

“So what are we supposed to do?”

**HIV prevention and renegotiating students’ sexual identities in a South
African rural black community**

A qualitative research



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1. Introduction

In the last two decades, South Africa became one of the countries most affected by the HIV/AIDS epidemic. Although since 2005 the percentage of HIV infected people seems to be on the decline, the most recent estimates of the South African national government are still alarming. These estimates show that 28 percent of all South Africans are HIV positive. This national average covers up for the varying prevalence in the different South African provinces: from 12,6 percent in the Western Cape up to 37,4 percent in KwaZulu-Natal (National Department of Health, 2008).

The Ndlovu AIDS Awareness Program (NAAP) operates since 1999 on the border of Limpopo and Mpumalanga province. Its main objectives are to raise awareness and reduce risky behaviour among the general population to prevent them from getting infected with HIV. To achieve these objectives, NAAP works within several areas, including schools, farms, sports, businesses, churches, the community and the traditional health sector. NAAP recognizes that HIV/AIDS is as much a social problem as it is a medical problem and tries to involve all relevant stakeholders to achieve an optimal impact.

This research will focus on the way the NAAP team tries to influence the behaviour of secondary school students, ranging from about 16 to 22 years old. It is expected that many of these students are already sexually active (Ragnarsson, Onya, Thorson, Ekström & Aaro, 2008) and at risk for HIV infection (National Department of Health, 2008), which makes them a major target group for NAAP. The context in which these young people make their decisions concerning sexuality will be explicitly taken into account. Within this context, the focus will be on sexual identities and the cultural rules on appropriate sexual behaviour for men and women, which has shown to be limiting people's opportunities to protect their sexual health (see for example: Campbell & MacPhail, 2002; Varga, 2003; Schefer & Foster, 2001; Walker, 2005).

Research Objective

The aim of this research is to get insight in the process of negotiating the sexual identities of secondary school students that put them at increased risk for HIV infection. Within this process, the role of the Ndlovu Aids Awareness Program will be explored. An understanding will be acquired on several aspects: the cultural rules that make students extra vulnerable for HIV infection, the factors that allow or constrain the renegotiation of these rules, and the ways NAAP tries to stimulate this process of renegotiation. By looking both at the context in which the students make behavioural choices and the efforts of NAAP to influence these choices, any incongruence between the two can indicate opportunities for the program to refine its approach to increase its effectiveness.

2. Theoretical position of research

Individual behaviour and the importance of structural context

The Ndlovu AIDS Awareness Program (NAAP) aims, like most HIV prevention programs (Fishbein, 2000), at influencing people's behaviour in order to reduce their vulnerability to HIV infection. While trying to change individual behaviour, an intervention like NAAP should explicitly take into account the context in which these individuals are situated. A single program does not 'work' effectively for everybody, but only for certain people in a certain context (Pawson & Tilley, 1997). The embeddedness of individuals within the structures shaping their behaviour should be a major point of concern to policymakers. As this theoretical framework will show, cultural rules within communities, as well as economic and political relations can limit people's opportunities to practice safe sex (Parker, 2001; Mathews, Everett, Binedell & Steinberg, 1995; Campbell & Williams, 2001; Gupta, Parkhurst, Ogden, Aggleton & Mahal, 2008). These constraints on individual behaviour have to be taken into account for an intervention to be successful. Information provided by HIV prevention programs will always be interpreted within a framework of pre-existing meanings and rules on 'appropriate' behaviour (Parker, 2001; Wilson & Miller, 2003).

Several authors have presented models that give insight in the theoretical variables underlying individual behaviour (f.e. Fishbein, 2000). Many of these models are helpful in identifying the determinants of certain types of behaviour, but fail at showing how these determinants are being constituted and maintained, let alone how they can be transformed. The interrelatedness of individual behaviour and the contextual structures that shape it is often overlooked. Because of this, individualized models provide policymakers as well as sex educators with an incomplete picture of what it is needed to change individual behaviour. For a more comprehensive insight in the foundations of risky sexual behaviour, more attention should be paid to structural influences (Parker, 2001; Gupta et al., 2008).

A good starting point for addressing the interrelatedness of behaviour and structure is Anthony Giddens' theory of structuration (Giddens, 1984). Giddens characterizes human behaviour as simultaneously structuring and being structured by society. In this process, structures are not external to people, but are being produced and reproduced through their actions. Giddens emphasizes that although individual behaviour is being structured by society, one should not overlook the will and knowledgeability of people. A striking example of this knowledgeability is given by Walker (2005), in quoting a working-class man from Johannesburg, struggling to step out of the culture of violence he was raised in:

"My father was a very abusive man. I became lost and thought this is the way of life. Abusing is the way of life; then you leave that life. I began to realize the effect on me of that abuse at home. It is very difficult; because if you are not careful you are going to end up being violent because these people violate you."

(Walker, 2005: 232)

The man speaking here is clearly knowledgeable on the influence of the environment he was raised in and seemingly tries to resist this influence. The ability to explicitly explain and reflect upon the reasons for certain behaviour, gives people the opportunity to change their pattern of action.

However, we do not explicitly reflect on many things we do; many behaviour is performed in a routine-like manner. We rarely question the reasons for behaviour that is perceived as normal in a given context. As we adapt our behaviour to certain cultural rules, we reproduce these rules as an unintended consequence of our behaviour. Still, the man in the example above did not act by the 'rule' of violence imposed on him, and hereby challenged it. People can challenge the rules effectively if they have the resources to do so. According to Giddens, *rules* and *resources* together constitute the structural properties of individuals¹ and are utilized by them to produce and reproduce social life. Resources enable people to choose to follow these rules or not, "to be able to 'act otherwise', [...] to intervene in the world or refrain from such intervention" (Kaspersen, 1995: 40). In this sense, resources are very much linked to power (Kaspersen, 1995: 35, 38-39).

For behavioural change to be effective, questioning the rules that guide people's course of action, needs to be supplemented by the resources to act on this. For example, Campbell and Williams (2001) show that although health educators were successful in convincing commercial sex workers of the benefits of condom use, they lacked the resources to put this in practice. Living in poverty and facing a limited supply of paying customers, they could not afford to put their income at stake by refusing customers that were unwilling to use a condom. The next chapter will go more in-depth on the resources that are needed to effectively challenge cultural rules that limit the abilities of people to protect their sexual health.

Although resources are in the example above presented in a rather objective, economic sense, Bussey and Bandura (1999) make a useful addition to this. They show that people's confidence in their own abilities is central to their actual capacities of controlling their behaviour. Beliefs of self-efficacy stimulate people to pursue their personal objectives, even when facing difficulties (Bussey & Bandura, 1999: 691). This means that one's perceived capacity to "act otherwise" is in itself a resource to do so.

This paragraph showed that, when trying to stimulate behavioural change, it is important to take into account the structural context in which this behaviour takes place. Much behaviour is performed as routine conduct and adapted to the cultural rules in a specific context. Explicit reflection on the rationale of their conduct is a precondition for people to challenge the cultural rules that shape this conduct. This reflection needs to be supplemented by sufficient resources and confidence in these resources to actually act against cultural rules imposed on them, leading them towards unsafe sexual practice (Kaspersen, 1995; Bussey & Bandura, 1999).

Culture, objective structure and power differentials

Cultural rules on appropriate and socially accepted behaviour for men and women can create power differentials between them, also on the domain of sexuality. Rules in rural black communities on how 'real' South African men and women should behave, put men in control of their sexual encounters and leave women in a more or less disempowered position. The next chapter will go more in detail on this. For now, it should be stated that an important feature of this asymmetric control over sexual practice of men and women is the fact that many features of this inequality seem more or less accepted by both parties in these communities. Although in a quite different context, Komter (1985)

¹ or other social agents

shows how Dutch married women in the 1980s put their husbands' sexual pleasure before their own. Conflicting sexual preferences between partners are often 'solved' by women by simply meeting their husbands' demands. The dominance of the male perspective on sexuality over a female one is often described as the way things are 'supposed' to be and the 'natural' state of affairs. Women can refrain from attempting to change the situation out of fear to jeopardize their relationship or to frustrate their partner. Komter (1985: 296-297, 300-301) describes these processes as *latent power play*, as women anticipate on the negative consequence of trying to change the status quo and therefore avoid conflict. There is a big normative pressure on women to conform to their husbands' sexual desires.

Even though the above shows how power relations can be derived out of ideas of how things are supposed to be, there is also much evidence showing that more objective structures enable these cultural standards to be reproduced. Recalling Campbell and Williams' (2001) example from the previous paragraph, it shows that latent power play can also be due to economic dependency. The commercial sex workers that got individually motivated to use condoms, would often refrain from suggesting condom use out of fear to lose customers and income (Campbell & Wilson, 2001). Economic dependency, in this case, makes that commercial sex workers prioritize the anticipated social reaction to their behaviour (reluctance of their customers) over their own attitude towards it, this way reproducing the 'rule' of unsafe sex that is imposed on them.

An important scholar that elaborated on this interplay between power, culture and objective structure is Antonio Gramsci. Although most of his writings are on the class struggle in southern Italy, his concept of hegemony seems useful for elaborating on the interrelatedness of cultural norms and asymmetric power relations. For Gramsci, inequality is the "inability of subaltern people to produce coherent accounts of the world they live in that have the potential to challenge hegemonic accounts [...] in an effective way" (Crehan, 2002: 104). In a state of hegemony, a social group has succeeded in widely diffusing a culture that appears to represent the interest of society as a whole, but is in fact reflecting the interests of that specific social group. Normative statements are often presented as 'natural' and taken for granted, as for example the 'biologically determined' male need for sex (Ragnarsson et al., 2008). Dominant groups stay in power through the consent of the dominated, but this consent is as a power mechanism entangled with coercion (Crehan, 2002: 96-97, 101). Recalling the way that structures can shape individual behaviour, hegemony can be seen as a situation in which societal rules, although accepted by many, are benefiting the dominant group, while coercion indicates the lack of resources of disempowered people to "act otherwise" and to oppose dominant rules (Kaspersen, 1995: 40). Recognizing the importance of more objective structures, Gramsci stresses that any cultural reform is necessarily linked to economic reform as well as political changes (Crehan, 2002: 94, 105).

Gramsci sees consent and coercion as two extremes in a continuum of power relations (Crehan, 2002: 101). Komter's previously mentioned notion of latent power play can indeed be placed in between these two extremes. When people conform to certain standards in anticipation of social sanctions for deviant behaviour, there is no actual consent or actual sanctioning. Although people might not agree with dominant standards, still the hegemonic state of affairs will be reproduced. Bussey and Bandura (1999) state that the adoption of a certain style of behaviour will be more likely if it produces, or has shown to produce for others, valued and rewarding outcomes instead of

unrewarding or even punishing outcomes. People's perception and anticipation of these rewards and punishments seem crucial in the choices they make, especially when their own attitude contradicts the perceived social norm.

For an attempt to change cultural rules to be successful, Gramsci indicates the importance of developing a group of people having and diffusing alternative ideas and conceptions of the world that challenge the dominant, taken-for-granted assumptions on how things should be. The more an intervention succeeds in producing critics of a hegemonic situation, the more successful it will be in its cultural conquest over traditional normative standards and the power relations that are related to these (Crehan, 2002: 95, 132-137, 143, 161). Enabling this cultural change can be seen as a major task for HIV prevention programs aiming at behavioural change.

This paragraph showed how cultural rules can be entangled with more objective structures that can help to reproduce people's disempowered situation. When aiming to renegotiate cultural rules to facilitate behavioural change, it is crucial that policymakers get insight in what these rules entail and what constraints people encounter to challenge these rules and "act otherwise" (Kaspersen, 1995: 40). By exploring previous research among young people in South Africa, the next chapter will provide a theoretical framework for the process of renegotiating the secondary school students' sexual identities that put them at greater risk for HIV infection. Within this framework, the potential role of HIV prevention programs will be explored.

3. Challenging 'risky' sexual identities: a theoretical framework

Cultural rules on sexuality and risky behaviour

When interrelatedness of behaviour and structure is taken in mind, a study of sexuality needs to take into account the context that shapes it. It includes more than just sexual practice; it also includes people's beliefs about sex and normative 'rules' on what is "natural, proper and desirable" sexual behaviour (MacPhail & Campbell, 2001: 1614). These rules are different for men and women (Ragnarsson et al., 2008) and are part of male and female identities. These identities provide people with 'recipes for living' connected to some kind of group membership (Campbell & MacPhail, 2002), in this case being a man or woman. Given the focus of this research, the central concept here is that of sexual identity, referring to those parts of male and female identity that provide them with cultural rules on proper conduct related to sexuality. This chapter will focus on the dynamics of these sexual identities; what they can be like for South African secondary school youth, and the opportunities and constraints they encounter for effectively challenging and renegotiating them in order to protect their health.

Cultural ideals on male and female conduct influence their sexual behavioural choices and are related to sexual risk taking behaviour (Campbell & MacPhail, 2002; Varga, 2003). These cultural ideals can contradict messages conveyed by health promotion programs, and constrain people's abilities to "construct images of themselves that adequately reflect their potentialities and interests" (Campbell & MacPhail, 2002). This plays a major role in the reproduction of gender inequalities, often leaving women disempowered and not in control of their own sexual health. A better understanding of these sexual identities is crucial for effectively challenging them and achieving a situation of gender equity in which people are better equipped to protect themselves from contracting HIV and AIDS (Reddy and Dunne, 2007). HIV prevention programs that aim to change people's behaviour should be sensitive to the situation and experience of their target group (Wilson & Miller, 2002) and create a context in which the renegotiation of 'risky' sexual identities can take place (MacPhail & Campbell, 2001).

A model for renegotiating sexual identities

The theoretical framework of this study explores the renegotiation of 'risky' sexual identities and HIV prevention's possible role in this process. First, cultural norms will be identified that can contradict protective sexual behaviour through abstinence, being faithful, condom use and delaying sexual debut². These norms are divided over four themes: having (multiple) relationships, having sex, using protection while having sex and communicating or negotiating about sex. For each of these themes, it will be explored how cultural rules can differ for men and women and why they can lead to risky sexual behaviour, like unprotected sex or multiple concurrent relationships. Secondly, factors will be explored that seem to constrain or, on the contrary, allow people to challenge these 'risky' behavioural norms. These factors are categorized under three headers: awareness, physical and economic (in)dependency and social support. These factors play an important role in whether people conform to 'risky' behavioural norms or are able to effectively challenge them. In this process, HIV

² This ABCD of HIV prevention is also being propagated by the Ndlovu Aids Awareness Program amongst its target groups.

prevention's possible role is explored for each of these factors. Figure 1 depicts the model that provides the basis for this theoretical framework for renegotiating sexual identities and HIV's possible role in this.

