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'Dear diary I saw an angel, she looked like heaven on earth': Sex talk and sex education

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In this paper we highlight and address some of the problems involved in teaching HIV/AIDS education in southern and eastern Africa, and especially in generating open discussion among pupils about sex and sexuality. The paper draws on the findings of a UNICEF-funded study, in which we were involved, as research consultants (2001). The study focused on 'young people, gender, sexuality and HIV/AIDS education' and was conducted in Botswana, Kenya, Rwanda, South Africa, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe. In Botswana, Rwanda and Kenya, teachers and young people were interviewed about their attitudes towards and experiences of teaching/learning HIV/AIDS education. Young people were also interviewed more generally, in all the countries, about what it was like being a boy or girl of their age. We argue that HIV/AIDS education, as it is commonly taught, as a series of moral injunctions (against pre marital sex) effectively silences young people, and means that sex 'becomes' naughty when they do talk about it. We propose HIV/AIDS pedagogies, which emulate the practices our researchers adopted when researching the identities and views of boys and girls, especially concerning gender and sexuality. By addressing young people as experts about themselves and in a holistic and non-judgemental way, our interviewees were able to speak about anxieties and pleasures, many of which related to sexuality. This, they had not been able to do with other adults, and even with other children. We focus on the regulation and production of gender identities through the ways boys and girls talked about sex in our interviews and also in their participation in HIV/AIDS classes. In particular we look at how boys and girls 'performed' gender when discussing sexuality with boys often very loud and girls quiet, with boys presenting themselves as sexual and girls presenting themselves as asexual. We argue for approaches to HIV/AIDS education which challenge gender power relations without alienating boys by problematising them, and without reproducing stereotypes of boys as subjects and girls as objects of sexual desire. We examine the implications of this for single sex and mixed group work and for addressing 'sexual harassment'. Importantly, we found that both girls and boys described people of the opposite sex and heterosexual desire very differently in mixed-sex group interviews and in the diaries they kept. Rather than addressing girls and boys as unitary gendered subjects, we argue for approaches in HIV/AIDS education, which are responsive to the different and contradictory ways boys and girls present themselves and talk about sexual desire and the opposite sex in different contexts.

Keywords: gender, identity, Africa, AIDS, young

Introduction

In this paper we highlight and address some of the problems involved in teaching HIV/AIDS education in southern and eastern Africa, and especially in generating open discussion among pupils about sex and sexuality.

The paper draws on the findings of a UNICEF-funded study,[1] in which we were involved, as research consultants (Pattman & Chege, 2003). The study focused on 'young people, gender, sexuality and HIV/AIDS education' and was conducted in Botswana, Kenya, Rwanda, South Africa, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe. In Botswana, Rwanda and Kenya, teachers and young people were interviewed about their attitudes towards and experiences of teaching/learning HIV/AIDS education. Young people were also interviewed more generally, in all the countries, about what it was like being a boy or girl of their age, about their pleasures and anxieties and the sorts of relationships they had with contemporaries of their own and opposite sex as well as with adults. The interviews were loosely structured around these general themes, and the young people were encouraged to set the agenda and determine the pace and direction of the interviews. Crucially the researchers worked hard at establishing friendly and informal relations with the young people and tried to respond to what they said in ways which encouraged them to elaborate and without being judgemental.

On the basis of our findings from interviews with teachers and pupils about their experiences of HIV/AIDS education and from observation of HIV/AIDS lessons, we identify key problems which seriously mitigate against the possibility of open discussion about sex and sexuality. These are associated with the classroom dynamics and the sorts of relations teachers and pupils, as well as boys and girls, forge with each other. We argue that appropriate and effective forms of life skills/HIV/AIDS education need to engage with the significance young people themselves attach to sexuality in their lives. Further, we suggest that in order to do this, teachers need to establish the same kind of young per-

son-centred relations with their pupils as our researchers did with the boys and girls they interviewed.

Striking, in our research, was how 'open' many young people were when talking about gender and sexuality to an interested, friendly and non-authoritarian adult. In Zambia, one of the researchers reported that, *'the girls really had a lot of issues raised and they said categorically that for the first time they have had a chance to talk to people who were willing to listen to their concerns at that level'*. Researchers in Kenya reported that adolescent boys and girls asked them questions about sex and sexuality for which they claimed they did not get adequate answers from their teachers and parents. The experience of being treated by (friendly and non-judgemental) adults as experts about themselves and others is uncommon for children and young people in many African settings (Davies, 1999), and many of the young people participating in our research expressed great pleasure at being addressed in this way. Most reported being secretive towards adults about their sexual feelings, and their relationships with contemporaries of the opposite sex. We argue for teachers to take their pupils and not themselves as experts, and to take a facilitative role in stimulating and generating discussion.

Girls were much more likely than boys to be 'sexualised' or presented as objects of sexual desire, and this had important implications for what they could say about themselves and sexuality. In some countries differences were found between what girls expressed about their relations with boys when they were being interviewed in mixed gender or single sex groups, or in their diaries and in interviews. Boys also expressed themselves differently in these different contexts: for example, speaking about sex 'openly' and explicitly in groups in ways which demeaned girls as expendable objects, yet romanticising about their girlfriends in their diaries. In the paper we argue that HIV/AIDS/life skills education needs to develop ways of encouraging and enabling these different and contradictory voices to emerge.

