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### **Abstract**

Adolescents' constructions of gender and sexuality are key in understanding high rates of gender violence, HIV, and teenage pregnancy; however, research into adolescents' constructions of gender and sexuality is lacking in South Africa. Therefore, this project aimed to understand adolescents' constructions of gender and sexuality in one low-income community in Cape Town, South Africa. The research was part of a larger study which collected data on the effectiveness of an intervention programme implemented by RAPCAN (Resources Aimed at the Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect) in improving knowledge about gender and sexuality. Our study looked at baseline constructions of gender and sexuality from a feminist, social constructionist theoretical perspective. The research was conducted at a school in Lavender Hill, Cape Town. Focus groups were conducted with learners aged 13-17 about their experiences of gender and sexuality. The findings of our thematic analysis suggest that gender and sexuality are constructed through discourses of power and passivity, where boys are constructed as powerful and girls as passive. In addition, participants challenged the idea of 'romance' in heterosexual relationships. This research contributes on practical, theoretical, and methodological levels to the field of gender and sexuality research and practice.

*Keywords:* gender, sexuality, violence, adolescents, qualitative research, social constructionism.

## **Background**

South Africa has extremely high levels of gender and sexual violence, HIV/AIDS, and teenage pregnancy. Gender relations and constructions of masculinity and femininity have been found to play an important role in these phenomena, which has resulted in the emergence of gender and sexuality as important research areas in South Africa. In order to understand these social problems and to attempt to ameliorate the current situation, it is necessary to look at gender hierarchies that exist in a multiplicity of spaces, and to examine the constructs that produce and preserve inequalities. The present study aims to address some of these issues. The literature review is divided into two sections: the first will look at gender and sexual violence against children, including gender violence in adolescent relationships, and the second section will look at adolescent sexual and reproductive health.

### **Gender and Sexual Violence Against Children in South Africa**

South Africa has high rates of sexual violence. Police statistics indicate that there were 63 603 rapes and sexual assaults reported during the year 2010/2011 (South African Police Service [SAPS], 2011); however, it can be assumed that the actual number is much higher, because the majority of rape cases are not reported to the police (Jewkes & Abrahams, 2002). Statistics from other sources also indicate high rates of rape and sexual assault of children and adolescents (Cox, Andrade, Lungelow, Schloetelburg, & Rode, 2007; Jewkes & Abrahams, 2002; Jewkes, Levin, Mbananga, & Bradshaw, 2002; Leoschut, 2009).

Entrenched patriarchal ideas about men, the social position of children, and dominant practices of sexuality create environments in which child rape is often normalized (Jewkes, Penn-Kekana, & Rose-Junius, 2005; Jewkes et al., 2006; Petersen, Bhana, & McKay, 2005; Posel, 2005; Richter & Dawes, 2008). Patriarchal ideas are pervasive in South Africa and are often held by both men and women (Jewkes et al., 2005; Petersen et al., 2005). These views see men as possessors of women and children, with the right to treat them (including beating or raping them) in whichever way they see fit (Richter & Dawes, 2008). Traditional views on the position of boys and girls in the social hierarchy also dictate that men and boys should be accorded respect, and men should be obeyed without refusal or argument, including obedience to demands of sex (Jewkes et al., 2005, 2006; Petersen et al., 2005). There are also strong beliefs

that men are naturally sexually impulsive and unable to control their sexual urges. Overall, a strong sense of sexual entitlement on the part of men emerged in much of the research.

In 2001, a report by Human Rights Watch brought the problem of sexual violence in South African schools to the fore. It reported widespread sexual violence against girls on the part of teachers, principals and boy peers. Gender violence in schools can be defined in terms of implicit and explicit gender violence (Dunne, Humphreys, & Leach, 2006). *Implicit gender violence* refers to institutional practices in schools that reproduce gender hierarchies. These practices include customs such as requiring that girls do domestic duties while boys concern themselves with more physical labour; gender differences in punishment and classroom management; and behaviour on the part of students, especially boys, that aims to assert domination. Relationships within peer groups and with educators therefore enforce normative gender roles which are typically unequal (Dunne et al., 2006; Leman & Tenenbaum, 2011; Ridgeway, 2009).

*Explicit gender violence* refers to aggressive acts that are visible and that make mention of issues related to gender. These acts can include sexual or physical assault, verbal abuse, and intimidation. With regard to sexual and physical assault, the South African National Schools Violence Study (NSVS) showed that violence is widespread in schools and is highly gendered (Burton, 2008). In high schools, boys were much more likely to be assaulted (5.9%) than girls (2.7%), whereas girls were more likely to be sexually assaulted (4.8%) than boys (1.4%). Verbal abuse and intimidation in schools are also highly gendered and are powerful tools in constructing gender and sexuality, contributing to the reproduction of gender hierarchies (Brown, Chesney-Lind, & Stein, 2007; Currie, Kelly, & Pomerantz, 2007; Dunne et al., 2006; Eliasson, Isaksson, & Laflamme, 2007). The violence experienced by children in schools also extends into their intimate relationships.

**Gender and sexual violence in adolescent relationships.** Violence and forced or coerced sex are highly prevalent in South African youth relationships (D. Bhana, 2012; Flisher, Myer, Merais, Lombard, & Reddy, 2007; Jewkes, Vundule, Maforah, & Jordaan, 2001; Wood, Maforah, & Jewkes, 1998; Wood, Lambert, & Jewkes, 2007, 2008; Wubs et al., 2009). In a study of violence perpetration in adolescent relationships, Flisher et al. (2007) found that 20.7% of youth in Cape Town admitted to having committed violence against their partners, whereas Wubs et al. (2009) found that 37.8% of their sample had experienced violence from a partner.

Interestingly, both studies found that the perpetration of violent behaviour was significantly higher amongst females than males in Cape Town, whereas the opposite was true in the other study sites in Mpumalanga and Tanzania (Flisher et al., 2007; Wubs et al., 2009). Wubs et al. suggest that this could be because of over-and-under reporting on the part of both boys and girls; however, further research is required in order to determine the nature of this phenomenon.

Several qualitative studies have investigated how violence manifests itself in youth relationships. An issue that emerges overwhelmingly is the normalization of violence, where being physically, verbally or sexually assaulted by boyfriends is considered normal and even to be expected (Bamberg, 2004; D. Bhana, 2012; Sathiparsad, 2008; Wood et al., 1998, 2007, 2008). In some contexts, the use of force was considered socially acceptable, especially in cases where a girl did not want to have sex and needed to be persuaded, or needed to be punished for some perceived indiscretion (Wood et al., 2007, 2008). These behaviours were often seen by both girls and boys as ways of showing love. Other cases, however, were viewed by the girls, and sometimes by the men who had perpetrated the beating, as abusive. These practices are deemed acceptable by ideas of men's superiority and the subsequent need for women to defer and be submissive. Denying sex and insisting on contraceptive use, for example, may be considered disrespectful and worthy of punishment. Although these kinds of experiences are considered normative by many adolescent girls and boys, D. Bhana (2012) describes how many of the girls in her study feared their boyfriends and lacked sexual agency.

Some research suggests that boys use gender and sexual violence as a method to 'protect' their agency, and therefore alternative masculinities should be encouraged (Tolman, Spencer, Rosen-Reynoso, & Porche, 2003). In this regard, research has found that, although discourses of male power still dominate, alternative forms of masculinity are starting to emerge (B. Anderson, 2010; D. Bhana & Pillay, 2011; Kahn, Holmes, & Brett, 2011; McCormack & Anderson, 2010; Sathiparsad, 2008). In South Africa, research shows that discourses relating to men's presumed right to hit or punish women are being questioned by some men and boys (B. Anderson, 2010; Sathiparsad, 2008; Shefer et al., 2008). Regarding femininity, D. Bhana and Pillay (2011) show that, contrary to constructions of girls as submissive, girls in a single-sex South African school demonstrate diverse and sometimes even violent femininities. Discourses of masculinity and femininity also play a role in the reproductive health of young people.