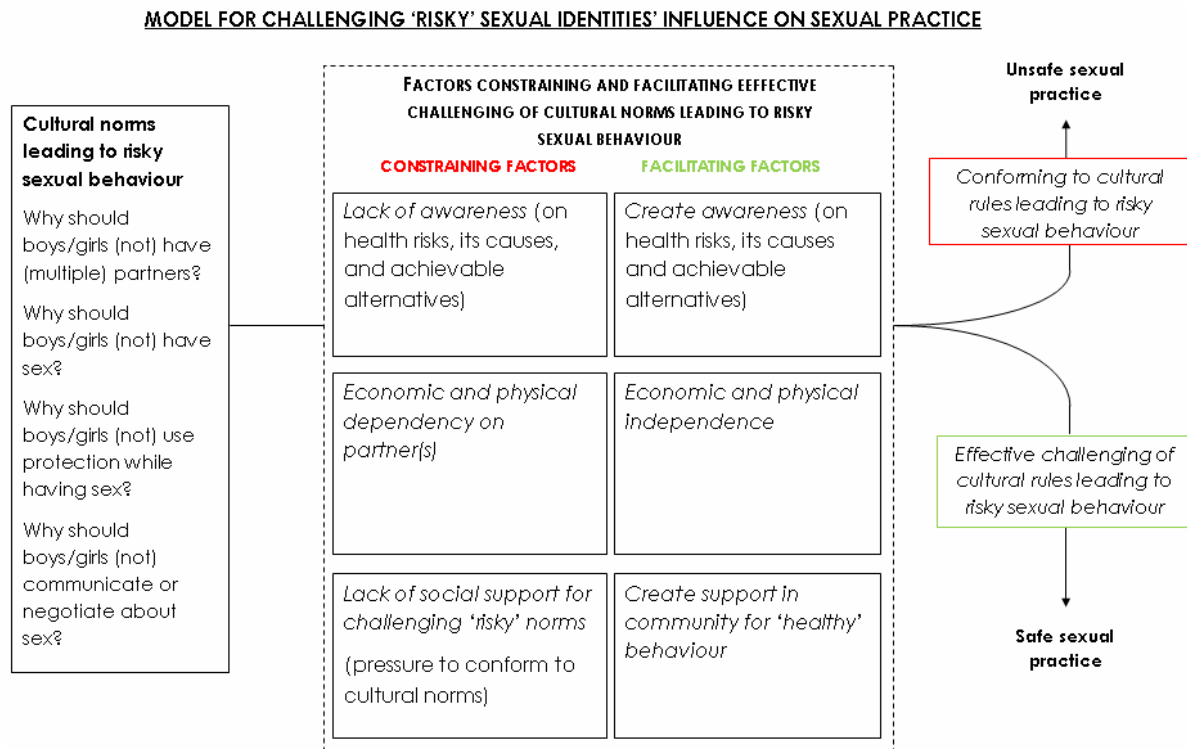


Figure 1

This model is not attempting to provide a comprehensive insight in the sexual identities of young people. Its focus is on those parts of sexual identities that can be problematic from the perspective of young people's sexual health. These cultural norms and their related patterns of behaviour should be addressed by HIV prevention programs to effectively establish behavioural change. It should be taken in mind that it is too rigid to characterize people as simply supporting or rejecting these cultural rules. Sexual identities are constantly being reconstructed and negotiated as time is passing by. Since the abolition of apartheid, black women have succeeded in improving their legal and social position and traditional notions of South African manhood and male domination are being destabilized. On the one hand, these changes are met defensively by men, clinging to their old privileges and even becoming more violent towards women. On the other hand, it becomes increasingly legitimate to challenge traditional sexual identities. Within this context of changing expectations and contradictions between traditional norms and those norms propagated by health promotion initiatives, young people can get confused (Walker, 2005). The challenge for programs like NAAP is to convince these youngsters of the benefits of safer sexual behaviour and to empower them to actually put this in practice. Getting clear insight in the dynamics of young people's sexual identities can give directions to these programs in their attempts to do so.

3.1 Cultural rules leading to risky sexual behaviour

Based on previous research on young, black South Africans' sexuality, four themes of cultural rules are distinguished: having (multiple) relationships, having sex, using protection while having sex and communicating or negotiating about sex. For each of these themes, it will be discussed which assumptions are held by different actors on appropriate behaviour for men and women, and why these assumptions can put them at increased risk for HIV infection.

Having (multiple) relationships

Men and women can have different reasons for engaging in a relationship. Several authors show how a 'real' man is supposed to have several girlfriends at the same time. Approaching girls seems important as a means for young men to gain status from their peers, while handling more than one partner at a time is seen as a way for young men to prove their abilities. By engaging in multiple relationships, men are able to get sexual satisfaction (MacPhail & Campbell, 2001).

The need for men to have several girlfriends seems implicitly accepted by young women, as they often don't expect to be the only partner (Ragnarsson et al., 2008; MacPhail & Campbell, 2001). This mutual acceptance seems to reflect a hegemonic state of affairs, clearly giving men (contrary to women) more freedom to have several relationships. This appropriateness and even desirability for men to have multiple sexual relationships increases their risk for contracting HIV (Epstein, 2007) and contradicts HIV prevention's message to practice abstinence, to be faithful to one partner, or to delay sexual debut.

Expectations for women are almost opposite to those for men. Respectability seems important for women to gain status; having multiple partners compromises this respectability (Varga, 2003). Instead of their sexual satisfaction, loving and being loved seem important for women in a relationship. Reddy and Dunne (2007) even go as far as saying that loving, trusting, and making a man happy is what constitutes the ideal relationship for young women. They show that out of this desire to be loved, many women are willing to compromise their agency in the relationship. The importance of trusting a partner can be a disincentive to use or discuss condoms in a relationship, as these can be seen as a sign of distrusting your partner (MacPhail & Campbell, 2001).

Although women are not supposed to have more than one boyfriend, there are reasons for women to have multiple relationships. In a relationship, men are expected to provide for the women in order to have sex with them (Campbell & MacPhail, 2002; Ragnarsson et al., 2008). Transactional relationships are common in South Africa; women can engage themselves in relationships in expectancy of financial or other material benefits. Within this context, having multiple sexual relationships can function as a system of social security to these women (MacPhail & Campbell, 2001; Epstein, 2007: 76-78). While having multiple partners is already a risk in itself, women in transactional relationships are often less able to protect their sexual health, as will be shown in a later paragraph.

Having sex

Just as the reasons for young men and women to engage in relationships differ, having sex also seems to have different meanings for them. By having sex, men seem to demonstrate their manhood and respectability. They are often said to have a biologically determined greater need for sex and are regarded as the ones that enjoy the sexual act most. The pleasure it brings seems an important reason for them to have sex; sexual satisfaction is sometimes even presented as a male right. Condom use can be seen as compromising this pleasure (Ragnarsson et al., 2008; MacPhail & Campbell, 2001; Varga, 2003; Schefer and Foster, 2001).

While men seem to gain respect by having sex with many partners, promiscuous women are regarded as sluts. That sex is a predominantly male game, is supported by Reddy and Dunne's (2007) finding that a woman's satisfaction partly lays in her ability to satisfy her partner. Rather than enjoying the sexual act itself, women are regarded to enjoy the love and intimacy that it symbolizes (Reddy & Dunne, 2007). Young men can insist on having sex with their girlfriends as a proof of their love (MacPhail & Campbell, 2001), while young women often see love as a legitimate reason to have sex (Reddy & Dunne, 2007). Initial intentions to abstain or delay sexual debut can be compromised for these reasons. As was mentioned before, transactional sex is common among South African youth (Campbell & MacPhail, 2002; Ragnarsson et al., 2008), so material benefits can be an important reason for girls to have sex. The transactional character of these relationships can increase the boy's or man's sense of ownership of his partner's sexuality (Ragnarsson, 2008), which further disempowers women's control over their sexual lives.

Using protection

The meaning of condom use is related to the reasons for young men and women to have relationships or to have sex. As young men seek pleasure in sex, condom use can mitigate this pleasure. Flesh-to-flesh sex appears to be regarded as more enjoyable (MacPhail & Campbell, 2001) and especially desirable in steady relationships, as it would symbolize trust and commitment and improve the bond between two partners. Condom use can be seen as a lack of trust in the partner; suggesting it means risking to lose him or her. Besides being a sign of distrust, suggesting condom use or carrying condoms can, especially for women, be seen as a reflection of loose morals or promiscuity (Reddy & Dunne, 2007; Varga, 2003).

Besides compromising pleasure and trust, condom use constrains fertility. Although fertility is regarded as important for both men and women (Varga, 2003), most youngsters see the costs of teenage pregnancy, like dropping out of school, as too high and try to avoid it (MacPhail & Campbell, 2001). Protection against pregnancy, but also against HIV and STIs is, according to Schefer and Foster (2001), often seen as a female responsibility. This puts women in a difficult position, as they should be taking care of something that is regarded as highly inappropriate for them to even talk about.

Communicating or negotiating sex

What is seen as proper behaviour for men and women regarding sexuality contributes to imbalances in the control they have over their sexual encounters. While men can be portrayed as "conquering heroes", women are regarded as passive and complying to men's wishes (Campbell & MacPhail, 2002: 332). As women are expected to show sexual coyness and innocence, raising the issue of condom use would suggest an inappropriate amount of knowledge, contradicting the image of a

'good' woman (Reddy & Dunne, 2007). Women's expression of sexuality is censored as much as possible and otherwise stigmatized, which is a major disincentive for partners to discuss each other's sexual histories and the possible health risks related to these. Even though this might not reflect the truth, women should at least appear as if they are a-sexual.

Men, on the other hand, often can legitimately insist on sex. As was already mentioned, they can insist on sex with their girlfriends as a proof of their love (MacPhail & Campbell, 2001). A real man should be in full power of his sexual relationships (Varga, 2003) and can earn respect when having sex with many partners. In this process, coercion and even violence towards women are common; by many people it is accepted and even seen as normal (Ragnarsson, 2008; MacPhail & Campbell, 2001). Within this context, women have only limited abilities to negotiate safe sex (Schefer & Foster, 2001). Illustrating their lack of control over their sexual encounters, some women spoke about sex as something that "just happened" (Campbell & MacPhail, 2002: 339). When violence or coercion is being used, this puts them at an even bigger risk of HIV infection, as the girl's vagina is often not properly lubricated before penetration, which increases chances of getting infected when the partner is HIV positive.

3.2 Opportunities and constraints to challenge 'risky' norms on sexuality

Renegotiating cultural rules on appropriate behaviour and the sexual identities they are part of, is a major task for HIV prevention programs if these are to be effective (MacPhail & Campbell, 2001). From this perspective, HIV prevention should be sensitive to the factors that constrain people in challenging these 'risky' norms in favour of more health-enhancing ones and, where possible, enable people to overcome them. The following three paragraphs will discuss these constraining factors, as well as HIV prevention's possible role in overcoming them. In line with scholars like Gramsci and Giddens, it will be shown that challenging and changing cultural rules is more than just a matter of individual awareness, but closely connected to broader processes of empowerment and the generation of community support to provide young people with the resources to protect their sexual health.

Awareness

Awareness can be seen as a first condition towards the challenging of cultural rules that promote risky sexual behaviour. People should become aware of the consequences of their behaviour and the reasons for it. To start with, people can be unaware of the health risks of certain sexual practices. For example, someone can be unaware of the fact that he or she can get infected with HIV when having sex without a condom with a partner whose HIV status is unclear. HIV prevention programs should provide people with insights in the modes of transmission of the virus and teach them how to protect themselves. Although this is a necessity, many authors show that this knowledge alone is not enough for behavioural change. MacPhail and Campbell (2001) stress that many people are aware of HIV, but see its threat as something external to them. Their research showed that 70 percent of young men in a rural township said not to connect messages on HIV to their personal situation and did not feel at personal risk. When people see HIV mainly as being related to rape, commercial sex workers and alcoholics, this can keep them from seeing protection as a necessary precaution in their own sexual lives.

Another level on which awareness should be raised is on the underlying causes of risky sexual behaviour. As Campbell and MacPhail (2002) show, people should develop a critical consciousness of the way social conditions shape their disadvantaged situation that leads to unsafe sexual practice. In order to change their pattern of action, people should be able to explicitly explain and reflect upon the reasons for their behaviour (Kaspersen, 1995). Young men, for example, need to become aware of the way in which cultural rules urging them to have many girlfriends (presented as a 'biological need') put them at risk for HIV infection. Their ability to critically reflect on the reasons for their behaviour can provide them with confidence in resisting the dominant gender norms that put them at risk (Campbell & MacPhail, 2002).

Several authors show that many people lack this critical reflection on the reasons for their risky behaviour. For example, while power imbalances within sexual relationships often lead to sexual abuse and women's disempowerment, both young men and women often see these power imbalances as normal, or even biologically determined (Ragnarsson et al., 2008; MacPhail & Campbell, 2001; Schefer & Foster, 2001; Reddy & Dunne, 2007). Many young people possess limited abilities to conceive alternatives to their current situation. Traditional didactic methods used in schools are stimulating an a-critical mindset, keeping people from attempting to change their current situation and allowing situations of high vulnerability to proliferate. HIV prevention programs should offer a platform where young people can develop their critical consciousness of the factors that put them at increased risk of HIV infection. This allows them to think holistically and critically about their situation and the way that certain cultural norms can undermine the likelihood of good health. Such insights are necessary for people to start believing in the possibilities of resisting and changing dominant norms and identities (Campbell & MacPhail, 2002).

A platform to develop this critical consciousness can be provided by peer education, which also forms a central feature of the Ndlovu Aids Awareness Program's work with secondary school students in the rural area of Moutse. By including an active dialogue as a central feature of HIV and health education, young people are participating in a critical analysis of their situation. Within the educational group, the pros and cons of different behavioural alternatives can be discussed and new 'healthier' alternatives can be formulated. This way, participants together can develop a critical consciousness on the health risks of their behaviour and the situation in which it occurs. In practice, however, peer education programs often seem to emphasize biomedical facts in their activities, instead of focussing on the social processes that shape people's vulnerability. Young people will only be further disempowered when they are instructed to perform safe sex, but are not provided with insights in the factors that keep them from doing so. Both are needed for effectively stimulating safe sex (Campbell & MacPhail, 2002).

