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**'Astride a dangerous dividing line':  
Preschool teachers' talk  
about childhood sexuality**

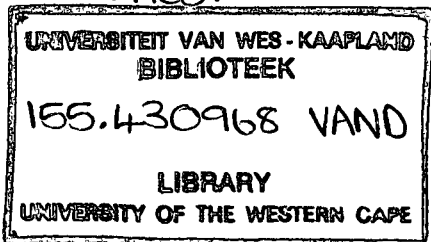
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in the Department of Psychology,  
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Thes.



## **Abstract**

The focus of this thesis is preschool teachers' talk about childhood sexualities. A literature review of empiricist, psychoanalytic, feminist, social constructionist and post-structural approaches to childhood sexuality suggests that it is a marginalized research topic. Moreover, emphasis tends to fall on the problems associated with childhood sexuality, rather than regarding it as part of everyday life. In this study, I facilitated a focus group discussion with eight preschool teachers. The complexities of analyzing a text produced by participants with multiple identities are acknowledged. The discussion was hinged around vignettes and questions about childhood sexuality, and was transcribed into a written text. Using discourse analysis, I explore some of the 'taken-for-granted' assumptions about childhood sexuality, within 15 extracts from the text. I argue that multiple, paradoxical constructions of childhood sexuality position children 'astride a dangerous dividing line', which can be read on many levels. This unstable positioning both creates and is created by multiple discourses of 'taking charge'. The discourses of 'taking charge' impel preschool teachers to police 'dangerously' sexual children and protect 'innocent' children from corruption. These discourses are gendered: girl children are constructed as more vulnerable to corruption; boy children tend to be constructed with 'sex-drives' needing to be tamed; and adult women are constructed as the monitors of childhood sexuality. Furthermore, silences or taboos about childhood sexuality are integral to these discourses. Although there are hints of childhood agency, I suggest that the teachers themselves have limited access to or use for feminist and other liberatory discourses. More subtle resistance may be evident in many examples of laughter in the text. While this is project situated on the margins of psychology, by virtue of its subject, epistemology and methodology, I conclude by discussing various limitations.

## Declaration

I declare 'Astride a dangerous dividing line: Preschool teachers' talk about childhood sexualities' is my own work and that all the sources I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jane van der Riet". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'J'.

Jane van der Riet

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There is a widespread notion that children are open, that the truth about their inner selves just seeps out of them. That's all wrong. No one is more covert than a child, and no-one has greater cause to be that way. It's a response to a world that's always using a tin-opener on them to see what they have inside, just in case it ought to be replaced with a more useful type of tinned foodstuff (Høeg, 1993, p. 57).

But when the child thus seems to be well on the way to postulating the existence of the vagina and to concluding that an incursion of this kind by his *[sic]* father's penis into his mother is the act by means of which the baby is created in his mother's body - at this juncture his inquiry is broken off in helpless perplexity. For standing in its way is his theory that his mother possesses a penis just as a man does, and the existence of the cavity which receives the penis remains undiscovered by him. It is not hard to guess that the lack of success of his intellectual efforts makes it easier for him to reject and forget them. This brooding and doubting, however, becomes the prototype of all later intellectual work directed towards the solution of problems, and the first failure has a crippling effect on the child's whole future (Freud, 1977, p. 196).

The very profusion of often confusing and conflicting voices, lyrical and anguished, biting and caring, romantic and cynical, repelling and appealing, contentious and collective, has marked the world of sexual politics as uniquely cacophonous and disturbing. But the voices represent the diversity which to my mind is the only truth about modern sexuality (Weeks, 1991, pp. 8-9).

# 1. Introduction

Are preschool children sexual? How can adults tell? And what should we do about it - if anything at all? 'Childhood sexuality' is often not easily discussed or researched in contemporary Western contexts (Plummer, 1991; Rogers & Stainton Rogers, 1992; Potgieter & Fredman, 1997), as well as 'Other' contexts (Levett & Kottler, 1997). It tends to evoke strong feelings in adults, from calls to protect its purity, to liberate its passion, or to restrain its rampant outbursts (Plummer, 1991). These contrasting ways of speaking could be labeled as pieces of discourses which actively (re)produce 'reality' (Parker, 1992).

Through a discourse analysis of the transcript of a focus group, this research explores some of the ways a group of preschool teachers in Cape Town constructed children's sexuality and adult responses to it. As a central metaphor for the analysis, I use Foucault's complex description of the discursive positioning of childhood sexuality: 'astride a dangerous dividing line' (1976, p. 104). The 'dangerous dividing line' can be read on many levels; one of the participants in this study represents it like this:

U: ... They try to hide themselves from you. Because they know with within themselves. Because perhaps it's because you have discussed it with them already. So they know within themselves that this is not for a child to do. Or they see at home also, this is only the way mommy and daddy should behave or how adults should behave so they know that because it's the the the the the instinct of of sexuality is natural within the child, they know (whispering) 'I mustn't do it in front of my mommy', so they hide.  
(lines 507-514)

I will argue that the unstable and potentially hazardous positioning both creates and is created by multiple strategies for teachers and other caretakers to 'take

charge'. These processes have ideological effects on child and adult subjectivities.

This study is premised on the idea that 'sexuality' is not a fixed or natural essence within us, but that its meaning at any moment is rooted in social relationships and structured through language (Foucault, 1976; Weeks, 1985, 1989, 1991, 1995; Plummer, 1991). Therefore I am not attempting to create an alternative version of what childhood sexuality actually *is*. Rather, this study attempts to unpack, interrogate, and perhaps complicate further, some of the taken-for-granted ideas that inform us what preschool children and preschool teachers are doing.

There are other, related assumptions underlying this study. Definitions of childhood are not biologically predetermined but inseparable from social context (Prout & James, 1990; Dawes & Donald, 1994). Similarly, the category of 'preschool' children, referring to children beyond infancy and before primary school, does not arise 'naturally', but relates to the historical construction of childhood. The research also assumes that discourses on childhood sexuality will be saturated with relations of power which tend to privilege adults over children, men/boys over women/girls and heterosexuality over homosexuality (Foucault 1976; Weeks, 1991; Potgieter & Fredman, 1997).

Further, the chosen methodology reflects the 'the shift to language' in certain strands of psychology (cf. Parker, 1989; 1992; Burman & Parker, 1993; Banister, Burman, Parker, Taylor & Tindall, 1994). Language is not understood

to act as a neutral mirror of social relationships; instead language *constructs* realities (Potter & Wetherell, 1987). The shift to language deconstructs the split between individual subjectivity and structural power (Burman, Kottler, Levett & Parker, 1997).

The thesis moves from academic texts on childhood sexuality (Chapter 2), to the production and analysis of the preschool teachers' text (Chapters 3 and 4), to reflections on *this* text, the thesis itself (Chapter 5). Chapter 2 is a critical review of academic texts on childhood sexualities. Its purpose is partly to survey the dominant discourses on childhood sexuality within more 'essentialist' approaches to knowledge: empiricist, some psychoanalytic and some feminist approaches. I suggest that while childhood sexuality is interpreted in multiple ways, academic texts tend to fix and polarize it between various categories. Childhood sexuality is viewed predominantly as problematic or dangerous; while a few texts idealize it. The review underlines the argument (for example Plummer, 1991) that 'childhood sexualities' is something of an academic taboo. The second purpose of the review is to place myself in the post-structural and social constructionist camps, and to borrow useful tools for my analysis. Other analyses of subjects related to childhood sexuality are therefore also briefly reviewed.

Chapter 3 tells the story of the methodological process. How I came to various choices of method, as well as difficult patches in the research, are purposely discussed, as they relate to the analysis that follows. This chapter describes how the participants were 'chosen', how a text was produced through recording

and transcribing a focus group, and the process of analysis. In particular, the complexities of talking to a group with multiple identities is signposted. Further ethical issues conclude the chapter.

The analysis in chapter 4 follows a thread of argument in two parts, with reference to extracts from the transcript. In the first part, the confusion and paradox which infuses constructions of childhood sexuality are highlighted. In the second part, I argue that dominant discourses of 'danger' give rise to multiple strategies for taking charge. In a third section of the analysis, I reflect further on the mutually reinforcing nature of these discourses; on the centrality of gender and of the interwoven silences or taboos. Further, in a discussion on power and resistance, I argue that the subjectivities of both children and teachers are shaped by their positions in these discourses; and that counter-discourses are muted. I suggest that there is indirect evidence of resistance in participants' laughter.

In the final chapter, I reflect on certain effects and limitations of the analysis. While this is a project on the fringes of psychology and other institutions, I outline five 'problems' in the research. These range from the difficulties in writing on a 'taboo' topic, to the potential for colonizing participants' discourse, to ways in which this research contributes to the marginalization of childhood sexuality. The thesis concludes by revisiting the opening questions of this introduction.

## **2. Literature review: dominant and alternative discourses on childhood sexuality**

This is a selective and critical view of approaches to childhood sexualities. Its purpose is not to comb exhaustively through all available resources on childhood sexuality and then stake a claim to an area of 'truth' that no-one has examined before. I am interested in the ways that childhood sexualities are constructed within academic knowledge. The participants in this study have been educated, at least partly, in modernist approaches to childhood development, including its ideas and silences about childhood sexuality. In the analysis, I will be commenting on how dominant discourses and at rare times alternative or sub-dominant discourses on childhood sexuality filter through participants' talk.

I will be using Plummer's (1991) 'map' of constructions of childhood sexuality as a guide to the literature: Are children constructed as sexual or asexual? What assumptions are made about their sexuality - is it pleasure, danger or social construction? I will also be using the survey of literature to position my analysis within more alternative approaches to childhood sexualities.

There has been a flood of literature about childhood sexual abuse over the past two decades, much of which offers limited and problematic insights (Levett, 1988, 1994, 1995; Plummer, 1997). Although childhood sexuality is often only recognized within the negative framework of sexual abuse (Rogers & Stainton Rogers, 1992; Fredman & Potgieter, 1996), I will not be reviewing this

body of literature here. Because my focus is talk about preschool children, texts which discuss the sexualities of older children are also excluded.

I would like to make two overarching points about the literature surveyed here. Firstly, to note the scarcity of any kinds of research about childhood sexualities, even within the more radical approaches to knowledge. In addition, I found that many references on childhood sexualities are not carried in South African libraries, suggesting that it is an even more marginalized subject in South African academia than in perhaps European or North American contexts, where most of the literature originates. Secondly, there appears to be an overriding concern with problems and pathology, rather than seeing childhood sexualities as part of the mixed experience of everyday life.

The literature is discussed under the successive headings of empiricist, psychoanalytic, feminist and social constructionist / post-structural approaches, but these are somewhat arbitrary and non-exclusive categories. Following these headings, analyses in areas related to childhood sexuality are also briefly reviewed, in order to situate this study within discourse analytic research.

## **2.1 Finding the 'facts' about childhood sexuality: empiricist approaches**

A dip into mainstream textbooks of developmental psychology suggests that while there are degrees of conservatism (for example in their definitions of 'gender'), there is a shared negation of children's sexuality. 'Sex roles',

'differences', 'typing' and 'education' are topics considered worthy of inclusion, but childhood sexuality *per se* is not. Gardner (1978) discusses adolescent sexuality, but childhood sexuality is only mentioned obliquely in a brief exposition and critique of Freud's work. Under the heading of 'sex roles', he explains gender as 'sex-role identity', but this is apparently unrelated to sexuality. In their discussion of sex education, Segal and Yahraes (1978) argue that peer influence is more important than parental influence. Their argument suggests that sex education must be 'put into' the empty vessel of the asexual child. In their textbook, the subject of 'homosexuality' is both marginalized and stigmatized by placing it under the headings of 'sex deviation' and 'consequences of abuse'. Tomlinson-Keasey (1985) also concentrates on sex differences and sex roles, and childhood sexuality is again only mentioned via a rather dismissive reference to Freud.

The reader of these texts may assume either that children are barely constructed as sexual at all by the traditional discourses of developmental psychology; or that the surrounding taboos (Plummer, 1991) mark children's sexuality as 'unfit' for presentation to or debate by students of psychology.

In contrast, Ford and Beach's (1952) cross-cultural survey of *Patterns of Sexual Behaviour* contains sparse but significant references to children. Their comments focus mainly on trends in societies where sexual expression is viewed relatively positively or negatively. For example, they reflect that most children in 'liberal' communities move from vague to systematic masturbation by age eight; and that homosexual tendencies are strongly inhibited in children



in more conservative communities. In addition, they note that there is evidence of secret sex play even in the most restrictive societies.

Other mainstream texts which affirm the existence of childhood sexuality tend to view it as a natural, inborn, universal process which unfolds in stages, either negatively or positively, depending on psychosocial influences (see Tharinger, 1990; Belsky, Steinberg & Draper, 1991). These kinds of normalizing views of childhood development are loaded with moral and political values (Burman, 1994) and can act as a colonizing force over 'Other' versions of the truth (as Levett (1994) argues in the context of childhood sexual abuse). However, these texts also emphasize the limits of current 'knowledge' (see Goldman & Goldman, 1982; Tharinger, 1990). Goldman and Goldman point to the 'astonishingly incomplete' state of knowledge about childhood sexuality (1982, p.1), and suggest that Piaget's focus on children's thinking about the physical and natural sciences neglects the human sciences, and for them, the important area of children's sexual thinking. Their explanation for this lies in a version of the 'repression hypothesis' (Foucault, 1976), which states that taboos about sexuality have paralyzed intellectual exploration. However, they are also careful to suggest, along with Freud, that sexuality is not simply copulation or even genitality; and define it extremely broadly to include relationships and feelings about a range of developmental and gendered practices.

To their credit, neither Ford and Beach (1952) nor Goldman and Goldman (1982) fix childhood sexuality as inherently and exclusively dangerous or pleasurable. However, while they theorize centrally about social influences on

children, they do not escape the positivist convention of positioning children and context as ontologically separate entities (Dawes & Donald, 1994). In other words, the essence of 'sexuality' is still located within individual children.

While ostensibly reporting on the long-term outcomes of childhood and adolescent sexual experiences, Kilpatrick's (1992) underlying agenda is to counteract myths about sexual abuse. She analyzed statistics from 501 primarily middle class women in the USA concerning both child (ages 0-14) and adolescent (ages 15-17) sexual experiences (it is therefore impossible to isolate findings about preschool children here). The definition of these sexual experiences was limited to forms of contact between the subjects and various partners - 55% of her sample disclosed such experiences. The largest proportion of childhood behaviours reported were hugging, kissing and showing genitals; and the majority of childhood experiences were reported to be voluntary, pleasurable, non-harmful and leading to little guilt.

Kilpatrick's (1992) findings are complex and she takes an important stand against researchers of child sexual abuse making moralistic assumptions about harm done, and in favour of recognising resiliency. Her recommendations are primarily about appropriate action around sexual abuse, but she also advocates 'acceptable' research directly with children, and children in general, rather than 'victims' only, in order to extend our understandings. However, Kilpatrick seems to accept at face value that 45% of her subjects simply *did not have* sexual experiences in childhood or adolescence, which is entangled with her narrow framing of sexual experience as between two subjects. This

assumption is further entangled with her underlying project of sexual abuse advocacy work, rather than exploring children's sexual experiences for their own sakes.

Calderone (1992) takes a rather different standpoint. She argues strongly that childhood eroticism is as important a need as that for food or play or learning - and that all such needs should be met. 'To deny the sensual nature of children places them in a precarious position of intensely experiencing something that their own loved adults deny or, even worse, punish' (p. 134). But her recommendations are somewhat paradoxical. She advocates non-interference with the child's sexual enjoyment until age two 'except by gentle introduction to the appropriateness of privacy and the closed door' (p. 136), which I believe certainly could be experienced by children as intrusive. After age two, she suggests that families (i.e. adults) constantly reinforce behaviour which they consider appropriate, yet she does not question that families' interventions may not always be benevolent. Her construction is of an idealized, natural, and pleasurable childhood sensuality, which is also delicate and sensitive to adult disapproval.

South African academics and stakeholders have been largely silent about childhood sexualities (Potgieter & Fredman, 1997). Apartheid censored sexuality research and education, but even in the current era of transformation there remains a narrow focus on sexual dangers (abuse, AIDS, S.T.D.'s, teenage pregnancies) rather than the way sexual discourses infuse children's

wider experiences. The attention given to problems related to sexual *intercourse* also puts preschool children's sexuality in the background.

The Children's Charter of South Africa (1992) includes children's rights to sexual education. But a review conducted for the National Progressive Primary Health Care Network found that most sex education programmes are targeted at adolescents, and could identify only one programme in South Africa affecting preschoolers (Rapholo, Segal, Everatt & Hirschowitz, 1995). This review on child and adolescent sexuality itself sidelines preschool children as it focused on seven to 20 year olds. In addition, *Molo Songolo*, a magazine for youth, ran a series on sexuality education in 1997, but addressed children of 10 years and older.

I did encounter an anomalous South African voice, who was difficult to place in an epistemological category in this review. He ends up here (perhaps unfairly) because his account constructs sexual desire as natural, unmediated, and driven by the body. Achmat (1994) traces his 'childhood as an adult-molester' and recounts his first sexual memory at three years old (he watches his mother letting his father 'embrace her in a grotesque waltz' (p. 326)). He paints a vivid picture of his pre-adolescent sexuality, as assertively sexual, even predatory. It assails conventional ideas about age, sexual orientation, 'race', gender (and more), yet fails to fully acknowledge unequal power relations between children and adults. As Potgieter and Fredman (1997) point out, the consent of an individual does not constitute 'equality'.

In summary, even within broadly empiricist work there is no single construction of childhood sexuality. Understandings veer between a number of polarities: asexual / sexual; biological / social; fragile / resilient; repressed / liberated. Within strictly empiricist approaches, responses to these uncertainties, contradictions and taboos would be to call for further knowledge, in order to counteract the taboos and unravel the contradictions, rather than to address why the uncertainties exist. In contrast, conceptual spaces for uncertainties and contradictions start to open up in the approaches discussed below.

## **2.2 The impact of psychoanalytic ideas**

Freud's thinking has had a massive impact on discourses on childhood sexuality over the past century. It is difficult to imagine any Western ideas about childhood sexuality which do not start, albeit implicitly, from agreement or difference with Freud (Linzi Fredman, personal communication, 22.3.1999). While there are no immediately obvious Freudian ideas in the text of preschool teachers' talk analyzed in this thesis, the very concept of childhood 'sexuality', as well as particular notions about 'sexual instinct' perhaps constitute residues of psychoanalytic thought.

Freud argued for the indisputable existence of infant and childhood sexuality and wrote extensively about the oscillating development of human sexuality from the 'germs of sexual impulses ... already present in the new-born child' (1977, p. 92). Three characteristics of infantile sexuality were proposed: it

attaches to a somatic function, its sexual aim is dominated by that erotogenic zone; and it is autoerotic (there is as yet no sexual object) (Freud, 1977). According to Freud, there are profound differences between adult and child sexual life. He also started to make critical breaks from the idea of a fixed, anatomically determined and 'naturally' unfolding sexual path (Weeks, 1985, 1991; Frosh, 1989): 'although a sexual drive is postulated, sexuality as a complex of fantasy, desire and social behaviour is something that only gradually takes shape' (Frosh, 1989, p. 70). According to Weeks (1985), other important insights were: a challenge to the notion of a unitary human consciousness; a severing of the connection between sexual instinct and heterosexual genitality; and perhaps most importantly, the proposition that sexual identity is a struggle, a hazardous journey which is never preordained. But Weeks (1985) also wonders whether Freud is too emphatic about 'sexuality' rather than 'sexual potential', and suggests Freud's 'evidence' for this is tautological.

Freudian theory suggests that childhood sexuality has a pervasive influence on current and subsequent development: 'all comparatively intense affective processes, including even terrifying ones, trench upon sexuality' (1977, p. 123). All children are preoccupied with the problems of sex; all neurotic adults' problems can be traced back to them. In my limited reading of psychoanalytic literature, I wondered whether the exclusive purpose of examining childhood sexuality is often to elucidate adult problems. For example, Green (1995) argues from a classical psychoanalytic position that contemporary foci on pre-Oedipal issues have obscured the central importance of sexuality in

psychoanalytic theory and practice. He protests that many of his adult patients still bring sexual disturbances to analysis - despite the way sexual and genital issues have been deemed superficial by the privileging of the paranoid-schizoid and depressive positions. In the process of his argument, the centrality of *childhood* experience is lost. In another example, Siegal (1994) discusses *adult* women patients' unmet early sensual and sexual needs in relation to their mothers. Sexual activities in infancy and childhood are also usually given adult names (Jackson, 1982 in Frosh, 1989).

Scharff (1982) locates childhood sexual development within the work of Winnicott and other object relations theorists. This theory suggests that childhood sexual development is not simply triggered by the maturation of erotic zones and cognitive capacity; but is inseparable from relationships with the family, in particular, with the mother. Consequently, sexual problems originate in infancy, within the family; and sexual symptoms are signs of turmoil both in the internal and external worlds of parental relationships. While Scharff does not completely gloss over pleasurable childhood sexual experience, this is cast in terms of 'if nothing goes wrong'; and the emphasis still lies on subsequent pathology in adulthood. However, his view of an ever-present, dynamically changing, 'interlocking' relationship between child and parents' sexualities suggests the seeds of a theory of social constructionism.

Seen through psychoanalytic lenses, children's sexuality becomes visible and complex. However, there has always been a tension between the radical insights and the pull towards normalization within psychoanalytic theorizing

(Weeks, 1985, 1991; Parker, Georgaca, Harper, McLaughlin & Stowell Smith, 1995). One set of critiques of this tension emerges from feminist theory. The following section starts with feminist problematizing of Freudian constructions of childhood sexuality, before considering other feminist debates.

### **2.3 Feminist challenges**

Frosh argues that Freud's 'absorption in patriarchal attitudes and biologicistic assumptions actually produces an account of sexual difference that recognizes only one form of sexuality, which he regards as masculinity' (1989, p. 200). Both Flaake (1993) and Lykke (1993) take issue with a central gendered construct in psychoanalytic theory: the Oedipus complex. Flaake disagrees with the notion that it is solely *male* attention that enlivens female sexuality; at the same time she is critical of mothers, who through their own complexes, inhibit their daughters' positive sexual development. From a different angle, Lykke argues that daughters might threaten fathers' privileged positions by feeling rivalrous Oedipal desire for their mothers. In spite of one author's stated allegiance to 'unfixed gender significances' (Lykke, 1993, p. 23), both Flaake and Lykke have rather fixed views of 'female sexuality' and 'motherhood / fatherhood', as if 'gender' emanates from an internal well. They also perhaps labour the point of the 'negative' Oedipus complex which is acknowledged by Freud (Laplanche and Pontalis, 1973).