## **Adolescent Sexual and Reproductive Health**

Much of the research on youth and sexuality has arisen as a response to growing concerns about the HIV epidemic and to mounting literature suggesting that young women between the ages of 15-24 are the most at-risk group for contracting HIV (D. Bhana & Pattman, 2009; Greig, Peacock, Jewkes, & Msimang, 2008; Jewkes, Dunkle, Nduna, & Shai, 2010; Shisana, Rice, Zungu, & Zuma, 2010). Given that around half of adolescents in South Africa are sexually active by the age of 16 (Peltzer & Pengpid, 2006), it is important to look at relationship dynamics that affect sexual and reproductive health in this age group.

The high prevalence of HIV in young females specifically, as well as teenage pregnancy, have been linked to intimate partner violence and gender power inequalities in youth relationships (Jewkes et al., 2010; Jewkes, Morrell, & Christofides, 2009; Varga, 2003). For example, Jewkes et al. (2001) found that pregnant teenagers were much more likely to have experienced forced sex in their first and subsequent sexual encounters than controls who had never been pregnant. Adolescent pregnancy also has differential consequences for boys and girls, with girls having to bear the burden of responsibility for preventing pregnancy and for the long-term consequences if they do fall pregnant (Varga, 2003).

Research investigating the high rates of HIV and teenage pregnancy often looks at adolescent risk behaviour such as age at first sex and self-efficacy about condom and contraceptive use (K. Anderson, Beutel, & Maughan-Brown, 2007; A. Bhana, Zimmerman, & Cupp, 2008; Boer & Tshilidzi Mashamba, 2007; Halpern-Flesher, Kropp, Boyer, Tschann, & Ellen, 2004; Peltzer & Pengpid, 2006). However, many of these studies have failed to take into account the role of normative masculinities and femininities and unequal gender power dynamics in explaining why these risk behaviours exist in the first place. For example, there are widespread beliefs amongst young men that having many partners proves their sexual prowess and masculinity (D. Bhana & Pattman, 2009; Salo, 2002; Varga, 2003). In addition, there is a sexual double standard that having multiple sexual partners is acceptable for boys, but not for girls. Moreover, some boys view attempts by girls to use condoms or contraception as disrespectful and a sign that the girl is HIV-positive or cheating on her partner, limiting the sexual agency of girls (Dietrich et al., 2011; Lesch & Kruger, 2005; Varga, 2003). These beliefs indicate the need for prevention interventions that aim to change entrenched gender power relations by increasing girls' sexual agency and providing alternatives to normative masculinity

and femininity (Boer & Tshilidzi Mashamba, 2007; Jewkes et al., 2009; Lesch & Kruger, 2005; Sathiparsad, 2008; Varga, 2003).

The background information provided above has focussed on gender and sexual violence and adolescent sexual and reproductive health as two concerning social problems which shape, and are shaped by adolescents' constructions of gender and sexuality. It therefore follows that constructions of gender and sexuality need to be understood in order to help combat these problems; however, research into adolescents' constructions of gender and sexuality is lacking in South Africa. More research is needed on this topic in order to inform what kinds of interventions are needed to address issues of gender violence in relationships and schools, as well as to improve the sexual and reproductive health of adolescent girls and boys.

### **Aims of the Research Project**

This study is part of a larger research project, in collaboration with RAPCAN (Resources Aimed at the Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect), which aims to collect data toward assessing the effectiveness of an intervention known as *Today's Children, Tomorrow's Parents* (TCTP) (see Appendix A for a description of the project) (Resources Aimed at the Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect [RAPCAN], 2010). The intervention was implemented in Lavender Hill High School by RAPCAN as part of the Life Orientation (LO) curriculum, and is being re-evaluated.

The aim of the current research was to collect and write-up the data for a baseline study that investigated how learners construct gender and sexuality. Our research questions for this study were: "How do adolescents construct gender and sexuality?" and "How do these constructions shape gender interactions and sexual relations?"

### **Design and Methods**

#### **Theoretical Framework**

We approach the topic of gender and sexuality from a feminist social constructionist theoretical perspective, focusing on the role of language and power relations in constructing social realities (Burr, 1995). Social constructionism emphasises the production and reproduction of knowledge through social interaction. It is critical of everyday knowledge and truth claims which are taken for granted. In order to understand the social construction of gender, feminist research seeks to conceptualise gender as a means of control through which the subordination of women is made possible (Kiguwa, 2004). Feminism is in addition linked to action and strives to

improve the lived reality of women and change entrenched patriarchal gender relations. Gender is therefore the main focus of analysis in this research.

West and Zimmerman (1987) describe gender as something that is ‘done’ and ‘achieved’ rather than something that is innate and unchangeable. The concept of ‘doing gender’ therefore refers to the ways in which gender difference is produced and reproduced through the repetition of daily actions (Shefer, 2004). Although much research on gender has focused on either masculinity or femininity, constructing them as polar opposites, it is important to highlight the relational nature of gender, where women and men play a part in reproducing dominant forms of masculinity and femininity (Martin & Muthukrishna, 2011; Talbot & Quayle, 2010).

In addition, Connell (1995) describes hegemonic masculinity as the dominant way of doing or practicing masculinity at a particular point in time and in a particular cultural environment, and the same can be said for femininity. It is therefore useful to think of the existence of a variety of masculinities and femininities, depending on the context as well as issues of ‘race’, class, and culture (Abrams, 2003; D. Bhana & Pillay, 2011; Connell, 1995; Cooper, 2009).

Gender is also linked to sexuality in that it is “a social process that constantly refers to bodies and what bodies do” (Connell, 1995, p. 71) and sexuality can therefore be considered a physical playing out of gender relations. From this vantage point, it is understood that knowledge about gender shapes knowledge about sexuality and that these constructs shape daily life (Lehr, 2008; Tolman, Striepe, & Harmon, 2003). Heterosexuality is constructed as normative and is produced through the social construction of gender difference (Hollway, 1984). Hollway describes three main discourses which construct heterosexuality: the male sexual drive discourse which suggests that male sexuality is biologically determined by an innate, uncontrollable drive; the female have/hold discourse in which women are positioned as responsible for establishing and maintaining heterosexual relationships; and the permissive discourse which supposedly allows women equal expression of their sexuality in relation to men. However, there is a contradiction within the permissive discourse because the ‘equal expression of female sexuality’ often ends up benefiting men. Therefore, it is important to be aware of the role of these discourses in constructing heterosexuality.



## **Qualitative Research Methods**

Qualitative research is an interpretive methodology that seeks to understand the subjective and diverse experiences of individuals (Marecek, 2003). It also takes a critical stance to the larger social context in which research takes place, connecting the individual to social history, culture and broader relations of power. Knowledge is constructed through meaning and can legitimize or challenge existing power structures. Participants are active meaning-making agents in the research process (Parker, 2005). The researcher is therefore not the primary source of knowledge, but the researcher's role in the co-construction of data is acknowledged.

We chose a qualitative approach for this study because we were interested in learners' subjective experiences of gender and sexuality in the context of Lavender Hill. The qualitative methodology was particularly suited to the social constructionist framework of our research because it provided data through which the construction of meaning related to gender and sexuality could be analysed.

The criteria for evaluating qualitative research differ from quantitative research in that qualitative research does not aim to be objective and specifically takes into account subjectivity (Willig, 2001). Qualitative research is not concerned with representativeness and generalizability (i.e. reliability) because its main purpose is to understand a particular phenomenon in a particular context. In addition, validity is achieved through the flexible and open-ended nature of the research process. Furthermore, reflexivity is important to identify the researcher's own interests and biases. This in turn increases validity by the mere fact that the researcher's presence in the research is acknowledged.