Economic and physical (in)dependency

Economic and physical dependency on sexual partners are potential barriers for people (mostly women) to effectively challenge cultural rules when their partner is unwilling to cooperate. For example, when a young woman does not feel like having sex, submitting to men's sexual desire instead of saying no is sometimes seen as the best thing to do to avoid getting physically and sexually abused (Ragnarsson et al., 2008). Both men and women often expect relationships to be coercive or even violent (Varga, 2003). Anticipating this can work as a latent power mechanism (Komter, 1985),

smothering women's attempts to suggest things that are potentially disliked by their partners, like condom use and male faithfulness.

Economic dependency on partners can similarly work as a latent power mechanism that limits women's³ agency within a relationship, as (a part of) their income is also at stake in the relationship. As mentioned before, transactional relationships are widespread among young black South Africans. It can be expected that this limits young women's agency in a relationship and stimulates men's sense of ownership over their girlfriends' sexuality (Epstein, 2007: 76-78). This constrains women's attempts to challenge dominant norms of male domination in favour of those allowing them to protect themselves properly.

Individual 'psychological' empowerment towards the challenging of cultural rules can be only effective when it is accompanied by 'real' economic and political empowerment (Campbell & MacPhail, 2002). HIV prevention programs are expected to have only limited direct influence on people's economic or physical situation. For this reason, it can be expected that there is a need for more comprehensive developmental programs to improve especially women's economic situation, as well as advocacy programs to improve women's rights and their enforcement, for example on the terrain of domestic violence. Still, HIV prevention can increase young people's awareness on the abusive and coercive nature of certain types of relationships (mostly transactional relationships and young women dating older men (MacPhail & Campbell, 2001)), to prevent them from getting involved in these and, while already in such a relationships, make them aware of their rights and possible alternatives to their current situation.

Social support

People do not just judge their behaviour by themselves; they also take into account what other people will think of it (Bussey & Bandura, 1999). First of all, peer's opinions are highly valued by young people and, according to MacPhail and Campbell (2001), in the majority of cases they encourage risky sexual behaviour. Young men can be accused of being stupid after having used a condom and young women carrying condoms on them are often gossiped about and labelled as promiscuous. Many boys feel compelled to comply to peer pressure that provides them with traditional norms on how to gain respect and status as a 'real' man (Ragnarsson, 2008). They can fear to be regarded as abnormal if they do not conform to these norms (Reddy & Dunne, 2007).

Besides having to deal with peer pressure, young men and women often lack support from their parents in dealing with issues concerning sexuality. Instead of stimulating condom use, they often preach abstinence. Some boys even said not to use condoms because their parents disapproved of it (MacPhail & Campell, 2001). Speaking with parents about sex is often seen as a sign of disrespect and is avoided as much as possible. Besides this lack of communication, the parental example is often unpromising: many young people experience their fathers as violent towards their mothers as well as themselves (Walker, 2005). Looking at their parents, expectations of sexual relationships are often not very high (Campbell & MacPhail, 2002).

³ The literature used for this research only mentions female dependency on men, not the other way around.

Taking into account these social constraints to challenge dominant cultural rules, it is important for HIV prevention to regard the renegotiation of sexual identities as a collective rather than an individual process. Peer education can act as a platform where peer groups are able to collectively challenge dominant 'risky' identities and replace them with more health-enhancing ones. Still it needs to be taken into account that this peer group is not the only environment in which young people act; when the rest of their community is unsupportive of any change, HIV prevention programs will act in a vacuum. Interventions aiming at secondary school children, being the focus of this research, should therefore be part of a larger set of interventions aiming at different stakeholders within the community.

4. Research Questions

As this theoretical framework has shown, HIV prevention should not be regarded as just an issue of individual awareness. When trying to influence the sexual behaviour of secondary school students, the complexity of their sexuality should be taken into account. It includes the meanings they attach to different patterns of behaviour in the field of sexuality, which are intertwined with more objective structures of dependency, together shaping their sexual behaviour. The following questions will be central to this research in order get insight in what is needed for students to challenge the cultural rules that increase their vulnerability for HIV infection, and the way in which the Ndlovu Aids Awareness Program (NAAP) tries to fulfil this need:

Main question:

How do secondary school students negotiate cultural rules that stimulate them to perform risky sexual behaviour and how is the Ndlovu Aids Awareness Program addressing this process?

Sub questions:

- *To what extent do secondary school students accept or reject the cultural rules that stimulate them to perform risky sexual behaviour?*
- *What constraints do students encounter in effectively challenging these cultural rules?*
- *To what extent is the Ndlovu Aids Awareness Program's approach to reduce risky sexual behaviour among secondary school students appropriate to the their situation and experience?*

Together, the answers to these questions will give a practical insight in what the different aspects of the model on renegotiating sexual identities (Figure 1, page 10) entail for the secondary school learners that are targeted by NAAP. This research will give insight in what is *needed* for the students, as well as what is being *provided* by NAAP to enable them to effectively challenge the sexual identities that put them increased risk for HIV infection. Any discrepancies between these needs and provisions can indicate opportunities for NAAP to refine its approach and adapt to these needs to improve their effectiveness.

5. Research Methods

To answer the questions posed in the previous chapter, a qualitative approach was taken. Parker (2001) shows the importance of qualitative research on the “cultural meanings that shape and construct sexual experience, and on the political economy of structural forces that impinge upon sexual life” (Parker, 2001: 173) to inform HIV prevention efforts. This chapter will describe the context in which the research was performed and discuss what was done in order to answer the research questions.

The area of Moutse

The rural area of Moutse is one of the poorest parts of the Elias Motsoaledi municipality, Limpopo province. It used to be a designated ‘black’ area during apartheid. These days, Moutse still has an all-black population. In 2005, between 71.6 and 85 percent of the households in the municipality reported to have an income lower than the ‘minimum subsistence income’ of 1300 Rands (just over a 100 euro) per month. The literacy rate in Moutse was estimated at 58 percent; the same percentage of the inhabitants was unemployed. There are no data available on HIV rates in the area (Elias Motsoaledi Local Municipality, 2008).

During the research period, there was much social unrest in Moutse due to a demarcation conflict. While the area is part of Limpopo province, most inhabitants are unhappy about the service delivery here and want to be allocated to the neighboring Mpumalanga province. For this reason, schools were closed for several weeks and there was incidental rioting, whereby roads were blocked, a large truck was burned down, and the police had to intervene several times.

The Ndlovu Care Group and Ndlovu Aids Awareness Program

The Ndlovu Aids Awareness Program (NAAP) is one of the community services offered by the Ndlovu Care Group in the area of Moutse. Ndlovu Care Group aims to provide a holistic package of community health and care services. Besides raising awareness on Aids, Ndlovu runs a 12- and 24-hour medical clinic, a program for orphans and vulnerable children, and several community development programs, such as a music academy, computer literacy program, and a water and waste program. Ndlovu Care Group was started in 1994 in Moutse. The concept has since then been replicated in two other rural sites in South Africa.

NAAP was started in 1998 and attempts “to educate, de-stigmatize and mobilize communities at large towards voluntary counseling and testing, early care-seeking behaviour, protected sexual behaviour, openness and acceptance of [people living with Aids], and gender equality, in order to mitigate the impact of the HIV/AIDS/TB epidemic” (Ndlovu Medical Trust, 2008: 6). The organization employs around forty people and works with different teams in the following five areas: schools, businesses, farms, community and sports.

This research focuses on the work of the NAAP school team, which consists of five peer educators and a coordinator. Due to internal changes at NAAP, the initial five peer educators were replaced by five others during the research period. There were both male and female peer educators, with all in

their mid- or late twenties. Unless mentioned otherwise, when this report refers to the activities of NAAP, it refers to the activities of the school team.

Previous research at the Ndlovu Aids Awareness Program

Preceding the current research, other research was conducted through Utrecht University at the Ndlovu Aids Awareness Program. This previous research took a mostly quantitative approach. Through questionnaires, it tried to gain insight in the underlying variables of the students' sexual behaviour (Tempelman & Vermeer, 2008). During the current research period, some of the results from previous research were discussed with the peer educators of the NAAP school team. Many contradictions occurred between these results and way the peer educators experienced the students' sexual behaviour. For example, research suggested that 73 percent of the students between fourteen and eighteen years old abstained from sex.

*PE1:*⁴ That is a clear lie. [...] When you asses the lifestyles of the current generation, [...] the way they are sexually active, it easily tells that this percentage is very, very high.

Interviewer: Why do you think that this number is so high? [...]

PE2: Denial. I think sometimes they feel ashamed, [...] I feel that maybe sometimes when you ask this question [about their sexual activity], they feel ashamed to tell the truth. They feel that this person is going to judge [them].

The peer educators also doubted the research outcome that sixty percent said not to have sex for pleasure.

PE: When you enter in a class and [...] say 'let us talk about sex [...], why do you have sex?' They will say 'we have sex for pleasure'. So it shows that they are lying [in the questionnaires]. They have sex for pleasure, not for making babies or something. They have sex for pleasure.

Also on issues of multiple partnerships and transactional sex, peer educators doubted the research outcomes. As the peer educators are just a few years older than the secondary school students, mostly come from the same area, and still work closely with them, it is expected that their comments provide a legitimate basis to seriously doubt some of the previous research findings. In the current research, a different, qualitative approach will be taken that tries to give a more realistic account of the secondary school students' situation and experience.

Participants and data collection

To get insight in the cultural rules that make students engage in risky sexual behaviour, eight focus group discussions (FGDs) were conducted at five different schools where NAAP is active. MacPhail and Campbell show that FGDs are "capable of revealing the processes whereby social norms are collectively shaped through debate and argument" (MacPhail & Campbell, 2001: 1618). Especially on topics that can be subjected to taboos, like sexuality, FGDs allow the less inhibited participants to break the ice for their shy peers.

⁴ PE = Peer educator. When several peer educators are discussing in one quote, they are numbered, with the first person speaking being no.1, etc.

Male and female respondents participated in separate groups to prevent that exclusionary power mechanisms (Plantenga, 2004) keep them from contradicting the expectations that the other sex holds of them. The following criteria were set with the selection of students: They should be above 16 years old (the age from which parental agreement is not required), attending secondary school, be willing to participate voluntarily and have sufficient verbal skills in English. Although this last criterion could be compromising the external validity of the sample, it is expected that this disadvantage is outweighed by the advantages of participants being able to directly express themselves in the (English) discussion with minimal interruption of a translator. Within the criteria mentioned here, the final selection of students was done by the life-orientation teachers of the different schools where the FGDs were conducted.

Focus group discussions with male participants were led by the (male) author of this thesis, female groups were led by a female colleague. Both are white, Dutch university students in their early twenties. The differences in background between the discussion leaders and the participants did not seem to restrict the openness of the participants. Similar to Walker's (2005) findings, being an outsider rather seemed to facilitate discussion, as it created a non-threatening space for the participants to speak freely about issues of sexuality. When one researcher was leading the discussion, the other made notes and asked additional questions. A translator attended each discussion, but translation was rarely necessary.

In total, forty students (21 male, 19 female) participated in eight focus group discussions. All lived in the Moutse area and were black South Africans. Their age ranged from 16 to 22 years, with an average age of 18,5. Male respondents were on average around a year older than female respondents (19,1 vs. 17,8). All of them reported to have seen a NAAP performance at least once. In the FGDs, vignettes were used to trigger discussion. These vignettes contained examples of 'real-life' experiences of fictive characters with having relationships, sex, and using protection. Together, these vignettes made sure that all relevant aspects of the model depicted in Figure 1 (page 10) were covered in discussions. Each vignette consisted of three parts in which a story was unfolded; each part was discussed separately. Participants were asked how they felt about what was happening in the story, if they thought the characters behaved in a 'proper' way, and if the stories were realistic accounts of what is happening among people their age in their area. Using vignettes allowed students to express how they feel about certain cultural rules and how these can (not) be challenged, without forcing them to talk about personal experiences. In total, ten vignettes were used (see Appendix). Half of these were composed by a fellow researcher focussing on multiple relationships among secondary school students, but much discussion on these stories was relevant for the current research as well.

To get better insight in the activities of the Ndlovu Aids Awareness Program and their strategies for changing the students' behaviour, several methods were used. First of all, observations were done during the activities of NAAP in schools. To get insight in NAAP's formal strategy, policy documents were collected and analysed. Interviews were held with the program's manager, coordinators and peer educators to get an understanding of the activities and strategies from their perspective. The peer educators directly working with the students also participated in two FGDs, discussing their perspectives on the students' sexual identities and their way of dealing with this in the program. Finally, quantitative data collected by the organization itself on the number and character of

activities performed was taken into account. Using this triangulation of methods provided a comprehensive understanding of NAAP's activities and the rationale behind these.

After getting preliminary insights in the results of our research, a feedback session was conducted with NAAP school team members to discuss how they can implement this research's findings in their daily work. Presentations were done to present the preliminary findings to the whole NAAP team and the Ndlovu Care Group management.

Data analysis

The qualitative data collected in this research was analysed by using MaxQDA, a software package for qualitative data analysis. The FGDs and most interviews were taped and fully transcribed. The transcripts of the students' FGDs were coded within the framework of the model depicted in Figure 1 (page 10). This provided insight in the students' perception of the cultural rules shaping their behaviour, their personal opinions on these rules and the constraints or opportunities they encounter to challenge these cultural rules. The policy documents, FGDs and interviews with the NAAP team were mainly coded by the methods they used and the topics they covered in their activities. On this last aspect, the quantitative data provided by the organisation itself and the observations during NAAP activities were used to confirm or challenge the findings from the FGDs, interviews and policy documents.

6. Relevance

Social Relevance

The social relevance of this research can be found in its use for the Ndlovu Aids Awareness Program (NAAP), as well as for other similar interventions working with a similar target group. Discrepancies between the students' experience and the program's approach were discussed with the program's employees and management. This allows NAAP to design more culturally appropriate programs (Parker, 2001) and to be sensitive to the obstacles students face to challenge dominant norms. When HIV prevention is able to be more responsive to the needs and experience of students, it will be more effective in changing their behaviour towards safer sexual practices.