Flax (1993) provides a more complex reading of daughterhood / motherhood. She follows Foucault (1976) in arguing that sexual pleasures are always



suffused with power relations. Flax suggests that mothers tend to evoke daughters' desire, then refuse it and hand their daughters over to men. She asks provocatively about the little discussed 'erotic charge of maternity' (p. 150): are we - including children - afraid to face the idea of a mother's sexual feelings for her children? According to Flax, we are often reluctant to confront the heterogeneous and conflictual meanings of motherhood, because of our longing for an idealizable figure. Further, the relationships of domination between mothers and daughters are rarely acknowledged - fathers and sons much more so.

Feminist theories also open up other areas of debate. They alert us to how mainstream psychological texts present childhood (Burman, 1994) or sexuality (Fredman & Potgieter, 1996; Potgieter & Fredman, 1997) in 'gender neutral' terms - which usually means using the standard of the boy-child - except when the child is passive:

(w)e have a situation where the developing child, the child in the state of developing, is rendered masculine, while the state from which 'he' (sic) is developing, childhood, is feminized. But are infants always passive, feminine objects of nurturance? No. I suggest that where babies and children are active in the expression of their wants, needs, frustrations, they become culturally masculine (Burman, 1995, pp. 54-5).

Useful critiques have also been leveled at gendered power relations in paedophilic discourses (Jeffries, 1990); at the ways young girls' subjectivities are shaped around fear of sexual abuse (Levett 1988, 1995); and at how heterosexuality is set up as the privileged, normalized state (Wilkinson & Kitzinger, 1993; Potgieter & Fredman, 1997). Plummer (1991) argues that gender identities, although they cannot be collapsed into sexual identities, 'flood' children's interpretations of sexuality.

Millett (1992) frames her discussion of childhood sexuality within patriarchy and focuses on the sexual exploitation of children, especially girls. She advocates a state of autonomy for children, in which they 'belong to themselves' (p. 223). She also suggests that intergenerational sex could one day be 'a wonderful opportunity for understanding human beings' (p. 222) but current power relationships preclude such non-exploitative sexual relationships. Her position could be characterized as seeking or believing in (impossible) spaces outside of discourse, beyond multiple relationships of power and interdependence.

Fredman and Potgieter (1996) lobby for the acknowledgment of a 'positive' and 'natural' child sexuality. They point out the problematic elision of 'sex' and 'sexuality', and instead, suggest that sexuality be understood as a continuum, 'from talking to touching to penetration and orgasm, which is expressed from same-sex through to opposite-sex expression' (p.48). This is a counter-hegemonic discourse, which takes an important moral and political stand. Yet their use of the singular (sexuality), and their appeal to 'nature' still essentializes childhood sexual experience.

Fredman and Potgieter (1996) argue that feminists have not really taken the gap in theorizing childhood sexualities, including in South Africa, and furthermore, and that feminist writers have tended to criticize rather than pose meaningful alternatives. Feminists are often caught in a double bind which forces them to side with the moral panic generated by conservative institutions (Plummer, 1991; Fredman & Potgieter, 1996). More specifically, the feminist discourses discussed here give rise to an uneasy dichotomy between the dangers of patriarchy and the pleasures of a nirvana not yet quite reached. The approaches in the following section attempt to deconstruct this polarization.

#### **2.4 More about power: post-structural and social-constructionist perspectives**

The following voices are not homogeneous, but they have in common an approach to childhood sexuality which does not start, as many voices reviewed so far, from 'what is it?' Rather, they attempt to strike a 'critical distance' (Parker, 1992, p. 3) from which it is possible to ask: 'how did childhood sexuality come to be *made* and what is it made of?' Most are also concerned (as are many feminists) with relationships of power shaping and shaped by dominant discourses.

The fundamental subversion of sexual essentialism comes from Foucault (Weeks, 1991) who conceived sexuality not as an instinctual drive but

rather as an especially dense transfer point for relations of power: between men and women, young people and old people, parents and offspring, teachers and students, priests and laity, an administration and a population (Foucault, 1976, p. 103).

'Sexuality' is thus a *word* - an historical construct. Foucault disrupts the idea of a comfortable spectrum of desires; rather, 'sexual identities have been organized into violent hierarchies' (Weeks, 1995, p. 40) with elevated positions for the most 'normal' and 'natural'. Moreover, power does not operate in a single, stable, uniform strategy, but through varied, multiple and contradictory strategies in which resistance is always present (Sheridan, 1980; Weeks, 1995). These arguments enrich an understanding of childhood sexuality because the dominant discourses are then not simply possessed by adults (and other powerful groups) and dispossessed of children (and other less dominant groups) (Sheridan, 1980). When children start to understand and use language, they also have access to discourses (Burman, 1994). Post-structural theory therefore shifts the focus from individual bodies and desires to cultural and social contexts (Gagnon and Parker, 1995).

Countering Freud's repression hypothesis ('we can't talk about sex'), Foucault argues that since the eighteenth century there has been a proliferation of talk about sex, and an intensification of webs of discourses, involving all kinds of subjects. In particular, various discursive strategies were focused on childhood and adolescent sexuality. 'Children were defined as 'preliminary' sexual

beings, on this side of sex, yet within it, astride a dangerous dividing line' (1976, p. 103). Parents, teachers, doctors, and later psychologists, were all implicated in the definition and disciplining of childhood sexualities.

There is debate around Foucault's dismissal of repression. Lützen (1995) argues that like death, sex has been separated from public discourse, and 'wrapped in silence' (p. 23), which may be just as interesting to analyse as what has been said. Foucault (1976) acknowledges that there have been some areas of silencing, but theorizes the silences around sexuality *within* discourse, as part of multiple prescriptions and proscriptions. Others suggest that while challenging the simplicities of 'repression', Foucault may be glossing over repressive discourses which have operated in the West over the past two centuries (see Levett, 1988; Weeks, 1989; Gagnon & Parker, 1995).

A host of contemporary voices follows Foucault and challenges the natural origins of any forms of sexuality. Yet many texts are puzzlingly quiet about the construction of *childhood* sexual experience (for example, Caplan, 1987; Kitzinger, 1987; Wilkinson & Kitzinger, 1993; De Lauretis, 1994; Gagnon & Parker, 1995; Plummer, 1995). And while Burman (1994) examines developmental psychology's effects on children and parents, she does not comment on childhood sexualities outside the discourses of sexual abuse. Is this a further silencing, the operation of an adhesive taboo (Plummer, 1991) or the 'visceral clutch' (Rogers & Stainton Rogers, 1992) aroused by the idea of childhood sexuality? Perhaps these authors might argue that 'childhood sexuality' is not important, urgent or problematic enough to explore?

In contrast, Plummer (1991) provides a useful guide to thinking about childhood sexualities. His analysis deconstructs the traditional, binary constructions of children as 'sexual' or 'asexual' and childhood sexuality as 'danger' or 'pleasure'. Plummer argues that three combinations of these constructions form the key elements of contemporary adult thinking about children's sexuality, including childhood sexual abuse and paedophilia. The 'danger' and 'sexual' labels together construct children's sexuality as rampant, potentially threatening and requiring firm control. They make up the 'repression' model, endorsed by puritans but also echoed by the Freudian position in which repression is necessary for the survival of civilization. In contrast, the 'pleasure' and 'sexual' constructions constitute the liberation model, in which children's desires are seen as healthy, creative and freeing. This model is used by other Freudians and liberal thinkers, but has also been taken up by emerging defenders of paedophilia. A third combination places the 'danger' of sex with the 'asexual' nature of children in the 'corruption' model, which sees children as innocent, empty vessels, vulnerable to defilement. Plummer suggests that some feminists have taken this position in constructing young girls as passive victims of male power.

Crawford (1984 in Rogers & Stainton Rogers, 1992) notes a shift in the West towards a discourse of sexual 'release' (liberation) in the 1960s and back again to a discourse of control (repression / corruption) in the 1980s. Linking this trend to notions of childhood sexuality, Rogers and Stainton Rogers (1992) suggest that the gaze of informed liberation shifts to the gaze upon the dangers

of sexual abuse. However, these do not represent progressive moves towards enlightenment, but 'a continuity of adult power in monitoring, anxiety induction and confession' (Rogers & Stainton Rogers, 1992, p. 166).

The notion of an 'innocent' or 'asexual' childhood can be further problematized on various counts. In the context of discourses about sexual abuse, Kitzinger (1990) argues that the idea of 'innocent' childhood actually increases children's sexual desirability for abusers; and increases their vulnerability by preventing their access to knowledge and power. Furthermore, the duality of 'innocent' and 'knowing' stigmatizes 'knowing' children (Kitzinger, 1990), and continues to double bind children even when the new era of 'children's rights' substitutes for the traditional notion of asexual childhoods (Burman, 1995). If their agency is acknowledged, children may start to be blamed for their own abuse.

Ennew sees the 'cult of innocence' (1986, p. 16) which emerged strongly at the end of the 19th century, as a buttress against Freudian ideas. But this cult hides deep ambivalence, for if children were *really* regarded as innocent and ignorant, why would they need to be cocooned from adults (Fuller, 1979, in Ennew, 1986)? From a different angle, Burman (1995) argues that the onset of 'sexuality' stakes the boundary between children and adults in many cultures; therefore to admit to child sexuality threatens a nostalgic, retrospective view of what childhood is supposed to be.

Plummer (1991) maintains that instead of seeing the repression, liberation and corruption models as mutually exclusive, a social constructionist viewpoint

'searches for the multi-layered complexity, historical diversity and situational ambiguity of 'sex'' (p. 232):

What matters most in this analysis are the multiple and often contradictory *meanings* that a child assembles and negotiates with others as it moves through a myriad of emerging encounters: *sexuality never means one thing once and for all*. There are both 'asexual' moments and 'sexual' ones; sexuality is *both* 'danger' and 'pleasure' (p. 235).

While multi-disciplinary, cross-cultural evidence exists of a multitude of 'sexual behaviours' in young children, Plummer argues that it is a mistake to impose adult sexual meanings onto childhood experiences. In fact, it is worth noting that adults may play a role in actively producing children's sexual identities by their reactions to children (Gagnon, 1977 in Plummer, 1991). Plummer states further that something that may be observed to be 'sexual' may be a potential or a capacity rather than a core of sexual feeling. (This echoes Weeks' (1985) critique of Freud's unwavering conviction that sexual-seeming behaviour had to be 'sexual'). While there is a physiological base to human sexuality, its essential meaning is symbolic and socially constructed.

From Plummer's perspective, a child's acquired sexual identity is not a smooth journey through predestined developmental stages, but a sort of stumbling through the dark, picking up and reading or misreading confusing messages about sexuality. In a fragmentary fashion, children construct their own 'sexual



scripts'. Plummer names the pervasive scripts of absences, values, secrecy and utility in Western cultures, and argues that they 'are complex, intertwined and scarcely researched at all' (1991, p. 240).

The 'absences' script refers to the blocked and limited communications which children often receive about sexuality. Scripts about 'values' are the emotions and judgments (often negative) which children learn are embedded in sexuality. Through a 'secrecy' script, children also come to know that sexual matters are secret and private, which Plummer argues breeds enormous confusion, misunderstanding and fantasy. Children also get drawn into scripts of utility, for example, discovering that their sexuality can be used to disturb adults or gain favours.

Plummer covers two further 'sexual scripts' of gender and generation. He argues that gendered scripts centre around the axes of dependency-independency and intimacy-distance. Scripts about age are traditionally built on fixed models of stages or crises but he prefers a more fluid, non-linear, construction, resting on *how* children negotiate their own meanings and changes, using an imagery of 'drift, becoming, emergence' (p. 245).

Plummer argues that these scripts are transmitted to children through culture, in the form of caretakers, peers, media and their own histories, and he maintains that these scripts are relatively inaccessible to adults. Writing from outside of post-structural schools of thought, Plummer clearly chooses *not* to employ 'discourse' discourse. Nevertheless, I think the concept of *discourses*

of absences, values, etc., allows exploration into the adult constructions which filter into children's worlds. 'Discourses' could also imply more fluidity and complexity, compatible with his arguments, than does the static, rehearsed quality of 'scripts'. This terminology also bring into focus the productive nature of language.

Furthermore, by incorporating post-structuralist ideas into his social-constructionist framework, it becomes possible to note that some discourses are more 'dominant' than others. For example, that the corruption and repression 'models' or discourses are very influential in current Western thinking; while liberation discourse is less popular and powerful. It would then be necessary to discriminate between the very different kinds of power relations perpetuated by the paedophilic and feminist versions of liberation discourse.

Although Plummer carefully deconstructs models of childhood sexuality, development and gender, I want to make two final critiques of his work. Firstly, that he does not consider how the 'corruption' and 'repression' discourses are often gendered. To extend Burman's (1995) argument from childhood to childhood sexuality: the passive, innocent child, vulnerable to corruption tends to be feminized; while the active, lustful child, needing to be kept under firm control, tends to be masculinized. Similarly, Foucault (1976) leaves out of his analysis that girls are more often constructed on the 'endangered' and boys on the 'dangerous' sides of the 'dangerous dividing line' of childhood sexuality - at least, this is what my analysis of preschool teachers' talk suggests.

Secondly, Plummer (1991) stops short of unpacking the power relations in generational sexualities. He closes on a hesitant note: '(w)hen the complexity of such worlds can be better understood, the complexities of intergenerational sexualities will become more apparent' (1991, p. 246). This leaves me wondering what pressures made it difficult for him to comment further on intergenerational sexualities here.

## **2.5 Textual analyses of sexuality**

I did not find other discourse analyses of adults' talk about childhood sexualities. Having reviewed various theoretical approaches to childhood sexuality, I will now comment briefly on how other analysts have produced work on related topics; focusing on methodological and theoretical features which inform my analysis in chapter 4.

The first example is not a discourse analysis but an attempt to describe ideology. Robinson (1989) examined the theories of Ellis, Kinsey and Masters and Johnson, but only Ellis and Kinsey, who raised points about childhood sexuality, are discussed here. Robinson's primary argument about ideology seems to be that both Ellis (at the turn of this century) and Kinsey (mid-century) set up their versions of childhood sexuality in order to oppose Freud. Both theorists believed children to be essentially innocent. Ellis rejected the use of adult terminology to describe children, and saw their responses as physiological rather than psychological. In his view, children were therefore

unable to carry out purposely perverse or homosexual acts. Moreover, the idea of children's incestuous desires for their parents was impossible as Ellis believed that familiarity actually blunted sexual attraction. Kinsey understood sexuality as equivalent to genital activity only - an overt critique of Freud's inclusion of all kinds of tactile stimulation. And where Kinsey observed sex play among boys, he attributed this to their greater accessibility to each other, and continued to believe it was innocent behaviour (Robinson, 1989).

I found Robinson's analysis rather shallow and missing the bigger picture of the ideological functions of the sexology movement. His views of both theorists are ultimately benign - arguing that Ellis's 'tolerance and enthusiasm' (1989, p. 41) paved the way for later sexologists; and that Kinsey helpfully 'demystified' sex. In contrast, Weeks (1985, 1989) and Gagnon and Parker (1992) discuss the normalizing, individualized accounts provided by sexologists, which pervade modern thought. Weeks takes a historical view; for example, he argues that the debates about the existence of childhood sexuality at the turn of the century actually masked underlying anxieties about the social categorization of children. Therefore while the content of Robinson's analysis may be relevant to this thesis, discourse analysis provides more potentially critical and disruptive analytic tools than his unself-reflexive descriptions.

The following studies use discourse analysis to challenge commonsense ideas about various aspects of sexual identity. Hollway's (1983, 1984, 1989) work on dominant discourses of heterosexual desire in the West opened the way for many other analyses. Using post-structuralist, feminist and psychoanalytic

theory, she explored the ways men and women positioned themselves and each other, giving rise to the concept of 'emotional investment' in subject positions, which I use in this thesis. Her arguments crystallize into the naming of 'the male sex drive', 'have/hold' and 'permissive' discourses. The 'male sex drive' discourse constructs male sexual desires as natural, imperative and uncontrollable, and women are positioned as having to manage and put up with this. While Hollway's ideas are derived from adults' talk about adults, participants in this study also drew on the 'male sex drive' discourse to describe the uncontrollable sexual instincts of young boys.

Levett (1988) argues that dominant Western discourses construct the effects of childhood sexual abuse as universal, inevitable, and deeply scarring; a process which is closely related to the stigmatic effects of these discourses. Like Hollway, she makes explicit the ideological threads which hold the cloth of discourse together, which provides a useful model for this thesis. In addition, my adoption of some of her methods (vignettes and focus groups) is discussed in the next chapter.

Kaminer and Dixon (1995) analyzed male ex-university students' talk about drinking alcohol. They argue that essentialist and normative discourses of masculinity had particular effects: gender hierarchies were reproduced and deviant, 'other' masculinities were constructed. Both these processes are echoed in preschool teachers' constructions of childhood sexualities; in particular, the construction of deviant sexual identities as a way of shoring up normative identities. Kaminer and Dixon also point out how constructions of

difference are played out both in the micro-context of the talk as well as wider social contexts, a useful thought to hold onto for this analysis.

The HIV / AIDS crisis has generated many studies of sexual practices. Willig (1995) analyzed interview transcripts to show how a marital discourse disempowers women from requesting condom use, with serious implications for their sexual safety. Drawing on transcripts of focus groups about AIDS, Strebel (1997) discusses the interpretative repertoires of medicalization and stigmatization. She argues that these repertoires compromise women's capacity to face the risks and fears involved. Neither Willig nor Strebel use Foucauldian theory (for example, to understand the way discourses produce subjects). However, their work valuably points to the consequences of discursive practices which I will discuss further in chapters 4 and 5.

Miles (1997) analyzed a group of white and a group of black women students talking about AIDS. Her main arguments are around gendered power relations within heterosexual relationships, and she outlines complex webs of discourses which impact on women's ability to negotiate safe sex practices. Miles also notes resistant voices to the dominant discourses, but speculates that black and white student participants may have had different access to alternative discourses - white students drew mainly on feminist discourses while black students seemed to draw more on anti-apartheid discourses, perhaps finding feminist discourses less useful. This framing of limited access to or limited use of alternative discourses was helpful to my analysis.

Levett and Kottler (1997) comment on discursive productions of childhood sexual abuse in a range of cultural and language contexts other than white English speaking contexts. They argue that hegemonic discourses of modernity are both woven into and also absent from this talk, because African working class women, although urbanized, are differently constituted as subjects from a middle class, white elite. This work threw up important issues about translation - not simply from one language to another but across multiple identities. Levett and Kottler usefully point out that we do not and cannot often *know* what people mean by particular words - in any language. Therefore this analysis needs to be questioning and exploratory, rather than imposing my meanings on the participants and the text. These issues are central to this study and will be discussed further in the next chapter.

## 2.6 Overview

In this chapter, I have selectively reviewed a range of academic texts about childhood sexuality. While the categorization of texts into 'empiricist', 'psychoanalytic', 'feminist', 'social-constructionist' and 'post-structural' approaches is somewhat loose, this has helped to broadly distinguish between those which primarily assert a fixed 'truth' about childhood sexuality, and those which start to see the meaning of childhood sexuality as contextually contingent. The latter viewpoints provides critical conceptual tools for this thesis. Within the essentializing approaches, the *multiplicity* of meanings attached to childhood sexuality is most striking (Weeks, 1991). However, this

statement should not obscure how frequently childhood sexuality tends either to be denied or problematized in traditional academic discourse.



### **3. Methodology: a story of the research process**

This chapter attempts to provide a reflexive account of the research process. 'Reflexive', in Banister, Burman, Parker, Taylor and Tindall's (1994) sense of explicitly sharing how the research text and analysis emerged. This incorporates, rather than avoids, the researcher's involvement in the process. I start by discussing the identities of the research participants (including myself); then move to the way the transcript was produced; and then discuss the process of analysis. While ethical issues are raised throughout, key questions are considered further in the final section.

#### **3.1 The participants**

Very early on in the research process, I considered talking directly to preschool children about their understandings of their own sexualities, but the ethical and logistical barriers were formidable. I quickly made an easier choice: to analyze the talk of adults. This research is clearly not immune to the taboos surrounding childhood sexualities! A group of preschool teachers was chosen as participants, as their talk would be likely to provide insight into the way they constructed childhood sexuality (Plummer, 1991), as well as the pedagogical discourses (Foucault, 1976) which impel teachers to observe, train, nurture and discipline children. A further motivation for me (unstated at the time) was that this group was likely to be female and therefore 'easier' for me, as a woman, to talk to.

Access to the participants was through a non-governmental organization (NGO) which provides resources and training to preschool teachers in the Western Cape. Important elements in establishing my credentials were: my supervisor, Linzi Fredman, having personal contact with some staff members; my being a senior student in a 'relevant' department (psychology) of a 'progressive' university (the University of the Western Cape (UWC)); as well as my previous involvement in NGOs known to members of this organization. After telephone contact and letters of introduction (see Appendices A and B), permission was granted by the NGO for me to do the research. I then met briefly with a group of trainee preschool teachers (approximately 20), informing them of the parameters of the research and inviting eight volunteers to attend a focus group at a convenient time.

At this stage, I was concerned that although I had emphasized that participants needed to be fluent in English, and parts of this speech were translated into the majority first language of Xhosa, some of the volunteers did not seem fluent in English when I chatted to them afterwards. One reason for the need for fluency was so that I could legitimately do a discourse analysis without compounding the already existing power dynamics (Cheryl de la Rey, personal communication, 1995). Another related reason was so that I could hold certain assumptions about the participants exposure to dominant, modernity discourses (Levett, 1994, Levett & Kottler, 1997). However, it was difficult to then ask certain volunteers not to attend the focus group, as if I was rejecting

them. With supervision, I decided to go ahead with the full group, being aware of this tension and the possibility that I might have to recruit another group.