## **Sample and Data Collection Procedure**

The sample for this study came from Lavender Hill High School. Lavender Hill is a community in the Cape Flats, Cape Town which experiences high rates of poverty, unemployment, violence and gangsterism, and lacks many basic services and resources. Access to Lavender Hill High School was granted to RAPCAN by the Department of Education and the principal of the school. RAPCAN mediated access for the researchers. Participation was voluntary and recruitment took place via the teachers, with the assistance of RAPCAN.

We intended to collect data from five mixed focus groups with six to ten participants per group, conducting one focus group with each grade (grades 8-12). However, many of those who had agreed to participate did not arrive. The principal also did not allow the matrices to participate

because they were preparing for exams. As a result, we conducted four focus groups with four participants in focus group one, two in focus groups two and three, and five in the last focus group. Most learners were first-language Afrikaans speakers; therefore a first-language Afrikaans speaker, who was not one of the researchers, co-facilitated most of the focus groups. All focus groups were tape-recorded and transcribed verbatim.

**Focus groups.** Focus groups are a method in which joint meanings and interaction are emphasised (Willig, 2001). Focus groups were the most appropriate data collection method for our study because we were interested in how the participants constructed gender and sexuality relationally (Wilkinson, 1999). In addition, the focus groups provided an environment for ‘doing gender’ that was similar to the natural context where boys and girls interact on a daily basis. This added to the ecological validity of the data and of the study as a whole.

In this study, the researchers introduced the topic by asking learners about their understanding of gender relations in their community. We then read out a case-vignette, leading into a discussion about sexual relationships in their community (See Appendix B). We modified some of the questions from Abrams’ (2003) study, which looked at constructions of gender and sexuality in different socio-economic contexts. The questions and case-vignette were altered to make them as relevant to the context of adolescence in Lavender Hill as possible.

### **Data Analysis – Thematic Analysis**

Thematic analysis is a data analysis method through which general patterns in the data are identified and interpreted (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Although thematic analysis has generally been considered a method that is more consistent with a realist epistemology, it is a flexible method that can fit in with a feminist, social constructionist theoretical account. From this perspective, themes that are found in the data are not seen as a reflection of reality, but show “the ways in which events, realities, meanings, experiences, and so on are the effects of a range of discourses operating within society” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 81).

Thematic analysis consists of five main steps, although it is important to take into account that there is a constant movement back and forth between steps (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The first step was immersion, where we read the focus group transcripts thoroughly and familiarised ourselves with the data. Then we were able to start identifying themes in the data, labelling and coding all instances of the themes we identified. We then reviewed, refined and elaborated on the themes, creating a more nuanced and complete collection. Finally, we

interpreted the themes, providing an analytical account of how they answered our research questions.

### **Reflexivity**

Qualitative research acknowledges the researchers' role in the co-construction of the data, and does not aim to eliminate bias (Parker, 2005). It was therefore important for us as researchers to reflect on the impact that our identities and institutional affiliations had on the research process. Although qualitative researchers acknowledge the importance of reflexivity, Parker warns that reflexivity should not be reduced to personal confessions, and should remain focused on the political implications of the research.

Both of us are white, middle class females living in post-apartheid South Africa. We were also representing two institutions, the University of Cape Town (UCT) and RAPCAN. The combination of these identities and affiliations meant that we represented privilege and, one could say, elitism. Although apartheid is over, geographically Cape Town is still largely divided along 'race'/class lines, and white people still enjoy considerable privilege. Despite an equitable and affirmative admissions policy, UCT is also considered by many to be an elitist university with stringent entrance requirements, and it is still often seen as a 'white' university. We experienced this position of privileged outsiders quite strongly when we entered Lavender Hill. For example, we were taken aback by the stark contrast between the poor living conditions in Lavender Hill and the privilege a few roads down. After the focus groups, many participants also told us about their ambitions about going to university, which they would not be able to achieve because of a lack of resources.

Finally, our identities as females and our own personal experiences with gender and sexual violence informed our position within a feminist framework. Although we did not explicitly state our feminist position, it became evident in the ways in which we asked questions about the participants' experiences of gender and sexuality. For example, the case-vignette depicted a stereotypical scenario where it was clear that the boy's actions should be interpreted as 'wrong' and our interactions with the participants could have reinforced this. Therefore, it is important to acknowledge that the participants were telling a particular story for a certain audience (i.e. two white, middle class females with a feminist agenda) (Parker, 2005).

### **Ethical Considerations**

Ethical approval was obtained from the UCT. We developed an informed assent form for the learners and an informed consent for their parents (see Appendices C and D respectively). Both forms were translated into Afrikaans; however, most participants preferred English forms. Learners were only allowed to participate if their parents had signed the consent form and the learners also agreed to participate by signing the assent form. In addition, participants were informed that participation in the focus groups was voluntary and that they had the right to withdraw from the study at any time without negative consequences.

In terms of benefits, participants did not receive any monetary gain for their participation, but a donation of stationary was made to Lavender Hill High as a token of appreciation. Refreshments were also provided during the focus groups. In addition, RAPCAN will be using the findings of this study to improve some of the interventions that they run in the community. Although there were no direct harms involved in the research, some of the questions in the focus groups were of a sensitive nature. Therefore, RAPCAN developed a list of resources providing services to young people, which we gave to the participants after the focus groups. In terms of debriefing, we made ourselves available for any questions following the focus groups.

### **Analysis and Discussion**

In our thematic analysis of the transcripts, following the steps suggested by Braun and Clarke (2006), we identified three main themes: discourses of passivity, discourses of power, and challenging 'romance' in heterosexual relationships. Due to space constraints, only the main themes are presented here. Coming from a social constructionist theoretical perspective, we acknowledge that these themes do not necessarily represent 'reality' but rather our own interpretation of the data. Therefore, we recognize that our interpretation of the transcripts is one of many possible interpretations. All the names mentioned in the analysis are pseudonyms.

#### **Discourses of Passivity**

Discourses of passivity were evident across the entire data set where girls were commonly constructed as 'weak'. Girls and boys relied on several subthemes when referring to discourses of passivity, such as girls being boys' possessions, lacking agency in sexual decision-making and being the target of games such as *druk haar vas* (pin her tight). Although most of the girls opposed these discourses of passivity in the opinions they expressed, they simultaneously drew on them to describe their experiences. As suggested by Talbot and Quayle (2010), girls

therefore play an active role in constructing themselves as passive. In naming this theme ‘discourses of passivity’, we make reference to the powerlessness that many girls face in contesting dominant practices of masculinity and femininity and do not aim to infer that girls are inherently passive.

Discourses of passivity were mentioned in relation to boys who are ‘feminine’:

**Wafeeqah:** *There are moffies in the school. It’s a boy that wanna be a lot like a girl who’s not a girl but he speak like a girl [...] they say the head boy, he’s a moffie-*

**Taryn:** *Or the head girl.* (FG 3, girls only)

Rather than pointing to the fact that being homosexual has to do with sexual orientation, Wafeeqah speaks about the ways in which “moffies” (gay men) are feminine. Although there was no elaboration on the definition of ‘acting/speaking like a girl’, girls as well as boys reinforced a certain kind of masculinity that is based in heterosexuality. Similarly, Martin and Muthukrishna (2011) found that ‘forced’ heterosexuality and the monitoring of masculinity by both girls and boys made it hard for boys to challenge existing hegemonic masculinities. Thus, there is an element of ‘weakness’ in wanting to be like a girl or being a girl in the first place. Girls were also constructed as ‘weak’ when they were viewed as possessions.