Scientific Relevance

From a scientific perspective, this research resembles the approach taken by Catherine Campbell and colleagues (see MacPhail & Campbell, 2001; Campbell & MacPhail, 2002; Campbell & Williams, 2001; Campbell, 2003). Besides their studies, few HIV-related researchers have explicitly taking into account the interrelatedness of subjective structure (cultural rules) and more objective structure (economic and physical dependency) and the way these provide the context in which individuals give meaning to their sexual encounters and make their behavioural choices. The model depicted in Figure 1 (page 10) provides a holistic framework for empirical research, which use is not restricted to a study of secondary school students' sexual identities, but could also be implemented in research on other target groups of HIV prevention programs.

Relevance for Interdisciplinary Social Science

This research presents HIV prevention as an enterprise in need for a holistic approach. Sexual risk-taking behaviour should not be regarded as an issue of individual awareness; neither should it be regarded as a direct outcome of contextual factors. People are not passive objects in their environment or completely autonomous actors free of any structural constraints. With this perspective on human behaviour, an interdisciplinary approach is a necessity. Insights from sociology, anthropology, social psychology and pedagogy are drawn upon to get a comprehensive perspective on the interrelatedness of individual behaviour and contextual structures. From an ontological perspective, this interrelatedness shows the arbitrary nature of the different social science disciplines and the necessity of combining insights from these different disciplines to get a comprehensive understanding of social problems.

7. Research Findings

The first part of this chapter will present the empirical findings of the current research on cultural rules that stimulate secondary school students to perform risky sexual behaviour. For each of the four themes that were distinguished previously (having (multiple) relationships, having sex, using protection and discussing and negotiating about sex), it will be discussed to what extent these cultural rules are accepted or rejected by the students and which constraints they encounter in effectively challenging these rules. The second part of this chapter will discuss the empirical findings on the strategy of the Ndlovu Aids Awareness Program in addressing the secondary school students.

7.1 Cultural rules

Unless mentioned otherwise, all results presented here are derived from the eight focus group discussions with the secondary school learners. Together, the following paragraphs will provide answers to the first two sub questions of this research: *'To what extent do secondary school students accept or reject the cultural rules that stimulate them to perform risky sexual behaviour?'* and *'What constraints do students encounter in effectively challenging these cultural rules?'*. The answers to these questions will give the Ndlovu Aids Awareness Program insight in the students' situation and experience and will help in assessing the appropriateness of their intervention.

7.1.1 Having (multiple) relationships

This paragraph will elaborate on the meaning of having relationships to the respondents. Unless mentioned otherwise, the relationships discussed here include sexual intercourse between partners. When reference is made to multiple relationships, this means boys or girls are having more than one partner in the same period of time.

Acceptance of having (multiple) relationships

Previous research in similar settings shows how expectations on having relationships can be different for men and women. While a 'real' man should be having more than one girlfriend at the same time (MacPhail & Campbell, 2001), women lose respectability when having multiple partners (Varga, 2003). The desirability for men to have more partners also seems accepted by women, as these do not expect to be the only partner (Ragnarsson et al., 2008; MacPhail & Campbell, 2001).

These results from previous research are partly confirmed in the current research. Firstly, male respondents indicate that some of them would gain status among their peers when having many girlfriends.

M1⁵ (21yrs): To be honest, some of us, they want to have just one girlfriend. And to others, they want to have two or more girlfriends.

[...]

Interviewer: And if you like [only] one, can you discuss it with [...] your friends?

M1: Yes, it is still okay, as long as you have a girlfriends, then it is okay.

⁵ M = male respondent; F = female respondent. When several respondents are discussing in one quote, the respondents are numbered, with the first person speaking being no.1, etc.

Interviewer: And if you don't?
M1: Ishh. [It will be bad.]
M (22yrs): If I have one girl, to my friends I look like a fool. They are going to just take me like something, not a person or a human being.
 [...]
M1: They tell you that you can't eat chicken every night. You have got to eat pork, or...
 (FGD4)

The discussion above shows that, although having a girlfriend seems important for everyone, the desire to have more than one girlfriend differs among the respondents' peers. The remark that 'you can't eat chicken every night' indicates that some boys see it as a necessity to have several girlfriends.

While having multiple partners is stimulated among young men, another respondent states the opposite for young women. In the following quote, he comments on a vignette in which a girl is dating two different men.

M (17yrs): You know, you can't drive two cars at the same time. You have to drive one.
Interviewer: As a girl you can only drive one car?
M: You have to drive one.
 (FGD2)

While young men can not be monogamous and 'eat chicken every night', young women can not be polygamous and 'drive two cars at the same time'. These two statements are exemplary for the respondents' seemingly greater acceptance for young men to have multiple partners compared to young women. Similar to results from previous research, respondents indicate that women jeopardize their respectability by having several boyfriends.

Interviewer: When a girl has more boyfriends, is she impressing her friends with that? [...]
F (18yrs): In that situation, we as girls, we see you as a fool. Because you are ruining your reputation. That is a reputation that you should be protecting. [...]
Interviewer: What kind of reputation would you have if you have several boyfriends?
F: You know, people will see you as a slut, we call you all sort of names. That one she likes boys very much. The dignity that you have goes down.
 (FGD5)

While the quotes above confirm the existence of traditional male and female expectations, there are also contradictory statements made for both sexes. Firstly, female respondents indicate a certain level of acceptance for women to have more than one partner.

Interviewer: Do you think [a girl] will tell her friends about [having more than one boyfriend]? [...]
F (17yrs): They will not be shocked, they will talk about. [...] They are gonna act normal, because they are also doing that.
 [laughing]
Interviewer: Is it happening a lot, you think? A girl that has two boyfriends?
F: It is happening, more than two or three.
 (FGD3)

Similar contradictory statements are found when discussing men's relationships. Although it was already shown that young men can gain status by having multiple relationships, others disapprove of this. The following quote shows two female respondents with contradicting opinions, commenting on a vignette in which a girl accepts that her boyfriend has more girlfriends, as 'boys need more sex'.

F1 (17yrs): I think [she] is right [when] saying 'one man is supposed to have more girlfriends', because nowadays it is not easy to get a boyfriend that only has [one] ... As long as they use a condom it is okay.
[...]

F2 (18yrs): Wohh! [...] I don't think it is right to have many girls or boys by yourself.

(FGD1)

Although the first respondent quoted above accepts men to have more girlfriends 'as long as they use condoms', it seems as if this acceptance stems from pragmatic motives ('not easy to get a boyfriend that only has [one girlfriend]'), instead of a moral justification of male polygamy. The second girl clearly disapproves of it. This disapproval is also found among boys.

M (21yrs): From my side, I don't think it is good for a male person to love two girls at the same time.

(FGD4)

Comparing these findings with those of previous research, the respondents partly confirm the desirability for young men to have more than one partner, and disapproval of this for young women. However, the respondents also show that both of these ideals are far from absolute. Female respondents also indicate a certain level of acceptance of women having more boyfriends, while several male and female respondents say to disapprove of men having more girlfriends. Compared to what was suggested in previous research, the focus group discussions present less consensus and more resistance to traditional gender roles and expectations regarding having relationships.

Reasons for being in a relationship

In previous research, gaining status among peers and sexual satisfaction are presented as important reasons for young men to have relationships (MacPhail & Campbell, 2001), while receiving money and gifts in exchange for sex is mentioned as a reason for young women to have one or more partners (Epstein, 2007). These reasons are also discussed by the respondents in the current research and are always clearly distinguished from another reason to have a relationship: love.

M (17yrs): I will describe myself... I have three girlfriends. There is one I love, then these two, I don't love... maybe... ah.. sometimes that does not cross my mind. I go to visit her and she turns me down. That does not pain me.

(FGD2)

The respondent quoted above clearly distinguishes between the one girlfriend he loves and the other two he doesn't love. He seems to care less about his relationship with the last two girlfriends. Some young men see love as the only legitimate reason to have a relationship, while others seem to accept other reasons than love as well. It is especially female respondents who reject all motives for having a relationship other than love. The following respondent comments on a vignette describing a transactional relationship.

F(17yrs): They both got in the relationship for the wrong reasons. [...] It is not love.

Interviewer: And what is a good reason for a relationship?

F: A good reason to start a relationship is... well from my side, if you love somebody you just have to tell him that you love her and it has to be something that comes out of your heart, not out of your mind.

(FGD3)

The girl quoted here states that when 'it is not love', you 'got in the relationship for the wrong reasons'. Still, both male and female respondents are able to explain about these 'wrong reasons' and indicate that they are common among them and their peers.

Peer pressure

The most important reason for boys to engage in multiple relationships seems to be peer pressure.

M (18yrs): You know, as teenagers we usually have even more than two girls, 3 or 4. So that is why I am saying, it is not because you love these girls, it is because of pleasing or amusing other people.

(FGD8)

The ability to have sex is a central aspect of peers stimulating each other to have more girlfriends.

M (18yrs): If ever they see you have fallen in love with one girl and being faithful to her, they will say you are a fool, you don't know how to have sex, they will make fun of you, jokes. So I think many boys are afraid of that.

(FGD8)

Judging from this statement, the pressure on boys to have sex seems to be very high. The following quote shows how sex can be the single reason to engage in a relationship.

M (21yrs): Why are we having sex before marriage? For fun. So when I propose to a girl and I am saying 'let's have a relationship together', I am not honest to her. I should have said, 'let's have sex together'.

(FGD4)

While young men are pressurized by their male peers to have more than one partner, the following quote shows how a respondent indicates that girls encourage them to behave like a 'player' as well.

M (21 yrs): Some of these girls, when you have sex or when you are called a player, they seem to fall in love with us, I don't know why. So what are we supposed to do?

(FGD4)

The young man's question 'what are we supposed to do' seems rhetoric; when your same-sex friends, as well as girls reward it when you behave like a player, than doing this seems to be a logical choice.

While peer pressure on young men mostly seems to stimulate them to have more girlfriends, this is more ambiguous for women. On one hand, friends can urge them to have a lot of boyfriends, but friends can also discourage them and, as was mentioned previously, condemn women having multiple relationships.

F (18yrs): Being with a lot of friends, they can pressurize you to take their position. And they say 'just have more boyfriends', [...] and [you] will agree with them, and go with a lot of boyfriends.
(FGD5)

F (17yrs): For girls, when they have lots of boyfriends, [...] your friends are going to tell you it is not right.
(FGD1)

These contradicting peers' opinions reflect the previously mentioned ambiguous acceptance of girls having multiple relationships. They are on one hand being called 'sluts', while on the other hand, people will 'act normal, because they are also doing that'. This can place them in a difficult position, in which they will always fail to meet some expectations others hold of them.

Transactional relationships

Receiving money or gifts in return for having sex can be a reason for young women to engage in a relationship. Having a transactional relationship can be a means for them to maintain a particular kind of lifestyle.

F (17yrs): Most chicks like those fancy things. They don't always get them, [...] maybe their parents can't afford them. I mean, that is the reason why they decide to have a sugar daddy.
(FGD3)

'Sugar daddies' are referred to as being mostly older men that provide girls with gifts and money in exchange for sex. Secondary school girls dating older men, like taxi drivers, seems to occur in the respondents' community. These transactional relationships, especially when it involves an older man, are disapproved of by all respondents.

F (19yrs): We as young girls, nowadays, we are looking for jewellery, something that takes us far in our lives. Money [...]. A man who is going with the [fancy] cars, we are taking it too far. This is not good girls. Look [...] now, [this girl] is pressurised by her boyfriend, [...] nobody knows if they have protected themselves or they are just having sex without protection. What if [she] catches diseases, what if she falls pregnant?
(FGD6)

The female respondent quoted above is clearly associating the desire to live a certain lifestyle with risky sexual behaviour. Other respondents make similar remarks, like these male respondents that speak about girls that 'damage their body' because 'they put the money first'.

M1 (20yrs): What [these girls] do, they put money first, they love money more then they [love] themselves. And it happens with older guys, older men, who are financially independent. What they do, they offer them money, just to damage their body.
[...]

M2 (17yrs): I think that it is because [he] is supporting her financially, so if she tells [him] to use condoms, he will start to push her away.
[...]

M3 (18yrs): She will lose that income.

(FGD7)

This discussion shows how receiving money in a relationship can make someone economically dependent on partner. In this situation, frustrating this partner means risking to 'lose that income'. One peer educator, who grew up in the students' community himself, gives clear insight in how a transactional relationship diminishes a young woman's negotiation capacities, as it gives the man a sense of ownership over the woman's sexuality. This will, in line with previous research (f.e. Epstein, 2007), often lead to unsafe sexual practice.

*PE*⁶: If somebody is buying clothes or giving money, it is like that person is owning you. [He would say] 'If I gave you 500 rand [around 40 euro, LG] to go and buy clothes and do your hair, and if ever then I want to have sex, you can't tell me to use a condom. Because it seems like I spend my 500 rand for nothing. So to show that I spend my 500 rand for something, lets go for sex without a condom.

(FGD2 team)

Looking at transactional relationships, there seems to be a gap between the moral convictions of the respondents and the reality that they describe around them. Although all respondents disapprove of sex in exchange for money or gifts, they often indicate that it does occur among their peers. This contradiction shows that what respondents see as 'the right thing to do' in respect to relationships, is often not what is actually happening. There appear to be other than moral motives for engaging in certain types of relationships.

Responsible lifestyle

All the above shows that multiple relationships occur among the respondents and their peers. Both male and female respondents are able to explain the reasons for people to engage in multiple relationships and, up to a certain extent, accept their existence, especially for young men. On the other hand, respondents often give reasons why they should not have more than one relationship, or why they should have no relationship at all. Sometimes, the inability to provide for a partner is given as a reason for young men not to have multiple partners. Multiple relationships are also seen as 'unfair' or 'dishonest' by several respondents, hence they disapprove of these. Still, most arguments against multiple relationships or being involved in a relationship in general, are linked to the idea that it is interfering with a responsible lifestyle. Being in one or more relationships is said to put pressure on students' school performance, burdening them emotionally and, most of all, putting their health at risk or risking pregnancy. The following quotes are comments on different vignettes describing a boy or girl having more than one partner.

M (18yrs): Sometimes it is wrong, because we may find ourselves losing concentration at school. Two girls can cause trouble.