The focus group was ultimately fruitful and usable, although as I discuss below, some voices were silenced. Further introduction to the participants is appropriate here. It is impossible ever to present a 'true' or static picture of an individual's identity; contemporary identity theory suggests that we have multiple, changing, and often fragmented subjectivities (Henriques, Hollway, Urwin, Venn & Walkerdine, 1984). However, I gathered some demographic information about the eight participants in this study (See Appendix C for a copy of the form handed out before the focus group). A ninth participant sat in at the beginning of the discussion with minimal participation and had to leave after about 10 minutes; her details are therefore not included here. The other eight participants are women, and their ages ranged from 23 to 53 with an average age of 37. According to Apartheid classifications, five are African and three coloured. The African women speak Xhosa as their first language, and belong to Baptist or Zionist churches. The coloured women consider both English and Afrikaans to be their first languages; two are Muslim and the third belongs to the NG Sending Kerk. Half the participants live in urbanized communities in Cape Town, while the other half live in semi-rural communities on the periphery of Cape Town. Two participants reached matric, one standard 9 and the rest standard 8.

At the time of the focus group, all participants were working as preschool teachers. They were also participating together on an Advanced Preschool

Training Programme (Level 3) which ran for four hours a week over 18 months, at the NGO. Their teaching experience ranged from three to eight years; with an average experience of six years. While I did not assess income, the participants' status as preschool teachers and their geographical locations suggest that they ranged from working class to lower middle class. All eight participants were mothers with between one and five children; their children's ages ranged from 1½ to 32 years.

These 'facts' place me in numerous relationships of difference and some of sameness, which are appropriate to make explicit here. I am female, but younger than most participants; have a white 'racialized' identity; and do not practice any religion. I am English-speaking, I can communicate in Afrikaans and a few words of Xhosa; I am also urban and very likely to be more 'middle class' than any of the participants; I have a post-graduate education, no preschool teaching experience, and no children of my own.

This heterogeneous group of research participants raises questions and challenges. I could argue that *all* research is 'cross-cultural' in a framework of multiple identities; therefore 'cross-cultural' interpretations are ubiquitous. Moreover, sensitivity to 'race' differences is far more complex than is routinely acknowledged (Griffin & Phoenix, 1994). However, these arguments should not serve to gloss over the multiple power relationships between researcher and researched and also among the research participants. In addition, I have had to be sure that I am reasonably 'culturally competent' to analyze the participants' talk (Parker & Burman, 1993), that is, to know 'enough' about what

the text is referring to. The text certainly 'felt' familiar enough to analyze, as if the participants and I have a degree of shared experience. Underlying my 'familiarity' are assumptions that modernity discourses had already filtered into these participants' worlds (Levett & Kottler, 1997), through their schooling but more specifically through their extended training as preschool teachers.

Furthermore, we all have emotional investments in particular subject positions in discourse (Hollway, 1984). I make tentative comments about the participants' possible investments in the following chapter. My own investment in feminist and 'children's rights' discourses has offered ways of seeing gendered and other forms of oppression in this text, and also the motivation to try to understand, explore and challenge them.

### **3.2 The production of a research text**

In March 1997, the participants and I met during the lunch hour of their training course in the resource library of the NGO. This was the most convenient time and place, given participants' after hours commitments and transport needs. The research text was created in a focus group, a facilitated group discussion around a particular issue (Stewart & Shamdasani, 1990). Before we started, I repeated information from the introductory session: that the talk would be recorded but anonymously written up; that participants could choose to have material left out afterwards; and that they would eventually be able to read the thesis and an accessibly written summary, at the offices of the NGO. I also explained that I would be reading three stories about childhood social

development and asking questions about each. Further, there were no right or wrong answers - I was interested in *their* ideas and opinions - and they did not have to agree with each other either. I invited participants to speak as freely as possible and ask questions at any point. That these assurances could not have been heard 'neutrally' is discussed further below.

The focus group discussion was hinged on three vignettes and associated questions, a technique adopted from Levett (1988) and also used in my honours thesis (see van der Riet, 1995). These pre-constructed scenarios were intended to stimulate discussion and debate in a non-threatening, non-intrusive way. Participants were able to share their personal narratives, but there was no pressure to do so. The three vignettes concerned a boy and a girl playing 'catch-catch'; a boy and a girl playing 'mommy and daddy', and a boy running around naked at a family braai. The associated questions asked for general and then more specific responses, including if the children's genders and ages were different (see Appendix D). By using vignettes, a text was already constructed for the participants, yet there *is* no starting point outside of discourse (Parker, 1992). By introducing the topic loosely as 'childhood social development' I attempted to limit preconceptions to some extent.

The vignettes and questions went through at least three distinct drafts. The most complex version consisted of preliminary questions (as a warm up) and five vignettes (including potential sex-play among same gendered pairs and a masturbating child). The preliminary questions and two vignettes had to be

abandoned because of the need for more limited time and focus, but ideas from the two discarded vignettes were integrated into the remaining three.

I facilitated the discussion, but did not always bring it back strictly to the research topic according to traditional focus group guidelines. This was partly because the ways that participants diverged from or avoided issues was important material, but also because I sometimes felt helpless in their stream of talk. My notes after the group suggest that we were all anxious to some degree; my anxiety also emerged in a need to get through all the questions, so that other at times I felt 'out of sync' in cutting 'irrelevant' talk short. In addition, I turned the tape over too soon, thereby not recording the last few minutes of the discussion.

It may have been less threatening to talk about childhood sexualities in a group than in an individual interview, but group dynamics also inhibit participants (Carey, 1994). This group was dominated by three voices (W, U and T), seemingly more confident and brimming with contributions than the others; and I was concerned about two very quiet participants (V and Z). The uneven participation is certainly worthy of exploration, but this cannot be done here, except in noting that V and Z did not seem at ease in English.

Focus groups can capture interaction between participants on a complex and sensitive topic (Morgan & Kreuger, 1994) like childhood sexualities. Yet my overriding impression after the group was of 'their faces turned towards me'. Unstated assumptions about my expectations (and possible expertise) no doubt

shaped the emerging text (Banister *et al.*, 1994). As Reicher (1994) puts it, the social relations of the interview room are as important as those relating to the research topic. The institutional frameworks (Parker, 1992) of their training course, 'psychology', 'university' and 'research', among others, are likely to have made certain discourses more available to participants than others in this discussion. For example, politically correct constructions of children appear to be readily accessible - although resistance against this is also discussed in the next chapter.

The group discussion was recorded with the participants' permission. I transcribed this aural record in four successive bouts (the first in the week after the discussion, the last in the final weeks of writing up a year later). But this cannot be a perfect rendition of their talk, for the recording and transcription are processes of construction in which meaning and emotional texture are lost, excluded or repressed (Banister *et al.*, 1994). A very simple transcription convention was used as I did not intend to analyze minute interactions (therefore pauses have not been timed, concurrent speech and murmurs of agreement or emphases in speech were not registered) (see Appendix E for transcription conventions and full transcript).

### **3.3 The textual analysis**

A sea of words - the text - needs theory to make sense of it. I have chosen to use the strand of discourse theory loosely deriving from post-structuralism (Burman & Parker, 1993). This strand constructs itself as 'critical' and political (Fairclough, 1992). Discourses are conceived as networks or complexes of



power-knowledge (Fairclough, 1992; Henwood & Pidgeon, 1994) and a discourse may be defined as 'a system of statements which creates an object' (Parker, 1992, p.2).

There are vital debates about the scope and limitations of discourse analysis (see Fairclough, 1992; Parker, 1992; Parker & Burman, 1993; De la Rey, 1997). What is valuable about discourse analysis for this study is that it disrupts the taken-for-granted meanings of everyday concerns: the 'normal' becomes *strange* (Pidgeon & Henwood, 1994; Parker *et al.*, 1995). As Parker puts it, '(d)iscourse analysis unravels the conceptual elisions and confusions by which language enjoys its power' (1992, p. 28). Further, discourse theory allows - in fact expects - competing and contradictory discourses in the same text (Parker, 1992). The myth of the monolith of childhood experience is revealed (Burman, 1995). Forms of resistance are always present. This is an apposite method for South African research, in which issues of power are always salient (Parker, Levett, Kottler & Burman, 1997).

And because an emerging analysis does not hold itself up as the 'truth', the *consequences* of a discourse analysis can also be examined (De la Rey, 1997). This is a paradigm leap from the positivist world of reliability and validity - instead, the openness of the transcript and persuasiveness of argument decide its worth (Henwood & Pidgeon, 1994). But discourse analysis is not inherently progressive; it can only change things in so far as it is used strategically (Burman, 1991; Parker & Burman, 1993). I have attempted to

respond to Gill's invitation for a 'passionately interested inquiry' (1995, p. 175) in which political and social causes are made explicit.

Discourses do not lie in a text, waiting for discovery (Parker, & Burman 1993). They are actively constituted by a reading, which relates to the reader's discursive positioning (Gavey, 1989). Initially, I identified a range of potentially interesting areas of discourse, including:

- children's sexuality as equivalent and different to adults' and adolescents';
- politically correct and traditional discourses around caretaking;
- binary constructions of children's sexuality as deviant / natural, dangerous / free, knowing / innocent; as well as
- discourses on regulation and surveillance, medicine, gender identity, sexual abuse, attention seeking and childhood learning and development.

I was also intrigued by:

- the complicated meanings and uses of laughter in the text;
- contradictory discourse around current practices as enlightened or corrupt;
- discourse on cultural changes; and
- the many slippages away from sexuality.

There was far too much for this study. In the six months between presenting a short paper on this material at a conference and writing up the thesis, my attention concentrated around the two main themes presented in the next chapter: the contradictory constructions of childhood sexuality and the closely associated discourses of 'taking charge'.

Having chosen these foci, I re-read the text and transferred chunks of relevant text to a separate file. There was again far too much. As I wrote the analysis, I made decisions about which fragments to include or exclude, based on their perceived usefulness for making and supporting my critical arguments. The selection and ordering of extracts of texts represents a further step away from and reconstruction of the participants' talk.

Writing the analysis was the most difficult part of the process - the confusion (Banister *et al.*, 1994) and not knowing (Hollway, 1989) necessary to all research had to be experienced. My final arguments emerged slowly through re-writing and supervision. I have included many, some quite substantial pieces of text in the analysis, partly to incorporate as much of the text as possible so it can be engaged with, but also, because it is impossible to isolate autonomous discourses. They are interdependent (Fairclough, 1992) and to name them is to play with concepts, rather than to recognise a discrete piece of reality (Hollway, 1989; Parker, 1992).

An important shift occurred during the writing process. I started off feeling on the children's 'side' and quite hostile to the teachers, especially their strategies of regulation. But as the process continued, it became possible to hold another perspective, that teachers are *also* positioned and pressured by these discourses. I was then faced with the question: are both children and teachers simply prisoners of discourse? And if not, how could the analysis highlight their resistance and agency? This dilemma is played out in the next chapter, and in chapter 5, I will reflect further on the effects and limitations of the analysis.

### 3.4 Further ethical issues

Banister *et al.* (1994) outline four key ethical issues in qualitative research: informed consent, the protection of participants, confidentiality / anonymity and accountability. I will discuss each briefly in relation to this study. Participants were informed of most aspects of the research and gave their written consent to participate. An important omission was the explicit topic of 'childhood sexuality', although the NGO which organized access was fully informed. This felt slightly underhanded, and yet also necessary. It may be argued that there is no 'completely' informed consent, as we cannot know or explain all the outcomes of a research process. I also believe that the participants' integrity and well-being was protected by the structuring of the discussion around relatively neutral vignettes, and by the organizational framework which contained us. The participants' anonymity has been maintained by removing their names and the NGO's name from this report. Participants were given the choice of removing material from the transcript - although no-one took up the opportunity, which I know is difficult to do.

In terms of accountability, as well as not sharing my research interests completely with the participants, I have also not negotiated or checked the meanings of their words in subsequent meetings (Smith, 1994; Levett & Kottler, 1997). This is not to deny that participants were also agents in the discussion itself (Smith, 1994). However, this project does not meet Bhavnani's (1994) criteria for empowerment, that change and action are enabled by the research. My primary accountability has been to the requirements of my academic

degree, through UWC. The NGO will be given a copy of the completed thesis as well as a summary, which it is hoped will be more accessible and perhaps pertinent to their needs.

#### **4. Analysis: multiple constructions, multiple strategies**

A pedagogization of children's sex: a double assertion that practically all children indulge in or are prone to indulge in sexual activity; and that, being unwarranted, at the same time 'natural' and 'contrary to nature', this sexual activity posed physical and moral, individual and collective dangers; children were defined as 'preliminary' sexual beings, on this side of sex, yet within it, astride a dangerous dividing line. Parents, families, educators, doctors, and eventually psychologists would have to take charge, in a continuous way, of this precious and perilous, dangerous and endangered sexual potential (Foucault, 1976, p. 104).

Resonances between this condensed passage and the transcript of the preschool teachers' talk are striking. Foucault refers to 'a pedagogization of children's sex' as one of the four important 'strategic unities' (1976, p. 103) which have formed the mechanisms of knowledge and power around sexuality in the West since the eighteenth century. Foucauldian discourses themselves (re-)construct the participants' talk; but I am exploring a dialogue between these texts.

I have chosen to trace two interdependent themes in the teachers' talk: firstly, the multiple, complex and unstable constructions of preschool children's sexualities; and secondly, the multiple strategies for 'taking charge' which

attempt to police the 'dangerous dividing line'. I will also be returning, throughout the analysis, to gendered discourses, to the operation of taboos, and to forms of resistance against dominant discourses.

#### **4.1 Multiple interpretations of childhood sexualities**

##### **4.1.1 'Nice' and 'natural' discourses**

The 'dangerous dividing line' can be understood at many levels in the text of teachers' talk. One important level is the division between 'nice' and 'nasty' behaviour. The construction of 'niceness' reflects the need to see children's sexuality as essentially sweet, good, bland, innocently natural - possibly not 'sexual' at all. Perhaps these idealized constructions are an attempt to preserve the myth of an idyllic childhood (Ennew, 1986) or quality of childlikeness; or to ward off the threat of corruption (Plummer, 1991); or to keep the boundaries between adulthood and childhood in place (Burman, 1995).

While I am not using quantitative research methods, it is worth noting that constructions of 'nice' (a)sexuality in the whole transcript were few, marginal, and tended to stem only from one participant. The identity of the 'nice' children and their 'nice' (a)sexuality is highlighted by the much more common constructions of 'not-nice', 'deviant' or 'dirty-minded' children (who appear in later extracts). However, even the purity of the 'nice' identity is fragile,

surrounded by taboos, and constantly on the edge of becoming something else, as in my reading of the following extract.

- (a) U: And also the the children, what I've experienced from the children of today, I would say, they are more open and more um mature about these things because now like a a week ago, the two children in the centre there by us they found two ladybirds, on top of one another. And they said, 'Come see, come see, teacher, come see!' And I asked, 'What's wrong?' They said, 'The ladybird's are mating, they are mating!?' (laughter) I asked, 'Yes, what what is mating?' And they said, 'They mate and then they have a baby. The lady ladybird is going to have a baby!' (laughter) I say, 'Oh, that's that's nice, that's very interesting.' And then they say, 'Yes!' Um um the one girl says that that people also mate, and then the mommy has a baby. And then the other girl says, 'No, people don't mate, they make love!' (laughter) Because this is something that they that they hear and it's things that's perhaps discussed with them at home.  
(lines 288-301)

'Niceness' is maintained through a range of mechanisms. Perhaps most powerfully, through a separation between the children and sex, for the children are passive observers and commentators, they themselves are not engaged in overtly sexual activity. Therefore, although they are talking about sex, they seem essentially asexual or innocent. This image is enhanced by the presence of the ladybirds. Ladybirds have charming, harmless associations, unlike many other insects. The ladybirds' mating rituals are also framed within a 'nature' discourse, which creates them into a safe, 'natural' object for observation. Alongside the nature discourse, a procreational discourse ('mating') upholds the norm of adult, heterosexual, genital sex, and stands in opposition to other kinds of sexual encounters or sex for pleasure. The idea of procreation also allows the talk to slip comfortably into what humans - at least human mummies and daddies - do. By the end of this piece of text, we are also aware that it is *girl* children talking, which fits with the picture of good, passive, ladylike chatter.



In this passage, the girls are constructed as empty vessels, as in Plummer's (1991) corruption model. They seem, at least initially, not yet corrupted. The girls are following the desirable, 'nice' path of gradually absorbing appropriate knowledge within the careful supervisory environments of home and school. They are then rewarded with being labeled 'open' and 'mature'; *this* kind of communication is positively valued. The implicit contrast is with 'closed', 'immature' children - possibly *boys* - who are perhaps more raucous, active, 'naughty' or secretive. However, the purity of this construction is disrupted in the last few lines when another girl proclaims that people 'make love' instead of mating. This is a complex shift, which breaks from the normalized, naturalized view of procreational sex, and breaks a silence of children speaking about their parents' sexuality. In addition, it is a *girl* who takes this active stance. It seems difficult for the participants to explore this in words; and the complexity of their response is perhaps reflected in their loud, ambiguous laughter. On I re-reading this passage again and again, I was suddenly reminded that the ladybird is not so innocuous after all, for in the nursery rhyme, the ladybird is a mother whose children are endangered by a fire.

The following extract contains a construction of 'nice' masculine' sexuality. In contrast to the asexual, passive girl, the boy child is 'allowed' to be sexual, and even to name his own feelings as 'nice'.

- (b) U: I feel that, sorry, I feel that each and every person, each and every child is born with that natural instinct within himself. I mean like like my son doesn't sleep in the same room with me. But when he goes to the bathroom, many a times you I find him touching himself and and then I ask him, 'Why do you do that?' And he says, 'It's nice'.
- W: Yes -

U: You know? It's natural. It's not something that they that they see, just seeing somebody do, it just comes naturally.  
(lines 226-233)

The mother's responses to her son's sexuality are ambivalent. On the one hand, his sexuality is naturalized: he is born with an already formed baggage of feelings and urges, which is called 'instinct'. But on the other hand, mother has to keep a close eye on him when he 'goes to the bathroom' and check on his motivations for touching himself. This suggests his 'natural instinct' may also be regarded as potentially hazardous. The child explains that he feels 'nice' - perhaps a word that he has learnt from his mother, and which he uses to protect himself from her scrutiny or disapproval. But asking why he does 'it' could reflect mother's unspoken concerns. Perhaps: is someone else touching him? Is he going to turn into a pervert? Are his genitals infected? Mother quickly takes us back into the safe territory of 'natural' and 'nice', by professing that her child is not exposed to 'seeing somebody do it'.

Therefore, as with the girls, a subtle threat seems to hang around the boy's 'niceness', albeit constituted differently. In Foucault's (1976) terms, this is the 'precious' and 'endangered' part of the 'dividing line'. Here the boy's 'touching himself' is viewed ambiguously; elsewhere in the text, masturbation incites panic and is pathologized. Even in this positive or neutral rendition of masturbation, taboos are subtly manifested in vague language (as in 'touching *himself*', 'do *that*', '*it's* natural') (Levett & Kottler, 1997).

The 'dangerous dividing line' could also be interpreted as the crossing point between innocence and awareness. This tension is explored in the next section.

#### **4.1.2 'Innocent' or 'knowing' discourses?**

- (c) W: But whenever there - it's the two years children, they are innocently doing it, in front of you. And you can no- just notice that there is someone that they have seen doing this. But the older ones, four five years -
- U: They know -
- W: - they are hiding from us.
- J: Ah, so there's a difference with the ages.
- U: Oh yes there is, definitely. Because a two year old child will will unknowingly just sit even on you lap even and and and -
- W: And do it -
- U: And start fondling himself and and not even think anything of it. But the older child, the four year old, the five year old child, they do it, in a in a um they hide themselves. They try to hide themselves from you. Because they know with within themselves. Because perhaps it's because you have discussed it with them already. So they know within themselves that this is not for a child to do. Or they see at home also, this is only the way mommy and daddy should behave or how adults should behave so they know that because it's the the the the the instinct of of sexuality is natural within the child, they know (whispering) 'I mustn't do it in front of my mommy', so they hide.
- (lines 495-514)

On one side of the 'dangerous dividing line' is the unself-conscious, unknowingly masturbating toddler, and on the other side is the secretive, knowingly sexual older child. How is this line transgressed? Firstly, by knowledge. The essential innocence of the two year old de-sexualizes his (sic) masturbation. His asexual fondling is still in the realm of the 'nice' and 'natural'. But as soon as children start to 'know within themselves', they enter a new territory in which their sexuality or potential sexuality is disallowed and pathologized.

Secondly, and related, children cross the line when they hide. It is the act of adult observation which confers innocence on the two year old. Plummer (1991) describes the extremely delicate and complicated ways that children learn about the need for secrecy. In this extract, the children's secrecy can be both constructed as a mark of guilt as well as a sign of agency.

Thirdly, the 'dangerous dividing line' can be transgressed with age. Here the speakers draw on pervasive developmental discourses which construct normality. It is normal (if not completely acceptable) for a two year old to masturbate openly; it is completely unacceptable and abnormal for a four year old to do so.

Gendered discourses are threaded through the whole text of preschool teachers' talk. In extract (c), it was suggested that the actively masturbating child was male; in the next extract, the male sex drive discourse (Hollway, 1983) is used even more explicitly:

- (d) Y: Sometimes if you are not uh if if they are sleeping and you leave them alone there, when you ca- you came come back again you will see the boy. She is she is coming she is coming from the girl's mattress. Sometimes you will see the boy, sleeping with the girl. But when you come in she just (claps to show disappearing act) go right to his place. I don't know why (laughter) she knows that she mustn't be there. (laughter) But because you are not there, she there is something that there is something that she wants to do that girl. Now you you you are in now, and she knows that you mustn't do that (laughter)...
- (lines 416-424)

The active subject in this text is a male child (the confusion of pronouns is probably because pronouns are not gendered in the speaker's first language, Xhosa). It is the boy who catches the teacher's eye, the boy who has

journeyed across from his place to the girl's mattress and then runs back again in a flash, and the boy who is the subject of the verb who 'sleeps with' her. He is the 'master' of this social interaction (Walkerdine, 1988 in Burman, 1995). The girl has something 'done to' her, and her responses and feelings are absent from the text. If he is 'knowing' and she the 'innocent', then the 'dangerous dividing line' between innocence and knowledge is also gendered here.