Six-year-old children talking about their sexual experiences

We begin by focusing on how six-year-old children spoke about sex in a young person-centred interview conducted by one of our researchers in Zambia. As the children talked about sex, they showed no embarrassment or shyness, apart from one boy who tended to cover his face and whom the researcher did not pester to talk. Indeed the children were so keen to contribute to the conversation that they leaned forward, put their hands up, and even stood up to try to attract the interviewer's attention. What was striking was that they were talking about their own experiences of sex. From our video-tape recording, the interviewer, a woman in her twenties who sat between the boys and girls, portrayed herself as warm and friendly, looking from side to side to maintain eye contact with all the children around her. She did not at all appear shocked or embarrassed but kept smiling encouragingly, asking questions in a matter-of-fact way about what they did when they claimed to have had sex, and where they had it. We want to argue that it is precisely because of the kind of relaxed, friendly, and non-judgemental relationship that this interviewer established with these children that they were so keen to talk about the sexual aspects of their lives as exemplified below:

Luchele: How do you know whether you are male or female?
Steve (B): By the small penis [pencil].
Bwalya, Musonda, Beatrice and Eliza: penis- [smile on their faces].
Stella: [smiled] Vagina.
Luchele: What do you do with the penis and the vagina?
Beve (B): Sex.
Luchele: Whom do you have sex with?
Geli (G): With my husband.
Luchele: Where do you have sex?
Beve: [holds chin and smiles] In the bush or bathroom.
Musoda: (B) [holds his head and smiles] Under the bed.
Geli: [playing with a bottle portraying a shy expression] In a small house.
Luchele: Where is the small house?
Geli: In the bush.

Even as the children made frank revelations of their sexual experiences to the researcher, they explained that they knew that their parents would disapprove of them having sex. Hence, they made sure that their parents did not find out otherwise they would be beaten as was stated by some of the children. We argue that, had these girls and boys seen the interviewer like they saw their parents, they would not have spoken as they did. Clearly, even though they spoke about sex, almost in the same breath as play, it was something which, unlike other forms of play, they hid from their parents as we observe below.

Luchele: When having sex do you make noise or not?
All in chorus: Awe (No).
Luchele: Why not?
Beve: They can beat us.
Beuty and Eliza: We could get caught.
Luchele: Why do you have sex when you know that you can be caught?
Beve: [putting his hands on his face] We feel good.
Biggy: It feels very pleasant [put his thumb in the mouth].
Steve: It feels nice.
Beauty: Sweetness.
Luchele: What do you do when you finish?
Musonda: We dress up and go to play.
Luchele: Whom do you go to tell about it?
All in chorus: Nobody.

The children used the term 'nobody' presumably to refer to adults in general. As we observe in the excerpts above, apart from the girls and boys being keen to contribute, they also spoke about sex and their sex experiences in a matter-of-fact way and in tune with the style and approach of the interviewer. They not only talked about sex but also shared their experiences, seemingly as a common knowledge and culture from which parents and other adults were excluded. The absence of a research literature on very young children's accounts of sexuality may reflect, we suggest, the failure of researchers to investigate this and to develop the sorts of subject-centred relations with children which enable

them to talk in the way they were doing in the excerpts above. The fact that these children talked about sex as explicitly as they did has important implications for developing appropriate HIV/AIDS and life skills pedagogies that centre on pupil-teacher relations. If HIV/AIDS and life skills education is to be appropriate and effective, we would argue, it needs to be based around the concerns and desires of young people as they articulate them, and they are unlikely to do so unless teachers are able to relate to them in non-authoritarian and non-judgemental ways.

Young people: What they learnt in HIV/AIDS and sexuality education

In our research we were interested not only in young people's views about or experiences of sex, but also, more generally, in how they saw and defined themselves as particular boys and girls with certain interests, desires and relations with others. Sexuality, however, emerged as an important theme in many of the interviews, whether they reported engaging in sex, like the children above, or not, or were pro or anti boyfriends/girlfriends. The focal point of HIV/AIDS education, taught within a learner-centred framework, should not be HIV/AIDS, but, as in our research, the lives, identities and relationships (sexual and non-sexual) of young people. Findings from our research indicate that HIV/AIDS and sexuality education in the school, families, and community focused specifically on sex. But this was not because the learners themselves had introduced sex as a topic of conversation in class. Rather the teachers had decided to focus on sex, presenting this in an authoritarian way as something that was bad for young people and which they should avoid. Focusing exclusively upon sex was embarrassing for many teachers and it may have been partly because of this that when they did so they presented it as bad. This is illustrated in the following examples of what some Kenyan schoolboys and schoolgirls said they learnt as part of HIV/AIDS education.

Lessons that boys learnt from the school teachers

- Girls can bring diseases to us (14-year-old).
- Not to have sex because of HIV/AIDS (13-year-old).
- Boys start looking for women and can be infected (anonymous).
- Not to have sex because of HIV/AIDS (13-year-old).

Lessons that boys learnt from parents and grandparents

- Avoid sex with girls, which are a shame and can bring diseases (14-year-old).
- Sex is bad manners or habits; you should not have a girlfriend (15-year-old).
- Do not choose girls who are sexy because they may have diseases (14-year-old).