(FGD2)

F (19yrs): This can disturb her in her studies. Because always when she is at school, maybe she starts to think about those two boyfriends and that can affect her [...] studies.

(FGD6)

⁶ Peer educator

M (20yrs): I also think that [she] is putting her life in danger, because sometimes you might become pregnant or something, and she may confuse herself with who is the father of the child. She might also get infected.

(FGD8)

F (18yrs): You should be having only one sexual partner. Because there are many illnesses, STIs, you never know. Maybe some [...] build up from the side, they show symptoms at a later stage. So he won't know if he has them or not. And I will tell you that he should go and get tested for HIV. Know his status.

(FGD5)

According to the quotes above, having multiple relationships is seen as 'trouble', 'disturbing' and 'dangerous'. These types of reactions are common among all respondents. When being presented with situations in which a boy or girl has more than one concurrent partner, disapproving comments about an irresponsible lifestyle are the respondents' typical first reaction. Most of the time, it is only after disapproving of the presented behaviour, that they indicate that it does occur regularly and give reasons why people, even themselves, still engage in such behaviour.

This ambivalence on the respondents' reaction reflects the contradiction between messages on safe sex from health interventions and motives to still engage in multiple relationships, like peer pressure or exchange. Respondents show to be well aware of the health risks that are attached to having several partners and, from this perspective, condemn unfaithfulness. Sometimes, respondents even make explicit reference to the Ndlovu Aids Awareness Program or the government's Soul City magazine⁷ to back up their statements. Still, it shows that possessing this knowledge is insufficient for behavioural change and that, as is also stressed by Campbell (2003), more than just basic awareness is needed to effectively stimulate safe sexual behaviour. More on strategies of HIV prevention will be discussed in paragraph 7.2.

7.1.2 Having sex

According to previous research in South African rural black communities, sex is seen as a predominantly male game. Men are the ones that enjoy and need sex most (Ragnarsson et al., 2008), while women's satisfaction would lay in pleasing their male partners and in the intimacy sex brings (Reddy & Dunne, 2007). Women would have sex to prove to their boyfriends that they love them (MacPhail & Campbell, 2001).

These results from previous research are partly confirmed in the current research. Young men are allowed more freedom when it comes to having sex. Discussing a vignette in which a boy and girl have sex after just having met at a party, the following respondents clearly show a different acceptance of this for the sexes.

M (18yrs): Well, this is normally what is happening here nowadays. At the tavern, I am drunk, I see this nice girl, and I will end up wanting to talk to her. Nothing major I want to attend, I just want to have sex with her just for that day. Sometimes you say it is just a one day service thing.

⁷ Soul City is a publication by the government that, among other things, stimulates youngsters to take care of their sexual health.

[...]

M (17yrs): I am sorry to say this, but I have to say it. [...] if [the girl] agreed to have sex with [the boy], that means [she] is a slut.

(FGD2)

While the male character is described as just wanting to have a 'one day service thing', the female character is qualified as a 'slut'. This reflects the idea that having (multiple) sexual partners can be seen as a virtue for young men, but as a disgrace for young women. Some female respondents do not straight away reject sex without love being involved. Still, they discuss it somewhat differently than male respondents.

F1 (17yrs): According to our tradition, it is a taboo to have sex with someone who you are not in love with.

F2 (18yrs): It is not right.

F3 (18yrs): Don't lie, [...] You know that it happens. Just to sleep with that person.

F4 (19yrs): You can have sex, just because....

F1: ... the attraction of the body.

F4: If you like that person and you just have sex. We have seen [it] on the TV....

(FGD6)

While the male respondent that was quoted earlier stated bluntly that casual sex is 'normally happening here nowadays', this female respondent states more carefully that it is something they 'have seen on the TV'. Young women regularly describe sex without love as a taboo and disapprove of it. It seems as if male respondents are more comfortable in discussing and approving such behaviour, which might reflect that more is accepted of them when it comes to sex.

Reasons for having sex

The idea that men would need sex more than women seems to exist in the respondents' community.

M (21yrs): In our language there is a [Zulu] saying that says [...] a men is an axe. Before he sleeps, he must be sharpened. Like a pencil. He must be sharp, basically it means every day. Every time you go to sleep you must have sex.

(FGD4)

M (17yrs): I think that we, guys, are the problem, mainly because, you know, I don't think we can get used to having one girlfriend. Most guys feel unsatisfied with one girl.

(FGD7)

The last respondent quoted here does not think that guys 'can get used to having one girlfriend', which he sees as problematic. This suggests that having only one girlfriend is seen, from a certain perspective, as the better option, but their need to have more partners makes it difficult to stay faithful to one. Others see this inherent male need for sex as false. The following respondents are commenting on a vignette in which a girl accepts that her boyfriend has more girlfriends.

M (17yrs): I think she is 120 percent wrong[...], [when] she thinks [a man's] need for sex is bigger, there is no thing like that.

(FGD2)

F (17yrs): There are many [boys] that don't have [...] more than one girlfriend. When you have [a lot] of girlfriends, it is what you think in your mind.

(FGD1)

By stating that 'it is what you think in your mind', this female respondent seems to be aware of the socially constructed nature of traditional male sexuality. Without this awareness, such ideas can be seen as 'natural' or 'biologically determined' (Ragnarsson et al., 2008) and can be, therefore, uncritically accepted (Crehan, 2002).

Pleasure or fun is rarely mentioned by respondents as a reason for having sex. Only male respondents sometimes make such comments.

M1 (22yrs): I think most of the guys have sex for fun. [...]

M2 (17yrs): Because it is cool...

M1: ...to have sex for fun.

M3 (19yrs): We all think that it is cool.

(FGD7)

While several male respondents make remarks on how sex can be fun or pleasant, girls never refer to pleasure or fun when talking about sex. Respondents can give reasons for young women to have sex, but it is rarely explicitly mentioned as a pleasant goal in itself. In one previously discussed instance, girls did state that you can have sex, just because of 'attraction of the body', but needed to refer to the television as the source of this idea. This can indicate that, as is suggested by Schefer and Foster (2001), they themselves lack a positive discourse on female sexuality.

A reason for young women to have sex that is more extensively discussed by the respondents, is to prove their love to their boyfriends. One female respondent is very outspoken about love as a legitimate reason to have sex with a partner.

F1 (19yrs): If I say 'I love you' to that boy, it means that I will do what the boy wants.

Others: No!

F2 (19yrs): No, that is a pressure and abuse. [...] She can engage herself in things that she does not want.

(FGD6)

Other respondents seem to disapprove of having sex just to prove your love to your partner. Still, it seems that young men can use love to put pressure on their girlfriends to have sex with them.

M1 (21yrs): And to be honest, most girls [...] go to have sex, they are being pressurized by us. So we will find that, I did force her to sleep with me.

Interviewer: [...] How does this forcing work?

M1: Like, she is my girlfriend, then I date her for two weeks. Then I tell her: something is missing...

M2 (22yrs): ...let's go to have sex. [...] You show me that you can love me.

M1: We tell her that you must show me that you love me. Prove your love.

(FGD4)

These statements confirm previous research that shows that satisfying their male partners is an important aspect of female sexuality. This can compromise female negotiation capacities in a relationship, as it makes young women to prioritize their partner's wishes over their own.

F (17yrs): [She] still prefers to wait [with having sex], but because she [...] loves [her boyfriend] and doesn't want to lose him, she slept with him anyway.

(FGD3)

This quote clearly shows how the sexual satisfaction of her partner was more important than her own sexual preference (which was, in this case, delaying). All the above shows that sex is sometimes still seen as a predominantly male game, but also that, from another perspective, this male dominance is rejected.

Delaying or abstaining from sex

While up till here the possible reasons for young men and women to have sex have been discussed, both male and female respondents give many reasons for abstaining or waiting with having sex. The desire to keep their virginity is one of these reasons for female respondents. Waiting until after marriage is also mentioned as a reason to postpone sex.

F (18yrs): Virginity is important, because in [some] cultures, when you are a virgin, old people will respect you. They take you as an understanding girl.

(FGD6)

F (18yrs): I think, from my side, [you should] have sex after marriage.

(FGD5)

Still, the most cited reasons for boys and girls not to have sex or to wait with sex, is to live a healthy, responsible life. Sometimes, potential partners are distrusted. Doing an HIV test is regularly mentioned to be a necessity before starting sex.

F1 (18yrs): It is better not to have sex at all.

F2 (18yrs): Abstain. And when you reach that stage that you want to go to have sex, go for testing [...]. And if someone comes and approaches you that he wants to have sex with you, then you insist that he will go for an HIV test, because [...] you can't trust someone, maybe you can get that. You have to know their [HIV] status. In writing, in black and white.

(FGD5)

M (22yrs): They might have to go to do a blood test. Just in case. [...] You must not have a run to sex, you must [...] walk slow. Just know anything about that girl.

(FGD4)

As with discussing multiple relationships, respondents show to be well aware of the health risks attached to having sex. Respondents often associate sex with risk-taking. When commenting from this safe-sex perspective, it is mostly stressed that sexual partners should not be trusted. This sometimes conservative and repressive way of looking at sex ('it is better not to have sex at all'), seems to be out of tune with the reality that students experience in their daily lives. Although the importance of HIV testing is expressed regularly, still many do not seem to do a test before starting to have sex with a new partner.

Interviewer: Does it happen a lot with [...] boys your age in this area, if you get a girlfriend, [do you] go first to NAAP to have [an HIV test]? [...]

M (21yrs): Yeah, it should be like that, but that is not happening.

(FGD4)

This last quote shows a clear distinction between the respondents' expressions on how things should be and what is happening in reality. Many of these contradictions come up when respondents are discussing sex. On one hand, reasons are given why young men should have many sexual partners and young women should satisfy their partners' desires. In the same discussions, respondents disapprove of the same behaviour for reasons of sexual health. It seems as if the secondary school students base their opinions on two competing discourses: a 'traditional' discourse of male sexual dominance, opposed to a discourse of sexual health. Respondents are able to comment on a presented situation through both discourses. When they are aware of the health risks of a certain type of behaviour, this does not necessarily mean that the respondents do not engage in the risky behaviour themselves.

M (21yrs): In this situation we are preaching but rather not practicing. Preaching is useless [...]. I do know that you must wait for the time to come, but when the situation comes, we do [...] it. We do sex.

(FGD7)

7.1.3 Using protection

Previous research presents several disincentives for young men and women to use condoms. MacPhail and Campbell (2001) show that condoms are seen as a constraint to sexual pleasure. Condoms also have a more symbolic value, as they can indicate mistrust between partners. For women, suggesting condoms can be seen as a reflection of loose morals (Reddy & Dunne, 2007). Although condom use also limits fertility, most youth do not see this as a disincentive to use them, as they are not ready to have children yet (Varga, 2003).

A barrier to fertility, pleasure and trust?

These results from previous research are all confirmed by the respondents in the current research. First of all, both male and female respondents express to see themselves as too young to have children. Getting pregnant is seen as irreconcilable with going to school, and having to provide for a child is not within the students' possibilities.

M (18yrs): At this age, this pregnancy thing is not something we plan. I can not sit down with my girlfriend and say 'I want to have a baby with you'. It just a thing that just happens during sex.

Interviewer: Why can't you discuss it?

M: We are still young, I can't actually afford a baby right now.

(FGD2)

Instead of condoms being a constraint to fertility, it is more the other way around: The risk of getting pregnant is a reason for the respondents to use condoms.

F (19yrs): It is right to protect themselves, because they [...] can become pregnant. They have no responsibilities for that child. They have to protect themselves.

(FGD1)

While constraints to fertility are not problematic, male respondents do see the reduction of pleasure when using condoms as a disincentive to use them. In the following quote, male respondents explain how young men can sabotage condoms to trick their girlfriends into having unprotected, 'flesh-to-flesh' sex.

M1 (21yrs): The tip of the condom....
[...]

M2 (18yrs): They just take that out.

M1: Most using their nails.
[...]

M1: When you go to bed, he takes the hand of the girl and let her see, I am using a condom.
The girl will agree.

Interviewer: But why do boys do that?
[...]

M1: Sex with a condom, to be honest, it is not the same. It is quite different, to be honest.

Interviewer: But then if you remove the top part, is it better?

M1: The condom will burst in each direction and then you still have flesh-to-flesh.

(FGD4)

These young men clearly explain that sex with a condom is 'not the same' as unprotected sex. Having sex without a condom seems to be preferred. It is only male respondent that make such statements. The following quote shows how female respondents do not understand why some men do not like to use condoms.

F1 (18yrs): Most guys say that [they don't enjoy sex when using a condom]. Because you can't eat a banana with the skin around it.

F2 (18yrs): ... [or eat] a sweet with a wrapper.

F3 (18yrs): I don't think there is a difference. The only difference is that you are wearing that condom. Everything is the same. I don't see his reasons why he is not enjoying it.

(FGD5)

These different opinions of male and female respondents might reflect a different way of experiencing sex. As male respondents are the only ones that explicitly associated sex with personal pleasure, they are also the only ones that mention a limitation of this pleasure as a disincentive to use condoms. While not agreeing with the male perspective that was discussed ('I don't see his reasons why he is not enjoying it'), female respondents never talk about the influence of condoms on the female sexual experience. This again might reflect how sex is still seen as a male game, even though the respondent do not agree with this.

The symbolic meaning of condoms in a relationship is discussed by both male and female respondents as a reason not to use them.

F (18yrs): You will get tempted. If I use a protection, I don't love him, I am cheating, all these kinds of things. [...] He will say to me 'oh, what, you don't trust me? Because I am your boyfriend, you should trust me, so let us not use a protection, we will do it naturally'. Then [...] I say

fine, he is my boyfriend, I love him, [...] let us not use a protection. Then it happens that I fall pregnant and drop out of school, things like that.

(FGD5)

The respondent quoted here shows how men can exploit this symbolic meaning of condoms to persuade their girlfriends to have unprotected sex with them. Judging from her statements, demanding condoms can symbolize a lack of love, trust and faithfulness. The respondent show to be aware of how (the anticipation of) her partner's reaction to suggesting condoms can make her vulnerable for, in this case, pregnancy. A male respondent makes a similar comment on the suggestion of condom use, explaining why a girl might be afraid to do so.

M (17 yrs): I think [...] she is afraid that maybe [her boyfriend] feels like [she] is having HIV [if she asks him to use condoms].

