

**Understanding risky sexual behaviour  
amongst young women in a single-sex school  
in the Durban area in the context of HIV &  
AIDS**

By

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## **Declaration**

I, **Nicole Shaney** declare that:

- (i) The research reported in this dissertation is my original work, unless otherwise acknowledged and referenced.
- (ii) This dissertation has not been submitted for any degree or examination at any other university.
- (iii) This dissertation does not contain other persons' writing, unless specifically acknowledged as being sourced from other researchers. Where other written sources have been quoted, then:
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## **Abstract**

This study explores how a group of young women, aged 16-18 years, attending a single-sex school in the Durban area, give meaning to gender and sexuality in relation to sexual risk within the South African context of HIV & AIDS. In South Africa the rate of HIV infection is high, with women being more vulnerable to the infection than men. Social constructions of gender play a major role in placing restrictions on women in terms of their sexual liberty, reinforcing traditional femininities which leave women powerless in terms of negotiating safe sex.

Social Constructionism was utilised as the theoretical approach that guides the data generation and analysis in this study. It is this theory that forms the theoretical keystone of the study.

The study is located within a qualitative interpretivist paradigm and the main research methods comprise individual interviews and focus group discussions with 10 young women (16-18 years) from a single-sex school. The transcripts were analysed through the use of an inductive process which allow for the data to be scrutinised and categorised into themes. There were eight themes that emerged from the data which include; Love and dating, Love and Risk, Sex Education and risk awareness, Sexual coercion and gender dynamics, Mature partners and materiality, Substance abuse and sexual risk, Performing for peers and lastly Performing and challenging femininities.

The data from this study shows that even though single-sex education is assumed to protect girls against gendered and sexual ideologies that place them at risk, many girls in single sex schools continue to reproduce conventional forms of femininity that perpetuate gender inequality that are detrimental to their sexual health. There were various social dynamics that affected the decisions that these young women made in relation to sexual activity. Peer pressure appeared to influence early sexual relations and the need to feel included within a social group was important to achieve social success. Many of these young women had compromised their ability to negotiate safe sex practices in order to please their partners and to maintain these relationships.

While this is derived from the experiences of the majority of the young women interviewed, there were young women who suggested a certain degree of agency and demonstrated greater control over their sexual behaviour and sexual health, proving that experiences vary based on social context and that sexuality is in no way static.

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# **Chapter 1: Introduction**

## **1.1 Introduction**

This study explores how a group of young women, aged 16-18 years, attending a single-sex school in the Durban area, construct their sexual identities within the context of HIV & AIDS. This study articulates the understandings of these young women in relation to gender and sexuality and how this in turn is relative to their engaging in risky sexual behaviour. In addition, this research study pays attention to the conflicting and complex views of these young women regarding the construction of their sexual identities, exploring lived experiences of those who display disempowering views that heighten sexual vulnerabilities as well as those who exhibit sexual agency.

## **1.2 Background and focus of the study**

South Africa is one of the countries that have the largest number of people infected with HIV & AIDS in the world (Abdool Karim & Abdool Karim, 2010). The UNAIDS Global Report (2013) provides an insight, not only into the statistics on the HIV & AIDS epidemic but also on the way forward in terms of ensuring that there is a decrease in the rate of infection. According to the UNAIDS Global Report (2013), goals have been set in terms of reducing the rate of infection and countries are attempting to achieve these goals by 2015. According to the report, in 2012, 35.3 million people were infected with HIV on a global scale as compared to approximately 28 million people in 2001 (UNAIDS, 2013). One of the possible reasons for the rise in numbers could be due to the availability of medication required to prolong the life of those infected with HIV. There appears to be a '33% decline' in reported numbers of newly infected individuals (UNAIDS, 2013, p.4). The number of deaths caused by the HIV & AIDS epidemic has also decreased from 2.3 million people in 2005 to 1.6 million people in 2012 (UNAIDS, 2013, p.4).

Sub-Saharan Africa appears to be the worst affected area in the world, with 70% of newly infected individuals (UNAIDS, 2013, p.12). Although there appears to be a decrease in the

number of newly infected individuals, there are still a large number of people living with HIV which is a cause for major concern.