But this construction does not make the girl 'safe'. Her passive innocence makes her vulnerable and even attractive to dangerous, predatory, male sexuality (Kitzinger, 1990). Nor does it condemn the boy child entirely. The participants' laughter may contain a hint of admiration at the wily boy who gets what he wants. In addition, the male sex drive discourse constructs him as 'unable to help himself'. It then becomes the (female) teachers' job to protect the girls and control the boys, casting a net of surveillance over all the children.

The need for adult supervision perhaps also arises out of the uncertainty of what the children are actually doing. The 'something' that the boy wants to do is unknown and the word 'sleeping' blurs both the innocence of the resting children and the adult euphemism for sex. This suggests that taboos and silences are closely related to supervisory discourses, which are discussed further in the second part of the analysis.

#### 4.1.3 'Deviant', 'dirty' and 'dangerous' discourses

- (e) T: You know sometimes, um, when these things happen a girl and a boy like playing, this is a play. But then the other child, they see it in a different way. Like I'll see now this story maybe in the way I see it now. You see where they will say, 'Oh, teacher that one is old-fashioned' or 'that one is old-fashioned'. That immediately comes to their minds. If they see something like this. Even if it's a play. You see, so children of today, they see everything around them, and now the - the mind just go to that. That's the only thing their minds go to. But sometimes if it's a nice play, for them where the teacher will interact, the teacher plays with them like that then it's ok, but if they play alone, and something like this happens, that's the first thing that comes to their mind. You see, that those are making old fashioned, or things like that. And then they'll come and complain. It's like they're complaining.
- J: What do you mean by 'making old-fashioned'?
- T: Like -
- S: They *ouga!* (raucous laughter)
- (lines 153 -168)

These children are astride a 'dangerous dividing line' between deviance and normality. A division has been set up between the 'innocent' child who just 'plays' and the 'other child' who 'sees' the sexual content of the play. This fixing of difference leads us to believe that there inevitably is such a 'deviant' child - probably in any playground - whose imagination is rife with sexual thoughts. The impulsive, driven nature of this child's thoughts is underlined in at least four different places: the child's mind is 'immediately', 'just', 'only' and 'first' flooded with them. Half way through A's speech, the singular 'deviant' child switches to the plural 'children of today', implying the loss of a whole previous, innocent era of childhood. In this construction, all today's children are dangerously close to deviance. It would have been interesting to explore further with participants their explanations for this, which might have included exposure to sexual scenes on TV, increased sex education at school or more overcrowded conditions at home. In this extract, while the teacher's presence

appears to ward off sexual thoughts in an almost magical way, and make things 'ok', there is an overall sense of danger, a 'dangerous' space.

Although these 'dirty-minded' children seem to have little control over their thoughts, some agency is suggested. For these children are so sharp-eyed that they notice and process events before other children and adults; they may even actively create a different reality out of the 'nice' play which disrupts the peace and innocence of the playground. But paradoxically, these children also take on a kind of self-supervisory role on behalf of the adult teachers, when they 'complain'. It is as if they are appealing to the adult authorities to restore normality.

The last line of this extract plays with sexual taboo in a very local context. While the term 'old-fashioned' probably refers to kissing and holding hands, '*ougat*' implies more flirtatiousness, and may even allude to sexual intercourse. 'Old-fashioned' is also more polite than '*ougat*'. Both words are commonly used in Afrikaans speaking communities in the western Cape, especially in lower socio-economic groups (Charmaine Smith, personal communication, 2 March 1999). Among many possible interpretations, the speakers may have been shielding me (or themselves?) from the cruder '*ougat*' up to that point. The highly ambiguous nature of the word might express the participants' own feelings of enjoyment, titillation or embarrassment. *Ougat*, with which they were clearly familiar, and the loud burst of laughter, broke a silence and a reticence about what the children actually do. But it could also be interpreted

as part of a dominant, disparaging, construction of childhood sexuality, which brands children's practices as 'dirty'.

In the above extracts, ideas about perversion are fairly muted. In contrast, the following extract creates a macabre picture in which the ultimate punishment for masturbation is infertility:

- (f) W: ... When you you let your child being uh touching himself every time, he must try to leave it like that and re- resist it, whether it's it's the form of him uh masturbation. Because sometimes when that masturbation after that doing that thing. After mastu- he can take a nail a nail and just pushes it in because there is that ma- masturbation uh instinct that's carrying on in his body. And sometimes takes uh matches to put in it. And we did have a child like that in in our preschool. But he didn't do it in our school but has done it at home. And the father was, the mother has gone to work and the father brings the child to school and said and tell told us, and we didn't even like to look at that. And I say, you must take this child to the doctor, because this is dangerous. If there is something that he has put it in, sometimes it's bleeding inside or sometimes there's something that's broken in there. So you must take him to the doctor and the doctor would see what's going on. Sometimes this this child will just do this and you give him them other medicine to cure him and that will make him not to have children, af- when he's old. Then you wouldn't know that it's because you didn't take him to the doctor...

(lines 886-903)

Here, the pendulum has swung right over to the 'danger' pole of the pleasure / danger polarity (Plummer, 1991); the 'dangerous dividing line' has been crossed. In fact, this construction of a child's activity is closer to sickness than sexuality. As an object of discourse, masturbation takes on an addictive quality, analogous to dependence on drugs or ritual violence. This text evokes a mounting panic, by harnessing the horror of self-mutilation, parental helplessness, the incompetence of non-medical ('indigenous'?) healers, and the threat of infertility. Weeks (1985) argues that the last two centuries have been marked by a series of moral 'panics' around sexuality, including childhood



sexuality, prostitution and homosexuality. He suggest that current 'panics' are likely to be framed within a disease discourse, most obviously related to HIV / AIDS. Conversely, Rogers and Stainton Rogers (1992) argue that modernist discourses around the larger project of bio-social hygiene honed in on the dangers of masturbation. While the content of this extract may be a step removed from HIV / AIDS, it is clearly exploiting the threat of a dangerous disease.

This is a specifically masculine form of masturbation (there is an example of more passive outcomes of feminine masturbation in extract (o) below). In this case, the male sex drive has a particularly punitive consequence in that it is implied that touching himself will not only lead to physical pain and possibly disgrace, but infertility. The linking of masturbation and infertility could be interpreted as an extremely negative scripting of values (Plummer, 1991), especially because male fertility is highly privileged in African urban and rural contexts.

A point was reached where the teachers felt unable to help directly and had to defer to medical expertise. Perhaps they drew on medical discourse here, because of the way 'Sexuality' was discussed in their training course under the heading of 'Health and Nutrition', together with topics like 'Infectious diseases' and 'Cleanliness, health care and safety'. In the context of our discussion, where the Western medical model may have been perceived to be dominant,

participants may also have felt it appropriate to dismiss alternative healing systems ('other medicine').

In conclusion to this section, both the literature surveyed in chapter 2 and the extracts of preschool teachers' talk discussed above contain multiple, often contradictory versions of the 'truth' about childhood sexuality. If these truths are seen as interrelated, together they situate children's sexuality 'astride a dangerous dividing line'. Closely associated are discourses which attempt to manage or police it. Foucault (1976) calls this 'a continuous way', in which adult caretakers and professionals 'take charge' of children's lives.

#### **4.2 Multiple strategies for 'taking charge'**

The teachers' subjectivities as monitors, managers and police are partly created by the way our discussion was set up as an exchange between educated adults. The teachers are likely to have felt accountable to 'knowing' what they are supposed to do, and to let me know that they know. Furthermore, asking questions like, 'What should the teacher do, if anything, in this situation?', is likely to produce a range of positive responses. In this text, there was little hesitation in assuming that there were many things that teachers could or needed to *do*, from anticipating problems, to intervening in various ways, to involving other caretakers. In this second section of the analysis, I explore some of the teachers' discourses on how to respond to childhood sexuality.

#### **4.2.1 'Anticipating' and 'observing' discourses**

'What's wrong?' immediately asked the teacher, in extract (a), when her children called her to 'come see'. An important set of discourses of 'anticipation' and 'observation' arises from the need to 'take charge'. As objects of discourse, the children are actively *expected* to enter 'dangerous' sexual or potentially sexual territory, although the exact nature of their activities is usually unclear. Therefore, children's behaviour is often framed as already or potentially suspicious. Within the 'anticipating' and 'observing' discourses, great pressure is applied to the preschool teachers to become the vigilant watchers and protectors of the children. In the following extract, preschool teachers are exhorted to take on an 'attitude'.

- (g) T: Like yes like W said there must be an attitude like the teacher must go for and just she must just look what they do in the make-believe area maybe and go to them and and if she sees that something really going to happen serious maybe then she must call them and they can sit and talk to them.  
Right? ...  
(lines 353-357-)

This argument assumes that each teacher requires an internal alarm system, perpetually switched on but only activated by the sight of 'something really going to happen serious'. She must also constantly scan the environment. If scanning is the required activity, this implies that the signs of childish disorder are visually detectable and that the difference between 'play' and 'serious' are readily discernible. The 'make-believe area', an area of the preschool less structured than other areas, is constructed as particularly prone to problems and requiring a special kind of supervision. Here, children's playing with

different roles and identities may also threaten a transgression of boundaries, for example, gender or sexual orientation.

In this passage, the children are also required to make a physical break from their previous activities (sit) and engage in an act of communication with their adult teachers (talk). Within the discussion, a significant tension emerged between at least two different ways of talking to the children. Using the teachers' terms, these are labeled the 'shouting' and 'talking nicely' discourses.

#### **4.2.2 'Shouting' or 'talking nicely' discourses?**

The 'shouting' discourse is a traditional, authoritarian approach to perceived misbehaviour, which flattens any possibility of improper exploration. The 'talking nicely' discourse is a more liberal, politically correct approach. While 'shouting' may be likened to a fascist police force, 'talking nicely' is like the kindly bobby in an English village who knows everyone's business and makes sure they behave through subtle checks and threats. They are therefore both regulatory, but 'talking nicely' also asks the children to regulate themselves. In the focus group discussion, speakers shifted between the two different caretaking discourses depending on context. The politically correct approach was often ascribed to 'the course' in which the participants were engaged. Here is an example:

- (h) Y: We used to say to our children, 'You mustn't go to the girl and sleep with the girl. What you want to that girl. You must keep in your place (shrieking laughter) not to that girl'. We used to say so. But in the course they say, 'You mustn't shout the children. You must talk to them nicely, and not

shout about visiting to the girl. You must just **leave her to visit** that day and **observe what are they what are they going to do**.

- U: And also um um I think what we what we supposed to do is **direct them into anoth- in another way**. Like for example the story says that they covered themselves with a blanket. You could perhaps as a teacher say, 'No, leave the blanket aside, you don't need to cover yourself with the blanket,' or something like that. Because that would also **restrict** them from from doing whatever they want to do, (laughter) you know? And um, also like perhaps like like maybe if like if you are there **monitoring** them they won't go as far as as as um what has happened already (laughing) but um um how can I say um? You could also **explain** to them, that that there's certain things that's only meant for adults to do. And and children are not are **not allowed to do that** because of certain - conditions or or whatever. I mean that is what we were taught in the lesson.

(lines 447-465)

Taboos around naming (see underlined words in this extract) make it extremely difficult to know exactly what the children are doing. Body parts, movements, points of contact between bodies, and intentions are all obscured. This is has been striking in previous extracts including the 'something serious' in extract (g). Again, as in extract (d) where the little boy wanted to 'do something' to the girl, it is clear that taboos bolster regulatory discourses. The fog around what is actually happening creates confusion, suspense and apprehension: who knows what sort of monster might emerge from under the blanket? This ambiguous construction justifies forbidding children from having private, secret worlds, away from adult observation. The teachers' positions of scrutiny and control (see bold in extract (h)) become necessary, invisible and acceptable.

The context of this fragment of talk suggests that it is a boy who visits the girl. The first speaker therefore draws on the familiar gendered discourse in which the boy child is actively, rampantly sexual and the girl is passive (Burman, 1995). However, the second speaker does not discriminate between boys and girls, suggesting that the girl children may also be out of control. These

constructions call for subtly gendered responses from the teachers. Taking a step beyond the text, the boys may be repressed but excused because 'they can't help it'; while the unfeminine, unsuitably sexual girls may evoke derogatory discourses referring to promiscuity or prostitution.

What is alluded to under the blanket could be the behaviour of sex-crazed teenagers or adults; yet the children are also re-positioned as non-adults, as cannot-be-adults: 'children are not allowed to do that'. Another paradox may be unraveled alongside this one: the children are at once wily, sophisticated and agentic in hiding their sexualized behaviour from the adults; yet they are also positioned as basically naive and ignorant, needing to be initiated into proper behaviour and the proper distinctions between children and adults.

The 'talking nicely' discourse is not uniform, but adaptable and potentially unveiling innumerable strategies. First, it suggests that rather than instantly quelling, it is necessary to take time to observe carefully - to collect evidence before sentencing. Or alternatively, the teacher could intrude, interfere, interrupt, divert or expose so that the children's sexual play is neutralized in some way. Thirdly, the quiet monitoring presence of the teacher is itself enough to prevent wild outbreaks. Fourthly, soothing and rational explanations may be given, which on closer inspection are rather unconvincing. There is also an unstated device of shaming (discussed in relation to another extract below) in the stripping and watching and lecturing.

In practice, these strategies are complicated and possibly embarrassing for teachers to carry out. How do teachers spell out what is allowed without passing on illicit information? In the end there may be a fall back on quite an authoritarian stance - 'you can't do that' - in the guise of a more understanding, less punitive discourse:

- (i) T: ... You can you imitate mommy and daddy but this is not - but in a - not those serious - I mean you see you know what I mean.  
U: Or you could perhaps say that that kind of action is only meant for mommy and daddy.  
T: Yes. Yes. You understand, so that they can understand, ja.  
U: Direct them into a in another way of playing.  
(line 357-363)

In the following extract, the teachers position themselves within the liberal, permissive 'talking nicely' discourse. The parents, whom it is implied come from rather backward communities needing to be enlightened, are the subjects of the 'shouting' discourse.

- (j) U: In the communities that that we have - in the communities that we have taught in, like parents will come to you as a teacher and say, 'This child keeps touching himself, I don't know why he does it!' You know? So it's, to to to them it's to them it's something ugly, something a child must not do, you know? And if you explain to them, perhaps how to go about it, they but, 'No you can't do that! You can't tell the child it's ok to do that!' You know? It's it's a norm for them to-  
T: Like a like a habit that their hands just want to go down there. I mean what we can maybe explain to that child, is that, if you see your uh child is doing this all the time, and explain to them, 'Right, you can do it, but step aside, um stand aside so that other children don't see it maybe.' Or as you grew up if it goes like that that the habit is still in him, then he mustn't let the child- the other people don't see him. I mean, go aside and and whatever his desires is then then he can let it out. You see so, maybe we can do that (laughing).  
(lines 915-929)

Parents and teachers are called on to network together, to act as co-monitors and protectors of the 'endangered' or 'dangerous' children. However, the

school environment and teachers' expertise are given superior status here. The teachers have the skills of 'how to go about it' and the parents lack these skills. Against the relief of such ignorant parents, teachers can re-position themselves as enlightened. Yet the second speaker bursts into and interrupts this rational, enlightened discourse and returns to the familiar construction of the addictively masturbating boy. She finds a compromise between the 'shouting' and 'talking nicely' discourses, in which the child has permission to masturbate but is barely tolerated, perhaps even stigmatized. In fact, this unfortunate boy with 'the habit ... still in him' must learn to police himself.

Policing works at multiple levels. Reading the whole text, it becomes apparent that at times the teachers feel governed by a higher authority, another set of 'teachers', in the form of 'the course' and 'the lessons' that they are learning. Thus children's sexuality is also policed through the monitoring and lecturing of their teachers, which is internalized into a form of self-monitoring. Yet the authority of 'the course' is also subverted when the teachers let slip in other parts of the text that they cannot allow the children to 'do those things':

- (k) W: What she's saying is that they say they did say they they did say there were children which are born with the feeling. Uh uh and then we must let the children to do what - (laughter).  
U: I don't know.  
J: And what do you think of that? Do you agree?  
X: Ja, we we disagree with that.  
?: We disagree.  
U: Ja but -  
X: We said we can't allow children to do that. But the teachers said we must allow the children to do those things.  
T: The rubbing.  
X: Mm mm.  
J: So what do you think you should do?  
X: I - I dunno (very soft).  
(lines 1142 -1155)



Although the preschool teachers are revealing their allegiance to authoritarian, 'conservative' discourses here, their opposition to the 'talking nicely' approach could be read as resistance - resistance to an imposed, prescriptive, perhaps confusing political correctness. The politically incorrect view is repressed in the context of their course. This perspective becomes even more possible when we notice that X is speaking. X speaks very few times in the text; here, anomalously, she appears to silence the voluble U, who was often an advocate for 'talking nicely'. At another point (line 351), U simply 'can't recall' how the course urges the teachers to treat children who act out 'sexually'. This amnesia, the disagreement in extract (k) and the shifting back and forth between 'shouting' and 'talking nicely', suggests that the teachers cannot fully invest in either discourse. In addition, the context of the focus group itself may have hindered the expression of politically incorrect views, as in X's hesitancy of the last line.

#### **4.2.3 'Silencing - shaming' discourse**

The 'silencing - shaming' discourse is often not directly acknowledged as a way of speaking to children, but implicit in interactions between adults and children. For example, in this complex, emotionally-charged and power-laden interaction between a mother and her children.

- (l) U: Basically what I have done is that if I've found myself in a situation like this, I mean I've even experienced it at home, and we've got three boys and and one girl. And with my son going through that stage now, um just um two days ago ja, they were bath, they were all in the bath together. And I came in and they were also touching one another. And I and I let them - I stood - I came into the bathroom and they all looked at me. And I just stood there. And I say, 'Come, let's wash finish because I want to talk to you when you

finished'. And then when they done, got them out of the bathroom, and I asked them, 'So why did you all look at me like that when I came into the bathroom?' And they go, "Cos we were naughty'. 'What were you doing that was naughty?' You know? But then they couldn't tell me what they were doing. But they knew within themselves that they were not supposed to do that.

(line 476-488)

The bath becomes another potentially 'dangerous' space when unsupervised, like the make-believe area at the preschool. And if it contains a mix of both genders and siblings, the hazards of heterosexual, homosexual and incestuous activity are all possible. But this cannot be stated explicitly by mother or children. The scripts of absences, secrecy and values (Plummer, 1991) are already firmly in place.

The son is trapped between contradictory constructions of being both 'naturally' exploratory ('going through that stage now') and unnaturally precocious ('they knew within themselves that they were not supposed to do that'). He is also embroiled in the silencing taboos in which the meaning of 'that stage' and the nature of the 'touching one another' is not spelt out. Furthermore, he is silenced and shamed by the mother's attribution of guilt onto him. The meaning of shame is shaped by culture (Ennew, 1986); therefore the nuances of this experience would have to be explored further with this family.

I have read this extract as a repressive 'shaming' process. An alternative reading is that the children are agentic and playful, purposely keeping quiet as a way of negotiating their own space within an adult discourse. Both readings are possible.

#### **4.2.4 'Reporting' and 'instructing' discourses**

Another way that the problems related to children's sexuality are managed is from the subject position of 'expert'-teacher in relation to the ignorant children and caregivers. This was already apparent in extract (j) above where the parents were positioned as short-sighted and reacting from ignorant panic, and the teachers as more tolerant and politically correct. To take this a step further, teachers are also encouraged in the 'reporting' and 'instructing' discourses to be alert to possible problem behaviour originating at home, and then feedback information and advice to the parents.

In the following fragment of text, the participants are talking about the possible damaging effects of children sleeping in the same room as their parents and then observing and imitating sexual intercourse. European children tended to be removed from parental bedrooms by the eighteenth century (Aries, 1962 in Luke, 1990), as part of 'innumerable institutional devices and discursive strategies' governing their psychosocial development (Foucault, 1976, p. 30). However, there are few or only one room in many poor South African dwellings. The youngest children often permanently share their parents' bedrooms or may graduate to another communal room with older siblings when they have passed preschool age. One of the participants also referred to this arrangement as part of African culture, suggesting that she sees it not merely as an adjunct or result of poverty (see line 249). A specific discourse arose for monitoring problems caused by children sharing their parents rooms:

- (m) W: They must be observed. If there is any play like that they must be observed because if some are, sometimes it's uh X's daughter, and uh X is sleeping with the daughter daughter in his room. And sometimes they are babies sometimes you think he she is sleeping, but not sleeping. And she is seeing everything that you do, as in the night. And then, in the critch (crèche) they are coming out with those things. And what we used to do to the parents, then we just say: 'Your daughter is old now, and she is trying to know whatever you doing. So you should try to take her to the other room with the others. Because she is doing this and this and this and this and this'.
- ?: Just like my daughter, my daughter is six years old, and I sleep with her with her father. She said to me, 'Mommy I saw a big beast!' (laughter) That was me and her father. I was so shocked. I couldn't ask her.
- (line 208-220)

The first speaker creates omniscient teachers with all-seeing eyes who can pick up the child's problematic behaviour (although it is unclear exactly what 'those things' or 'this and this' are) and are able to trace this behaviour to the child's too mature witnessing of parental sexual intercourse. It is taken-for-granted that teachers' responsibility to their pupils well-being extends even into the child's sleeping space at home, and furthermore, it is their duty to correctly 'instruct' the parents.

However, the next speaker shifts into a parental subject position - in contrast to the expert, resourceful teacher - and seems helpless and perhaps embarrassed to deal with her child's frank fantasy. This is quite a brave revelation, resisting the mantle of expertise and the responsibility of action. It was perhaps safer to address these embarrassing moments through the distant, mediated position of teacher.

At times children's sexuality is seen as strange, alien, outside normal practice (like the self-mutilating child in (f) or the 'dirty-minded' children on the playground in (e)). In other places, sexuality is enveloped, albeit precariously,

in a normalizing developmental discourse. For example, when the teachers are discussing school readiness, including motor, personality, intellectual, emotional and sexual development in the child (line 380 onwards). The teachers have to monitor appropriate development and make official reports:

- (n) T: So that is what they going write in maybe in their report. Observation. And you do tell them and say this these two play like this in the observ- um make-believe area, and things like that. It is very important to write it down, so that they can, if that if any parent comes and asks how's my child is doing and what they do for the day and then you can explain to them. So the parent can see what the children are doing at the school.  
(line 374-379)

The ideas about strange and normal sexual behaviour are complementary ways of preserving boundaries and creating identity, as in Kaminer and Dixon's (1995) study of normative masculine identities. They give rise to a heavy obligation on teachers to monitor and report to parents.