(FGD2)

This statement shows how condoms can be associated with an HIV infection. This stigma can keep people from suggesting condom use to their partners.

Although love and trust are regularly being connected with having unprotected sex, several respondents say that this trust should be confirmed by an HIV test. Only after such a test, partners can start having sex without a condom.

F (18yrs): If you decide not to use condoms, it is when you know your status. That you are all negative, that you know that there is nothing transmitted from one person to another. [...] After knowing their status, that is when they should decide, no, we are not using a condom, because we both know that we are HIV negative.

(FGD5)

Still, respondents indicate that this testing does not happen often.

F (18yrs): To be totally honest, here they don't usually go for an HIV test. Majority of them [doesn't] get it.

(FGD5)

As was discussed previously, boyfriends can point to trust as a reason why they should not use condoms ('because I am your boyfriend, you should trust me'). The same might be true for doing an HIV test. Like using condoms, an HIV test is done when there is no certainty of a partner's HIV status. As is stated by Reddy and Dunne (2007), this contradicts the female ideals of loving and trusting a partner.

Condom use as protection

Besides the reasons not to use condoms mentioned above, respondents also give reasons why condoms should be used. While reasons for unprotected sex are mostly disapproved of, reasons to use condoms are without exception supported by the respondents.

As mentioned above, respondents can see condom use as a lack of trust between partners. For others, this is exactly the reason why you should use protection; you never know if your partner is faithful to you.

M (18yrs): I also think that we, guys, should use condom, because we never know if our girls are fooling around behind our backs or what. So we should use condoms, protect ourselves.
(FGD7)

F1 (18yrs): Unless you know that for sure he is telling the truth [about being faithful], then how will you know? That is the trouble, you will never know. That is why you should use protection at all cost. Unless you want a baby.

F2 (18yrs): Or HIV.
(FGD5)

These statements differ from earlier statements where trust is seen as a disincentive to use condoms. The latter seem to indicate trust in a partner *a priori* ('he is my boyfriend, I love him, [...] let us not use a protection'), while the former takes mistrust ('we never know if our girls are fooling around behind our backs') as a starting point. This difference in perspective seems to play an important role in decision-making concerning condom use.

As with discussions on sex and relationships, respondents show to be aware of the risks of unprotected sex while discussing condom use. Health risks are mentioned as a main reason not to engage in unprotected sex.

M (17yrs): If you don't use condoms [...] you are at risk of getting HIV. There are many sicknesses, STIs, STDs, you know, it is like, maybe if you don't use condoms you kill yourself. You dig a grave for yourself.
(FGD2)

F (17yrs): So what is gonna happen if both of them are infected? [...] They are gonna die. You just have to say it, wherever you are, if you have sex with someone, you just say 'use condoms'. Well, if he says no, it is obvious you will have to say no to him.
(FGD3)

It seems as if secondary school students also base their decisions concerning condom use on two competing discourses. On one hand, condoms should be used as protection from disease and pregnancy. On the other hand, respondents show that condom use is seen as an obstacle to good sex or a good relationship; it limits (male) sexual pleasure and indicates a lack of trust or the suspicion of STIs or HIV. These various motives to use, or not to use condoms give insight in the reasons for people to still engage in unprotected sex, even though they are well aware of the risks that are attached to this.

7.1.4 Discussing and negotiating sex with partners

As men are often seen as "conquering hero's" and women as more passive in the domain of sexuality (Campbell & MacPhail, 2002), it was expected that men had more control over their sexual encounters than their female partners. Women would have to show sexual innocence and coyness. This implies that revealing their sexual histories and discussing potential health risks due to previous boyfriends, would be difficult for them (Reddy & Dunne, 2007). These results from previous research are partly confirmed in the current research.

Male dominance

In the community of the respondents, it seems to occur that young women are being forced to have sex by their boyfriends.

M1 (18yrs): Girls have sex because of us. We force them to have sex. [...]

Interviewer: Why do boys do this?

M2(21 yrs): Maybe they are saying, girls are more easily being forced into something. You just tell them two or three times, 'come on, let's have sex'. Then she says no. You go again, 'let's have sex'. Then she says no. You call her on the phone, 'let's have sex'. [...]

Interviewer: And then why do you say this?

M2: They end up saying yes.

(FGD4)

The statement that they 'are being more easily forced in something' shows that young women do not have full control over their sexual encounters. Young men seem to exploit and reinforce this position of dominance by forcing their girlfriends to have sex with them. As the following quote shows, they can threaten to end the relationship if their girlfriends won't have sex with them.

F (19yrs): We all know that [...] many boyfriends used to tell their girlfriends that 'if you don't sleep with me, I will leave you'. This is a thing that most girls heard from their boyfriends. But you must just live the life you want to live.

(FGD6)

These quotes confirm what was stated earlier. Young women can have sex just to please their partner. As the female respondent quoted above states in her last sentence, she disapproves of this ('you must live the life you want to live'). Also male respondents disapprove of sex that was forced by men.

M (18yrs): Did she agree with that boy that she wants to have sex? If she said no, then [he] is totally wrong.

(FGD2)

Still, young men are able to explain how men that force women to have sex, including their peers, justify their actions. The following respondents are discussing a vignette in which a male character has sex with a female character at a party without her consent.

M1 (18yrs): A lot of boys [...] think that when a girl comes to a party, that means a lot to them. It means that she won't sleep at home that night. She will sleep with some boy that night.

M2 (18yrs): And sometimes, as a boy, you can do that because the girl was maybe smiling at you...

M3 (17yrs): ...flirting... [...] If you are drunk, 'no' is not an answer. If you are drunk, you can not take 'no' as an answer. You force that person to agree. And that is a rape.

(FGD2)

By stating that 'if you are drunk, 'no' is not an answer', these boys reduce their own responsibility for their actions; the alcohol is to blame. By noting that 'when a girl comes to a party, that means a lot to them' and the fact that 'the girl was maybe smiling at you', they also make this girl responsible for what happened. This way, they seem to justify their actions and externalize the responsibility for what happened. Still, the last young man that was quoted above describes the situation as a rape, indicating his disapproval of what happened. Both male and female respondents argue for equal

rights for men and women in the domain of sex, for example when one of the partners wants to wait longer with it.

F (19yrs): He must accept that [she] does not want to have sex, until she reaches the age that she wants to have sex.

(FGD6)

M (18yrs): You should make your own decisions. If you really love someone, wait for her, until she decides that.... Don't keep on asking her, 'I want to have sex with you', when she says no. Then she will end up saying yes, just to please you, when she is not ready to do it.

(FGD8)

Although it shows that there is resistance to male dominance in the domain of sexuality, there are indications that young women are sometimes unable to take control of their sexual encounter, even if they themselves are willing to have sex.

M1 (21yrs): [When we go to her place], obviously she can not say to you 'let's go and have sex'. [...] It is obvious, [...] but she will say maybe 'it is cold'. Then we enter the room and sit on the bed and at that time you say 'let's sleep'.

M2 (19yrs): It is obvious that she is looking for something.

Interviewer: But why can't a girl just say, [...] 'let's have sex' [...]?

M1: Because they are shy to say. They think sex is a guy thing. [...] They are still hiding it, while we guys are proud of it.

M3 (20yrs): [...] People like us, who live in rural areas, [are] so traditional. We still think that a girl should not approach a boy. More especially when, you know... Sex.

M2: A boy must be the first one to approach the chick.

M4 (22yrs): We do have girls, like... that are approaching guys.
[...]

Interviewer: When a girl approaches you, how do you feel about that?

[...]

M2: [I would feel] like living in seventh heaven.

Interviewer: But then she is allowed to do that [...]?

M2: Yeah, she is allowed.

M1: She is expressing her feelings.

(FGD7)

This discussion shows an ambivalent attitude of the respondents towards young women that make the first approach to potential partners. First, someone says that they 'still think that a girl should not approach a boy', while later another respondent says that a girl is allowed to 'express her feelings' and approach a boy. This ambivalence indicates that their opinions are being influenced by the ideal of equal relationships between men and women, while also still shaped by more traditional notions of female sexual innocence.

This discussion also shows that young women can feel uncomfortable initiating sex; they rather indirectly show what they want, instead of saying this directly. This might again reflect the male character of sex and the coyness and innocence that is expected of women in this domain. The passiveness that seems appropriate for young women puts them in a rather disempowered position,

as it becomes difficult for them to discuss or negotiate issues around sex or protection with their partners.

Discussing health risks and protection

While the previous discussion would suggest that it can be difficult for young women to discuss their sexual histories with their partners, this seems partly true. On one hand, respondents indicate that they sometimes rather not discuss issues that are in the past, while others stress the importance of discussing previous relationship. The following discussion contains both opinions.

- M1 (21yrs):* Sometimes you just prefer to hold our questions [about your girlfriend's past] to ourselves. We just ask our peers, who might give wrong answers. [...]
[...]
- M2 (22yrs):* If you trust, you must ask about the love life of someone that you are in love with. I must ask her, because [...] I am going to learn much of her, so that if she made a mistake or maybe she was in love with that guy, then he gets this STIs or HIV. I might have to know.
[...]
- Interviewer:* But then if you look at it the other way around, is it for [...] a girl easy to go to a boyfriend and say 'I had, before you, other boyfriends, maybe it is better to use a condom'?
- M1:* If she says that to me, she will [think] that I take [her as] a bitch or whore.
[...]
- M3 (18yrs):* I think 80 percent is going to [...] say 'no, we are not supposed to talk about it'. But 20 percent [will] say 'we have to talk about it'.

(FGD4)

One of these respondents says that, as a young men, he prefers to 'hold [his] questions to [himself]', while women can refrain from talking about their sexual history as they might expect to be seen as 'a bitch or whore'. This again might reflect that female sexual experience is seen as a disgrace. On the other hand, another male respondent stresses the importance of such discussion, as you 'learn much' through it and can become aware of possible STIs or HIV. It seems as if the students have to weigh these benefits against the possible negative reaction of their partner. As is also stressed by Komter (1985), it is the expectation one has of this reaction that influences whether one dares to bring up this topic or not.

Something similar can be said for suggesting condom use. When a negative reaction from the partner is expected, people can refrain from pursuing their wish to use condoms. This especially holds when someone is dependent on their partner, as was discussed previously with transactional relationships. Besides economic dependence, the age difference between a 'sugar daddy' and a young woman can play an important role, as the following quote shows.

- F (17yrs):* If she was having sex with [a boy her own age], it could be easy to say [...] 'can we use condoms'? [...] But [with] an older guy [...] you can be scared, [...] because he is older. I think he will not agree to use condoms.

(FGD3)

The threat of physical abuse in a relationship can similarly smother a young woman's agency in a relationship. Both male and female respondents say that it happens in their community that young women get beaten by their boyfriends. When anticipating physical abuse, they can refrain from

frustrating their boyfriend by, for example, breaking up with him when he is unfaithful. The following respondents comment on a vignette in which a boy beats his girlfriend.

M (18yrs): [She] is scared, she won't be able to go to [her boyfriend] and tell him 'I am breaking up with you'.
(FGD2)

F (18yrs): And beating [her] is not a good solution, because [she] is going to be afraid to discuss her problems with [her boyfriend].
(FGD6)

This abuse is often disapproved of. Still, some respondents can understand and accept the rationale behind these beatings, as with a vignette in which a female character is abused by her boyfriend, after he finds out she is dating someone else.

F (19yrs): She sneaks around [with other boys]. I think he is right when he beats her. Because [...] we all know that sometimes men used to say that they are the head of the family. [...] [He] has to beat her in order for [her] to be fair with him.
(FGD6)

This respondent's reference to men as 'the head of the family' again indicates that the traditional male dominance can still be accepted within relationships, as well as the use of physical abuse within this authority. Although other respondents reject this male supremacy, it still seems as if women are in a disempowered position in which their abilities to negotiate and discuss sexual issues in a relationship are limited, compared to men.

8.2 Ndlovu Aids Awareness Program's strategy

Campbell and MacPhail (2002) stress that when people are aware of possible negative consequences of their behaviour, it does not necessarily mean they will change it. A prerequisite for behavioural change is people's ability to think holistically and critically about their situation and the way that certain cultural rules can undermine the likelihood of good health. Only with such critical awareness, they will be able to renegotiate their sexual identities, whereby traditional notions of being a man or woman that stimulate risky sexual behaviour, are replaced by more health-enhancing ones.

Peer education programs, like the Ndlovu Aids Awareness Program (NAAP), should be providing students with a platform to develop such critical consciousness. An active dialogue must be a central feature of such health education, whereby the target group participates in discussing the pros and cons of different behavioural alternatives (Campbell & MacPhail, 2002). The content of these programs should be sensitive to the students' situation and experience (Wilson & Miller, 2002).

In this paragraph, the results from individual interviews and focus group discussions with employees of the Ndlovu Aids Awareness Program will be supplemented by field observations, analysis of policy documents and quantitative data on NAAP's activities, together answering the last sub question: *'To what extent is the Ndlovu Aids Awareness Program's approach to reduce risky sexual behaviour among secondary school students appropriate to their situation and experience?'*

Methods of addressing the students

Team members of the Ndlovu Aids Awareness Program (NAAP) mentioned different objectives for the program. Although decreasing the number of new HIV infections is seen as a major objective, other related objectives are mentioned as well: reducing teenage pregnancy, reducing HIV-related stigma and discrimination, and stimulating a positive and responsible lifestyle; these are all mentioned as goals of NAAP in their work with secondary school students.

NAAP uses different methods to reach its objectives. The one that is used most, is that of presentation. Almost every activity that the NAAP school team conducted with the students, is through presentation. The following quotes are from peer educators describing their presentations.

PE: A facilitator will stand in front of the [students] and ask questions [...] and give clarity about HIV and AIDS and answer those questions that the [students] might have for that particular day. Then it is a two way communication from a presenter and a [student].
(individual interview)

PE: When I do my presentation, I start by giving them a platform to discuss sex and sexualities.
(individual interview)

These peer educators stress the importance of student participation in the activities, which is also stressed in the 'training for aids awareness'-manual by the Ndlovu Care Group.

An adequate workshop [...] avoids educators purely presenting information to students, and rather utilizes interactive teaching strategies. Students are motivated and encouraged to engage in asking questions, thinking about and discussing HIV/AIDS issues, and participating in group activities and assessments.