In South Africa, recorded numbers of HIV infection in young women aged between 15-20 years is higher than that of men (Karim, Humphries & Stein, 2012). The UNAIDS Global Report (2013), states that it is mostly young women who are infected by the HIV & AIDS epidemic and in Sub-Saharan Africa an alarming 60% of women are living with HIV. It is this particular statistic that motivated me to conduct a research study centering on the sexual behaviour of young women aged 16 to 18 years.

The UNAIDS Global Report (2013) explains that, women who are involved in relationships that display intimate partner violence are more likely to be infected with HIV & AIDS than those in non-violent relationships . It is within these abusive relationships that unequal gender power relations are demonstrated. As a result, women are coerced into engaging in risky sexual acts which includes the non use of condoms in an attempt to please their partners (Soomar, Flisher & Mathews, 2009). Unequal gender power relations afford men the power to make decisions concerning the engagement in risky sexual behaviour, resulting in an increased vulnerability of women to HIV infection (Jewkes & Morrell, 2010). Gender and relationship dynamics have thus been implicated in the high incidence of HIV among young women (Bhana & Anderson, 2013).

My personal motivation for conducting this research was the prevalence of teenage pregnancy within the school that I am currently employed in. Within a context of the increased prevalence of HIV among young women, high rates of pregnancy have heightened concerns. The school is an under-resourced, rural primary school. One of the policies that we have implemented in the school is the counseling of pregnant teenage learners. Due to a lack of funds it is an educator at the school who provides the counseling. This educator is an untrained counselor and tends to disclose personal information to other members of staff. On listening to the ‘counselor’s’ reflections, it was evident that many young women were coerced into engaging in risky sexual behaviour by their partners. The reactions of certain educators showed an indifference to the experiences of learners. On numerous occasions when discussing teenage pregnancy, certain educators tended to blame the young women. Clearly there are educators who lack an understanding of sexual coercion and gender powered relationships, which further motivated me to explore gender, sexuality and their association to risky sexual behaviour. Although this is a

small scale study it is important as it may give others an insight into some of the reasons why young women engage in risky sexual behaviour, and being an educator, it is essential to understand the experiences of these young women so as to provide a support system that is beneficial to the learners. This study also attempts to make other young women aware of the gender inequalities that persist in certain relationships and this knowledge could be used to empower these young women.

According to Boyce et al. (2007), the study of sexuality which include sexual behaviour needs to be given prominence and needs to be the focal point where HIV & AIDS are concerned. This would assist in curbing the spread of the HIV epidemic and would play an active role in the enhancement of preventative campaigns. It is this epidemic that requires an exploration of sexual behaviours and an understanding of how individuals negotiate and present their sexual identities and sexual practices in an attempt to reduce the rate of HIV infection (Boyce et al., 2007). Highlighting sexuality denotes explicit discussions on sexual practices in a significant way, which is needed to understand the reasons behind unsafe sexual practices (Boyce et al., 2007). Boyce et al. (2007), further explain the various influential dimensions of sexuality which include; social, moral and cultural dimensions. Sexuality in a nutshell is not homogenous and is shaped by various factors and contexts. This study therefore provided a platform for these young women to explicitly discuss sexual behaviours and how they have constructed their sexual identities, in an attempt to understand why young women continuously engage in risky sexual behaviour despite the information made available to them regarding HIV & AIDS. With this in mind, it is important to focus on girls' constructions of sexuality and their vulnerability to risky sexual behaviour.

I was particularly interested in working with young women from a single-sex school because I attended a single-sex school in my high school years. Historically, single-sex schools have been linked to elite education (Morrell, 2000, p. 221). South African schools were largely influenced by Britain and therefore adopted Britain's system in the mid to late nineteenth century (Morrell, 2000, p. 221). These British schools were primarily single-sex schools for both boys and girls. According to Morrell (2000), during the apartheid era, Africans lacked freedom of choice in the type of school their children attended. Considering that single-sex schools provided education for the elite, these schools were mainly for white children. With the election of a democratic

government in South Africa, equal education was prioritised. Single-sex schools which were formerly white were now desegregated. Morrell (2000) states that The Gender Equity Task Team was established to address issues surrounding gender. Single-sex schools were recommended in an attempt to improve education for African girls. Although these schools are theoretically now accessible to all, it is only middle class individuals who attend due to economic factors (Morrell, 2000).

The purpose of this study is to investigate how girls between the ages of 16 to 18 give meaning to gender and sexuality in the South African context of HIV & AIDS. I have chosen to work with young women attending a single-sex school in order to explore whether and/or why they continue to support disempowering gender ideologies that increase their sexual vulnerabilities and risk to HIV infection.