**Girls as possessions.** Both girls and boys made reference to girls as possessions by illustrating that girls are subjugated to boys’ decisions. Boys in particular spoke of the possessive nature of their sexual relationships in terms of controlling for infidelity:

**Daniel:** *[...] sometimes a girl know if a boy go there [to a party] something bad gonna happen there. She’s gonna tell him not to go then he’ll decide if he’s gonna go or not.*

**Damien:** *Like my girl, I don’t let her go any place if she don’t tell me where she gonna go now.* (FG 4, boys only)

Damien speaks of “my girl” in a way that shows that she is his possession and that she has to be accountable to him rather than herself. Girls also positioned themselves as boys’ possessions which often limited their agency in sexual decision-making:

**Amira:** *I’m now his girlfriend, if a boy has to ask me to give him my virginity [...] then it’s going to be hard for me to say no and there’s time with boys that they can force also [...] you’re not that strong enough to protect yourself from them.*

**Yeshe:** *What do you guys think?*

**Konrad:** *For me as a boy [...] we have an advantage over the girls and if we say so then girls will do so. We get more stuff right than them.*

**Brandon:** *Yes.* (FG 1, mixed)

Amira indirectly defines herself as the possession of her boyfriend by speaking about “being his girlfriend” and “giving him my virginity”. She supports this statement by drawing on a discourse of passivity where she is unable to stand up for herself, and in doing so limits her own agency. The boys agree that they have an “advantage over the girls” which puts them in a position of power. Similarly, Abrams (2003) described the ways in which girls construct their sense of self in relation to boys, which places them as subordinate.

Discourses of passivity were also evident when girls had boyfriends that were gangsters:

**Lizme:** *They [girls] also become like gangsters-*

**Hope:** *They fit in with their boyfriends. They are like...call girls [...] they must give the boys what they want [...] if he now decides he wants to have sex he can have sex now with her-*

**Lizme:** *And she can't tell him no.* (FG 2, girls only)

In the above extract, girls who have boyfriends that are gangsters ‘belong’ to their gangster boyfriend. Lizme and Hope describe these girls as “call girls” who are expected to have sex when their boyfriend demands it, limiting their sexual agency. Poverty and lack of resources, as well as the history of forced segregation and removal during apartheid has created a gang culture in the Cape Flats (Cooper, 2009). Gang culture and the glorification of violence shape a certain kind of violent masculinity which legitimates boys’ use of violence and coercion in relationships. These findings are also supported by research which suggests that men consider women to be their possessions and expect them to be obedient (Jewkes et al., 2005, 2006; Petersen et al., 2005).

In contrast, both girls and boys expressed oppositions to discourses of passivity by describing the ways in which girls used their status as ‘gangster girlfriend’ to gain power:

**Taryn:** *[...] I still see girls running around here wanting to be gangsters when it's not just the boys-*

**Wafeeqah:** *[...] when then they have a boyfriend that's a gangster, they must also acting like [...] 'I'm also here' [...] 'I can also be rude' [...] 'you must see my true colours' and*

*then they actually just putting up a face that says, 'I can also be rude but I'm actually not like that, I'm a soft person.'* (FG 3, girls only)

Taryn and Wafeeqah indicate that girls use 'being rude' as a way to make themselves known and heard. At the same time, however, girls' 'softness' highlights that they cannot escape the discourse of passivity even when they attempt to oppose it. Currie et al. (2007) found that girls use violence, verbal and physical, against other girls as a way of exerting power and agency, and to elicit respect in their relationships. Girls' violence is, however, often interpreted as a 'masculinization' in gaining control rather than an alternative expression of femininity (Brown et al., 2007).

'Girls as possessions' was furthermore notable in the way that girls' bodies were commonly objectified and labelled in terms of sexual practices:

*I think they [girls] feel unsafe in the environment as well because- some of them are actually being targeted [...] they say 'this girl has a good body and now she's my partner and if I can't have her then I'm gonna hurt whoever wants her [...] if one girl at the age of 13 has sex...they take it this way... 'OK you all live in an area like Lavender Hill so I guess that all the girls at the age of 13 is having sex' [...] they say 'ou werk' which means that you had sex...so every single girl they will call 'ou werk' even if you know that she hasn't had it.* (Sam, FG 4, boys only)

Girls are referred to as "ou werk" ("old work") which is slang for 'whore'. Even when girls have not had sex, they are referred to in this way as something that has been used and is no longer dignified. Similarly, Bamberg (2004) analysed a narrative account of adolescent boys who used 'slut bashing' as a means to construct their own morality in relation to 'promiscuous' girls. This is linked to the double-standard, where it is acceptable for boys to be sexually active and have multiple partners, but it is not acceptable for girls (D. Bhana & Pattman, 2009; Salo, 2002; Varga, 2003).

The extract above also shows how Lavender Hill has come to be constructed in a particular way in people's imaginations, to the extent that young women in the community have come to be seen in a specific way (i.e. 'ou werk'). Thus, the femininity of all girls is publicly constructed through communal perceptions, making it difficult for girls and boys to challenge these discourses. Additionally, this allows boys who refer to girls as 'ou werk' to construct

themselves as morally superior. The morality of boys and girls was further questioned in relation to sexual decision-making.

**Lack of agency in sexual decision-making.** Girls and boys drew on discourses of passivity to describe girls' limited agency in sexual decision-making. For example, in response to the case-vignette participants reflect on the responsibility of each character:

*Amira: Faizel was wrong but Aisha was just as wrong. She should've known before she went to his house what the consequences would've been [...] I wouldn't even go to his house at all if I knew that no one else was with him there.*

*Konrad: Faizel was right and she went on the wrong track. She was supposed to defend herself because she don't want to but she fell for Faizel. (FG 1, mixed)*

Amira is clear when she says that Faizel should not have pushed Aisha into sex; however, she also places some of the responsibility on Aisha. Konrad, on the other hand, puts the responsibility solely on Aisha. Aisha is furthermore blamed for having gone over to Faizel's house where she should have known that she would have to have sex with him. Although Amira says she would have done it differently, positioning herself against the discourse of passivity, she bases her decision on the notion that she would not be able to stand her ground against Faizel's request for sex. D. Bhana (2012) similarly found that girls feared their boyfriends because boys habitually coerced girls into having sex with them. Although most girls in her research strongly opposed these dominant practices of masculinity, they also complied with the available codes of conduct that legitimized such practices.

The idea that 'going over to his house' is associated with the expectation of having sex was also found in a study by Wood et al. (2007). Thus, once a girl has decided to 'go over to his house' she has given her consent to sex. Elsewhere, participants expressed this notion of consent by stating that Aisha made a choice to have sex with Faizel:

*Wafeeqah: She agreed to it so it's not rape, if you don't agree with it and he force himself on you then it's rape...she gave in...she gave in quick.*

*Taryn: She was easy. (FG 3, girls only)*

Here there is a clear indication that some girls who do not exercise their agency are seen as 'passive'. The dynamic between boys who use force and girls who indirectly 'give consent' by going to the boy's house, obscured the responsibility of both in sexual decision-making.



In addition, girls spoke about the difficulties in exercising agency when other girls did not:

**Taryn:** *It's not just affecting her as a female but just the whole thing where she didn't stand her ground is gonna make it 'okay she was easy to convince' it's gonna make him think that of the next one and the next one and the next one [...] it's gonna become this whole cycle and men are already thinking that women are weak so they give us a bad face.*

**Wafeeqah:** *They say the girls play hard-to-get [...] they actually try to stand their ground but they don't know how to say no [...] they think they're doing the right thing but actually they doing the wrong thing, like Taryn said [...] I will say no. (FG3, girls only)*

Although Taryn and Wafeeqah position themselves against the discourse of passivity, they illustrate again how the actions of some girls are used to publicly construct the femininity of all girls in communal discourses. The result is that many girls find it difficult to actively challenge normative discourses of femininity. This was also found by Wood et al. (1998) who showed that girls' sexual agency was often limited by the construction of all girls as submissive based on the actions of some.