(page 16)

These impressions of the methods that NAAP uses to address the students, partly reflect Campbell and MacPhail's ideal of peer education: Through interactive activities, the students are provided with 'a platform to discuss sex and sexualities'. However, the first peer educator quoted above is speaking about 'a facilitator [standing] in front of the [students]', already indicating a more traditional didactic teacher-student setting. This is confirmed by observations during the NAAP activities. The extent to which students are involved in the presentations differed among different peer educators and different presentations, but in general it is mostly the peer educators who are talking and the students who are listening. Questions are being asked to get a response from the students, but the observed presentations are all still far from the 'platform to discuss sex and sexualities' that they should be. Preaching messages on safe sex and responsibilities is common in the presentations.

The peer educators seem unable to put in practice the interactive facilitation style that is described by themselves and by the 'training for aids awareness'-manual. One peer educator explicitly refers to the lack of student involvement as a major problem.

PE: The way we are doing our workshops, [as] you have seen, [...] we just stand there and have a talk. We talk, we talk. But I can do a group discussion, just [ask] the learners [to divide] themselves into groups, so that they can discuss. We give a topic, [...] elaborate on that, talk about that. [...] In that way, [...] they are going to debate themselves. [...]

Interviewer: But this group discussion [...] is not happening yet?

PE: It is not happening yet.

(individual interview)

The extent to which NAAP fails to provide an interactive 'platform to discuss sex and sexualities', will also compromise the program's ability to develop the critical awareness that seems essential to influence the students' behaviour (Campbell & MacPhail, 2002).

A lack of capacities of the peer educators is mentioned as a possible reason for these difficulties with making the activities interactive. As the NAAP manager explains, most peer educators are recruited by the organization just after finishing their secondary school. This means that they often lack any experience or specific training. Capacity building, like developing the peer educators' facilitation skills, is seen as a key challenge for NAAP. As the coordinator of the school team states, there are external trainers involved in training the NAAP team members, but it has been many months since their last training. The 'training for aids awareness'-manual, developed in cooperation with Utrecht University, is only used rarely. It is seen as a good reference book, but lacking the practicalities to be a real training material.

Although presentations are the most common way of addressing students, it is not the only way. Doing drama is mentioned by most NAAP employees as an important activity that can help to address issues other than basic information. A drama can, for example, address the issue of multiple relationships.

PE: You play drama, then you discuss with them. [...] Drama would show the advantages and disadvantages of having multiple partners. Then you will come back to the audience and say, 'what do you think? What have you learned from this?' Then you will only have to give clarity.

(individual interview)

Several drama scripts are given in the 'training for aids awareness'-manual. Performing dramas seems a good method of catching the students' attention, presenting them with a situation that is close to their own experience and invite them to discuss this situation among each other. This could be a helpful method in stimulating the target group to develop a critical awareness of their own situation. Although everybody seems enthusiastic about working with these dramas, they are performed rarely. Data collected by NAAP itself shows that 15 dramas were performed in 2008, but only one was performed in the four month research period (February-May 2009). A lack of rehearsal, unavailability of proper venues, and too many groups of students with too few staff, are mentioned as reasons why dramas are not being performed.

Another way NAAP addresses secondary school students, is through establishing a core group in every school. Around ten students participate in these core groups, get taught by the NAAP team about HIV and Aids, and receive training in, for example, performing dramas. This way, these core group members can be approached with questions by other students when the NAAP team is absent and perform awareness-related activities when there is an event at the school or in their community. To what extent these core groups were functioning during the period of research is unclear, but the NAAP team members were trying to form new groups in several schools. The advantage that core group members have over the NAAP team members, is that they are the actual peers of the target group, while the NAAP team members are all in their mid- or late twenties. This advantage can be exploited by involving the core group members more in the NAAP activities in schools.

A last type of activity that the NAAP team performs in schools, is the 'educators meeting'. In these meetings, information about HIV and Aids is presented to the teachers in a school.

PE 1: We do [the educators meetings] after the [students'] workshop, so that they can understand why we came to school, why we want to help youth. So if there is a [student that] is infected, [...] they can help him or her [...]. If that girl or boy is bleeding, [...] they [...] know what to do.

PE 2: And they can so also provide support to learners.
[...]

Interviewer: How do the teachers react on your presentations?

PE 3: They respond well. They are cooperative. [...] They keep on coming, asking for help. [...] When the principal refuses us to come, there won't be information.

(FGD2 team)

These meetings with the teachers and principals are deemed very important, as is expressed by the school team coordinator.

The relationship we have with the educators and the principal [...] plays a vital role. Because if it is not for them, we would not have access to the [students]. We would not have support from the [students] as well, because [...] the principal or educators tell them 'we have a group from [NAAP], we are giving them [some] time and we should listen to them'.

(FGD 1 team)

Reaching out to the school teachers and principals seems to serve a double purpose. Firstly, they can facilitate the program's activities by providing NAAP access to the students and making sure that the people at school are cooperative. Secondly, stimulating the teachers' awareness can also be functional from the perspective of the student. As was mentioned earlier, creating an environment supportive of change will prevent that NAAP acts in a vacuum, with only limited opportunities for students to discuss such issues outside the program's setting.

Besides involving teachers and principals, the school team coordinator sees it as a useful future activity to involve the students' parents in their work as well. Students seem to receive little support from them when it comes to problems of sexual health. Respondents indicated that they can be afraid of talking to their parents about sex, as it would be 'disrespectful' and 'no parent allows a [teenage] child getting in a relationship and having sex'. Reaching out to teachers and, maybe in future, parents, can help to create a more open and supportive environment for the students to challenge the cultural rules that lead them to risky sexual behaviour.

Content of the message

Now it has been said *how* the NAAP school team tries to address the secondary school students, it is important to look at *what* is being said to them. To get an idea of the topics that need attention in a certain school, some students fill in a questionnaire some time before the activities. From these questionnaires, the NAAP team decides which topics are covered in the activities. Although this means that different topic are discussed in different performances, some general remarks can be made about the content of the presentations.

Both the interviews and observations show that basic information on HIV and Aids are regularly covering a large part of the presentation.

PE: We do much on the basic information of HIV, like how [...] it affects South Africa, the estimated number of people that are living with this virus, and also explaining what HIV and Aids stand for, and the stages of HIV and the difference between Aids and HIV and also strengthening the prevention measures, like abstaining and delaying to engage in sexual activities until the right time. And also the how part of it. How can a person be infected with HIV, [...]. I think these are the most key issues that we usually talk about in most of our presentations.

(individual interview)

PE: If you give more information and [...] statistics on teenage pregnancy and we give real pictures of STIs, I think they are going to change [their behavior].

(individual interview)

This focus on basic information was confirmed during the observations. The biological facts are often emphasized: What do the letters HIV and Aids mean? How is HIV transmitted? What is your CD4-count? How do HIV and Aids develop in your body? How can HIV infection be prevented? Questions like these form the basis of most presentations.

Judging from the focus group discussions, the secondary school learners seem to be rather knowledgeable on sexual health risks and methods of prevention, but still they (or their peers) seemed to engage in risky sexual behaviour. In this situation, an emphasis on basic information in NAAP's activities does not seem entirely justified. For example, in making the step from 'basic' awareness to a more critical understanding of one's own situation, it is questionable if additional explanation on CD4-counts is really helpful.

Although basic information on HIV, Aids and its prevention cover a large part of the presentations, there is also attention for more general life skills. Messages on how to live a responsible and respectable life are often included in the presentations. Also peer pressure and sugar daddies are sometimes talked about. Still, this mostly happens through preaching with little student interaction. For example, one peer educator was observed to talk for almost the whole 45-minute presentation about responsibility, but was, with only a few exceptions, the only one speaking in the classroom. It is a first step that such issues are addressed in the activities, but to effectively develop a critical awareness among students, more participatory methods are necessary.

When methods of prevention are discussed, there was a focus on abstinence and delay. Most peer educators see faithfulness and condom use as something that should only be discussed as an alternative after stressing abstaining and delaying as the best options.

PE: In schools we tend to emphasize the delay and abstinence, [...] because they are still children. You can't strengthen condom usage, although we tell them about it, and we also tell them about being faithful, but you don't stress that that much, because we believe that they are still children. They are still having a future ahead of them, [...] what they have to do is to concentrate mainly on their books and their studies.

(individual interview)

PE: The faithfulness and condomizing you will only mention, so that they know, okay, there are other options. But delaying is where we dwell mostly.

(FGD2 team)

Messages on delay and abstinence do not seem to match the way sex and relationships are experienced by the respondents. These 'children', as they are described by the peer educator, also include the students, age 16 to 22, that participated in the focus group discussions. Some of them seem to have picked up the discourse on abstinence ('It is better not to have sex at all') that is used by the NAAP team, but also indicate that this often contradicts their actual experience. They show that the pressure on young men and women to have sex can be big. Compared to preaching abstinence, condom use seems a more realistic preventive method to promote among sexually active students. It provides an opportunity for protection to those for whom abstaining is not a realistic option. Currently, this group might not be reached properly as result of an overemphasis on abstinence and delay.

The focus on abstinence and delay contradicts to some extent what is written in the 'training for Aids awareness'-manual by the Ndlovu Care Group. The following is stated about 'recent discussions on abstain and delay'.

Research [...] has revealed that focusing on abstinence has been completely misguided. [...] Condom promotion may bring the greatest benefits in controlling the epidemic [...]. In contrast, the effect of delaying sex in young women was very modest. Hopefully the fixation on abstinence [...] will end.

(page 38)

In the manual, abstinence is rejected as the main emphasis of HIV prevention. In spite of having 'very modest' effect for young women, delay is stressed as an important means to decrease their vulnerability for HIV.

When we can achieve that young women start their sexual life at an age where they really want to involve themselves – and not being forced into it – this will give them control over their own behaviour leading to less incidence in this vulnerable group.

(page 39)

Still, delay as a prevention method seems less relevant for secondary school students, as respondents suggested that many of this group are already sexually active. The validity of this argument will vary across the target group. It is expected that among younger, (primary) school children, sexual activity will be less, which would make abstinence and delay more appropriate prevention methods to promote.

The NAAP manager explains about this focus on abstinence and delay instead of faithfulness and condom use, as something that is beyond NAAP's own choice.

Manager: The distribution of condoms at schools [...] will be a more proactive approach for us, [...] but that thing [is] not allowed [by government], so we have to build on the others things [...]; preaching messages around abstinences and delaying. [...] It should be more on condom use, but if the government is not approving, then we really can not go against the government. [...] You can talk about it, but you can't distribute.

(individual interview)

These statements indicate that the inability to distribute condoms at school is a main reason for emphasizing abstinence and delay. Judging from the focus group discussions, however, obtaining condoms is expected to be less of a problem for many secondary school students, than making the decision to abstain from sex.

8. Conclusion and discussion

This research investigated how secondary school students in a rural black community in South Africa deal with cultural rules that stimulate them to perform risky sexual behaviour, and the way the Ndlovu Aids Awareness Program tries to influence their behaviour. In this chapter, the main conclusions will be discussed and used to reflect on the theoretical basis of the research. From the conclusions, several recommendations will be formulated for the Ndlovu Aids Awareness Program.

The situation and experience of secondary school students

M (18yrs): So we all know that it is wrong what we are doing, but we just keep on doing it.

(FGD2)

In the focus group discussions that were conducted, students show a rather ambivalent attitude towards different types of risky sexual behaviour, such as unprotected sex, having multiple concurrent relationships and involuntary sexual encounters. The respondents are able to comment on these behaviours from two perspectives. In general, their typical first reaction is one of disapproval. Risky behaviour is associated with an irresponsible lifestyle. School performances would suffer from having one or more relationships, pregnancy should be avoided at an early age, but most of all, the risk of getting an STI or HIV is mentioned as an important reason not to have unprotected sex, or not to have sex at all. Through such comments, both male and female respondents show to be aware of the risks attached to unprotected sex, and express their disapproval by stressing these risks.

Respondents also comment on risky sexual behaviour from another perspective. Instead of disapproving, the students indicate how these very same behaviours are performed, accepted, or stimulated in their own environment. Young males would encourage each other to have many girlfriends, while young women are shown to be unable or unwilling to demand condom use from their partners. These unsafe practices, and several others, seem to occur in the respondents' environment, in spite of their awareness of the health risks that are attached to them. Seemingly, there are reasons why students do not put their initial disapproval in practice. Among these reasons are peer pressure, a male need for sexual satisfaction, and the female anticipation of a partners' negative reaction, especially in transactional or abusive relationships.

These findings are a clear example of MacPhail and Campbell's claim that simply being aware of the risks of unsafe sexual practice, does not mean that people will change their behaviour. The main reason that MacPhail and Campbell give for this, is that many people still do not feel personally at risk for acquiring HIV (MacPhail & Campbell, 2001). However, looking at the participants of the current research, it seems as if they do apply these health risks to their own situation. When commenting on health risks, respondents seem to do so from a rather personal perspective. They indicate that the risky behaviours occur among their peers, and sometimes state that it is their own behaviour that is problematic.

Young men seem to be more in control of their sexual encounters than young women. Gendered stereotypes prescribe women to prioritize their partners' preferences over their own, while men would need sex more and can force their girlfriends to have sex with them. These cultural rules give

men a dominant position in the domain of sexuality. This dominance can be reinforced by more objective structures, like young women's economic dependence on their partners or a threat of physical violence. This shows that 'holistic' community development programs provided by the Ndlovu Care Group are essential for HIV prevention by empowering women to overcome their position of dependence. Still, these more objective structures have normative aspects as well. The reasons for men to abuse their girlfriends are understood or even accepted by some respondents. Transactional relationships are said to be motivated the norms that young women should adopt a fancy lifestyle. This shows the importance of targeting such attitudes through behavioural interventions like NAAP.

All this reflects the interplay of power, culture and objective structure, that was elaborated on by Gramsci. Gramsci used the concept of hegemony to describe a situation in which a widely diffused culture appears to represent the interest of society as a whole, but is in fact reflecting the interests of the dominant group (Crehan, 2002). This concept seems partly applicable for men's dominant position that comes forward from the focus group discussions. Still, not all aspects of this dominance reflect a state of hegemony. The popular consent that justifies a hegemonic situation seems to be far from absolute. Although some young women, for example, would allow their boyfriends to have several girlfriends while they themselves should be faithful, both young men and women criticize this situation of male dominance. It seems as if the traditional, hegemonic situation of male dominance is gradually losing its popular support. This resistance is not always effective, as it is expressed regularly during discussion and not always put in practice. The two competing discourses of sexual health and male dominance provide the students with a dilemma. Although they disapprove of risky sexual behaviour, this very same behaviour can still be positively sanctioned by the respondents' peers and partners.