Girls said they received the following messages about boys from HIV/AIDS education in school and home

- Not to walk with the boys (16-year-old).
- Not to have sex because I may end up pregnant (15-year-old).
- My mother told me about menstruation and she tells me about boys (16-year-old).
- Behave well and avoid evil things (16-year-old, out-of-school).

It is clear that the HIV/AIDS education these young people received focused on warnings about the bad consequences of relationships between boys and girls that were related to disease, pregnancy and 'evil things' without a hint of anything good that could emanate from such relationships. We suggest that this is problematic for a number of reasons. Firstly, with its emphasis on avoiding sex, HIV/AIDS education is not aimed at the many young people in our study who claimed they were already sexually active. Secondly, whether or not learners were engaged in sex, sexuality was highly significant in their lives as was apparent in the emotionally engaged ways they spoke about heterosexual relationships and feelings. Thirdly, by not responding to young people's sexual desires, pleasures and anxieties, but instead representing these in a negative light, HIV/AIDS education not only contributes to young people's worries concerning sex, but also helps to confirm the view expressed by most of them that sexual desires and concerns were not topics they wished to discuss with adults. Yet, many young people expressed the wish to do precisely this.

Our research revealed clearly that HIV/AIDS education was not being taught in a learner-centred way and within a life skills framework, but comprised a series of moralistic injunctions from teachers. Of particular concern, we feel, are the effects of this kind of HIV/AIDS education upon boys' and girls' perceptions of each other. Not only does this encourage boys to stereotype and stigmatise girls as potential disease carriers and girls to see boys as dangerous sex predators, it also presents relations between boys and girls as bad thus prohibiting possibilities of boys and girls developing even non-sexual friendships. No wonder, then that young people kept secret (from adults) their close relations with people of the opposite sex or even their fantasies about these.

Many teachers we spoke to felt embarrassed and vulnerable in HIV/AIDS lessons, and may have adopted a moralistic and didactic approach to assert their authority and protect themselves. Teachers in Botswana, for example, spoke about the discomfort they felt, as adults, being addressed as sexual beings by children in HIV/AIDS lessons.

> **Teacher 1** (male): They can ask whether we (teachers) have tested. They feel teachers are always talking about these things, while even they could be infected.
>
> **Teacher 2** (female): I remember one student wanted to know if I have ever used a female condom, and how it feels. I told them that I have never used it and that they should not become personal when we talk about these things.
>
> **Teacher 3** (male teacher): I remember there was a child at one point when we were discussing abstinence and withdrawal. The student was saying from experience he knows that withdrawal is impossible. And I was supposed to make a comment on that.

Of course the very fact that children felt able to put these questions suggests that perhaps these teachers were not

being too didactic and authoritarian. But if teachers show *they* are embarrassed by explicit talk about condoms, menstruation and sexuality, this suggests to pupils that such talk is embarrassing and may inhibit many pupils from speaking (as well, perhaps, as encouraging some to disrupt lessons by deliberately talking in ways which they know will embarrass teachers).

Confirming what adults want and expect to hear

One striking finding in our research concerned the discrepancy between how boys mainly (but occasionally girls) talked about their sexual relations and enjoyment of sex in sometimes quite giggly ways and the very moralistic positions they took up when asked for example about what should be done to curb the spread of AIDS or what advice they want from parents and teachers about sex. They were, it seemed, assuming two contradictory identities. Aspects of what was referred to as 'modern' culture such as movies, magazines and certain types of music came in for particular criticism. These were constructed by many young people, as we see in the following extract from an interview with teenaged Zambian boys as bad influences, as if young people (and in the second case young men) were easily manipulated by them and lacked agency.

Longani: R & B songs are bad; they carry sex messages, which influence the boys and girls to have sex.

Shanzi: Dancing by girls confuse men.

It maybe that they were implicitly identifying with the adult (male) interviewer and presenting what they expected he wanted to hear. For they quickly switched from their moralistic stance when he asked them, in a non-judgemental way, if they enjoyed the dances and songs, with everyone in the group of ten boys saying 'yes'.

These examples of the sorts of contradictory positions young people took up have important implications for HIV/AIDS/life skills educators. We would suggest that by taking a moralistic line HIV/AIDS educators may elicit what they see as 'good' responses from pupils in class, which conflict with the ways they construct their identities and their behaviour in other contexts, for example with their friends and outside school. HIV/AIDS/life skills education must not contribute to this splitting of identities, but should aim to address and encourage young people to talk about their sexual feelings, desires and concerns.

Loud boys and quiet girls

a) The problems for girls participating in life skills classes

One of the key findings in our study concerned the application of sexual double standards to girls and boys. In every country, a distinction was drawn (by both boys and girls) between good and bad girls, which centred on sexuality. This, however, applied much less to boys. 'Bad' girls were described as wearing mini skirts (and, because of this, inviting rape) and being too 'modern', drinking, staying out late, and having boyfriends. In addition, girls could be insulted for appearing to transgress perceived traditional models of being feminine and expressing desire, being 'too knowledgeable', or even speaking 'too openly' in mixed gender interviews. This regulation of girls not only restricted and limited what they could do or say, but also made them vulnerable in relationships with boys. Our researchers reported that in schools boys tended to be much louder and more assertive than girls and more likely to assume positions of responsibility in the HIV/AIDS/life skills classes they observed:

1. *AIDS awareness lesson in a school in Zambia*
   There was a lot of whispering among the learners during the lesson. Girls sat separately from the boys. Boys participated more than the girls and when asked to answer a question the girls answered in very low tones and when asked to repeat their responses, they kept quiet most of the time. Girls were quiet and shy, reserved, looked down when certain words were being mentioned i.e. sex, sexually active, sexual intercourse. Boys got most of the attention from the teachers throughout the lesson. No attempt was made to engage girls in discussion; girls were often forgotten. One girl was active but not noticed by the teacher. The girls looked down when asked to answer a question and there were incidences of laughter especially when a boy mentioned the use of condoms and when another boy narrated the day his father called for a family meeting to discuss HIV/AIDS.
2. *Life skills lesson in a school in Botswana*
   For group work, there were single-sex groups and mixed-sex groups. In the mixed-sex groups, girls were seen doing mostly secretarial work while boys chaired the group discussions. The boys would discuss among themselves and then tell the girls what they were discussing. The girls just sat there and waited for the boys to tell them what to write. In the single-sex groups, there seemed to be equal participation.

We suspect that the teachers here were not consciously intending to promote these kind of gendered identities but took it for granted that boys were naturally more demonstrative and girls naturally more shy, and were responding accordingly. But one of the key lessons which was being learnt as a result of the interaction between boys, girls and teachers was precisely that girls were quiet, passive and shy (even those who tried to contribute) and boys active and loud. Another was that boys were sexual beings and girls objects of their desires. Teacher training in life skills and HIV/AIDS education must involve sensitising teachers to aspects of the 'hidden curriculum' (Spender, 1982; Posada, 1999) and the sorts of messages about gender identities and relations which are commonly communicated through this. It should also encourage teachers to think creatively of ways of changing their practices so as not to unintentionally reinforce the sorts of stereotypical gendered positions which boys and girls were seen to take up in classroom observation above. This could, for example, involve experimenting with single-sex group work as a way of encouraging girls to develop a stronger voice. However, as we argue later, it is important that this is used not alone but in conjunction with mixed group teaching.

b) Boys abusing girls in mixed interviews

Many researchers in the Western countries have observed how boys try to assert themselves in relation to girls in the classroom by 'performing' their identities in certain ways, for

example by monopolising talk as well as by being loud, provocative or 'funny', often by being 'naughty' or through various types of threat to girls. (See for example, Connolly, 1998; Francis, 1998; Gilbert & Gilbert, 1998.) We found that these 'performances' characterised some of the interviews we conducted with boys and girls in mixed-sex groups. We want to examine one such interview with 16-year-old girls and boys in Zimbabwe. Here the boys not only asserted themselves in relation to the girls by dominating the conversation, but also by speaking about them in contemptuous and provocative ways. Whether they engaged in the sort of behaviour they described or not, what was clear was that in the interview they were eliciting much laughter from other boys by talking in self-consciously outrageous ways about girls as objects; as things which they 'opened' and threw away.

The following extract is from an interview with 16-year-old girls and boys from Zimbabwe.

Maideyi (B): These days, kids have big bodies, by the time she gets to Form One she will be having affairs.
Interviewer: Even those in Grade 4 and 5 (aged 10–11 years)?
Goddard (B): Eh…yes…those in Grade 4, yes; those are the ones we are jumping for these days (laughter).
Interviewer: Why do you go for such young girls?
Goddard: You know what, yes, us boys have an oppressive nature, once I sleep with a girl I lose interest in her so usually I want to go for those who still have 'intact-closed presents' (laughter and grumbles).
Interviewer: What presents?
Goddard: Official opening; when you sleep with a virgin!!
Interviewer: So how do you feel about it?
Goddard: I feel good it is nice. After the official opening, you can just ditch her.
Interviewer: So if a boy dumps you what do you do?
Elizabeth (G): It depends on how much you loved him. If you really loved him, you will be pained.
Mwaurayeni (G): A…I won't feel that way. I will actually look around for a replacement boyfriend and I will show off to the boy who dumped me.
Chionesu (B): That's when I will beat you.
Mabel (G): Why should you beat me, isn't it you would have dumped me.
Chionesu: Yes I will beat her because what she will be doing to me is painful, showing off to me.
Mabel: But it is you who would have ditched me.

Group dynamics such as those demonstrated in the excerpt above pose serious ethical dilemmas for teachers committed to a learner-centred approach. If teachers are to encourage young people to speak openly about sex and sexuality in class, they must work hard, like our interviewers, at developing friendly, non-judgemental relations with learners. Nevertheless, as we see in the example above, one consequence of this may be boys not only dominating talk at the expense of girls but also abusing girls. The boys, here, were forging a common identity as powerful, funny, and hedonistic males by talking outrageously about girls. The presence of girls in the interview only served to make them appear, in the eyes of each other, particularly outrageous and funny. It may be that the girls were silent as the boys spoke because they were so uncomfortable and did not want to be humiliated and abused further. However, the interviewer was concerned to give them the opportunity to respond to the boys. Significantly he had to put questions specifically to the girls to draw them into the conversation, and the effect of this was to generate a gender polarised and heated exchange in which the girls resisted boys' potential constructions of them as 'used goods' as the boys tried to re-assert themselves. What was apparent in this exchange was how quickly the boys' tone changed from humour to hostility when the girls started challenging them. This and the initial reluctance of the girls to challenge the boys no doubt reflected, in part, the ubiquity of double sexual standards, whereby boys derived status, and girls were condemned for speaking explicitly about their heterosexual needs and desires.