The participants demonstrated oppositions to discourses of passivity by living contrary to the norm as described in the aforementioned subthemes: *"I just do the total opposite...girls are forever pregnant in Lavender Hill. I'm not pregnant and I'm 17 already [...] I abstain, don't do what other girls do because it's a thing girls in Lavender Hill do"* (Taryn, FG 3, girls only).

Taryn is attempting to oppose a hegemonic norm of femininity in her particular context. This highlights the significance of the interaction between the social context and how gender is constructed and constrained within a particular setting (Abrams, 2003). For example, *druk haar vas* is a game which many participants spoke about. This game draws on the notion of girls being boys' possessions and their subsequent lack of sexual agency. Talking about *druk haar vas* therefore became an important way in which participants illustrated discourses of passivity and discourses of male control.

**Druk haar vas.** *Druk haar vas* involves one person (usually a boy) grabbing another (usually a girl) and forcefully kissing and touching them sexually against their will. Girls pointed to the notion of *druk haar vas* as sexual harassment. *Druk haar vas* can therefore be seen as a

form of explicit gender violence (Dunne et al., 2006). Girls positioned themselves against discourses of passivity in the ways that they reacted to *druk haar vas*:

**Taryn:** [...] you can't force me to kiss you [...] I really don't take nonsense [...] it's stupid-a boy standing, a girl passes, she doesn't give him any attention, or, okay sometimes she's also to blame- trying to play hard-to-get or whatever- [...] it's rape or it's sexual harassment because he's gonna touch your ass or whatever [...] I don't like it, I don't like it at all-

**Wafeeqah:** And sometimes you have to be rude to them and then they understand you [...] no she's not playing hard-to-get she's just not wanting to do it. (FG 3, girls only)

Once again, 'being rude' is a way in which girls resist discourses of passivity. In addition, this extract shows that boys used the notion that girls are playing hard-to-get in order to dismiss girls' resistance to their advances. Similarly, in attempting to oppose discourses of passivity, Wafeeqah and Taryn are at the same time blaming some girls for "playing hard-to-get". Wood et al. (2007) also found that boys legitimated their persistence of sexual harassment by claiming that girls were playing hard-to-get. In some instances girls went along with such advances for fear of violent consequences, whereas boys justified the use of force as part of game-playing.

It is evident from the analysis of this theme that in many cases girls were positioned as passive in relation to boys being powerful. However, discourses of passivity came across much more strongly as a distinct theme and did not necessarily refer to boys' power. Therefore, we identified 'discourses of power' as a separate theme.

### **Discourses of Power**

Boys and girls expressed various ways in which boys were constructed as 'powerful'. Girls in particular illustrated this through their experience of *druk haar vas* as something that is often done with force: "*IT IS THAT WAY they got the power to do something*" (Taryn, FG 3, girls only). In addition, girls spoke of the unpredictability of boys' power: "[...] you don't know how far he can go because he goes from kissing, touching, to [...] if he can kiss you and touch you in front of everybody else then he can do anything else" (Amira, FG 1, mixed). In these extracts Taryn and Amira draw on the male sexual drive discourse, constructing boys' sexuality as dangerous and uncontrollable (Hollway, 1984). Constructing male sexuality in this way puts boys in a position of power.

Boys also described *druk haar vas* as a means to show their dominance:

*[...] sometimes [boys] do it to impress the girl ((noises of agreement)) and show their friends they can druk this girl vas. They can do it and [...] [other boys] cheer for him because he 'druk this girl vas'. (Daniel, FG 4, boys only)*

There is a sense of achievement and accomplishment in being able to *druk haar vas* and boys' power is reinforced when they are successful. However, when girls reject boys and boys are not able to *druk haar vas*, boys lose this power:

**Taryn:** *[...] and then the boys will make fun of him, the one that wanted to druk that girl vas-*

**Wafeeqah:** *[...] I think they wanna be kwaai and they want to be known. (FG 3, girls only)*

In this context the word "kwaai" ("angry" or "strict") is associated with being cool. Elsewhere, boys agreed that *druk haar vas* is 'cool':

**Brandon:** *But some boys are like that, they just want to do this, do that and they think they're cool, they think they're kwaai.*

**Courage:** *[...] d'is gevaarlik man. (FG 1, mixed)*

Literally "gevaarlik" means "dangerous" but in the Cape Flats it has come to mean "awesome". Therefore, dangerous and risk-taking behaviour have come to be related to being cool/awesome and being powerful. These discourses of power are fundamental in reproducing hegemonic masculinities (Cooper, 2009).

In addition, participants disregarded discourses of male power by referring to situations in which girls were constructed as more powerful:

**Brandon:** *[...] Say now for example a man hits a lady then the woman will take it serious and take it to the court and sort this man out and [...] he will just beg at the police to say sorry and then [...] they will come and she tells him that he can't say sorry now.*

**Amira:** *I think it's unfair because when it's the girl, he don't go back to the girl and go lock her up [...] they would like hit the boy, they won't do that to the girl [...] And you very seldom find girls being locked up for abuse.*

**Brandon:** *Sometimes I don't feel okay with it- then I just get nervous sometimes and then just now it can happen to me if something wrong happens in life someday. (FG 1, mixed)*

On the one hand, participants attempted to show how boys are not that powerful because girls can take them to court, whereas boys cannot take girls to court for abuse. On the other hand,

Brandon supports the discourse of male power by describing his own fear of losing control and acting on violent urges. In a study conducted by Shefer et al. (2008) participants similarly constructed women as ‘abusing their legal power’ as well as having more resources to fight abuse than men had. Thus, men viewed the empowerment of women as the undermining of their own identity as powerful.

The discourses of power and passivity described in the above themes shaped heterosexual relationships in the participants’ community. Heterosexual relationships were often perceived as negative and participants challenged the idea of ‘romance’.

### **Heterosexual Relationships in Lavender Hill: Challenging ‘Romance’**

Participants consistently remarked on the lack of ‘romance’ in heterosexual relationships in their communities, which resulted in negative perceptions of these relationships. We recognize that the idea of ‘romance’ is a construct in itself, replete with certain connotations regarding what is and is not ‘romantic’. We also acknowledge our own use of the construct in the way we phrased the questions (e.g. “describe romantic or sexual relationships in your community” which was taken directly from Abrams’ (2003) study). We did not think of the implications of using the term ‘romantic’ for the participants’ negative perceptions of relationships in their community and the possible unintentional ideological effects this may have had.

Public constructions of what ‘romantic’ relationships should be like are strongly influenced by gendered discourses and heteronormativity. For example, common notions of ‘romantic’ relationships suggest that women are in search of love, whereas men are more interested in sex (Tolman, 2000). A ‘romantic’ relationship therefore involves the interplay between the male sexual drive discourse and the female have/hold discourse (Hollway, 1984). Cavanagh (2007) also emphasises that idealized romantic relationships often involve public displays of affection that make it known that those involved are a couple, as well as an emphasis on the more private, sexual aspect of relationships.

However, it is important to take into account local constructions of moral and responsible personhood in each community, which will in turn inform what idealized ‘romantic’ relationships look like (Salo, 2002). In this case, mutual respect, as well as privacy and restraint in displaying the relationship seemed to be valued a great deal more. For our participants, there seemed to be a disjuncture between what they viewed as ‘romantic’ and the relationships that were modelled to them, leading them to believe that there were no ‘romantic’ relationships in

their community. The following exchange illustrates the disillusionment that participants felt about relationships in Lavender Hill:

*Taryn: [...] there's nothing romantic about having to go to work and your husband or boyfriend is laying around, tonight he's drunk [...] there's no romantic relationships in Lavender Hill, there's a few [...]*

*Wafeeqah: Here and there-*

*Taryn: The only romantic relationships is with the people of over 60 to 70 and it's very seldom that both of them are still alive, so Lavender Hill is-*

*Wafeeqah: Here and there!*

*Taryn: Very Seldom, very very seldom, I mean very seldom. (FG 3, girls only)*

Participants illustrated how the lack of 'romance' in relationships came about through violence in relationships and through public displays of violence and sexuality, which are discussed as sub-themes. Within each sub-theme, we also show how negative perceptions of relationships were challenged by the participants, who discussed elements of 'romance' in their own relationships.