#### **4.2.5 *Appealing to other discourses***

A further discursive strategy used for coping with unwanted or inexplicable sexualized signs in the children is to draw on other, related discourses. This can have various effects, for example, transmuting the 'sexual' into something else, which is more easily managed. In the following final extract, it becomes possible to explain why a little girl masturbates in terms of a sexual abuse, medical or health problem.

- (o) W: And even in in the girl's place there are sometimes parents that they take that their children are were were were uh (pause) -  
?: Abused.  
?: Abused.  
W: Uh. But the doctors when you you take the child to the doctor. And the doctor said the child sometimes has got an infection.

- T: An infection ja that's it (mumbles).  
W: And just pushes in his finger. That it goes in and it it's nice for her when he's just going in. And not knowing that it's making a hole. And then when you ask where the child takes the uh the infection, they say, sometimes when you, when it's a girl, they say you must make it sure that you don't take the nappy from -  
U: From the back to the front.  
(lines 930-942)

The participants had been discussing boys with the 'habit' and 'desire' inside themselves to masturbate (see extract (j)). But the idea of the girl child masturbating was rejected by evoking the hugely powerful contemporary baggage attached to notions of sexual abuse. There were no references to sexual abuse in any of the vignettes, but two other participants knew exactly what W was hesitating over. Rogers and Stainton Rogers (1992) argue that current discourses in the West tend to place all childhood sexual encounters under the umbrella of 'sexual abuse', with profound implications for the way the 'problem' is viewed or treated. In this text, this argument is salient for girl children but not boys.

I have been highlighting how childhood sexuality is fraught with taboos, but discourses of sexual abuse are also saturated with stigma and taboo (Levett, 1995) - evidenced perhaps by N's inability to say 'abuse' out loud. This may, however, be an easier, more familiar 'repertoire' of discourses to draw on than those referring to childhood sexuality *per se*. Discourses on sexual abuse provide access to a familiar set of consequences: the girl is damaged and needs medical treatment. However, the reference to physical (the 'hole') rather than emotional damage suggests that this speaker has not taken on Western

discourses wholesale (see Levett & Kottler, 1997 for a discussion of this possibility).

Whether she has been abused or infected, the remedy for female masturbation is to be found in the doctor's consulting rooms. It is unclear whether W is talking about the doctor or abuser or even the girl herself pushing his/her finger into the girl's vagina, but this construction of pleasure is highly gendered. The boy masturbates compulsively; she feels 'nice' passively when she is abused, medical examined, or from an itchy infection. When the problem of masturbation is reduced to nappy tactics, then the sexualized girl-child becomes an 'innocent' infant.

I have analyzed two sets of extracts in terms of their multiple, variable constructions of childhood sexuality and strategies for responding to them. In the last section of this chapter, I discuss some of the possible effects, implications and justifications for these discourses.

### **4.3 Reflections on the text of preschool teachers' talk**

#### ***4.3.1 On 'taking charge' of childhood sexuality***

In this analysis of preschool teachers' talk, I have argued that there is no single, independently coherent construction of childhood sexualities. Rather, dominant discourses are paradoxical and position children across, on both

sides of and always in relation to a 'dangerous dividing line'. Although boundaries are set around 'nice' and 'natural' children, these slip and slide into 'dirty' and 'perverse' children. At times the children are empty and 'innocent', at other times they are already filled with 'dangerous' instincts. These versions of childhood sexuality are all 'true' (Plummer, 1991). As Burman (1995) put it usefully, reflecting on the film, *My Girl*, there is a complex self-maintaining system at work: childhood sexuality is simultaneously acknowledged and denied; innocence is protected and violated at the same time; and (adult) anxiety is both released and contained.

The 'dividing line' produces and is produced by polarities: for example, between 'nice' and 'dangerous', 'innocent' and 'knowing', 'pure' and 'corrupt' children. Weeks (1995) comments that binary divisions in sexual categories fulfill a necessary function of containing 'the uncontrollable elasticity and terrifying lack of boundaries within and between bodies' (Epstein & Straub, 1992 in Weeks, 1995, p. 37). It is easier to manage children - both in fantasy and in the playground - if it is clear who are the 'nice' children and who are the 'dirty' ones; who is 'innocent' and who is 'precocious', who is 'normal' and who is 'deviant'. In other words, who needs to be protected from corruption and who needs to be repressed.

These argument suggests that of Plummer's (1991) three prototypes for constructing childhood sexuality, the liberation, corruption and repression models, the last two dominate this text. The corruption and repression models



flow from an understanding of 'sexuality' as encompassing danger and pathology, in contrast to the liberation model which assumes a relationship between sexuality and pleasure. This picture fits with an impression of the academic literature as more preoccupied with children's problems than their mixed experiences of sexuality. In this text, even discourses about 'nice', 'natural', or 'innocent' children put their subjects on 'red alert', because (often unspecified) corruption lurks around the corner. Perhaps only the actively sexual, but still 'natural' boy in extract (b) was allowed to be 'liberated' - but his 'freedom' was transient and fragile. I shall return to the question of why participants had relatively little access to discourses of sexual liberation below.

I have also suggested that the corruption / repression models are gendered in this text, for the passive, 'innocent' children tended to be girls and the more active, sexually experienced and 'deviant' children tended to be boys. In particular, ideas about sex drive and instinct tended to be applied to boys. While the 'nice' boy's sexuality in extract (b) was 'precious' and 'endangered', girls' sexualities were arguably more consistently so; the boys were more frequently constructed as 'perilous' and 'dangerous'. This binary division tends to obscure that boys could be sexually vulnerable or that girls could be sexually agentic. Woven into gendered discourses, developmental discourses also tended to construct younger children as more sexually 'innocent' and open, and older children as more sexually self-conscious and secretive.

I have argued that the need to preserve boundaries around purity, and police potentially threatening sexuality, have produced multiple discourses on 'taking charge' of the children's sexualities and sexual potential. But it could also be argued that the discourses which create preschool teachers as vigilantly 'anticipatory', 'watchful', 'instructing', 'shaming' and 'reporting' also *produce* the objects of 'dangerous' or 'endangered' sexuality. The children's sexuality becomes charged with tension and confusion because it is so scrutinized. Even the politically correct discourses, as interpreted by the participants in this study, reinforce this process. Politically correct discourses for dealing with sexually active children often merely suggest different, perhaps more subtle and 'kinder', ways of 'taking charge'.

But these arguments about binary divisions, the dominance of 'dangerous' interpretations of sexuality, and pre-set repertoires for girls and boys, older and younger children, as well as for the teachers themselves, may suggest more certainty and fixity than intended. I want to come back to the essentially unstable and ambivalent discursive positions available for children and teachers. The teachers are supposed to 'take charge'. Yet this often appears as difficult and dangerous as walking a tightrope. Teachers have to be constantly mindful of possible unwarranted 'outbreaks' of sexuality among the children, mindful of the conflicting 'shouting' and 'talking nicely' discourses at their disposal, mindful of their duties to parents and school authorities, as well as containing other, perhaps less conscious anxieties about themselves. A lot of the discourse about childhood sexuality is simply confusing: for example, is

the 'knowing', secretively masturbating, older child in extract (c) behaving 'naturally' or is it a 'deviant' habit picked up in a suspicious manner? This kind of confusion must affect the teachers' 'emotional investments' in available subject positions (Hollway, 1983).

It is then unsurprising that the teachers tended to position themselves as *outside* the ambiguous, confusing and often shameful worlds of childhood. Furthermore, that they take on the 'necessary fictions' (Weeks, 1995, p. 43) of identities of authority. Teachers need to 'know' how to take charge. The myth of certainty provides a means of coping with difficult social relationships, as well as suturing the wounds of punctured identities (Weeks, 1991; 1995).

But what exactly is it that is so pervasively threatening to teachers and children? The nature of the threat is unknown, which perhaps increases it. Throughout the text, multiple silences, vague, bland or overly general terms, and fumbled speech covers the threat in a fog. This is theorized in various ways - as taboos (e.g. Plummer, 1991; Potgieter & Fredman, 1996), as scripts of absence and secrecy (Plummer, 1991), and as the silences which 'underlie and permeate discourses' (Foucault, 1976, p.27). But even with these concepts, the mechanisms of taboo / absence / silence seem as slippery as ever. Foucault's theory at least helps to identify how silences are integral to the constructions of childhood sexuality, and lead to an understanding that the silences further entrench the need for 'taking charge'.

In the following final section, I consider further implications of the dominant discourses in the text for relationships of social power, as well as my perception of relatively limited use of counter-discourses in the text. In doing so, I am assuming that discourse has material consequences - that the talk of these eight preschool teachers tells us something about the world we live in.

#### **4.3.2 On power and resistance**

Discourse naturalizes cultural practices (Parker, 1992). The interlinking discourses on childhood sexuality make various practices seem 'natural' and therefore socially invisible. If children who are 'nicely' sexual - or not very sexual at all - have to be protected from corruption, and children who are already corrupted have to be protected from disease, stigma or other forms of self-destruction, then forms of adult authority and surveillance become a necessary, taken-for-granted part of the landscape. We do not notice the huge baggage of ideas commonly held about children, and our corresponding vigilance around them. The seemingly fragile, permeable, boundary between 'endangered' and 'dangerous' - the children's' position *astride* the line - makes this regulation even more imperative.

Parker (1992) asks a useful orientating question to unpacking the power relations which have been naturalized: who is included in the discourse (has rights to speak) and who is excluded (has no or little rights to speak)? There are complex levels of inclusion and exclusion in this text, as there are probably

with most texts. The most 'violent hierarch(y)' (Weeks, 1995, p. 40) here is arguably that of adults over children. At one level of reading the text, children are primarily objects and rarely the subjects of discourse; only adults have the authority to speak. The text of the transcript addresses adults - me, the other participants, the readers of this thesis - about children, who are excluded from academic discourse. *We talk about them*. Therefore, the way the talk was set up between the participants' authority as preschool teachers and mine as a student of psychology, is part of this exclusion. The limited rights of children to speak is also reflected in the text in the construction of split worlds of adult and child consciousness. For example, in extract (d), the adult does not know, or cannot remember, *how* the boy knows that he has been naughty visiting the girl's mattress, and must run away.

There are further hierarchies structuring the power to speak. At times, 'trained' or 'educated' preschool teachers have privileged access to discourse, over the ignorant or naive members of the community and parents. At another level, the children who attempt to foster appropriate relationships with adults, have access to certain discourses; for example, they can discuss 'mating', or they can report on their peers being '*ougat*'. The children who are 'out of control' occupy an unfamiliar world, and draw perhaps on their own, secret discourses, which are obliquely heard (for example, in the participants' laughter) or completely outside this text. A further exclusion is the category of 'infants' and constructions of infantile sexuality. These are ignored altogether - both by the vignettes and by the participants.

The discourses which dominate this text shroud children's subjectivities in danger - danger from outside in the form of corruption, danger from inside in the form of unbridled instincts. The nature of the danger is itself unstated: it is very difficult to talk directly about children's sexualities in this and other contexts. Children take on these 'scripts', or become part of these discourses, although in ways that adults cannot fully determine or understand (Plummer, 1991). To put it bluntly, children's subjectivities are suffused by the experience of being watched, protected and controlled by adults. They also find ways of hiding, adapting or subverting adult discourses, the specific experience of each child is likely to be related to gender and other social circumstances. To some extent, children are addressed by these discourses to 'take charge' of themselves.

The dominant discourses in this text suggest that teachers and other caretakers' subjectivities are shaped by the imperative to act on and around children's sexualities. The way the discourses of 'taking charge' persuade and coerce teachers is also distinctly gendered, for in most social environments, women are required to look after children. It is the ladybird mother, after all, who is called to 'fly away home'. Adult men may be imagined in various positions in relation to these discourses - some supervisory (headmasters, teachers, educational authorities), some predatory (sexual abusers, future boyfriends). Their presence is largely invisible, but nevertheless powerful in

the text. Discourses on childhood sexuality are therefore intimately related to patriarchal, familial and even marital discourses.

But there is never a seamless imposition of dominant discourses without some form of resistance or counter-discourse (Levett, 1988). I have highlighted instances in which children's agency is suggested, albeit often ambiguously. For example, the girl talking about the ladybird's 'making love'; the boy making illicit visits to the girl; the 'other' children noticing the sexualized play in the playground.

The teachers' direct use of counter-discourse is less obvious. Discourses related to the repression and corruption models of understanding childhood sexuality dominated, with little access to the liberation model, which I have argued is less pervasive. Specifically, the feminist-liberatory discourse taught on the NGO training course (for example, that children's sexuality is 'natural' and should be nurtured) was taken up rarely, and mainly by one participant. Other participants 'resisted' and rejected the imposition of this discourse. Participants did draw on alternative, feminist discourses in relation to certain practices (it's ok for boys to do housework, little boys can play the mommy), but there seemed to be little space for gender-sensitive or even generally positive constructions of childhood sexuality. Beyond the silencing effects of taboos, the context of this particular focus group may have made it difficult for participants to draw on other, more familiar sources of resistance - perhaps through a pressure to present themselves as experts? On the other hand, the

context of this particular focus group may have made it difficult for me to 'hear' their counter-discourse - perhaps through my need to 'find' feminist or radical voices.

However, an area of resistance that needs to be acknowledged is the participants' laughter. Laughter cannot be rendered directly into text; it is also highly ambiguous, its source often unknown and unknowable. But in many instances in this text, laughter disrupted the fixity of discursive positionings and arguments. It may represent an engagement with taboos that suggests an alternative unofficial, less serious reality. Laughter could hold desire, guilt, frustration, challenge, among many possibilities. These are just possibilities - to have explored them with participants within or after the focus group might have led to the production of a very different text which subverts this one.



## **5. Further reflections and conclusion**

### **5.1 Reflections on the analysis of preschool teachers' talk**

This thesis occupies contested and marginalized spaces in various senses. Talk about sexuality is often marginalized (De la Rey & Friedman, 1996; Levett & Kottler, 1997), and talk about children's sexuality even more so (Rogers & Stainton Rogers, 1992; Fredman & Potgieter, 1996; Potgieter & Fredman, 1997). 'Childhood sexualities' is a marginalized research topic, in South Africa and elsewhere, even within progressive approaches to knowledge (Plummer, 1991; Fredman & Potgieter, 1996; Potgieter & Fredman, 1997). Through examining a particular text in a particular context, the analysis has attempted to destabilize fixed, polarized constructions of childhood sexuality and discuss some of their ideological effects. The epistemology and methodology of this project - post-structural, social constructionist, feminist theory and discourse analysis - are also drawn from the fringes of the institution of psychology (Burman & Parker, 1993; Wilkinson & Kitzinger, 1995).

However, I have also faced ongoing dilemmas, which relate to ways in which this research feeds into marginalizing childhood sexualities, or has other, unintended effects. Chapter 3 discussed various methodological limitations which could apply to a range of research topics. The first part of this concluding chapter reflects on five problems or issues created by this particular analysis, while acknowledging that it is not possible - or even desirable - to find neat resolutions in this kind of research.

Firstly, I want to record my great difficulty, at times, in engaging with the text of preschool teachers' talk and writing about it. Some of this has to be ascribed to the inevitable difficulties of doing research, and to the particular blocks which I bring to it. Yet I am also left with a strong sense of the density and complexity of *this* material. Partly, the 'taboos' and 'silences' contributed to the often sticky, ephemeral or opaque quality of the material. But I think that 'childhood sexuality' is constructed in very complex ways, often too complex to make simple.

Secondly, in this research, I have constantly skirted the danger of imposing Western assumptions onto the participants, some of whom are likely to have access to different sets of discourses (Levett, 1994; Levett & Kottler, 1997). I have argued that these participants have been influenced by Western understandings of children. Therefore, Foucauldian ideas have significant resonances with the talk of a group of preschool teachers in Cape Town in the late 20th century. I have explored certain 'local' textures to the dominant discourses; yet it is inevitable that some material remains inaccessible to me - perhaps including the counter-discourse which I struggled to 'identify'. Would it have been easier to analyze the talk of white, middle class, English preschool teachers? Probably not, as this would still constitute a group with multiple identities and unequal power relationships. The problem of limited attention to an analysis of cultural context has been highlighted in the discourse literature (Figueroa & López, 1991 in Parker & Burman, 1993); a more ambitious study

could have usefully spent more time with the participants and their 'discourse' worlds.

Third, and related to this issue, are the problems of applying a method developed in a monolingual context (discourse analysis) to a multi-lingual context. Such problems are only starting to be explored (Parker *et al.*, 1997). Furthermore, Gagnon and Parker (1995) argue that the social constructionist twist on sexuality has also brought with it a de-centering from the West; yet this hopeful statement seems hardly to apply to the majority of children in South Africa. Again, a focus on translation and interpretation in this text could have produced fascinating material. 'Translation' and 'interpretation' not just of Afrikaans or Xhosa words, but also English words (Levett & Kottler, 1997). This kind of project would have needed much more collaboration from participants, and could even draw in other members of their communities more fluent in English. An even more complex project could attempt to access children's responses too.

Which leads to the fourth point: what am I actually saying about children's sexualities? When I started this research, I was seeking a precarious position which does not essentialize childhood sexualities, yet recognizes and develops an understanding of childhood agency. As Burman (1990, 1991, 1992) (among many others) puts the question in other contexts: how to deconstruct without losing a political voice. Looking back, it was inevitable that I did not and could not speak 'for' children, and that the political objective has rather been to engage with adults' representations of children.

So to the fifth dilemma: the overlooking of children's physical bodies. Bodies tend to be silenced by theories of discourse, especially the way they function as agents of rebellion (Connell, 1994). This relates to Burman's (1990) critique of treating discourse as a purely symbolic relation, while forgetting the historical and material bases of oppression. 'Although power is certainly (re)produced in discourse, power is also at work in the structural position of people when they are not speaking' (Parker & Burman, 1993, p.158). Dawes and Donald (1994) also raise the problem of ignoring biological maturation within social constructionist approaches. The project of examining adults' constructions of childhood sexuality, and the ways these form child and adult subjectivities, is worthwhile. But it needs to acknowledge the 'ghost' of childhood sexuality hovering amongst the 'discourse' discourse.

## **5.2 Conclusion**

This thesis opened by posing three questions: Are preschool children sexual? How can adults tell? And what should we do about it - if anything at all? In conclusion, I want to consider partial 'answers' to these questions, suggested by the dominant discourses of preschool teachers explored in this thesis. Are preschool children sexual? There is no straightforward answer; younger children and some girl children were constructed as fairly 'asexual'; older children and boy children tended to be accorded 'sexual instincts'. The nature of this sexuality was highly contested however; from 'nice' and 'natural' to 'deviant' and 'dangerous'. Ironically, many participants equated 'sexuality' with

'puberty' at the end of the focus group discussion (see from line 1064), as if to erase previous commentary.

Which leads to: How can adults tell? We are left in no doubt that teachers 'know' when children are being 'sexual'. But this thesis suggested that the teacher's 'knowledge' is often a necessary construction, enabling them to manage threatening, often confusing situations. On the one hand, the discourses on 'taking charge' create the idea that the 'dangerous dividing line' is visible - we know when it is transgressed. For example, when children try to hide their masturbating or sex play; when children imitate mummies and daddies 'too seriously'; or when children injure themselves. But on the other hand, what do these words really mean? These discourses are so permeated with taboos - regions of silence, vagueness, absence - that the object of 'childhood sexuality' is often obscured and difficult to delineate.

Finally: What should adults do about it - if anything at all? I have argued that discourses of 'childhood sexuality' summon up a host of complementary strategies for 'taking charge'. Teachers are persuaded and coerced to 'take charge'; children are 'taken charge' of. This is not individual 'fault' or 'intention'; this text reflects and constructs this social reality for us. As long as childhood sexuality is predominantly regarded as obscure, unstable, potentially dangerous or endangered, adults will be drawn into 'doing things' about it. However, the ways of 'taking charge' are also contested: by children who 'hide', by teachers who 'disagree' with imposed solutions, and by laughter.

In closing, there are no single, neat answers to these questions. The act of asking them suggests that 'childhood sexuality' is a legitimate and challenging research topic; one that can be explored in many other ways, which might suggest many other 'partial' answers.

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## **Appendix A: Letter to the training organization for preschool teachers**

(University of the Western Cape, Psychology Department letterhead)

27 January 1998

Dear (NGO)

### Focus group with preschool teachers

Thank you for agreeing to assist me with my research.

As we have discussed, my research will be exploring a group of preschool teachers' perceptions of childhood social development. I would like to access and record their perceptions by running a focus group with about eight teachers.

I am writing to ask you if you could help me by identifying about 12-15 suitable teachers for a focus group. The group discussion would be in English, so the participants need to be comfortable and fairly fluent in English. It would also be useful if the teachers could all have roughly equivalent qualifications, preferably some kind of certification. Could you suggest a time and venue which would be convenient for such a group of teachers?

The focus group would be organized as follows:

- The teachers who are interested in participating would receive a letter explaining who I am and what I would like to do. They would sign this, indicating their willingness to assist me. A time and venue could then be arranged with hopefully at least eight of the teachers able to attend.
- We would meet for about two hours. Light refreshments would be provided.
- The discussion would be based on questions and stories brought by me. This is *not in any way a test of their knowledge*; rather, I am interested in their own opinions, ideas and experiences with preschool children.
- The discussion would be tape-recorded and transcribed. The teachers and their schools would be anonymous; and if they wished any material to be kept confidential, it would not be included in the transcription or the research report.
- However, I would like to record basic demographic information about the participants: their ages, qualifications, home language, teaching experience and whether they have their own children.

Ideally, I would like the discussion to be held in the first quarter of this year.

I plan to complete my thesis by the end of January 1999. The final thesis will be available to (training organization) and the teachers who participated. I will also write up a less academic summary of the discussion and my findings for

people to read more quickly and easily. I hope that by shedding light on teachers perceptions, (training organization) and preschools' own projects on childhood development may be helped in a small way.