Single-sex or mixed-sex group work?

Our research, and in particular the experience of interviewing young people in single-sex and mixed groups, suggests that single-sex group work should form part of life skills and HIV/AIDS education. This is because in these groups, girls in particular felt freer to express their desires and concerns without being labelled in derogatory ways. Life skills and HIV/AIDS education needs to encourage girls to talk about sexuality, not just in a negative way but about their sexual feelings and desires without feeling bad. It needs to address the question — how girls can assert themselves without being constructed as bad or 'too modern'. This may be more possible in single-sex classes. However, the problem is that these tend to reinforce assumptions that boys and girls are essentially different and in opposition to each other. As was found in the mixed group discussions, boys and girls were able to learn from each other about their problems, concerns, and views. For this reason, we would also advocate mixed group discussion as an important teaching strategy in HIV/AIDS and life skills education (see Pattman, 2002).

Teachers from Botswana reported that both boys and girls were inhibited by the presence of members of the opposite sex, especially when teaching about male and female condoms, menstruation and teenage pregnancy.

Moral education teacher (female): Girls are not comfortable when they are taught about teenage pregnancy in the presence of boys.
Social studies teacher (female): When teaching them about using condoms, the boys feel offended and also when teaching about female condoms I as a teacher and girl feel uncomfortable. Talking about menstruation for instance is like talking about self.
Guidance and counselling teacher (female): We were discussing factors of hormonal imbalance whereby during menstruation period the females may be moody. The boys then became embarrassed in a way. I think it is a problem of culture, whereby we cannot discuss female issues in the presence of males.

While boys, girls and their male and female teachers may find it easier to talk about issues such as male or female condoms or teenage pregnancy in single-sex groups, it is vital, we contend, that topics such as these do not become

characterised as exclusively male or female. Condom use (whether male or female) and pregnancy affect both sexes, and one of the aims of HIV/AIDS education must be to encourage boys and girls to talk about these in the presence of each other. While single-sex groups could be used initially to enable boys and girls to talk about issues which might be considered too embarrassing in mixed company, it is important that this does not become an end in itself.

One research practice adopted by the Zambian team that generated a great deal of critical reflection, and discussion by young people was to organise group work in two stages. First, same-sex groups were asked to identify and discuss the sorts of problems they thought they, and people of the opposite sex experienced. They were also requested to identify and record possible causes of, and solutions to the problems. In the second stage, the boys and girls then came together to present and discuss their findings. We suggest that this could very effectively be incorporated as a learner-centred and gender-sensitive pedagogy into HIV/AIDS/life skills education. Not only does it make the young people or learners' views the key resources, it encourages critical self-reflection, empathy and communication with others of the same and the opposite sex about aspects of gender which significantly influence their lives but which are rarely articulated. Furthermore, the experience of working in a single-sex group may encourage girls to be more outspoken in the mixed group discussions around gender and sexuality that followed. The Zambian team found that in some of the mixed plenaries the girls were as outspoken and critical as the boys, and attributed this to the confidence and support they had gained in the single-sex group.

Talking about sexual harassment

It was striking how many girls (and a few boys) were keen to talk about their experiences of sexual harassment to our interviewees, which they were unable to divulge to teachers and other adults. This implies, as we argued earlier, that our interviewers were developing the sorts of friendly, young person-centred relations with them which enabled them to talk openly about these concerns. We would argue that pupils are much more likely to voice these concerns to teachers who are learner-centred and gender-sensitive, than those who are authoritarian and judgemental.

Our interviewees commonly reported incidences of sexual harassment in schools by both boys and male teachers against girls. Presumably this contributed to the difficulties young people had complaining about sexual harassment, at least in the presence of male teachers. Indeed some of our interviewees expressed cynicism about male teachers who discouraged girls from having sexual relations with boys while they 'proposed' to girls.

Zambian girls in their late teens

Kelita: They [the male teachers] discourage us. When they do find you with a boy, they tell you to stop but they are also interested in you. Here at school some teachers propose and when you don't respond positively, they stop talking to you so even if they discourage us it is not with him.

Charity: Some teachers even give exam papers [leakage] to finalists; even mock exam papers may be involved.

Interviewer: What would you do if you were faced with such a situation?

Catherine: Just receive the paper and run away. What is important is not to allow him to have access to you body.

Interviewer: What is not good about receiving leakage papers?

Namangolwa: The teachers want something and then they only give girls. It is better to write only what you know in exams otherwise you become addicted to leakages.

However it is important that male teachers do not feel debarred from becoming HIV/AIDS/life skills educators because of the fear of not being taken seriously. For men teaching HIV/AIDS/life skills education can act as important role models for boys and demonstrate that it is possible for males to be responsible, caring, sensitive, approachable, non-authoritarian, non-aggressive and pupil-centred. It is important, too, not to assume that sexual desire is mainly male and that heterosexual relations inevitably entail males harassing females. Indeed HIV/AIDS/life skills education, we want to argue must promote equal sexual relations between males and females, if only to encourage and enable girls to express more openly their sexual desires. This would, we believe, make them less vulnerable to forms of sexual abuse. Precisely because girls are not supposed to express sexual desire in the same way that boys do, this leaves them open to the accusation, even if they report sexual harassment that really they 'encouraged' or 'sent a signal'.