**Violence in relationships.** Most of the participants described the relationships in their community as violent and abusive. Men were mostly seen as the perpetrators of violence. Wafeeqah (FG 3, girls only) describes one such relationship: *"She steals for the boyfriend and if she don't get money for the boyfriend she gets, she must walk with a blue eye, she must have blue marks on her body, she gets stabbed even, or he just do, he just do something bad to her."* Similarly, Konrad (FG 1, mixed) emphasises verbal abuse in relationships: *"Here where I live now, they don't have romantic relationships. Every day they must, they must have arguments [...]love arguments."*

Some participants also explained violence as a means through which boys exerted their power and sexual agency in relationships; therefore sex was not seen as a way of expressing 'romance', but rather as a way of expressing masculine power. For example, Daniel (FG 4, boys only) suggests that girls are frightened of saying no to sex for fear of violent repercussions: *"She also don't wanna make him angry 'cause she's thinking of the consequences that will happen if she gonna say no [...] Maybe, he's gonna hit her to have sex with her or so."* As this quote shows, negative perceptions of intimate relationships are often linked to coercion, with men as powerful enforcers of sexuality.

Although participants agreed that most of the violence in relationships was perpetrated by men against women, some instances of violence perpetration by girls were also mentioned:

**Craig:** *Like when a girl is ready [...]*

**Daniel:** *[...] And there comes a time when a boy is not ready also*

**Yeshe:** *And they also can say no?*

**Daniel:** *They also can say no. I think there is a relationship where girls force boys to have sex with them [...] Like maybe they sitting somewhere and then, or they come from a party, and now the boy maybe just wanna go sleep and the girl wanna have sex with him because they maybe drunk or so. If he don't wanna then she forces him to do it [...]* (FG 4, boys only)

In some cases, violent femininities come to the fore between girls competing for boys: “*Yes and they fight over boys. I saw a girl stab a girl over a boy.*” (Hope, FG 2, girls only). Thus, although physical, sexual and verbal violence perpetrated by men was constructed as more common, there was still a discursive space where violent femininities were constructed.

The accounts provided by the participants regarding high levels of violence and abuse in relationships are echoed in other South African literature. The normalization of physical, sexual and verbal violence perpetrated by men and adolescent boys against their partners is often underpinned by ideas of male superiority (D. Bhana, 2012; Wood et al., 1998, 2007, 2008). The consensus amongst the participants in our study was that boys were most often the perpetrators of violence, although there were some examples of female perpetration. Similar to the findings of D. Bhana and Pillay (2011), participants gave accounts of diverse femininities where girls were sometimes violent towards other girls, usually as a result of competition for boys in order to establish their heterosexuality.

Despite the fact that most of the participants described violence as a prominent feature of many relationships, they also positioned themselves strongly against this norm. They presented disapproving opinions regarding violence in relationships, highlighting the importance of communication:

**Lizme:** *It's very wrong for a girl to abuse her boyfriend, and for a boy to abuse his girlfriend.*

**Hope:** *I just think that no-one should lift their hands for anyone in a relationship and that you can talk anything out and if, even if you think you can't talk it out then leave the person if you feel that you don't want to bother with the person [...]* (FG 2, girls only)

Likewise, Daniel (FG 4, boys only) contrasts ‘good’ relationships with ‘bad’ relationships, emphasizing violence in ‘bad’ relationships and the importance of communication in ‘good’ relationships:

*[...] Some of relationships are good and some is bad... Like the man hit his wife in the road and the children see what the father do and they gonna do the same when they get bigger, and you get a good one that's, they always talk and talk to the children and they grow up to be good parents*

The participants also seemed to view mutual respect as important in relationships. For example, Amira (FG 1, mixed) emphasizes the importance of the boy ‘obeying’ the girl’s wishes: “*[...] they’ve been together for four months and not once does he touch her like the wrong way or anything because they both said they’re not ready no matter how old they are and he obeyed what she said.*” Similarly, Lizme (FG 2, girls only) also highlights how sex is not essential in an intimate relationship: “*[...] if she doesn’t want to have sex then he can do nothing about it because it’s not about- is not actually about having sex to like love you. He can have love in different ways [...]*”

In addition to condemning violence and approval of mutuality in intimate relationships, participants also presented ideas of what they believed ‘romantic’ relationships should be like, giving examples of their own relationships that were not violent, abusive or controlling. Some girls suggested that behaviours that were contrary to traditional norms of masculinity, such as helping with housework, would be considered ‘romantic’:

**Hope:** *((Laughs sarcastically)) [...] for a couple in this community romantic is like your boyfriend going to buy you a chocolate and you watch a movie.*

**Yeshe:** *Is that how you feel romance, romantic should be?*

**Lizme:** *Yes*

**Hope:** *No, that’s just how I see it here.*

**Maia:** *You said you do see that as how romance should be?*

**Lizme:** *Yes because [...]it is like buying you stuff and that but if you don’t have money you must try to understand that you can be romantic in many other ways...*

**Maia:** *What kinds of ways?*

**Lizme:** *Like ...making food for you, cleaning the house for your wife or your girlfriend if you live together, show that person you love them by stealing their heart by*

**Hope:** *Doing something (FG 2, girls only)*

Taryn (FG 3, girls only) also describes her own previous relationship as ‘romantic’ and emphasises the absence of controlling behaviour: “*we trusted each other enough to meet with other people, we took long walks to the beaches, we did something other than just staying in the house [...]*”

Although many boys in the communities that have been studied (mainly low socio-economic settings) are exposed to violence by peers, parents and in the community, it is not a given that all boys will be violent, and the emphasis in the literature is on encouraging and nurturing alternative masculinities (Sathiparsad, 2008). This is also highlighted by the girls’ ideas of what they consider to be ‘romantic’, which includes acts which defy dominant forms of masculinity. Although violence in relationships has been normalised (Wood et al., 1998), the fact that many of our female participants spoke strongly against violence may reflect an increased awareness of unequal power relations, and support for alternative masculinities and femininities. However, the often public displays of violence and abuse between partners may have made it difficult to actively challenge normative masculinities and femininities.

**Public displays of violence and sexuality.** Many participants commented that public displays of violence and sexuality also made them view relationships negatively, and most participants were openly disapproving of such displays:

*you don’t find people that have romantic, uhm, relationships or anything like that because [...] the way they will like walk pass and they will kiss in the road or give each other a bloody nose, they have no respect for each other stuff like that you don’t do in the road. (Amira, FG 1, mixed)*

Taryn (FG 3, girls only) also talks with contempt about public displays of sexuality: “*It’s not romantic standing in the corner kissing and people that know your parents, people you grew up in front of, what’s so romantic about that.*”

Reputations seemed to be very important in Lavender Hill and participants picked up the threat to a person’s reputation through engaging in such public acts in front of “people you grew up in front of”. In her research on adolescent sexuality and condom use in Manenberg, which is another community in the Cape Flats, Salo (2002) similarly emphasises the importance of reputation in the community, especially amongst girls and women. Salo suggests that for women, their moral reputation, which is linked to sexual restraint, is how they constitute ‘personhood’. A woman with a ‘good’ reputation will therefore receive support from the



community. By condemning these public acts, participants seemed to be constructing themselves as moral and responsible persons, worthy of their reputations.