With many thanks, again, for your assistance,

Yours sincerely

Jane van der Riet  
Intern Psychologist  
University of the Western Cape

Linzi Fredman  
Supervisor  
University of the Western Cape

## Appendix B: Letter to participants

(University of the Western Cape, Psychology Department letterhead)

27 January 1998

Dear (participant)

### Discussion about childhood development

I am a masters student in clinical psychology at the University of the Western Cape. I am doing research on how preschool teachers view childhood social development. I received your name from the (training organization), who are helping me to contact preschool teachers.

I am writing to ask whether you would be willing to help me with my research. This is how the research will be organized:

- About eight teachers and myself will meet and talk for about two hours.
- The time and venue will be arranged to suit you. It will probably be some time in February or March 1998.
- Light refreshments will be provided.
- I will bring questions and stories to talk about. You do not have to prepare for the discussion and it is not a test of your knowledge. In fact, I am interested in *your* opinions and ideas about children.
- The discussion will be tape-recorded and later written down. Your name and school will NOT be written down in my research.
- If you say anything that you wish not to be written down, it will not be copied from the tape recording or put into the research report.
- I would like to keep a record of basic information such as your age, qualifications, home language, teaching experience and whether you have their own children:

I hope to complete my research by the end of January 1999. The final thesis will be available to (training organization) and the teachers who participated. I will also write up a summary of the discussion and my findings for people to read more quickly and easily. I hope that by shedding light on teachers perceptions, (training organization) and preschools' own projects on childhood development may be helped in a small way.

**If you are willing and interested in helping me with this project, please would you fill in and sign the form on the next page and give it to (NGO).**

Many thanks for your consideration,

**Yours sincerely**

**Jane van der Riet  
Intern Psychologist  
University of the Western Cape**

**Linzi Fredman  
Supervisor  
University of the Western Cape**

**FORM FOR PRESCHOOL TEACHERS WHO ARE WILLING TO HELP WITH  
Research on childhood social development**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Preschool: \_\_\_\_\_

Contact phone numbers: WORK \_\_\_\_\_

HOME \_\_\_\_\_

If you have no contact phone number, is there any other way you can be contacted?

\_\_\_\_\_

PLEASE TICK ALL THE TIMES BELOW WHEN YOU MIGHT BE AVAILABLE:

I would be able to meet for about two hours on a:

- |                   |                          |                     |                          |
|-------------------|--------------------------|---------------------|--------------------------|
| Monday morning    | <input type="checkbox"/> | Monday afternoon    | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Tuesday morning   | <input type="checkbox"/> | Tuesday afternoon   | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Wednesday morning | <input type="checkbox"/> | Wednesday afternoon | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Thursday morning  | <input type="checkbox"/> | Thursday afternoon  | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Friday morning    | <input type="checkbox"/> | Friday afternoon    | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Saturday morning  | <input type="checkbox"/> | Saturday afternoon  | <input type="checkbox"/> |

If you cannot meet at any of these times, is there any other time that would suit you?

\_\_\_\_\_

I am willing to participate in a discussion group concerning childhood social development.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix C: Demographic information sheet

### DETAILS OF PARTICIPANTS for FOCUS GROUP on CHILDHOOD SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Age: \_\_\_\_\_

Home language: \_\_\_\_\_

Religious background: \_\_\_\_\_

Where were you born?: \_\_\_\_\_

Where do you live now?: \_\_\_\_\_

Highest education: \_\_\_\_\_

What training have you had in preschool teaching?

\_\_\_\_\_

How many years have you been a preschool teacher?: \_\_\_\_\_

Do you have any children?: \_\_\_\_\_

If yes, please could you give the age and sex of each:

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Any other information you would like to give me?

\_\_\_\_\_

**MANY THANKS FOR YOUR HELP!!!**

Jane van der Riet

## Appendix D: Vignettes and guideline questions

### VIGNETTE 1: Ebrahim and Lindiwe

The children were playing catch-catch in the playground. Ebrahim had to catch the other children. The children ran around screaming as Ebrahim chased them. Ebrahim ran after Lindiwe and caught her. He jumped on top of her and held her lying on the ground for a few minutes. Then Lindiwe got up and started chasing the other children.

1. What do you think about this story?
2. (If few responses) Why do you think Ebrahim jumped on top of Lindiwe?
3. What was Ebrahim feeling? What was Lindiwe feeling?
4. Is this game common among preschool children?
5. What would the teacher do, if anything, if she saw the children playing like this?
6. How would you answer if it was Lindiwe who jumped on top of Ebrahim?

### VIGNETTE 2: John and Shahieda

John and Shahieda were both five years old. They were playing in the schoolyard. Shahieda was the mommy, John was the daddy, and a doll was the baby. The children pretended that it was nighttime, so they lay down on the ground. The children covered themselves with a blanket. Then they kissed goodnight and hugged each other.

1. What do you think about this story?
2. Why are they playing this game? (Where did they get the idea to play this game?)
3. What was Shahieda feeling? What was John feeling?
4. Is this game common among preschool children?
5. What would the teacher do, if anything, if she saw the children playing like this?
6. How would you answer if it was two little girls, Shahieda and Nombulelo, playing like this?
7. How would you answer if it was two little boys, John and Thukulo, playing like this?

### **VIGNETTE 3: Siph**

The Dyasi family were having a braai with some friends. The youngest child, Siph, who was two years old, pulled off his nappy and t-shirt and started running around naked.

1. What do you think about this story?
2. Why is Siph doing this?
3. What was Siph feeling?
4. Is this common among preschool children?
5. What, if anything, would his family do if they saw Siph playing like this?
6. How would you answer if Siph started touching himself between his legs?
7. How would you answer if Siph was a girl, Nombulelo?
8. How would you answer if Siph was six years old?
9. And if Nombulelo was six years old?

### **FINAL QUESTIONS**

1. How old do girls start having sexual feelings?
2. How old do boys start having sexual feelings?
3. Is it the same feelings as adults?



## Appendix E: Transcript

**Cape Town**

**Wednesday 4 March 1998**

**1.00pm - 2.00pm**

**Present:**

### **Transcription notation**

(greatly simplified and adapted from Banister *et al.*, 1994)

(laughter)	explanation or commentary on non-verbal communication
(overtalk)	indistinct as participants talking on top of each other
xxx	untranscribable
?:	speaker's identity uncertain
<i>ougat</i>	Non-English words

1 (SIDE A)  
2 J: Ok. My name is Jane.  
3 Z: My name is Z.  
4 Y: My name is Y.  
5 X: My name is X.  
6 W: My name is W.  
7 V: My name is V.  
8 U: My name is U.  
9 T: My name is T.  
10 J: Ok, let's just check the microphone.  
11 S: My name is S.  
12 J: S.  
13 R: My name is R.  
14 J: Ok, great. People, please have something to eat, something to drink.  
15 I'm gonna have something. And this is a bit new for you? (to S).  
16 S: Yes.  
17 J: Ok, I'm just going to read some stories about childhood social  
18 development and I'm going to pose some questions. And we must try  
19 and just give everyone a chance to say something, what they think. Ok.  
20 The first story is about Ebrahim and Lindiwe. The children were playing  
21 catch-catch in the playground. Ebrahim had to catch the other children.  
22 The children ran around screaming, as Ebrahim chased them. Ebrahim  
23 ran after Lindiwe, and caught her. He jumped on top of Lindiwe, and  
24 held her, lying on the ground for a few minutes. Then Lindiwe got up  
25 and started chasing the other children. (pause) What do you think  
26 about this story? Anything, anything that comes into your mind.  
27 S: That's it's not a story!  
28 W: They are sharing. The game.  
29 ?: They are participating.  
30 W: Because it's from it's from uh the first one who was catching. And now  
31 Lindiwe is catching also.  
32 U: So basically, maybe it's the pattern of of the way they played this game  
33 perhaps every day. It's the game of catch. If I catch you then you've got  
34 to go on and catch the next person. You know, and maybe it's the  
35 pattern that they follow.  
36 J: Anything else?  
37 W: And communication.  
38 U: They understand, how the game is played.  
39 W: They communicate.  
40 T: And these like they are quite attached to one another. The minute like,  
41 the longer they, I mean they they are long on one another and maybe  
42 something (laughs) -  
43 J: Sorry (gestures to speak louder). It's very important what you're saying.  
44 I want to catch everybody's what everyone's saying.  
45 T: It's like um, the way they were laying on one another is like they got  
46 attached to one another and that their eyes were meeting one another.  
47 It's like two - two lovers that just met one another (giggles).

48 W: Eye-hand coordination. We throw - you look at the hands of of the  
49 following one and she is running to that one, and just catching and all  
50 the eyes are with the one which she wants to catch.  
51 X: And I can see they are developing their - they are developing physically,  
52 by running.  
53 ?: And socially.  
54 U: And I suppose um also socially and mentally because perhaps, like I  
55 said, that is the rules of the game. If you are caught then you have to  
56 try and catch the next person so they understand that.  
57 J: And why do you think that um Ebrahim jumped on top of Lindiwe?  
58 (Pause - overtalk)  
59 W: To make sure -  
60 U: Just to make sure that he has her.  
61 W: - that he has her.  
62 U: Just to make sure that he holds her. (laughter)  
63 X: Doesn't run away again.  
64 ?: Yes (laughs).  
65 J: Ok. Um, what do you think Ebrahim was feeling when he was playing  
66 this game?  
67 S: He was feeling good.  
68 T: He was feeling loving. You know? A feeling of -  
69 Y: And confident. He had confidence.  
70 Z: And he was happy.  
71 X: To catch the other one too.  
72 J: And Lindiwe, how was she feeling?  
73 W: Well -  
74 S: Maybe she felt - sorry Sis W - maybe she felt loved because like  
75 Ebrahim runs and holds her, you know? You know?  
76 T: She felt a little bit strange (softer than the others).  
77 W: Sometimes she wanted to run faster so that he could he couldn't catch  
78 him. But he did caught - catch her.  
79 S: You see in some cases you get this little game, and the one feels out  
80 because nobody caught him. You see?  
81 W: I never was caught.  
82 U: So she felt perhaps happy that she was now part of the game, she was  
83 caught.  
84 W: (talking) Yes sometimes in the other way, she was -  
85 U: Because I mean if she -  
86 W: - feeling good that she uh -  
87 U: - ja, if she, if she, perhaps if she was unhappy that she was caught, I'm  
88 sure she wouldn't have gone on to play the game. Because then, like  
89 the story goes she went on to catch the next person. So she was happy  
90 to be part of the game.  
91 J: You were going to say something, T?  
92 T: (giggles) Maybe she felt strange because the way he was like playing -  
93 S: - on top of her.  
94 T: Because maybe never that child never used to play with her and never  
95 interact in that way maybe. And that, therefore she feels like that.

96 J: Mm. Any other ideas? (pause) Ok, this is great, this is very nice  
97 everybody (nervous giggles). And just tell me, do you think this kind of  
98 game, is it common with preschool children.  
99 All: Yes!  
100 U: Definitely.  
101 X: Sometimes the the the older ones, up to standard four, standard five,  
102 they like the games. They like to run. Chase each other.  
103 U: Ja. I think it starts from a very early age. Like for example, my self, I've  
104 got two children. My baby is a year and and three months and my son is  
105 three years old. But, my baby she will see her brother, and then she will  
106 like like look at him and then she laughs, and then she runs, expecting  
107 that he's going to chase her. And then he does just that. He chases her  
108 and that is how the game starts. Then he catches her, and she chases  
109 him. So I think it's maybe a natural, natural instinct within within within  
110 the human being or within children. I'll run and you'll chase me  
111 (laughing).  
112 W: And even ourselves when were young about um ten or fifteen we used  
113 to run, touching and going and sometimes you hiding and you catch the  
114 others. And there's one who's going to look where you are. Running is  
115 always a child's active way to xxx  
116 J: That's nice.  
117 T: Actually there by my school also um, when the boys and the girls are  
118 chasing one another, playing like you see. And then the boys are  
119 sometimes very rough and then they grab the girls and the girls  
120 sometimes cry. Because they like to play with but the boys are playing  
121 too rough with them. They come and complain a lot (laughs)!  
122 J: Is it? Ok, and just - how would you answer if it was Lindiwe that jumped  
123 on top of Ebrahim?  
124 (laughter)  
125 ?: Ooooh!  
126 W: It's because the the girls and boys even in the - hou- where - at home.  
127 You will see that they are catching each other, every time you see that.  
128 Only a a moment you see the other one chasing the other, and the other  
129 one chasing the other, I don't know what. Whenever they are talking or  
130 something, why do you put this? You don't know why I don't know why  
131 he did put this this there because you didn't take it and put it there.  
132 They are just chasing to touch the other one. Not to hit, but to - in a  
133 playing way.  
134 R: Some of them, if they are playing by touching or by by the near touching  
135 the child that that this one doesn't get it. You know. He or she loves me  
136 or she understands me. But he even you the elder person when you  
137 talk to the child she want to come near you that you can touch or maybe  
138 hug. If you talking to the child that's maybe far away from you, she feels  
139 denied.  
140 J: Mm. So you are saying that children like to be touched?  
141 R: Mm.  
142 U: But I think, excuse me R, I think that that um J, in the norm of the society  
143 like if you asking now, what would we say if it was Lindiwe that jumped  
144 on on Ebrahim and Lindiwe is a girl. The norm of society is that if they

145 see a girl running around and jumping on top of somebody and holding  
146 like that, they would say, 'That child is wild! This girl is not acting like a  
147 girl should act.' Which is not also right, you know because I mean all  
148 children behave the same. But that is the norm. If people see a girl  
149 going on like that, then they say, 'Don't do that! You're a girl, you must  
150 behave yourself like a girl!' (Murmurs of agreement)

151 J: Other people are nodding? X?

152 X: (laughs)

153 T: You know sometimes, um, when these things happen a girl and a boy  
154 like playing, this is a play. But then the other child, they see it in a  
155 different way. Like I'll see now this story maybe in the way I see it now.  
156 You see where they will say, 'Oh, teacher that one is old-fashioned' or  
157 'that one is old-fashioned'. That immediately comes to their minds. If  
158 they see something like this. Even if it's a play. You see, so children of  
159 today, they see everything around them, and now the - the mind just go  
160 to that. That's the only thing their minds go to. But sometimes if it's a  
161 nice play, for them where the teacher will interact, the teacher plays with  
162 them like that then it's ok, but if they play alone, and something like this  
163 happens, that's the first thing that comes to their mind. You see, that  
164 those are making old fashioned, or things like that. And then they'll  
165 come and complain. It's like they're complaining.

166 J: What do you mean by 'making old-fashioned'?

167 T: Like -

168 S: They *ouga!* (raucous laughter)

169 T: Like you would see *'n man en 'n vrou mos nou op mekaar of so aan.*  
170 Like that, something like that. Because that is what they say.

171 J: Mm.

172 T: You see and - They know the parents and and -

173 J: Who complains, the children or the parents?

174 T: Yes, the, no, the children!

175 U: The children!

176 T: The girls and the boys. If this is something that they see. You know,  
177 there the boys, some of the boys, them two, I can pick them out. They  
178 maybe watch a lot of TV at home, or they hear their elder brothers and  
179 sisters talking about girlfriend and boyfriend. Now there, I've got a boy  
180 there, that, he loves to sit next to boys. And he's and um he likes to play  
181 with their hair and like ha- hand around there. And sometimes I caught  
182 him like he's playing -

183 U: With himself.

184 T: With with himself, and with the penis, and with another one. You see  
185 like (laughs). You see then we caught them, and then I told the mother  
186 about that. And she was actually surprised that her child is saying or  
187 doing all these things. But we observing the children. And then we we  
188 with then the oth- the other child the boy complained by the by his  
189 mother that this child did this to me. Now the mother is phoning me.  
190 You see, so these are the things that happening now, if these things  
191 happen then that's the thing that comes to their mind (laughing). Even  
192 to our minds as well. If we see, we don't even know that they are

193 playing maybe, and we will just jump to a conclusion, 'Oh, what are you  
194 doing? Are you old-fashioned?' You see. (Pause)

195 J: That's that's very interesting what what you're saying. But maybe I  
196 should go onto the next story, because the next story I think will also  
197 bring some interesting ideas. This is a story about - it's not really a long  
198 story as you can hear, it's just a short thing, and John John and  
199 Shahieda. John and Shahieda were both five years old. They were  
200 playing in the schoolyard. Shahieda was the mommy, John was the  
201 daddy, and they used a doll was the baby. The children pretended that  
202 it was nighttime, so they lay down on the ground, and the children  
203 covered themselves with a blanket. Then they kissed goodnight and  
204 hugged each other. So what do you think about this story?

205 T: It, it, it's real! (laughter) They imitate, they imitate their elders yes.  
206 S: They imitate, but it's very real (giggling).  
207 T: But like our parents -

208 W: They must be observed. If there is any play like that they must be  
209 observed because if some are, sometimes it's uh X's daughter, and uh X  
210 is sleeping with the daughter daughter in his room. And sometimes they  
211 are babies sometimes you think he she is sleeping, but not sleeping.  
212 And she is seeing everything that you do, as in the night. And then, in  
213 the critch (crèche) they are coming out with those things. And what we  
214 used to do to the parents, then we just say: 'Your daughter is old now,  
215 and she is trying to know whatever you doing. So you should try to take  
216 her to the other room with the others. Because she is doing this and  
217 this and this and this and this'.

218 ?: Just like my daughter, my daughter is six years old, and I sleep with her  
219 with her father. She said to me, 'Mommy I saw a big beast!' (laughter)  
220 That was me and her father. I was so shocked. I couldn't ask her.

221 J: So are you saying if children don't see, say if the children are sleeping  
222 with their brothers and sisters, they won't play like this? Or they will?

223 U: They will definitely!  
224 U: No, no.  
225 T: Very seldom.  
226 U: I feel that, sorry, I feel that each and every person, each and every child  
227 is born with that natural instinct within himself. I mean like like my son  
228 doesn't sleep in the same room with me. But when he goes to the  
229 bathroom, many a times you I find him touching himself and and then I  
230 ask him, 'Why do you do that?' And he says, 'It's nice'.

231 W: Yes -  
232 U: You know? It's natural. It's not something that they that they see, just  
233 seeing somebody do, it just comes naturally.  
234 W: No. You see when it's natural uh it's sticks from him. He's just playing  
235 with him only. But the one who has seen is doing the same thing to the  
236 - that you do in the bed, you see.  
237 U: Yes, I understand ja, what you're saying.  
238 W: But whenever it's in a - the instinct from his - his mind.  
239 T: Just playing.  
240 W: He's just playing with the - the penis or just uh grabbing herself (mimes  
241 holding genitals) if she's a girl. You can see the, it's different.

242 T: (indistinct)  
243 U: I understand what you're saying. But it doesn't only come from seeing it  
244 at home. I mean the the television, they see it on TV.  
245 ?: (indistinct)  
246 W: Even these days it's on TV, but uh more or less, there were no TV's  
247 before. It's it's that they are sleeping we -  
248 T: Who are the parents ja -  
249 W: - as African, our culture, we sleep with our children, till eight years old  
250 anything, with the father. If you don't see, nothing's wrong. That's why I  
251 say, it's more when the child is sleeping in the same room with her hers  
252 - and that they see what they are doing. Even I was a a a maid in the  
253 other house and my my my employers never hide anything. Even  
254 myself. If they are making love, they were making love. Even the child,  
255 you were knew ever, I said, 'What your mother is doing there and your  
256 father?' He says, 'They are making love.' 'You don't know what love  
257 is?' 'No, I don't know. And if you will show me how - what love it is.'  
258 And I could just laugh (laughter).  
259 Z: (Xhosa)  
260 W: If uh, she's what she's saying, she's saying that the the the children in  
261 the in the in the uh five to three to five six or three. They are doing  
262 everything that they are seeing other people doing. The parents, or  
263 other children. That what's they are. They are doing everything by  
264 copying it from someone.  
265 T: Someone told me, also a teacher from the other school, that they had a  
266 four year old child, a girl. And this other boy was also more or less the  
267 same age, four five. And they saw them catch - they caught them like  
268 the boy pulled down the the child's party down. And they, they asked  
269 him why why is he doing that? And they found out that he he sleeps he  
270 sleeps in a room with same in a room with the parents, right? And he  
271 saw all these things. And that is why he come and now take it out here.  
272 And that is how. Like my self and my son, my children sleep with me,  
273 because there were no other beds and that. Under the age of four. But  
274 we were very careful. Like we always see that they were sleeping and,  
275 you understand, and not doing it when they are awake. They awake  
276 until the like the middle of the night or whatever, they must be fast  
277 asleep. So they actually it's because like U said it's like they were born  
278 with these things and we don't come teach it although we tell them  
279 there's the mother and the father and all this and where does the babies  
280 come from. But we don't show it to them. It's not good to show it to  
281 them. They must like as you grow up they must uh learn it fro- from  
282 themselves. They *maar* can pick it from themselves.  
283 U: You can speak to them about it but it's not like -  
284 T: Speak - but not like show for them like in real life in this room, this is the  
285 way how you do it. What's gonna happen if he's gonna do it with  
286 someone with a child of yours, with a real girl or whatsoever, you see.  
287 So we must be careful with these, these not a joke to play with.  
288 U: And also the the children, what I've experienced from the children of  
289 today, I would say, they are more open and more um mature about  
290 these things because now like a a week ago, the two children in the

291 centre there by us they found two ladybirds, on top of one another. And  
292 they said, 'Come see, come see, teacher, come see!' And I asked,  
293 'What's wrong?' They said, 'The ladybird's are mating, they are  
294 mating!?' (laughter) I asked, 'Yes, what what is mating?' And they  
295 said, 'They mate and then they have a baby. The lady ladybird is going  
296 to have a baby!' (laughter) I say, 'Oh, that's that's nice, that's very  
297 interesting.' And then they say, 'Yes!' Um um the one girl says that that  
298 people also mate, and then the mommy has a baby. And then the other  
299 girl says, 'No, people don't mate, they make love!' (laughter) Because  
300 this is something that they that they hear and it's things that's perhaps  
301 discussed with them at home.