Botswana girls aged 16 and above

Phemo: Yesterday something happened. There was this girl in class whom some boys were touching and she kept on hitting them with books and telling them to stop; and then all of a sudden she started crying, as if something, part of her had been taken away.

Interviewer: Do they report it to anybody?

Rachel: Some teachers don't take it serious, teachers think we encourage it; we sent a signal.

Joyce: At one time some people in my class were harassing me though not sexually, I reported it to my guidance and counselling teacher, and she told me that I thought too much of myself, and it never stopped.

Phemo: At one time a boy kissed me on the cheek and I didn't like it, it felt so wrong and painful, and I thought of reporting but I felt teachers will think that I was joking or I wanted it to happen.

Also, it is not just that they might be disbelieved that may make them reluctant to report it, but that they may be seen as 'bad' girls for speaking openly about sex in this way. Usually fondling or touching private parts was spoken of as something, which boys as well as male teachers did to girls (and not *vice versa*). While most boys said they enjoyed being touched by girls, others like the one in the extract below who did not, felt too embarrassed to report this to teachers or parents. This, presumably, was not because he would be seen as 'bad' and promiscuous like the girls who

reported sexual harassment. Rather, we suggest, this was because of the assumption that, as a supposedly macho young man with a powerful heterosexual drive, he would be laughed at and ridiculed for presenting himself as the victim of sexual harassment.

Tadzina, Botswana boy aged 16

> Some girls demand to touch us. For example, at one time a girl came to me and told me that she wanted to touch me there (pointing at his private parts). I just left her, but I felt disturbed the whole day; I didn't tell anyone. However, for boys to do this they think about it before because girls will report it but boys won't.

While we would argue that HIV/AIDS/life skills teachers need to take a strong stand against sexual harassment, we would also stress that they must do so without taking the side of girls against boys and presenting boys as the enemy. Doing this risks alienating the boys from the teacher, as well as from girls (Redman, 1996), and may result in them becoming more macho as they try to re-assert themselves in relation to girls. A much better strategy in our view would be to focus on the benefits for both boys and girls of developing more egalatarian relations between boys and girls (sexual and non-sexual). For example, the benefits to boys of not always being expected to take the sexual initiative and of knowing for sure whether particular girls like them. While sexual harassment must not be tolerated in schools, it is important that the school's response to this does not simply comprise punishing boys, but exploring with boys and girls in HIV/AIDS/life skills education what sexual harassment is, why it takes place, whether boys and girls have similar desires, why girls get blamed and boys do not for being seen as too sexual and so on. The aim of HIV/AIDS/life skills education, here, must be to empower and enable boys and girls to negotiate sexual relations with each other, whether this means resisting, delaying or entering into these and whether these mean kissing, cuddling, being close or having penetrative sex. It must not reinforce the stereotype of girls as weak, fragile and passive, by presenting them as in need of protection by teachers from active, strong and sexually predatory boys.

Different and contradictory descriptions of the opposite sex and heterosexual desire

Boys and girls described people of the opposite sex in quite different and sometimes contradictory ways when being interviewed in groups and when writing diaries, in which they were asked to record details of significant events, feelings and relations each day for a week. We argue that this is connected with the different ways they are presenting themselves in the different contexts, and we contend that HIV/AIDS/life skills educators need to find ways, as we did in our research, of exploring and addressing these multiple identities (on multiple identities, see Hall, 1992).

a) Boys being misogynistic and idealising girls

Boys were much more misogynistic and more likely to talk about girls in derogatory and impersonal ways when being interviewed rather than when writing diaries and when being interviewed in groups than when being interviewed individually. In single-sex group interviews, for example, as we have seen, some boys boasted about sleeping with and dumping girls, yet in the individual interviews they were quiet about this. In the diaries they kept, where they recorded every day details about significant events, emotions and relationships, many of the boys, especially in South Africa, wrote highly romanticised accounts of their girlfriends or potential girlfriends as well as heart rending pieces about being dumped by them. These were conspicuous by their absence in the interviews. For example from the South African study, some of the boys entered the following notes in their diaries:

> 'Dear diary you won't believe what I saw neither did I: I saw an angel she looked like heaven on earth, every boys dream. I don't even know her name but I know she is wonderful, but she was everything a healthy guy can wish for.
>
> 'I just stayed at home thinking about what happened between me and the girl I love. My heart was broken and I thought it would brake into pieces. She was my one and only lover. She was one in a million, my number one priority.'
>
> 'I was disappointed by the bad news she told me. She told me that she did not love me anymore. I thought of slapping her, but I did not see any use in hurting her, so I left her and went home. She is the only girl I truly love. She has for all the qualities I need in my dream girl.'
>
> 'I must say she is beautiful. I watch her until it popped into my head that if I could make her mine this would make me happy. It was the first time I even wanted someone so much.'