The notion of public violence and sex as a ‘show’ was brought up repeatedly, again with disapproval. Some participants emphasized how many couples try to draw an audience to witness these displays:

**Konrad:** *Because if [...] the girlfriend had an argument and then they fight in the street and then the man hit the lady or the lady hit the man, and the people, they now want to make a show and on the streets-*

**Brandon:** *And they’re drunk, and they just want to show off and that.* (FG 1, mixed)

Amira (FG 1, mixed) also comments on the performance and how she views the public displays with contempt: “*They don’t trust each other enough and because if they did, their arguments, stupid arguments wouldn’t have to happen [...] they would talk it out like face to face, not out loud in the road like they do today.*” These quotes show how gender and relationships are ‘done’ publicly in Lavender Hill.

West and Zimmerman (1987) emphasize that gender is something that is ‘done’ rather than something that exists in the natural world. Gender is ‘done’ by constantly repeating behaviours and ways of relating that are considered to be gender-appropriate, which Butler (1990 as cited in Shefer, 2004) terms *performativity*. However, *performativity* in this sense does not refer to an actual performance where the intention is to draw an audience, but rather to the way people produce and reproduce themselves as ‘men’ or ‘women’ through the constant repetition of certain discourses (Shefer, 2004). Nevertheless, the way our participants described public acts of violence and sexuality seemed to suggest that perhaps one aspect of ‘doing’ gender in Lavender Hill is through *actual* performance and drawing an audience. Thus, men may be affirming their masculinity through publicly showing their domination of women; likewise, in cases where women are violent towards men, they may be publicly destabilising the construction of women as passive and inferior to men.

### Summary and Conclusion

The findings suggest that gender and sexuality are constructed through discourses of power and passivity, as well as through challenging the idea of ‘romance’ in heterosexual relationships. Regarding discourses of power and passivity, the relational nature of gender was continuously illustrated in the ways that boys were constructed as powerful in relation to girls

being passive and vice versa. However, the idea that girls are passive came across much more strongly, which was highlighted in the common view that girls are boys' possessions and that girls' lack sexual agency. In addition, normative heterosexuality was asserted (especially for boys) because it reinforced male identity as powerful as opposed to 'weak' and feminine.

On a broader level, the findings indicate that the femininity of all girls was publicly constructed through the particular actions of some girls, making it difficult for girls to challenge and change normative ways of doing gender and sexuality. Nevertheless, the participants in our study attempted to oppose the norms in their own relationships and behaviour, demonstrating some agency despite the discourses of passivity. It is therefore important to acknowledge the complexities of identity construction and the sometimes contradictory ways in which boys and girls construct gender and sexuality (Boonzaier, 2008).

In terms of challenging 'romance', widespread violence in relationships and public acts of violence and sexuality demonstrated the interplay between discourses of power and passivity. Men's public acts of violence and sexuality reinforced their masculine identity and sexuality, whereas women's public acts of violence and sexuality seemed to undermine male power and construct an alternative to discourses of female passivity. However, the use of violence remains a problematic means of establishing power, and these findings highlight the importance of examining and promoting alternative, non-violent masculinities and femininities.

The current study contributes to the literature on gender and sexuality in several ways. Firstly, on a practical level these findings will be used by RAPCAN to enhance their intervention which aims to improve gender relations between young people. Secondly, on a theoretical level these findings suggest that, in some contexts, gender is publicly performed in order to affirm or destabilize normative ideas of masculinity and femininity. This finding could be used to extend Butler's (1990 as cited in Shefer, 2004) concept of *performativity* to contexts such as Lavender Hill. The research also highlights the theoretical importance of reflexivity in qualitative research and looking at the ideological effects of particular concepts such as 'romance'. Lastly, the focus group method was a significant means to identify the shared narratives and agreements as well as disagreements among participants, which made for a richer source of data. A youth-centred approach is also important in understanding constructions of gender and sexuality in order to establish adolescents' rights to sexual autonomy and sexual and reproductive health (Boonzaier & Aulette-Root, 2010).

There were several limitations to our study. Firstly, we had fewer participants than expected in all the focus groups, which limited the amount of data that could be collected and the amount of interaction that could take place. Therefore, some of the focus groups took the form of a semi-structured interview, which is reflected in our analysis. In addition, we intended to have mixed gender focus groups that would allow interaction between boys and girls; however, most of the focus groups were single gender groups. This meant that we could not sufficiently analyse the co-construction of meanings between boys and girls. Finally, it is important to acknowledge the language divides in this research. We facilitated the focus groups in English, but some of our participants were first-language Afrikaans speakers. These linguistic and cultural divides may have impacted on what the participants felt comfortable sharing with us as outsiders, which resulted in some communication problems.

This research has focused specifically on one low socio-economic community and how gender and sexuality are constructed in this particular context. Focusing on low socio-economic communities can end up reinforcing negative stereotypes about those communities. In addition, it may also give the impression that these kinds of unequal gender relations only occur in low socio-economic communities. Therefore, future research should look at how gender and sexuality are constructed in a variety of contexts.

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## Appendix A

### Project Description (RAPCAN, 2010, p. 9-10):

TCTP is a primary prevention programme that aims to help learners make positive choices about sexuality. TCTP aims to provide learners with a tool to make positive life choices and sexual decisions and to address the risk of teenage pregnancy, low self-esteem and negative peer group formations. The following intended learning outcomes of TCTP aim to achieve these goals:

#### Initial Project Purpose and Intended Learning Outcomes

- Young people make informed decisions about their sexual behaviour through realisation of the responsibilities of parenting (physical, social and emotional), and exploration and encouragement of their future aspirations.
- Young people are able to recognise and challenge gender stereotypes and accepted norms to make informed decisions about relationships, and in particular sexual relationships.
- Young people understand about healthy, positive family relationships
- Young people understand the relationship between sexuality, pregnancy and HIV/Aids and other sexually transmitted infections (STIs).

#### Initial Objectives of the Project

In order to achieve the intended outcomes listed above the objectives of TCTP have been divided into the following three outcomes:

- **Long-term outcome** – Empower teenagers with a greater ability to control their fertility in order to make life choices which will improve their quality of life.
- **Medium-term outcome** – Enhance the quality of sexual decision-making and intimate relationships amongst school-based adolescents.
- **Short-term outcome** – Develop self-esteem and sexual decision-making / relationship management skills within adolescent intimate relationships.

## Appendix B

### Focus Groups for Learners

#### Baseline focus group.

*[The facilitators will start the focus group by introducing themselves and playing a speed-dating ice-breaker game. They will then introduce the research and explain details about confidentiality and participation. The facilitators will start the focus groups with the following questions]:*

What is it like to be a boy/girl in your community?

What are the main stereotypes about boys and girls in your community?

How do you deal with these stereotypes?

*[The facilitators then introduce a case-vignette and will follow up on the comments made about the case-vignette with additional questions]:*

This is a story about Aisha and Faizel. Aisha and Faizel have been going out for two months and on one Saturday night Aisha goes over to Faizel's house where no one is home. They start to kiss and Faizel would like to take it further. Aisha says she is not ready to have sex. Faizel grabs her and tells her not to play hard to get and that if she really loves him, she will have sex with him. Aisha is scared but has sex with him anyways because she does not want to make him angrier or cause him to break up with her. She asks him to use a condom but he tells her that sex does not feel good with a condom and refuses to use one.

What do you think about this scenario?

What do you think about Faizel's and Aisha's reactions?

How would you describe the relationships between men and women in your community?

How do young people experience romantic or sexual relationships in your community?

How do you feel about talking about these kind of topics, romantic and sexual relationships, in your LO classes?

*[At the end of the focus group, the facilitators will ask whether participants would like to add anything else to the discussion and thank the group for their participation].*

## Appendix C

### Assent form – Learners

We invite you to participate in the research we are conducting that will look at how you think about issues related to gender, relationships and sexuality. We are researchers from the University of Cape Town and we are doing this research in conjunction with a non-profit organization called RAPCAN (Resources Aimed at the Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect). RAPCAN will be implementing a programme about youth relationships, sexuality, parenting and other topics in your Life Orientation classes. We will be doing group discussions with you that will take about an hour at two different times during this year. The first time we will be asking you questions about how you think about issues related to gender, relationships and sexuality. After the LO programme implemented by RAPCAN has been completed, we will be asking you about your thoughts on the programme and how your views have been affected by the programme.