Developing critical awareness

For people to start believing in the possibilities to resist and change dominant cultural rules, it was discussed how they need insight in the way their personal situation increases their vulnerability to HIV infection (Campbell & MacPhail, 2002). Sometimes, respondents show such critical awareness and can explain, for example, how the pressure to adopt a 'fancy' lifestyle makes young women to engage in transactional relationships in which they have limited abilities to negotiate condom use. These and similar remarks are made on several domains, although it is expected that the focus group discussions it selves helped triggering such critical reflection.

It can also be seen as HIV preventions' role to develop this critical awareness to stimulate behavioural change. Prevention programs should therefore use participatory methods to involve their target group in the activities and engage them in discussion (Campbell & MacPhail, 2002). Although these ideas are shared by the NAAP employees and expressed in their policy documents, the program fails to achieve this level of student involvement in practice. Even those peer educators that stressed the importance of participation and discussion, seem unable to achieve this; they are still observed doing a lot of preaching while standing in front of a group of students. This resembles Campbell and MacPhail's (2002) findings on peer educators' tendency towards traditional teacher-student facilitation styles. They explain this to be an indication of peer educators' 'democratic inexperience'. They have always been used to authoritarian didactic styles, which are a sharp

contradiction to the non-directive character of peer education. It is expected that this 'democratic inexperience' also contributes to the inability of NAAP's peer educators to put the ideals of student participation in practice.

Content of the activities

It was shown that respondents of this research seem to engage in risky sexual behaviour, in spite of being aware of health risks and the ways HIV and STIs can be prevented. Still, it is this kind of information that the peer educators focus on in their activities. Their emphasis on the basic, often biomedical facts, resembles the findings of Campbell and MacPhail (2002). They claim that such presentation of facts contradicts the rationale behind participatory peer education, in which the students' should discuss and reflect on their situation themselves. Sometimes NAAP activities do include more social topics that would allow for a less directive style of facilitation, such as peer pressure or sex for exchange. Even when addressing such topics, however, it is still the peer educator who does most of the talking.

Looking at methods of prevention, the NAAP peer educators mostly promote sexual abstinence or delay through their activities. Condom use and being faithful are only discussed as second-best options, after stressing abstaining and delaying. This emphasis seems rather inappropriate for the participants of the focus group discussions. The promotion of condom use is expected to be a more realistic prevention method for students that are already sexually active, instead of urging them to have no sex at all. Several scientific publications stress the limited effectiveness of interventions that focus on abstinence, and instruct policymakers to prioritize condom use in HIV prevention targeting adolescents (f.e. Rothenberg, Potterat & Koplan, 2005; Yamada, DiCenso, Feldman, et al., 1999; Cleland & Ali, 2006). Even the 'training for Aids awareness'-manual by the Ndlovu Care Group stresses that 'focusing on abstinence has been completely misguided' and that 'hopefully the fixation on abstinence [...] will end'. Somehow, these insights are not implemented in the program on a practical level. It has to be noted, however, that the target group of NAAP is wider than the secondary school students that participated in the current research. For other parts of the target group, for example younger (primary) school children, these claims might be less valid.

Implications of research findings

Several recommendations for the Ndlovu Aids Awareness Program can be derived from what was presented here. First of all, it is recommended to invest in the facilitation skills of the peer educators and to revise the format of the activities to allow for more student participation. The importance of this participation is already mentioned by the peer educators. Those peer educators that joined the focus group discussions as a translator, expressed afterwards to see similar discussions as a valuable method for NAAP to raise awareness and stimulate reflection among the students. For now, it seems important that the peer educators are not just convinced of the importance of participatory methods, but also get provided with insights and skills to put these ideas in practice. An internal trainer that was hired by Ndlovu at the end of the research period, can already play an important role in this process.

Secondly, it is advised to rethink the content of NAAP's presentations. It is expected that the implementation of more participatory methods will already drive the focus from factual information

towards more social topics. This will allow peer educators to put more emphasis on issues like peer pressure, transactional relationships and gender inequality. Through discussion, they can stimulate students towards critical reflection on the influence of such issues on their vulnerability for HIV infection. It is also recommended to change the focus on abstinence and delay while addressing secondary school students. It is expected that more emphasis on condom use would increase the effectiveness of the intervention for the respondents of the current research.

As NAAP's target group entails more than just these secondary school students, it is advised that, similar to the current research, future research assesses the situation and experiences of other parts of the target group as well. Such research could provide valuable information for the NAAP team to fine-tune their program for the different parts of their target group, as not all people will respond to an intervention in the same way (Pawson & Tilley, 1997). As the current qualitative research methods does not provide any conclusive information on how widespread certain attitudes or behaviours are in the research population, future qualitative research should be supplemented with quantitative surveys. This could provide additional information on the topics that need extra attention in the activities, and can monitor changes in behaviour and attitudes over time. It could also help in testing Campbell and MacPhail's (2002) hypothesis on the correlation between people's critical consciousness of the negative influences of their situation, and behavioural change. Using quantitative methods and focus group discussions that triggered, rather than objectively measured this critical consciousness, testing this hypothesis was not within the scope of the current research.

It should be taken in mind, however, that quantitative survey data can provide incomplete or incorrect information. The current research has shown the ambiguity in the attitudes of students on risky sexual behaviour; they disapprove of it from one perspective, but can on the other hand still accept or practice it. Such ambiguity can be difficult to grasp in a survey, as previous research at NAAP has shown. It is therefore advised that for an optimal validity of future research, results from quantitative and qualitative research are used for mutual reflection to locate blind spots and contradictions, from which new research questions can be formulated (see also Varga, 2003; Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

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Appendix: Vignettes

Story 1:

The people in the story are:

Thabo (boy, 17 years old), Zanele (girl, 16 years old) and Lindiwe (girl, 17 years old)

- A. For three months Thabo is having a relation with Zanele. He also has a relationship with Lindiwe for two months now. Zanele and Lindiwe don't know that Thabo has a second girlfriend. Thabo is not planning to stop one of the relationships. He thinks he is allowed to have more girlfriends because boys need more sex than girls.
- B. Zanele finds out that Thabo also has a relationship with Lindiwe. She finds it okay for men to have more girlfriends. She thinks their need for sex is bigger. The only thing she is scared about is that they don't use condoms.
- C. The relationship between Thabo and Zanele is not going well. Zanele does not like it that she gets less presents from Thabo, she thinks he is buying more presents for Lindiwe. Zanele starts another relationship with a guy who does give her a lot of presents. Zanele is scared to step out of her other relationship with Thabo because she thinks he will beat her up.

Story 2

The people in the story are:

Mandla (boy, 19 years old) and Lizzy (girl, 17 years old)

- A) Mandla and Lizzy have a steady relationship. They started having sex. They never use a condom. Mandla does not have any other girlfriends and also thinks Lizzy is faithful to him. Still Mandla starts to worry: Would it be better if he would use a condom? Can he get infected with HIV if he does not use a condom with Lizzy? He wants to know this, but is afraid to ask anybody.
- B) Mandla asks his friends if he should use a condom when having sex with Lizzy. His friends laugh at him: Lizzy and Mandla are healthy, so why should they use a condom? They say condoms are for people that are already infected with HIV or STIs (sexually transmitted infections).
- C) Now Lizzy also starts to get worried. She heard that her previous boyfriend became very ill, maybe it is AIDS. She wants to say this to Mandla and suggest that they should use a condom, but she is afraid of his reaction. Because of this, she does not say anything.

Story 3

The people in the story are:

David (boy, 17 years old) and Mpumi (girl, 16 years old)

- A) David is at a party with his friends. He has a girlfriend, but she is not at the party. David sees a nice girl at this party: Mpumi. She goes to the same school as himself. First, he does not want to go to her, because he already has a girlfriend. His friends tell him that he should go and talk to Mpumi, because that is what a real men should do.
- B) After talking to his friends, David walks up to Mpumi and speaks to her. He really likes her, and wants to have sex with her. He takes her outside where it is dark and says to Mpumi that he wants to have sex. She says she does not want it. David thinks that she is only saying that to look like a nice, innocent girl. He thinks that she actually wants to have sex. He forces Mpumi to have sex with him.
- C) Mpumi feels really bad about what happened at the party. When she is sitting at school two days later, she sees Victor sitting in another class. She panics and starts crying. When a female educator asks her what happened, she does not want to tell her. She is afraid that the educator will blame Mpumi. The educator will probably say she was wearing a sexy dress and was asking for it to happen.

Story 4:

The people in the story are:

Thabile (girl, 19 years old), Thomas (boy, 20 years old) and Siyabonga (boy, 21 years old)

- A) Thabile has a boyfriend, Thomas, for a year now. She meets Siyabonga, a boy at school. They also start dating, but she is not sure if she loves him and if she should stop her relationship with Thomas. She has continued both relations for more than two months now.
- B) Thabile has a relationship now with Thomas and Siyabonga for four months, she loves both boys. She doesn't want her friends and family to know, because she is scared of their reactions. It is getting more difficult to hide the relationships.
- C) Thomas finds out that Thabile has a second boyfriend. He gets really angry and beats her up. He says she belongs to him and she is not allowed to fool around with other boys. As a man he is the only one that is allowed to have more than one girlfriend at a time.

Story 5

The people in the story are:

Sipho (boy, 18 years old) and Thembi (Girl, 16 years old)

- A) Sipho and Thembi have a relationship for 1 month now. They did not have sex yet. Sipho wants to have sex with Thembi, but she wants to wait longer. Thembi is still a virgin and wants to stay a virgin until she is 18 years old. Sipho thinks differently about this; he already started having sex when he was only 15 years old and he is proud of this.
- B) Sipho said to Thembi that he wants to have sex with her. Thembi still prefers to wait, but loves Sipho and does not want to lose him. She sleeps with him anyway.
- C) Two months later, Sipho and Thembi are still having a relationship. Thembi does not like the relationship and wants to end it. She talks about this to Sipho. He says that he loves her very much and he does not want to lose her. If she tries to leave him, then he will beat her up.

Story 6:

The people in the story are:

Maria (girl, 16 years old), Steve (boy, 16 years old) and Themba (man, 31 years old)

- A) Maria has a relationship with Steve, a boy her age she met at school, for seven months now. Maria comes from a poor family, she doesn't have the money to buy a new school uniform. She meets Themba a boy that's fifteen year older than her, he has a steady job. Sometimes Maria gets money or gifts from Themba. They start a sexual relationship. Maria tells stories to her friends at school about all the nice things she does with Themba.
- B) Themba is not satisfied with the number of times he has sex with Maria. Maria doesn't want to have sex more often. Themba tells Maria that he loves her and that she is the only one for him. He gives her a new bag for school. Themba convinces Maria to have sex more often.
- C) Maria and Themba have a relationship now for two months. Maria just heard that Themba is probably HIV positive. Maria is scared to ask Themba to use condoms when they have sex. Maria keeps having sex with Themba and her other boyfriend Steve.

Story 7

The people in the story are:

Jerry (boy, 23 years old) and Khomotso (girl, 17 years old)

- A) Jerry and Khomotso have a relationship for a few months now. Jerry likes having sex with Khomotso. Khomotso likes to have a relationship with an older boy who is buying her gifts and paying her school fees.
- B) One evening, Khomotso visits Jerry in his house. She is very tired, but he wants to have sex with her. Khomotso says that she is too tired. Jerry gets angry: "I buy you all these gifts, but you will not even sleep with me!".
- C) After this night, the relationship between Jerry and Khomotso changes. He starts forcing Khomotso to have sex with him every day. She does not like this, but she needs the money and gifts Jerry gives her. Because of this, she keeps going to his house every day and has sex with him.

Story 8:

The people in the story are:

Karabo (boy, 19 years old), Sharon (girl, 18 years old), Palesa (girl 16 years old) and Paulinah (girl, 18 years old).

- A) Karabo has a sexual relationship with Sharon for two months now and also with Palesa for more than a year. Both girls live in another village, quite far from the village where Karabo lives. He is proud that he is able to support both girls with money and gifts. Karabo speaks proudly of his two girlfriends to his male school friends.
- B) The school friends of Karabo push him to also start a relationship with Paulinah, a nice girl from his school. This way Karabo also has a girlfriend in his own village, which he can see more often. His friends say that, as a real man, he is allowed to have more girlfriends if they live far away.
- C) Karabo has sexual relationships now with Sharon, Palesa and Paulinah. Karabo really starts to love Paulinah. Maybe this is the girl he wants to marry. He doesn't know what to do now. His friends keep telling him to continue the three relationships.

Story 9

The people in the story are:

Sizwe (boy, 19 years old) and Mary (girl, 18 years old)

- A) Sizwe and Mary are in love and have a relationship. Since a few weeks, they are having sex. Sizwe knows that Mary had other boyfriends before him. He knows she had sex with

these boys. He is a little bit scared of getting STIs or HIV, but he does not want to talk with Mary about her previous relationships.

- B) Sizwe and Mary have talked about condom use. Sizwe said he does not enjoy sex while using a condom. Mary accepts this and says they do not need to use condom anyway; they love each other and trust each other.
- C) One day, Sizwe finds out he has got an STI (sexually transmitted infection). He blames Mary for this. She already had several boyfriends before Sizwe. He thinks she should have been more responsible and should have asked for a condom. Because of her, he now has got an STI.

Story 10

The people in the story are:

Nelson (boy, 20 years old), Wendy (girl, 18 years old) and Jacob (man, 45 years old)

- A) Wendy and Nelson are in a sexual relationship. Nelson also has two other girlfriends. Wendy know this. She does not like it, but thinks she should accept it: Boys are just like that.
- B) Wendy also has another boyfriend: Jacob. He is a lot older and is very wealthy. He buys her a lot of gifts. Wendy likes him, but she does not tell anybody about this second boyfriend; not even her best friends. A girl like her should not have more than one boyfriend.
- C) Wendy's parents find out about her relationships with Jacob and Nelson. Her father and mother are very angry and disappointed with her. They say she should stop seeing these two guys, or else she must leave the house and never come back again.