We suggest that boys often 'perform' very differently when they are with other boys (and girls) when they may be, as we have seen, loud, assertive, funny and misogynistic, than when they are on their own (writing their diary) or alone with an adult interviewer/teacher/parent. Rather than simply criticising boys for being misogynistic in class, and risk alienating boys, HIV/AIDS and life skills educators could perhaps explore with them what would seem to be very contradictory views they express about girls in different social contexts. A challenge for HIV/AIDS and life skills educators is to encourage boys to 'perform' in groups in ways which do not involve subordinating girls, but which draw on the affection for girls they express so vividly in other contexts.

There was evidence in our study that the idealisation of girls by boys reflected boys' dissatisfaction with popular ways of being boys (cf. Frosh, Phoenix & Pattman, 2002). For example, some boys in Zimbabwe said they wanted girlfriends for the sound advice they offered them and their more 'sympathetic' nature. These boys found it easier to confide in girls or to befriend them. As one boy said:

> 'If I am naughty, the girl will say what you are doing is wrong, but not boys, girls advise you so it is good to play with girls.'

The boys also extended these feelings to female teachers who were said (by both boys and girls, though mainly by boys) to be better listeners than male teachers, to be more sympathetic and to offer better advice. This suggests that boys can be encouraged to reject popular ways of 'performing' as boys with the emphasis on toughness, insensitivity

and naughtiness by appealing to their self interest and focusing on the costs to them of being like this, let alone on the costs to girls.

b) Girls being negative and at times positive about boyfriends

With girls what was interesting about their diaries in contrast to the interviews — was how many girls wrote about their boyfriends and in some cases their very positive relationships with them. In interviews, however, the absence of positive stories from girl interviewees about girls with boyfriends was striking. Most girls characterised these as inevitably oppressive relationships, which interfered with schoolwork, ended up in pregnancies and abuse, and conflicted with biblical or Islamic teachings.

Whereas many boys could acquire status from their peers by speaking openly and explicitly about their sex drive as well as by demeaning girls as objects for them, girls had to be careful not to talk about their sexual desires or about boyfriend relationships for fear of being labelled bad. It may be that boyfriend–girlfriend relations were very negative in the ways the girls described them, but we also want to suggest that girls had a powerful interest in presenting them like this. For by doing so, they were showing themselves publicly, in the group interview, to be good girls who resisted these kinds of relations. The descriptions, for example, of some girls of their 'ideal', hypothetical boyfriends as 'nice' understanding and 'church going' and the embarrassed laughter when one girl said she would like a 'good looking' boy, implied that for many girls, desire was not something they should talk about, at least perhaps not in groups with an adult present. Whereas for the boys the diaries seemed to provide a safe space to be 'romantic' and to show how much they were affected by girls who dumped them or whom they loved, for the girls, diaries seemed to provide an opportunity, we suggest, for articulating sexual desire.

Adults' concerns about our research

In August 2002 when we were reporting some of the findings of our study in a UNICEF dissemination workshop held in Mombasa, Kenya, many participants expressed not just surprise, but shock when they saw a video recording of the interview referred to above with six-year-olds in Zambia. There was discernible uneasiness followed by heated discussion as the participants questioned the veracity of what these children were saying. We suggest that such a reaction partly reflects our own tendencies as adults to wish 'innocence' on to children and our own discomfort with thinking about childhood sexuality (Epstein & Johnson, 1999). Clearly, whether we like it or not, these children were all familiar with sex, whether they actually engaged in penetrative sex or 'played' at it, and enjoyed very much talking about it. Sex was significant to them, even if only as something they wanted to talk about, though also it seemed (however they defined it) as something they engaged in. It is problematic, we would argue, to ignore the voices of young people in relation to gender and sexuality, at a time when sexuality and HIV/AIDS issues are a central concern for life skills education aimed at ensuring healthy nations.

Our research revealed that education on sexuality was not offered to younger children because adults (parents and teachers) believed that this would encourage the children to engage in sex at a relatively early age. Ironically, even with the apparent educational sidelining, we see the very young children such as those from Zambia claiming to engage in sexual acts and seeming to enjoy, tremendously, what they were doing. Like many of the teachers and parents, Government institutions, such as the Ministry of Education in Zimbabwe, assumed that children under 16 years old were either not having sex or not even thinking of, or talking about sexuality. Indeed our researchers in Zimbabwe were refused permission to interview school children who were under the age of 16 years. However, as we have seen, sixteen-year-old boys who were interviewed in Zimbabwe boasted about having sex with ten and eleven year olds.

Conclusion

We have argued for HIV/AIDS pedagogies which emulate the practices our researchers adopted when researching the identities and views of boys and girls, especially concerning gender and sexuality. In particular, we suggested that as a result of being addressed by our researchers as experts about themselves and in a holistic and non-judgemental way, our interviewees were able to speak about anxieties and pleasures, many of which related to sexuality. This, they had not been able to do with other adults, and even with other children. HIV/AIDS education, as it was commonly taught, as a series of moral injunctions (against pre marital sex) effectively silences young people, and means that sex 'becomes' naughty when they do talk about it. Even children as young as six had learnt that sex was something to hide from adults. We suggest that the failure of HIV/AIDS teachers to be student-centred and to address young people's sexual cultures and identities contributed to the ways many young people switched from being very moralistic about sexuality (in class and with parents) and liberal about it (perhaps dangerously so) with others and in other contexts.