### Participation

- Participating in this study is voluntary.
- You are free to stop participating in this study at any time with no penalty or any other consequences.
- Participating in this study will involve group discussions and they will be recorded with a tape recorder. The tape recordings and transcripts will be securely stored, and only the researchers will have access to this information.
- Any information you give us is strictly confidential and you have the right to ask us to remove any information that you have given from the study.
- We will write up the results of our research for our thesis, and reports will also be given to RAPCAN; however, we will not use your real names in our research report and all identifying details will be changed to maintain your confidentiality and anonymity.

- In order to make sure the information you share remains confidential, we ask that you sign an agreement that any information that is shared in the group discussions will remain between the group members.
- You will not be paid money for your participation in this study.
- The group discussions will take place at your school after school hours.
- If at any stage you feel upset by any of the questions and would like to speak to someone about it, we will have referral resources available.

Thank you for your participation!

**If you would like to participate in this study, you can sign below:**

Your signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Researcher's signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**If you agree to be tape-recorded during the group discussion, you can sign below:**

Your signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Researcher's signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**If you agree not to discuss information shared within the group discussion outside of the group, you can sign below:**

Your signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Researcher's signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## **Appendix D**

### **Consent form – Parents**

We invite your child to participate in the research we are conducting that will look at how they think about issues related to gender, relationships and sexuality. We are researchers from the University of Cape Town and we are doing this research in conjunction with a non-profit organization called RAPCAN (Resources Aimed at the Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect). RAPCAN will be implementing a programme about youth relationships, sexuality, parenting and other topics in your child's Life Orientation classes. We will be doing group discussions with your child at two different times during this year. The first time we will be asking questions about how your child thinks about issues related to gender, relationships and sexuality. After the Life Orientation programme implemented by RAPCAN has been completed, we will be asking your child about their thoughts on the programme and how your child's views have been affected by the programme.

### **Participation**

- Participating in this study is voluntary.
- Your child is free to stop participating in this study at any time with no penalty or any other consequences.
- Any information your child gives us is strictly confidential and you and your child have the right to ask us to remove any information that they have given from the study.
- We will not use your child's real names in our research and all identifying details will be changed.
- Neither you nor your child will be paid money for your child's participation in this study.
- Participating in this study will involve group discussions and they will be recorded with a tape recorder. The tape recordings and transcripts will be securely stored, and only the researchers will have access to this information.

- In order to make sure that the information your child shares remains confidential, we ask that your child sign an agreement that any information that is shared in the group discussions will remain between the group members.
- The group discussions will take place at your child's school after school hours.
- If at any stage your child feels upset by any of the questions and would like to speak to someone about it, we will have referral resources available.

Thank you for your participation!

**If you agree that your child participate in this study, you can sign below:**

Your signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Researcher's signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**If you agree that your child be tape-recorded during the group discussion, you can sign**

**below:**

Your signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Researcher's signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_



## Appendix E

### Memorandum of Understanding

Suite 87, Private Bag X12, Tokai, 7966  
Cape Town South Africa

E-mail [info@rapcan.org.za](mailto:info@rapcan.org.za)  
Web [www.rapcan.org.za](http://www.rapcan.org.za)  
Tel +27 21 712 2330  
Fax +27 21 712 2365

NPO No. 010-744  
PBO No. 18/11/13/2208  
Section 21 Co. 97/216/87/08



#### MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING

Between

**RAPCAN**

(Resources Aimed at the Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect)

And

**University of Cape Town**

#### MISSION

This memorandum of understanding records intentions of the parties to establish a collaborative partnership towards the fulfilment of shared objectives. The parties are RAPCAN, a non profit organization and the University of Cape Town. This document establishes an agreed framework outlining the principles of the memorandum of understanding between the two parties.

#### PURPOSE AND SCOPE

The purpose of this partnership agreement is to conduct a baseline study on children's knowledge and constructions of gender and sexuality with Educators and Learners at Lavender Hill High School. In order to achieve the purposes of this Memorandum, the parties have adopted and will comply with the principles of co-operation as set out below.

#### RESPONSIBILITIES

##### UNIVERSITY OF CAPE TOWN

In terms of this partnership agreement the University of Cape Town will undertake to:

- Provide 2 University Students to collect baseline information from Educators and Learners on children's knowledge and constructions of gender and sexuality of Educators and Learners at Lavender Hill High School.
- Ensure that a minimum of one focus group, that is representative of each grade, will form part of this baseline study.

##### Board of Directors:

A Dawes (Chair), K Gabriels (Treasurer), S van As, T Gxubane,  
J Sloth-Nielsen, D Chirwa, JC de Villiers, Z Hendricks-Johaadien

Executive Director: C Nomdo

- Provide guidance and supervision in the development of the tools for the baseline study, as well as for the impact assessment, for use by the students to complete the data collection.
- Provide guidance and supervision in the conducting of the baseline research
- Provide a baseline report incorporating analysis of the data collected.
- Provide the same two students, if possible, to guide, supervise and conduct an impact assessment post the RAPCAN intervention.
- Provide an impact assessment report

#### **RAPCAN**

**In terms of the partnership agreement RAPCAN will undertake to:**

- Secure access and permission from the Principal of Lavender Hill High School prior to commencement of the baseline study
- Be responsible for the all logistics and access communication with Lavender Hill High School. The Project Team will work closely with the Students in this regard.
- Respond timeously to the queries relating to this partnership agreement.

#### **JOINT RESPONSIBILITIES**

- Each Party will appoint a person to serve as the official contact and coordinate the activities of each organisation in carrying out this Memorandum of Understanding.
- The parties agree to cooperate with each other in mutual trust and good faith, assist and support each other in respect of agreed upon services between the parties of this agreement and inform each other of and consult each other on matters of common interest.

#### **TERMS OF UNDERSTANDING –**

##### **TIMEFRAMES**

The terms of this memorandum of understanding the agreed timeframes are as follows:

- The agreed baseline study and report, Educators and Learners, as well as the agreed impact assessment data collection will be completed during the period April 2012 to September 2012.
- The impact assessment report will be completed by the end November 2012.

##### **CHILD PROTECTION POLICY**

In keeping with the RAPCAN Child Protection Policy and Procedure, students must be thoroughly screened and reference checks completed, inclusive of criminal reference checks as well as checks against the sexual offences register, to ensure suitability to work with children prior to the start of the partnership agreement.

Designated students must be willing to sign a confidentiality agreement, whereby, he/she agrees to treat all information obtained through the execution of this partnership as confidential and undertakes not to disclose or communicate any information and/or to use information obtained for personal gain or for the benefit of any other organisation or person without the written authority from RAPCAN to do so.

**AUTHORIZATION:**

The signing of this memorandum of understanding implies that the signatories will strive to reach, to the best of their abilities the objectives stated in this Memorandum of Understanding and Partnership Agreement

Signed:

(for and on behalf of RAPCAN)



NAME

CHRISTINA NOMAO

DATE: 2 April 2012

Signed:

(for and on behalf of UNIVERSITY OF CAPE TOWN)



NAME Dr Floretta Boonzaier

DATE: 19 March 2012

## Appendix F

### Transcription Conventions

- ... Indicates a pause longer than three seconds.
- [...] Indicates that part of the participant's original speech has been omitted.
- (( )) Indicates non-verbal interactions.
- [text] Indicates words that have been inserted into quotation for extra clarification.
- Indicates interruption of speech.
- Underlining indicates emphasis in the participant's original speech.
- AB Capitalisation indicates shouting.