302 J: Sure, sure.  
303 (whispering)

304 W: That is why I was when we were doing the lesson there for the other xxx  
305 stage and that we must uh give them more freedom. And I thought, 'It's  
306 too much freedom that you are giving them.' And then, the even the  
307 freedom that they are taking with, you can see that they will damage  
308 their uh their adulthood. Because so your your your your daughter is  
309 fifteen years. She's got a girlfriend. She's going out, let her go out.  
310 And after letting her go out, he is sleeping there, even the following  
311 morning, couldn't care about the school. And you haven't - you've -  
312 you'll - you - you first think think that he has he was she was out,  
313 sleeping there, you didn't tell anything, because they say freedom. And  
314 then, by next day, they are sleeping there the whole day. And what  
315 freedom do did she have now? Because the school is behind -

316 U: And she's going to become pregnant, and whatever -

317 W: Yes -

318 U: - her freedom's gone.

319 W: Not too much freedom. We giving them -

320 J: And are you saying that starts young?

321 W: Yes, we can - you can give the child her freedom when you know that  
322 it's where sh-. You you can see the stages. Whenever you see that,  
323 this is an older stage, than herself, you must just come in front and say,  
324 'No, no, not like this now.' And it's too dangerous, even for yourself.  
325 Because after doing this you going to be to have this, and what you  
326 going to do about her? Even if she didn't be pregnant, what husband  
327 could take her? Like that. Because that one lose her, because he will  
328 get tired again, and just left her. And the following, the husband what is  
329 she going- he going to get from her? Because he she was already the  
330 wife of the other boyfriend.

331 J: Just to go a little bit back to to how the children in this story were  
332 feeling. It's very - I like to hear of all the other the other bits of  
333 information, but what do you think these children, John and Shahieda,  
334 what was Shahieda feeling during this game? And what was John  
335 feeling?

336 W: Sometimes it was an innocent game. They were no- just free and -

337 U: Like mommies and daddies do.

338 W: Yes.

339 T: That's what they see at home.



340 W: Yes.  
341 T: Imitate the adults.  
342 W: Not that.  
343 U: So to them it's an innocent issue. I mean we did once a a a we had a  
344 session on on how to handle situations like that. And I mean we were  
345 explained, I was actually surprised at the way it was supposed to be  
346 handled. I was explained that you do not like like I say, the the people  
347 of today, they will go, 'Hah! What's that child doing? No! Come away!  
348 Don't do that!' But then, they explained that that you don't handle that  
349 situation in that way. Because the child is doing an innocent replay of  
350 what he has seen or what he has heard himself. So you handle the  
351 situation in a in a in a other manner. I just can't recall (laughing) how it  
352 was supposed to be handled!  
353 T: Like yes like W said there must be an attitude like the teacher must go  
354 for and just she must just look what they do in the make-believe area  
355 maybe and go to them and and if she sees that something really going  
356 to happen serious maybe then she must call them and they can sit and  
357 talk to them. Right? You can you imitate mommy and daddy but this is  
358 not - but in a - not those serious - I mean you see you know what I  
359 mean.  
360 U: Or you could perhaps say that that kind of action is only meant for  
361 mommy and daddy.  
362 T: Yes. Yes. You understand, so that they can understand, ja.  
363 U: Direct them into a in another way of playing.  
364 T: And I think they felt quite happy in the story (laughing) because they like  
365 mommy and daddy now and if they feel there now they keep themselves  
366 like uh putting the shoes in adults their feet in adults shoes so - I don't  
367 know what the others say (laughs).  
368 J: So, I'm just interested, would the teachers be watching the children, or  
369 how how?  
370 T: Should be.  
371 W: That is the actually what (confused babble of answers) -  
372 U: Should be.  
373 X: Observing the children what they are doing  
374 T: So that is what they going write in maybe in their report. Observation.  
375 And you do tell them and say this these two play like this in the observ-  
376 um make-believe area, and things like that. It is very important to write  
377 it down, so that they can, if that if any parent comes and asks how's my  
378 child is doing and what they do for the day and then you can explain to  
379 them. So the parent can see what the children are doing at the school.  
380 W: And even uh when he is supposed to be for the to start her uh school  
381 her real school, not the preschool, you must have a report of him.  
382 Because he has developed in his uh uh - (gestures to arms)  
383 T: Muscles.  
384 W: Ja. So if he hasn't, you can tell him, no, he he doesn't hold the the  
385 pencil or crayon directly the way he should be. So whenever he is uh  
386 shy he doesn't speak uh quick and sometimes he is stubborn and he  
387 doesn't listen but by the time he is quiet, he is taking in, and you will see

388 that after days that he was listening. Takes time to to to to speak but  
389 everything is in so that the teacher can understand. (pause)

390 J: Are you -

391 U: Also I think that that um children in in in in the make-believe area like  
392 them that's playing mommy and daddy, you can pick up a lot of things  
393 from that. Like they they the two children in that story seem happy to  
394 play mommy and daddy. Like for example also last week you had a  
395 situation at our centre where the children were playing in the make-  
396 believe in the make-believe area now. Now our at the school where I  
397 am it's only girls, it's a girls' school. And the one girl was telling the  
398 others, you must be the mommy, you must be the daddy, and you must  
399 be the the baby, and you must be the dog. And the girl that must be the  
400 dog says, 'I don't want to be the dog, I want to be the mommy, 'cos  
401 mommies are are are the nice people in the house!' You know, so you  
402 can hear that also how a child feels at home, how the child feels about  
403 his parents also, because she says, 'The mommy is the nice person in  
404 the house', you know?

405 W: And even that, when there is one that's speaking the - choosing the  
406 others to be characters you can see that he he is going to be a  
407 manager. (laughter)

408 T: He's going to be a winner yes.

409 U: Ja, he's going to lead.

410 J: So are we saying that this game is quite common?

411 U: Ja.

412 Y: It's quite common.

413 U: Definitely.

414 Y: It's inside the preschools.

415 T: You can pick up a lot of things.

416 Y: Sometimes if you are not uh if if they are sleeping and you leave them  
417 alone there, when you ca- you came come back again you will see the  
418 boy. She is she is coming she is coming from the girl's mattress.  
419 Sometimes you will see the boy, sleeping with the girl. But when you  
420 come in she just (claps to show disappearing act) go right to his place. I  
421 don't know why (laughter) she knows that she mustn't be there.  
422 (laughter) But because you are not there, she there is something that  
423 there is something that she wants to do that girl. Now you you you are  
424 in now, and she knows that you mustn't do that (laughter). She just -

425 J: But how does he know that?

426 Y: Why he's running when you come in?

427 J: Ja.

428 Y: Because you didn't say nothing to her to him, but when she look he look  
429 to you -

430 U: He knows. Instinct.

431 Y: He knows that yes (laughter and overtalk)

432 W: They are neighbours with the girls. So they are when they are playing  
433 there free, they are doing what they see there. There it's an these uh  
434 play.

435 Y: It is a game.

436 W: Game for the children.

437 Y: Ja.  
438 J: Can we talk a little bit more, we've started talking about the teacher's  
439 role. What do you think the teacher should do, if anything, maybe the  
440 teacher shouldn't do anything. But what do you think the teacher should  
441 do, if she saw children playing like that, or if she came across children  
442 on the mattress together?  
443 Y: We had a lesson about that! (laughter)  
444 J: Don't tell me the lesson, tell me your ideas. I don't-  
445 Y: We used to say to the children -  
446 J: I'm more interested in your ideas.  
447 Y: We used to say to our children, you mustn't go to the girl and sleep with  
448 the girl. What you want to that girl. You must keep in your place  
449 (shrieking laughter) not to that girl. We used to say so. But in the  
450 course they say, 'You mustn't shout the children. You must talk to them  
451 nicely, and not shout about visiting to the girl. You must just leave her  
452 to visit that day and observe what are they what are they going to do.'  
453 U: And also um um I think what we what we supposed to do is direct  
454 them into anoth- in another way. Like for example the story says that  
455 they covered themselves with a blanket. You could perhaps as a  
456 teacher say, 'No, leave the blanket aside, you don't need to cover  
457 yourself with the blanket,' or something like that. Because that would  
458 also restrict them from from doing whatever they want to do, (laughter)  
459 you know? And um, also like perhaps like like maybe if like if you are  
460 there monitoring them they won't go as far as as as um what has  
461 happened already (laughing) but um um how can I say um? You could  
462 also explain to them, that that there's certain things that's only meant for  
463 adults to do. And and children are not are not allowed to do that  
464 because of certain - conditions or or whatever. I mean that is what we  
465 were taught in the lesson.  
466 J: Ok, but if this game is so common, do you end up talking to a lot of  
467 children or- ?  
468 T: Like we can do it in a -  
469 U: We normally do it in a group.  
470 (Overtalk)  
471 ?: No we don't -  
472 ?: Not that often -  
473 ?: - As a discussion.  
474 U: We normally do it in a group with with all of them.  
475 T: And then we -  
476 U: Basically what I have done is that if I've found myself in a situation like  
477 this, I mean I've even experienced it-at home, and we've got three boys  
478 and and one girl. And with my son going through that stage now, um  
479 just um two days ago ja, they were bath, they were all in the bath  
480 together. And I came in and they were also touching one another. And  
481 I and I let them - I stood - I came into the bathroom and they all looked  
482 at me. And I just stood there. And I say, 'Come, let's wash finish  
483 because I want to talk to you when you finished'. And then when they  
484 done, got them out of the bathroom, and I asked them, 'So why did you  
485 all look at me like that when I came into the bathroom?' And they go,

486 "Cos we were naughty'. 'What were you doing that was naughty?' You  
487 know? But then they couldn't tell me what they were doing. But they  
488 knew within themselves that they were not supposed to do that.  
489 J: I wonder how they knew?  
490 Y: But they knew.  
491 U: Maybe it's just natural.  
492 Y: They knew.  
493 T: If they-  
494 U: I think they see also that that this is an adult thing (laughs).  
495 W: But whenever there - it's the two years children, they are innocently  
496 doing it, in front of you. And you can no- just notice that there is  
497 someone that they have seen doing this. But the older ones, four five  
498 years -  
499 U: They know -  
500 W: - they are hiding from us.  
501 J: Ah, so there's a difference with the ages.  
502 U: Oh yes there is, definitely. Because a two year old child will will  
503 unknowingly just sit even on you lap even and and and -  
504 W: And do it -  
505 U: And start fondling himself and and not even think anything of it. But the  
506 older child, the four year old, the five year old child, they do it, in a in a  
507 um they hide themselves. They try to hide themselves from you.  
508 Because they know with within themselves. Because perhaps it's  
509 because you have discussed it with them already. So they know within  
510 themselves that this is not for a child to do. Or they see at home also,  
511 this is only the way mommy and daddy should behave or how adults  
512 should behave so they know that because it's the the the the the instinct  
513 of of sexuality is natural within the child, they know (whispering) 'I  
514 mustn't do it in front of my mommy', so they hide.  
515 J: Sjoe (pause - laughter). Ok, now say in your preschool situation, or  
516 maybe in a mixed school, say it was two little girls, say Shahieda and  
517 Nomkhita playing together, playing mommy and daddy together. How  
518 would you answer then? Would you answer differently any of these  
519 questions?  
520 U: No.  
521 W: No!  
522 J: Would you answer the same?  
523 W: It's the same.  
524 U: It's the same.  
525 W: Whether if she is in what uh colour or something -  
526 U: Or whatever sex it doesn't make any-  
527 W: It's the same. And even then there are girls who like to be the fathers.  
528 T: Ja. Because they want to be like the like the fathers.  
529 W: Yes. And there are boys who like to be mothers, wearing dresses, and -  
530 U: Oh yes. But what she's saying like like some girls want to be like the  
531 father. We had a girl (laughing) four years ago at the centre who used  
532 to want, she wanted to stand and urinate. Because she says, 'But my  
533 daddy does it like this!' And you had to ex-, the mother said, the mother  
534 came not like she every time she goes to the toilet she wants to do it in

535 that way and the mother has explained to already, 'No, no, no, girls don't  
536 do it like that.' And she couldn't understand that. She couldn't  
537 understand but why must my daddy do it like that and I have to do it like  
538 this? You know?

539 J: Is it also common for girls then, to play mommies and daddies together?  
540 T: Yes, they do play like that.  
541 J: And little boys?  
542 W: And the boys can be mothers too and ironing (laughter and overtalk)  
543 U: They can be mothers also. (overtalk)  
544 W: - and baking and putting them on the - cooking and everything.  
545 T: We can have like discussion. Like it's not only just the mommy that  
546 must now do the housework. If both the parents are working, then the  
547 mother can maybe be in the kitchen and the daddy can do the washing,  
548 the I mean wash the children. That is what my husband and I are doing.  
549 When I am busy in the kitchen maybe or the rooms and it's time for  
550 washing, then he go wash the children. And when I'm sick and then he  
551 wash the children, you see? So we can give it over to the, like I say, to  
552 the children. It's not just the mommy that's do all the household.  
553 U: Or even you could like like in the scene that we do of my family, what I  
554 normally do is I I would ask the children: 'What does mommy do? What  
555 is mommy's responsibility at home?' And they would say, 'No, mommy  
556 must wash the dishes, and mommy must clean the house, and mommy  
557 must make food and-' 'Now what must daddy do?' 'Daddy must go  
558 work.' 'Why must daddy go work?' 'Because daddy must earn money!'  
559 That that is the way they would answer you. And if you ask them, 'Is it  
560 ok for daddy to wash dishes?' They would -  
561 ?: Oooh!  
562 U: - first think. Now some of them would say, 'Yes'. They would first think,  
563 'Yes it is ok, it is ok for daddy to do dishes.' 'Why is it ok?' I would ask  
564 them perhaps. 'Because he must help mommy.' Then they understand,  
565 because they understand a sense of helping and sharing one another,  
566 and sharing with one another. But if you just like say, 'Mommy must do  
567 this, and mommy must do that, and daddy must do that,' if it's like I  
568 know of teachers that come forth like that, you know. They put um  
569 restrictions on children and children just have to accept it, you know?  
570 But if you give the child a chance to explain, and and give you, the  
571 answer that you were actually looking for (laughs) they accept it much  
572 more easily.  
573 J: So, ja, so you're saying it is also common for little boys to play mommies  
574 and daddies. What sort of age?  
575 W: From two to five years.  
576 U: From three ja. Three to six.  
577 J: And after that?  
578 (lots of 'No' and overtalk)  
579 U: After that they just want to be daddy (laughter).  
580 T: After they going in a new world (laughter).  
581 U: They just want to be daddy.  
582 (SIDE B)

583 J: Ok. This is just a story about Sipho. The Dyasi family were having a  
584 *braai* with some friends. The youngest child, Sipho, who was two years  
585 old, he pulled off his nappy and his T-shirt and he started running  
586 around naked (one person laughs nervously). What do you think about  
587 this story?  
588 (overtalk)

589 ?: Is that the story?  
590 ?: It's natural -

591 W: It's a natural thing for a child to go. Even when it's hot they take all their  
592 clothes and just walk.

593 J: And why -

594 U: He just took off his nappy and and his T-shirt and he just ran around?  
595 J: Mm hm.

596 U: All by himself? (laughter)  
597 T: Maybe when he got there, I mean it was warm that night and -

598 U: Ja, I know like sometimes my my daughter she also nags and nags and  
599 then when I take off her T-shirt then she feels happy. Then now when I  
600 take off her vest maybe she's even more cool. And then she'll, then  
601 she's fine.

602 J: You say maybe a two year old couldn't take off their clothes?  
603 T: Or just a nappy.

604 S: Or maybe that 'snappies'. It just pulls off and then the nappy falls off.

605 T: But even the four five year olds the boys there if it's very hot there then  
606 they took off their T-shirts. They run around in their shorts in their  
607 shorts, you see?

608 J: So why do you think this little boy wants to run around naked?  
609 S: Maybe -

610 U: He wants to be free (laughter).  
611 ?: He wants to be free.

612 S: Some children are more mature than the others and um maybe he felt  
613 he got more attention from people, you know?

614 T: Maybe he was looking for attention, yes (laugh)

615 S: Maybe he's seeking attention. .

616 J: You think it's a sign of maturity or -

617 S: No, no, no, that's not what I'm saying, I don't know actually.

618 J: No, it's very interesting what you're saying.

619 S: I mean, some children can be more mature than others, funny.

620 J: Mm. But I'm not sure if I'm understanding, is it more mature to take off  
621 the nappy or to leave on the nappy?

622 S: No, it's just normal. It's a normal behaviour. But maybe he's also  
623 looking for some attention you know. Maybe the adults is just -

624 U: But also -

625 S: - having a nice conversation, now I'm gonna do something, you know.

626 T: And maybe he was the only child there maybe.

627 U: When a child comes to you that that age of two years they are ready  
628 ahead- they are ready to go off their nappy and then maybe that was  
629 just his way of showing, 'I don't need this anymore' (laughing).

630 W: Yes, I can see the other, I can hear S saying sometimes she needs  
631 attention. Sometimes he needs someone to accompany him to do

632 something. Sometimes he's seeing something that it's on top of  
633 sometimes he just wants water. And you don't recognise you. So so  
634 you must come and see what's wrong with him, what he him, so that you  
635 can do it. They know that you don't want a a child running away naked.  
636 So you will run after him! (laughter)

637 J: So what would the parents do if they saw the child running naked?  
638 (laughter)

639 W: They would run after him because -

640 ?: They would care xxx

641 W: He's xxx

642 U: Where's your nappy? (laughter)

643 J: If they're sitting with the friends at the *braai*. And what will they do?

644 W: He would just leave the friends, sorry, and goes up to him.

645 U: And you know some people will even laugh about something like that.  
646 Seeing a child, taking off, like, 'Hah! Look at that child just took off his  
647 nappy and running around naked.' Some people will -

648 W: And then -

649 U: - make fun out of it.

650 W: You - then someone will try to know that there is something wrong.  
651 Because you know exactly what's going to happen when he's like that.  
652 He's going to pooh or something. So you you just go to him. And you  
653 will see what, sometimes he's thirsty, sometimes needs a bottle. By the  
654 time you put him on the nappy -

655 U: Or maybe he needs to go to the toilet.

656 W: - he will be not uh he will be irritated. And you will see that there is  
657 something that that he needs. So you can just see - water, or what or  
658 what.

659 T: Or maybe the nappy was wet.

660 W: Or or the nappy was wet.

661 U: Ja. Showing a need to get rid of this nappy.

662 J: So we've said there's different reasons why he might take it off. But  
663 what do you think he's feeling when he's running around naked?

664 S: Oh, he's feeling free! (laughter)

665 ?: Free!

666 S: It's very heavy -

667 T: - a heavy nappy on me (laughter).

668 S: Everybody's looking at me now I'm feeling very quiet you know.

669 J: So you're saying he's partly doing it to get people to look?

670 S: Ja!

671 T: Ja.

672 W: Wants to show off, sometimes. Because there are those ones who  
673 wants to be seen and be praised when they are doing something. So  
674 they will do just something that you can talk to him. Whenever you have  
675 got a a friend, your child, and you talking to this friend or her, he will  
676 keep on doing something that he needs your attention. You don't give  
677 the attention to the the - you must give him the attention. There are  
678 children like that. So you could just come to him and say, 'What you  
679 want?' And he'll just show you what if she wants to be on your lap, you  
680 must put him on your lap.

681 T: You see my sister, my eldest sister's teaching by me there. And one  
682 daughter's standard six. Now whenever the children she's teaching the  
683 three year olds xxx. Now whenever they are calling her 'mommy,' most  
684 of them are calling my sister, 'mommy', the teacher 'mommy', and now  
685 she gets cross and she walks out of the room. She's like very  
686 possessive over her mother that nobody can come or even they can't  
687 come and sit or hang on her, and she's a standard six girl. You see,  
688 and that is not a normal behaviour (laughter).

689 U: Not normal.

690 T: No I mean she she's I think she's old enough to think that these are  
691 small children and you see and and they need to be like hugged and all  
692 the attention, understand? I mean, now my my sister is getting angry for  
693 her, because she's like acting like a small child like doesn't want to be  
694 the like my friend can't go near my mother or something like that.  
695 That's-

696 X: To our culture, I didn't know why, the children used to be naked -

697 ?: Naked -

698 T: That I wanted to ask last week you know? (laughter)

699 X: But I didn't know why.

700 J: Talk some more about that, X?

701 X: In our culture the children used to be naked, uh the boys. I didn't know  
702 why.

703 T: Even the girls I saw.  
704 (Overtalk)

705 ?: Even the girls.

706 U: - still must find out why.

707 W: Why it's like that, before the culture in Xhosa, our people, when the  
708 child is born, it's only folded in a in a -

709 ?: A blanket.