It is, perhaps, unrealistic to assume that practising teachers can become pupil-centred especially when teaching a topic which elicits considerable embarrassment. They may, indeed, identify as teachers and professionals precisely by distancing themselves from their pupils. In view of this, we would advocate outsiders, trained to teach HIV/AIDS education in pupil-centred and gender-sensitive ways, be invited to schools. This is happening in Cape Town where student 'peer educators' from the University of Cape Town are addressing pupils in local schools about HIV/AIDS within a life skills framework. Unlike the teachers, these university students have been trained to teach HIV/AIDS education in pupil-centred ways, and also, unlike them, have no interest or desire in asserting their authority through distancing themselves from the pupils. They are closer in age to their pupils than most of the teachers, a factor which may encourage mutual identification between educator and pupil and facilitate pupil-centred approaches. This kind of outside intervention may, however, not be available, or be unreliable, and it is unlikely to be provided on a long term basis. (The peer educators at the University of Cape Town visit particu-

lar schools and classes perhaps once or twice a year.) We strongly recommend, then, that pupil-centred and gender-sensitive pedagogic approaches to teaching HIV/AIDS education feature prominently in pre-service and in-service teacher training programmes. These would need to address, and to some extent problematise, the very identities many teachers commonly inhabit.

A key aim of HIV/AIDS education, we believe, should be to break down boys' and girls' investments (see Hollway, 1989) in stereotypical and gender polarised identities. Research has shown that people who are at most risk of contracting sexually transmitted diseases are those who have little in common with people of the opposite sex, and who tend to think of themselves in terms of the opposite stereotypes of masculinity and femininity. These stereotypes, as we discussed, portray males as strong, sexual, and active, and females as weak, non-sexual, and quiet. When relationships are based on these stereotypes, sex tends to be entered into quickly with little discussion, understanding and negotiation. Such relationships are more likely to break down and be short-lived, thus resulting in people having frequent relationships with different partners (Holland, Ramazanoglu, Sharpe & Thomson, 1998).

It is important that teachers (and especially those teaching HIV/AIDS and life skills) learn to reflect on the gender dynamics in class and to think of ways of challenging rather than reinforcing popular views of girls as quiet, shy and subordinate and boys as active, funny, loud and dominant. Not only do teachers have an obligation to encourage the participation of all learners, but, by focusing on boys rather than girls, they are contributing to a culture where boys are expected to take the initiative and to subordinate girls (sexually as well as in other ways). This enhances the possibility of boys and girls engaging in relations with little communication and negotiation and perhaps little respect and empathy for the other. HIV/AIDS education needs, then, to encourage boys and girls to talk about themselves and each other in ways which do not affirm and reproduce these stereotypes, but which help them to identify with each other and see things from the others' point of view. The aim must be to help young people think of the opposite sex as less opposite and as more like them, as people with whom they can be friends as well as boyfriends/girlfriends in a trusting and safe manner.

We argued HIV/AIDS educators need to address the difficulties for girls, in particular, of talking in mixed groups about sexuality, especially where boys try to assert themselves as loud and sexual in relation to them. Not to address these means reinforcing gender power relations. It may be useful to establish 'ground rules' for teaching HIV/AIDS and life skills education, whereby the class agrees to adhere to certain rules of behaviour, for example not speaking in abusive ways about others in class, not interrupting others while they are speaking, not laughing at others in class. This may encourage boys and girls to relate to each other in ways perhaps which they are not used to doing and to see life more from the point of view of the 'other.' However, we would argue that teachers of HIV/AIDS and life skills education should not come to be seen as censors and that young people should be able to talk about how they see themselves and the opposite sex during lessons even in the ways similar to the extract from the interview with 16-year-old Zimbabwean boys and girls.

What is essential, we feel, is that opportunities are created for girls to talk and assert themselves. Our assumption is that the 'performance' of gender does not reveal characteristics which boys and girls are born with and which they naturally exhibit. Indeed, boys and girls (as well as men and women) can, and do, change as a result of talking with people of the same and opposite sex about their pleasures and anxieties and the way they see themselves *vis-à-vis* people of the same and opposite sex. Even as a result of talking in this way in the group interviews, some of our interviewees reported thinking about themselves differently and seeing people of the opposite sex as 'less opposite'.

We suggested, on the basis of the Zambian team's research, that one way of encouraging a voice to girls might be to experiment with single-sex groups in conjunction with mixed groups. Our emphasis in this paper has been on developing HIV/AIDS educational programmes which address gender power relations without reproducing the stereotypes of boys and men as active and sexual and girls as passive and not really sexual. Thus we argued for HIV/AIDS education to address the sexual harassment of girls by boys and men without rendering girls passive and asexual in contrast to overly sexual and naughty boys.

We found that both girls and boys described people of the opposite sex and heterosexual desire very differently in mixed group interviews and in the diaries they kept. We are not suggesting that boys and girls expressed their real uncensored selves in their diaries as opposed to the group interviews, rather that they were identifying very differently in these different contexts. And their contradictory accounts provided insights into the ways talk about sex was regulated for both boys and girls. Rather than addressing girls and boys as unitary gendered subjects, we argued for approaches in HIV/AIDS education which explore with girls and boys the different and contradictory ways they present themselves and talk about sexual desire and the opposite sex in different contexts.

Note

[1] A copy of the full study (Pattman & Chege, 2003*)* is available from Changu Mannathoko, ESARO, UNICEF, Nairobi, Kenya.

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