### **1.3 Objectives of the study**

The objectives of this study are:

- To explore the understandings of risky sexual behaviour among young women within the context of HIV & AIDS.
- To understand why young women engage in risky sexual behaviour within the context of HIV & AIDS.
- To understand how young women's constructions of femininities are connected to risky sexual behaviour.

### **1.4 The critical questions**

The critical questions are an important part of the study. These are the questions that were used as guidelines in an attempt to understand how these young women construct, negotiate and present their sexuality in relation to sexual risk within the South African context of HIV & AIDS. The three critical questions are as follows:

1. What do young women in a single-sex school understand by risky sexual behaviour within the context of HIV & AIDS?
2. What explanations do young women in single-sex schools offer regarding the practice of risky sexual behaviour in the context of HIV & AIDS?
3. In a single-sex school, how are young women's constructions of femininities connected to risky sexual behaviour?

## **1.5 Theoretical approach**

The study draws on the Social Constructionist theory in understanding how these young women give meaning to gender and sexuality, utilising the works of Vivien Burr (1995). It is this theory that assists in understanding how these young women, aged 16-18 years construct their sexual identities and how social processes play a key role in their understandings of and engagement in risky sexual behaviour. This theory highlights that there are multiple social contexts, thus various sexual identities are constructed (Burr, 1995).

## **1.6 Sampling**

The type of sampling that was utilised was non-probability (purposive) sampling due to the fact that I was targeting a particular group of individuals that were in a particular age group (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2000). In this study, I specifically targeted young women in a single-sex school, aged between 16-18 years. I incorporated snowball sampling due to the difficulty in accessing participants. This is a small scale research study; therefore I had initially selected 12 participants. I had made arrangements to meet these participants and on the day of the interview, 2 participants, without my knowledge had withdrawn from the study. This resulted in a sample of 10 young women, aged 16-18 years from a single-sex school.

## **1.7 Methodology and methods of data collection**

The study was located within a qualitative, interpretivist paradigm. The data was qualitative as opposed to quantitative due to this study requiring the sexual experiences of adolescents in a single sex-school. The reason for choosing this type of paradigm was due to the fact that the study aimed to fully understand the experiences and reasons behind risky sexual behavior of young women from a single-sex school. This paradigm produced qualitative data which was essential to answer the research questions.

The research questions were answered by engaging in focus group discussions (Appendix 3B) as well as individual interviews (Appendix 3A) with a group of 10 young women from a single-sex school. The data obtained was analysed in an attempt to understand the reasons behind risky sexual behavior.

## **1.8 Methods of analysis**

The interviews were recorded using a voice recorder and then transcribed verbatim. Once the interviews were transcribed and the participants had viewed the transcripts and were satisfied with the outcome, I studied the transcripts to familiarise myself with the data. The data was then analysed through the use of an inductive process (McMillan & Schumacher, 1993). I then began categorising the data into codes and then categorised these codes into themes. These themes became the subheadings for my data analysis chapter (Chapter 4). The theoretical approach was used to analyse the data.

## **1.9 Brief outline of the chapters**

This dissertation is structured in the following way:

Chapter 1 outlines the introduction, background and purpose of the study. The objectives, the three critical questions and the theoretical approach are also highlighted in this chapter. A brief explanation of the sample as well as the methods employed throughout the data collection

process follows. The manner in which the data was analysed is also included. The chapter ends with a brief outline of the chapters included within the dissertation.

Chapter 2 provides a review of the literature pertaining to understanding risky sexual behaviour among young women in a single-sex school in the context of HIV & AIDS. This chapter includes scholarly works of both international and national scholars, specifically looking at the South African context. The chapter ends with the theory that forms the theoretical underpinning of the study.

Chapter 3 discusses the methodology and methods of research that were used in my study which attempts to understand risky sexual behaviour among young women in a single-sex school in the Durban area in the context of HIV & AIDS. The chapter begins with an explanation of the broad methodological design which includes the research population and the research site, the type of sampling used in this study and the data collection process, which includes the instruments used to collect data as well as the experience of the data collection process. Ethical issues are also considered. The chapter concludes with an explanation of the attempts made to ensure that the data was considered trustworthy as well as the limitations of my study.