710 W: In a blanket. And it's like that until he is two or three years old. And  
711 when he's three he has to be slaughtered a sheep that there is a a a  
712 that blanket - it's a blanket for for him. For the rains and everything.  
713 Because he's he's out of his mother now. That the mother can um uh  
714 give shelter for him whenever it's cold or raining. Now he's got only that  
715 uh skin to cover him. And on here, they used to have uh uh uh a small  
716 uh skins also. Whenever it's he's older now, that he's coming a man, if  
717 there is a still that (overtalk) calambas?. And even the adults they used  
718 to have there are those small calambas. And they are building holes  
719 there. And then the penis is put in the calambas. And then tied on the  
720 other thing. And the girls are having their -

721 T: Like front skirts -

722 W: Those those uh in front things they say *inkciyo* in Xhosa. And they are  
723 free here. The body the body of a girl, it's not the - it's what you must  
724 hide, it's this the the the the -

725 U: The vagina.

726 W: The vagina, and not the the body. Because the there is that uh thing  
727 that in nature they can be, you can have your tits, if I'm having my my ti-  
728 my tits that are um they *ooNokhahla* in Xhosa, they have got big heads,  
729 here -



730 U: Oh.  
731 W: Big heads. And then if you put something on or the blanket for because  
732 they used to tie on blankets here, so it's falling, so there's nothing wrong  
733 with this place. What it's wrong it's the the vagina. What they are  
734 looking after it's the vagina. So the body they don't care anything about  
735 it. It's only the vagina that they are caring on, and only the thing the  
736 man the penis that they put on uh uh small skin here or a small  
737 calambas which is cut on them a mouth there and then put in there and -  
738 S: String around.  
739 W: String around.  
740 U: But I think um um, to come back to S about the fact that they could  
741 perhaps just be seeking attention. Like when my son just went off the  
742 nappy he was about two years and three months ja. And um he was at  
743 the at the crèche with me there where I used to teach. And he was on in  
744 the toilet one afternoon and he was sitting on on on the toilet. And I  
745 asked him, the other lady will will be wiping you because I have to go  
746 back to class. And he was always like that - when I was within my class  
747 then he would always do something that I would have to divert my  
748 attention from the children to him. And then this day (laughing) the the  
749 lady that was supposed to wipe uh was supposed to see to him in the  
750 toilet, came to me and said, 'The child is running around inside the  
751 school there with no pants on!' (laughter). And I and I had to go outside  
752 and you ask, and I had to run after him. And he's laughing because I'm  
753 chasing him. Now I, for me, I I said to him, 'Now you just wanted  
754 mommy to come out of the class now', and then he laughed. Because  
755 then I was now giving my attention to him. You see? Because he was  
756 like - perhaps he was upset that I was not giving any attention to him  
757 and just giving all this attention to the children. You know? And he  
758 couldn't understand that. 'Mommy, why you giving all this attention to  
759 them, I'm also here?' So I - he had to do something, to make me divert  
760 my attention.  
761 J: Ah. And he knew that would -  
762 U: Ja, he knew that would work (laughing).  
763 T: Now my little one, she was also four years old. I I taught the other  
764 children. And she used to come and run around me and I had to send  
765 her away to another crèche. Because I can't give my attention only her,  
766 because there's too many children to look after. So I had to sent her  
767 away because she comes and she disturbing me, do all sorts of things, I  
768 had to be with her, and so - but I'm actually very sad because I sent her  
769 away (laughing).  
770 U: But they do things -  
771 T: Now the things that I know now, now, I I'm sad, I'm very sad, of sending  
772 her away.  
773 U: But they do things to make you, like you to give your attention (laughs).  
774 J: Attention, is very important. But I just wanted to come back to what W  
775 was saying, at what age do do they need to cover up the penis and  
776 vagina?  
777 W: In um after when he's moved uh adulthood and adolescence.  
778 J: So can you say about -

779 W: When they feel it, I'm now I'm naked. And the girls when they go, they  
780 say going to the grass but it means that he's having his monthly  
781 periods.  
782 J: Ok. So it's what about twelve or so?  
783 W: Twelve, fourteen, sixteen?  
784 J: Fifteen?  
785 U: When they reach puberty I suppose.  
786 J: And in the urban areas? Now? How does it work?  
787 W: In the urban areas, there are there is- there are people who are having  
788 those uh *imibathu*. The girls are having those *imibhaco* and they are  
789 bare on this side. Whenever he reaches the stage of the that uh that he  
790 can get his uh-  
791 U: Period.  
792 W: Period. Her mother, he is showing he shows the girl to the mother. And  
793 they are not supposed to wash, until the three days or four days of the  
794 period. And after that they mustn't cook for anybody. They mustn't do  
795 anything (giggling) for for anybody. And they mustn't go to the kraals or  
796 animals, he must just stick there. And on the fourth day, they must go to  
797 the river -  
798 ?: And go wash -  
799 W: And wash there everything. And what they are doing, they are no pads  
800 there. They used to take the the there is an underneath uh uh  
801 *umbhaco*.  
802 J: Yes.  
803 W: They take it be like this - to take the the other -  
804 T: Pad.  
805 W: - the other xxx to the the behind one. To here. And when that it's full,  
806 they take the front one-  
807 U: And put it underneath. (laughter)  
808 J: And the younger children?  
809 W: The young ones?  
810 J: Like the preschool children -  
811 W: No -  
812 J: Are they -  
813 W: No - (almost hysterical giggling from T)  
814 J: No, no, no, sorry, ok. Just to - are they also running around naked?  
815 W: Yes, they used to.  
816 ?: Run around and -  
817 J: Now, I'm saying, now, in Cape Town.  
818 W: They run around here naked. But e- these things are not the things that  
819 are are done today. Every place and everywhere it's - (laughing)  
820 T: - changed.  
821 Y: Everything has changed now.  
822 U: It's more western now.  
823 W: Yes. Even you can see those people with uh blankets with the big uh  
824 *doeks* on their their heads coming from uh uh that city house. Her  
825 daughter is a teacher or her son is a doctor her daughter a doctor and  
826 he has planned to build a beautiful home for the parents. And just so  
827 the, but because he respects the the culture of their mothers, they don't

828 say he must take off this - but the parents are just saying, 'Now I must  
829 take this.' And the other say, 'No man, you are in a big house like this, a  
830 beautiful, you must take off these things and you put on the other one.'

831 T: The modern -

832 U: So they they they changing that -

833 W: They are changing, they are changing.

834 U: They are changing their own culture because of the way, they feeling  
835 guilty (murmurs of support) that that they are now in the western country  
836 so they must drop their own culture.

837 T: Ooh, do you think it's right?

838 U: But do you think that's right?

839 W: That's why -

840 ?: It's not right - (overtalk and agreement)

841 W: It's not right because that is why there is no rain in the the in the - they  
842 say *ntoni ntoni*.

843 Y: Eastern Cape.

844 W: Eastern Cape. No rain. It's drought. You can see in Kwazulu the  
845 Amazulu the Amazulu people don't uh throw away their -

846 Y: Culture.

847 W: Their culture. Even if you are educated there's -

848 ?: - you keep it.

849 W: xxx universities, you just don't take away your culture. There are times  
850 that you come back at home and you do on your cultures. And  
851 everything it's like before and you can see the rains there. Raining  
852 every time, there were no high bloods there, or sugar there. It's  
853 because you were eating fresh food. The mielies we are eating for the  
854 the the samp, it's last year's uh mielies. And what we having, this time,  
855 there are pumpkins and watermelons and even the the mielies that it's -

856 T: Fresh.

857 W: Uh that's fresh now. We eating all those that fre- fresh veg- uh -

858 ?: Fresh food.

859 W: Fresh food. And in winter, it's drying, we eat the beans, dry beans from  
860 this year. Dried beans and um uh samp from this year. But we don't  
861 know, the samp we eating today, we don't know when that samp was.

862 J: I think what you're saying -

863 W: I think it's fifteen years or twenty years (laughter).

864 J: It's very important what you're saying -

865 W: Yes, so we didn't have high bloods and everything. We were just free  
866 because the rains were falling.

867 J: I'm sorry to take us back but we we it's very important, and we can talk  
868 about it some other time but we haven't got much time here, (laughter)  
869 so do you mind if we just talk a little bit more about Siphon. We've  
870 already, this is the question that I - if if he started touching himself  
871 between his legs, how would you answer then? Um what what -

872 U: Is this the boy who took off his nappy?

873 J: Yes. If he started touching himself, what would the parents do, if  
874 anything?

875 U: I think there could be there could be a number of reasons why I mean,  
876 we could go back to the reason that he might have just taken off his

877 nappy because he needed to go to the toilet, and then he's perhaps also  
878 just touching himself because he needs to go. Sometimes in that stage,  
879 a child feels that he needs to get rid of this burden between his legs  
880 which is the nappy (laughing). And and he knows for a fact that he can  
881 do without it now. It could be also that that he he realizes that that that  
882 he has that natural instinct within himself, that if he touches himself  
883 there it would feel nice. So I don't know how the mother would answer  
884 him (laughing) in that way.

885 W: Yes there are sometimes if you can just let him do it as I say xxx  
886 sometimes xxx. When you you let your child being uh touching himself  
887 every time, he must try to leave it like that and re- resist it, whether it's  
888 it's the form of him uh masturbation. Because sometimes when that  
889 masturbation after that doing that thing. After mastu- he can take a nail  
890 a nail and just pushes it in because there is that ma- masturbation uh  
891 instinct that's carrying on in his body. And sometimes takes uh matches  
892 to put in it. And we did have a child like that in in our preschool. But he  
893 didn't do it in our school but has done it at home. And the father was,  
894 the mother has gone to work and the father brings the child to school  
895 and said and tell told us, and we didn't even like to look at that. And I  
896 say, you must take this child to the doctor, because this is dangerous. If  
897 there is something that he has put it in, sometimes it's bleeding inside or  
898 sometimes there's something that's broken in there. So you must take  
899 him to the doctor and the doctor would see what's going on. Sometimes  
900 this this child will just do this and you give him them other medicine to  
901 cure him and that will make him not to have children, af- when he's old.  
902 Then you wouldn't know that it's because you didn't take him to the  
903 doctor. Just said, 'Now, take this child to the doctor. Don't give it to us.'  
904 And he takes him to. So that's why you mustn't just let it do. When you  
905 see that it's too much, you must say, 'No', so that he could resist the  
906 masturbation if it's the masturbation that makes him feel - touching  
907 himself.

908 J: And what do other people think? What should what would the parents  
909 do? What do most parents do?

910 U: I think it's the norm for parents to to to shout at the child.

911 S: Mm, give the child a smack on their bum, you know?

912 U: It's definitely a norm. For parents to shout, I mean -

913 T: 'Don't do that' (laughing).

914 S: But they don't wa - they don't say why they say, 'Don't do it'.

915 U: In the communities that that we have - in the communities that we have  
916 taught in, like parents will come to you as a teacher and say, 'This child  
917 keeps touching himself, I don't know why he does it!' You know? So  
918 it's, to to to them it's to them it's something ugly, something a child must  
919 not do, you know? And if you explain to them, perhaps how to go about  
920 it, they but, 'No you can't do that! You can't tell the child it's ok to do  
921 that!' You know? It's it's a norm for them to-

922 T: Like a like a habit that their hands just want to go down there. I mean  
923 what we can maybe explain to that child, is that, if you see your uh child  
924 is doing this all the time, and explain to them, 'Right, you can do it, but  
925 step aside, um stand aside so that other children don't see it maybe.' Or

926 as you grew up if it goes like that that the habit is still in him, then he  
927 mustn't let the child- the other people don't see him. I mean, go aside  
928 and and whatever his desires is then then he can let it out. You see so,  
929 maybe we can do that (laughing).

930 W: And even in in the girl's place there are sometimes parents that they  
931 take that their children are were were were uh (pause) -

932 ?: Abused.

933 ?: Abused.

934 W: Uh. But the doctors when you you take the child to the doctor. And the  
935 doctor said the child sometimes has got an infection.

936 T: An infection ja that's it (mumbles).

937 W: And just pushes in his finger. That it goes in and it it it's nice for her  
938 when he's just going in. And not knowing that it's making a hole. And  
939 then when you ask where the child takes the uh the infection, they say,  
940 sometimes when you, when it's a girl, they say you must make it sure  
941 that you don't take the nappy from -

942 U: From the back to the front.

943 W: From the back to the front. You must take the nappy from -

944 T: Front -

945 W: In front -

946 T: Yes. To the back. Mm.

947 W: To the back. Because whenever you taking the nappy like that the  
948 infection of the pooh - it's the one that's making the -

949 U: That child -

950 W: That's itching and from there. So there are things that makes the child  
951 to just go underneath.

952 T: Scratch underneath. Girls also do that.

953 J: Ja, would you answer differently if it was a girl? If the story was about a  
954 little girl at the *braaivleis*, who took off her nappy? And then starting  
955 touching herself?

956 W: You you just go and see that you you take the child and wash it, wash  
957 herself. If it goes on you can take him to the doctor if you see there's  
958 the hole. You must take him to the, if the doctor would say, he is he she  
959 was abused, or not -

960 U: If she has an infection.

961 W: - because he has got he has got an infection or what.

962 J: And say, let's just say -

963 W: Because -

964 J: Mm?

965 W: You can see a a a child which was abused. There is a child of of one of  
966 my colleagues, which was abused by the cousin. And the child was six  
967 years and the cousin was fourteen to fifteen. So you can see the penis,  
968 when it's going in there, it leaves a hole, a big hole, whether it's going  
969 there in. Not a small hole like a finger's made that's going in. It's a  
970 difference. And the the the the hole of the penis, it takes time to to  
971 close. Noticing that it's a sin to uh to do that to a child. Because it stays  
972 there for a week or another even top of the of the vagina it stays the  
973 hole, whether she's like that, it stays the hole. So that everybody can

974 see that this child was abused. Not this child that it's closed and you  
975 can a hole which like a a a finger just goings in.

976 J: Ok, that's very important. And just what about if this little boy was say  
977 six years old. At the *braai*. And he took off his shorts and his  
978 underpants and his T-shirt and he was running around. Would you  
979 answer differently?

980 W: No.

981 J: Is that common?

982 ?: No -

983 W: It's common for a child to do something.

984 ?: Not -

985 ?: Not -

986 U: Not six years old.

987 ?: Six years.

988 U: Because six years old they - a six year old child I have found they are  
989 more aware -

990 T: They are aware of their bodies (agreement and overtalk).

991 U: This is their bodies and they they want to - you know?

992 W: Yes, there is something that has happened to him or something what  
993 was funny (laughter).

994 T: No six year olds won't just take off and run off (laughter).

995 U: Six year olds are more conscious of of - like even like -

996 T: And shy.

997 U: The girls, the girls is like um um the boys mustn't use the same toilet  
998 that they use. And the girls, the boys can't come in the toilet when they  
999 busy with the toilet -

1000 T: Can't come see mm -

1001 U So they - and the boys also they -

1002 T: They the same, do the same ja.

1003 U: They they more aware of, this is my body and I'm not going to go  
1004 around, show it off to anybody (laughs).

1005 W: But I think it's the it's not the same. Ours are just going in the same  
1006 bathroom uh -

1007 ?: Toilet.

1008 W: Toilet with the girls. They don't mind. Even when they are peeing, they  
1009 would say, 'Just go us off! I want to pssss!' (laughter) 'I'm I'm coming  
1010 though, I I want to.' And just be behind the the the girls.

1011 U: And what - they don't even move up? (raucous laughter).

1012 W: Because the the pee is -.

1013 U: Are you serious?

1014 T: You must put potties there man. Wet the girls. (laughter) Imagine.

1015 U: No I think maybe that like I mean for me that's a bit unbelievable  
1016 because I mean within our in our religion, like um um that is considered  
1017 as as as as a as a -

1018 T: Dirt.

1019 U: As as dirt. Your urine, your your stools and everything. So we will not  
1020 allow two children to to use one toilet at the same time. You know what  
1021 I mean?

1022 T: And and also uh the boys in our religion, then also -

1023 U: They also -  
1024 T: - need to sit.  
1025 U: They have to sit.  
1026 T: Sit and pass urine.  
1027 U: - and and urinate. They are not to allowed to stand.  
1028 T: The splashes are like - go around on your clothes and things like that.  
1029 U: They must sit.  
1030 ?: When they are peeing?  
1031 T: Ja.  
1032 U: Yes!  
1033 T: When they are peeing.  
1034 U: They must not stand. Because if they they they stand, droppings can go  
1035 onto their clothes and we -  
1036 T: And all around the toilet -  
1037 U: We we believe that your urine and your stool it is it is dirt. I mean it  
1038 smells and all that. (Murmurs of agreement) So if it drops on your  
1039 clothes you it's obviously going to smell. So we they must sit. Even a  
1040 big Moslem man, they must sit.  
1041 T: Yes.  
1042 U: They must sit, really.  
1043 T: Because they need to pray in their clothes, you see and it's dirty.  
1044 W: (Obscured) - On the on the pot they always sit when they are - but for  
1045 the boys when they are peeing, they are standing.  
1046 T: And they dirty the whole (overtalk).  
1047 W: And our pots are not small ones for the for the babies.  
1048 U: No we've got small ones.  
1049 W: No it's the big ones so, there is a gap in behind (demonstrates -  
1050 laughter, overtalk)  
1051 U: So they can fit in, *sommer* two at a time, three at a time!  
1052 W: No not it's not usually doing it's not like that. So (overtalk) it's there  
1053 going in and there you can see even see that -  
1054 ?: You can't keep it -  
1055 W: When they are out, they are outside there, we let them go to the toilet  
1056 and you will come in, after they have, sometimes the children think that  
1057 they are going, by the time you come there, they are there, they are all  
1058 there they are - (laughter).  
1059 U: They must get there quickly (gigling).  
1060 J: Ok, that's great. Just a, I can see we all getting a bit tired. Just the last  
1061 few questions. How old do you think little - how old do girls start having  
1062 sexual feelings. How old?  
1063 S: But I just know -  
1064 T: Nowadays I think very young.  
1065 S: I I uh girls is getting more quicker mature than boys. Like twelve year  
1066 old girls who have started having tits whereas the boys still wearing the  
1067 shorts and playing *kaalvoet* in the streets. While they busy dolling  
1068 themselves up and you know what I mean?  
1069 J: So those those little girls that are playing mummies and daddies, is that  
1070 -  
1071 T: I don't think that is part of of -

1072 U: I think maybe from about the age from when they can start becoming um  
1073 when they can when they reach puberty from about ten, eleven, around  
1074 there. They start realising.

1075 S: Ja, *vandag kan 'n kind so vroeg 'n kind kry xxx*. But you know -

1076 U: Innocence is gone now (laughing).

1077 J: Ok. Anybody else?

1078 W: Uh I don't know but uh because they say the children takes their own  
1079 time to be mature. (murmurs of agreement) Because we can't say  
1080 twelve years then even eight years or nine.

1081 ?: And even eight years -

1082 W: But even nineteen years, the other ones just can just grow without doing  
1083 anything and nineteen years -

1084 S: Hmm, it's simple -

1085 W: He's just realising now that he is a girl. He must.

1086 U: Ja.

1087 J: So so what are we saying that those those children who play mommy  
1088 and daddy or whatever um, they are not feeling the same as adults. Is  
1089 that what we're saying?

1090 S: *Ek weet nie*.

1091 J: Is it the same feeling as adults -

1092 S: *Ek weet nie*.

1093 ?: (Chorus of 'no's' and overtalk)

1094 W: Even the children are not the same. They don't feel they are the  
1095 mothers. They are just playing mother and father thing. Not feeling like  
1096 a mother that he has got to he is to have sexual ah -

1097 T: Intercourse.

1098 W: Intercourse to be a mother. No. But there are, whom are like that. But  
1099 like fifteen years. Because when you are growing up, there was my my  
1100 smaller cousin, he she was smaller than me, two years, I was two years  
1101 bigger than her. But whenever we were playing this *poppiehuis* thing,  
1102 (laughter) they - they used to, I I take time to develop to the uh because  
1103 I used to play *poppiehuis* and dolls.

1104 U: Ja.

1105 W: So by the time there is a time that you can see that they are hiding  
1106 somewhere you don't know where they are. By the time you see them,  
1107 they are mommy and daddy doing uh uh the the -

1108 S: *Snaakse dinge*. (laughter)

1109 W: Other thing on the other. Noticing I was older than her. And she was  
1110 two years smaller than me.

1111 J: So but when this little boy this two year old is is touching his penis and it  
1112 feels nice, what what is that? Is that -

1113 W: Uh, when we were taught about -

1114 J: Is that not sexual?

1115 W: - masturbation there is, they say in the in our session there, they  
1116 masturbate, even in their, when they are in womb, the from their  
1117 mothers. And we did ask, 'How?' By the time you think I must buy a a  
1118 girl's thing, I must take buy this pink uh vest, I must buy this, every time  
1119 you're going like for a girl, and another time you going for a a boy, and



1120           sometime you mix and you take yellow and white, you, the child is  
1121           masturbating inside you.

1122    J:    What do you think about that?  
1123           (pause, laughter and overtalk)

1124    U:    I don't understand what they said.

1125    W:    It's only that I will never be pregnant again and I will not try try to notice  
1126           it! (laughter).

1127    U:    I don't understand what you said now W, I don't understand.

1128    W:    They they have said uh the the child is masturbating inside your womb.  
1129           It's starting there.

1130    J:    But is that the same as an adult's feeling, or not?

1131    ?:    Hmm, I can't remember.

1132    W:    We, no we did ask why, and they say, by the time you think of buying a  
1133           a a vest for a girl, why do you pick a sex and not knowing what uh -

1134    T:    What kind of -

1135    W:    - child is in yourself. And they say by the time you, sometimes you were  
1136           not in the class U, I don't know why, why do you not understand this. By  
1137           the time, by the time the you pick up a girl's clothes, it's the instinct of  
1138           you taking the girl's clothes, the child is masturbating inside of you.

1139    X:    (speaks Xhosa)

1140    W:    Yes (laughs)

1141    J:    Could we have a translation?

1142    W:    What she's saying is that they say they did say they they did say there  
1143           were children which are born with the feeling. Uh uh and then we must  
1144           let the children to do what - (laughter).

1145    U:    I don't know.

1146    J:    And what do you think of that? Do you agree?

1147    X:    Ja, we we disagree with that.

1148    ?:    We disagree.

1149    U:    Ja but -

1150    X:    We said we can't allow children to do that. But the teachers said we  
1151           must allow the children to do those things.

1152    T:    The rubbing.

1153    X:    Mm mm.

1154    J:    So what do you think you should do?

1155    X:    I - I dunno (very soft).

1156    W:    Because there even children who -

1157    J:    I'm interested. We, we've finished now.

1158    W:    Who when sleeping when sleeping le- sleeping alone there, would move  
1159           his uh uh bottom like this. (murmurs of agreements) When sleeping  
1160           you could hear them see that the child is moving.

1161    T:    And just maybe - Just maybe it's a habit.

1162    W:    I just thought the child must be uh having uh -

1163    U:    A dream?

1164    W:    No, uh what's this. Stress. (lots of laughter) That's why he's moving,  
1165           moving, moving. When I say, 'No, you mustn't do this just another' - and  
1166           just carries on doing it again.

1167 U: No I mean like like sometimes W, when when I know when I was  
1168 younger, when I couldn't sleep, I would lay on my side, and I would rock  
1169 myself like this, the whole time. Until I fell asleep but on my side.  
1170 W: But I I don't say you rock on your side. And even myself when I was  
1171 sleeping I take the two thumbs, they are doing this, until until I sleep.  
1172 Even the others they say I I I'm making noise, whenever I'm sleeping  
1173 with someone they say I'm making noise (laughter) -  
1174 S: Your toes is going -  
1175 W: My two toes are are doing this. But this one it's the -  
1176 U: Makes a -  
1177 W: It's her pelvis -  
1178 U: My my daughter does the same thing, but -  
1179 END OF RECORDING