Chapter 4 presents and discusses the data that was analysed in an attempt to answer the critical questions. It is in this chapter that the understandings and experiences of the participants are articulated. The data is presented in this chapter according to the themes that were identified when analysing the data. The Social Constructionist theory forms the theoretical underpinning of the study as mentioned above and it is through this lens that the study and its findings are viewed.

Chapter 5 consolidates the main findings of my study as well as provides a summary of the chapters that are included within this dissertation. The chapter concludes with possible recommendations to assist in raising awareness about HIV & AIDS and young women's vulnerabilities to HIV infection.

## **Chapter 2: Literature Review**

### **2.1 Introduction**

In this chapter I will provide a review of the literature pertaining to gender, sexuality and its relation to risky sexual behaviour within the context of HIV & AIDS. I will draw on a variety of both local and international literature. This literature review consists of sections that include;

- Gender and HIV & AIDS
- Gender, Sexuality and HIV & AIDS
- Sexuality and HIV & AIDS Education
- Gender and Women's Vulnerability to HIV & AIDS
- Gender, Sexual Agency and HIV & AIDS
- Single-sex schools and femininities
- Theoretical approach: Social Constructions of Gender

### **2.2 Gender and HIV & AIDS**

HIV & AIDS is prevalent in sub-Saharan Africa (Karim, Humphries & Stein, 2012). There are multiple forces that feed the HIV & AIDS epidemic (Gilbert & Selikow, 2011). These include gender, context, socio-cultural and economic forces. Older literature shows that South African women aged 15-24 years are most vulnerable to HIV infection (Smit, 2008), and in more recent studies women aged 15-20 years are most vulnerable to HIV infection as compared with men (Karim, Humphries & Stein, 2012). This shows that the vulnerability of women to HIV infection has not changed over a period of 4 years and that a greater effort is required in terms of persuading women to use knowledge gained about sexual risk and preventative measures for empowerment. The UNAIDS Global Report (2013) further states that it is mostly women who are living with HIV & AIDS. Although there are men who are living with HIV, Gilbert & Selikow (2011) consider this epidemic to be feminised as it mostly affects women. Furthermore,

claims have been made that the gendering of HIV & AIDS has been overlooked by policymakers and other influential parties; however in many HIV & AIDS programmes women have been given prominence. Gilbert & Selikow (2011) go on to explain the biological justifications for women's susceptibility to HIV. A few of these explanations include; 'a greater area of mucous membrane is exposed during sex that provides fertile ground for the virus to enter the women's body, women are exposed to infectious fluids for a longer time' (Gilbert & Selikow, 2011, p.327). These biological explanations together with an understanding of gender inequalities enhance our awareness of women's vulnerability to HIV infection.

Gilbert & Selikow (2011) add that racial dynamics also contribute to the risk of contracting HIV, proving that not all women are affected in the same way. The study mostly draws on the statistics of HIV infection among black and white women. During the Apartheid era it was mostly black women who were socially disadvantaged and post Apartheid, black women from rural areas are still affected by this inequality (Gilbert & Selikow, 2011). In addition the engagement in risky sexual behaviour is the result of socio-economic problems combined with gender inequalities that persist in most social contexts within South Africa. Harrison (2008) states that a low socio-economic status is related to early sexual debut, multiple sexual partners as well as transactional sex which will be further discussed in this chapter.

## **2.3 Gender, sexuality and HIV & AIDS**

Sexuality is complex and consists of various dimensions other than sex (Milton, 2014). According to Schwartz and Rutter (1998), sexuality is embedded within biological and social contexts. The biological context refers to the genitalia of individuals and how they engage in sex for reproductive purposes. People however, do not only have sex to reproduce but engage in sex at leisure and to express emotions (Schwartz & Rutter, 1998). Sexual behaviour is not only relative to sexual intercourse but includes sexual attitudes, seduction, courting and self stimulation of one's genitalia i.e. masturbation (Schwartz & Rutter, 1998). The engagement in sexual acts is driven by sexual desire and it is sexual desire that causes one to want to engage in sexual acts (Schwartz & Rutter, 1998). Sexuality therefore incorporates both sexual behaviour and desire within its various dimensions. In addition, gender is an integral part in understanding

sexuality and does not function in isolation. Various aspects which include race, culture and personal differences function collectively and are influential to sexuality (Schwartz & Rutter, 1998). The social context refers to the social factors that shape sexuality. It is these factors that define what is considered natural and within most social contexts focuses greatly on heteronormative behaviour. Tensions are thus produced when individuals behave in a manner that is not deemed appropriate according to their social context (Milton, 2014). Sexuality is expected to be homogenous however it has proven to be continuously changing. It is sexuality that defines who we are as human beings (Parker, 2009). According to Reddy & Dunne (2007), schools are not the only sites that are responsible for producing sexual and social identities. Socio-cultural forces impact our views, perceptions and understandings of sexual experiences, moulds those sexual experiences and aids in the construction of sexual identities. According to Patricia & Mata (2006), when a person is born, their sexual identity is not fixed but is constructed throughout life and is largely influenced by social interactions. Patricia & Mata (2006), further state that there are various forms of sexuality which includes homosexuality, heterosexuality and bisexuality. As mentioned by Milton (2014), heteronormative sexuality is considered appropriate in most social contexts.

Boyce et al. (2007) suggests that sexuality needs to be addressed in order to better understand the reasons behind the engagement of risky sexual behaviour. Sexuality includes a variety of aspects that explores the sexual dimensions of an individual and how sexual identities are constructed and presented throughout life. Boyce et al. (2007) considers the exploration of sexuality to assist in revising and enhancing preventative campaigns in an attempt to reduce the rate of HIV infection, especially among women.

In order to fully understand women's vulnerability to HIV infection it is crucial to understand how sexuality is influenced by social processes and how this social construction impacts sexual relationships. "Qualitative research is starting to show that strong social and cultural forces shape sexual behaviour..." (Marston & King, 2006, p.1581). This statement clearly shows that social and cultural forces govern how men and women behave sexually. According to Marston & King (2006), there is a major difference in what is expected of men and of women within many social contexts, in terms of sexuality; especially social contexts that reproduce gender inequality. Stricter limitations are placed on a woman's sexual freedom as compared to men's (Marston &

King, 2006). Marston & King (2006) further state that a major emphasis is placed on the virginity of women and the exclusivity of a relationship as compared to that of men. According to Harrison (2008), women are expected to conceal their sexual relationships as it is considered inappropriate behaviour for women to engage in sexual acts. Men are expected to be sexually active whereas women who are sexually active are negatively labeled within their social environment where gender inequalities are rife (Marston & King, 2006). Premarital sex and procreation for men is seen as a pathway to manhood and respect (Nzima, 2006). Men and women are socially accepted if they conform to these socially constructed norms (Schwartz & Rutter, 1998). "Reputations are crucial for social control of sexual behaviour." (Marston & King, 2006, p.1583). According to this statement, men and women conform to these ideals to prevent their reputations from being damaged. Women who have multiple sexual partners and men who do not engage in sexual activity are at risk of destroying their reputations (Marston & King, 2006). This could result in the coercion of certain men and women to behave in a manner that they may not be comfortable with. This does not necessarily mean that all men and women obey the rules that regulate social norms. Those who show resistance are marginalised within their social environment and others who resist tend to resist discreetly (Jewkes & Morrell, 2010). This makes it extremely difficult for women to voice their opinions in terms of insisting on the use of condoms as this goes against the social norms and places their reputations at risk. This complicit and passive behaviour plays a role in the vulnerability of women to infection by HIV & AIDS. These social constructs as mentioned above, make women vulnerable to HIV and prevent them from gaining information regarding contraceptives and the consequences of risky sexual behaviour.

## **2.4 Sexuality and HIV & AIDS education**

The rights of those infected with HIV & AIDS is enshrined within the constitution in South Africa. (Naidoo, 2012). There is no room for discrimination and a person has the right to keep their status confidential as well as to make a choice on whether or not to get tested. No one living with HIV & AIDS should be denied access to the fundamental essentials such as education and medical treatment (Naidoo, 2012). Those infected should not be treated unfairly and should be given equal opportunities.

Schools are seen as sites that bring about change, therefore by educating young men and women about HIV & AIDS at a young age, the education system could assist in eradicating the stigmas associated with HIV & AIDS. Education will also make learners aware of how HIV is transmitted and hopefully assist young men and young women in making informed decisions on whether or not to engage in risky sexual behaviour (Moloi & Chetty, 2011). In the USA, sex education has been implemented in schools however parents argue that the aim of sex education should be to encourage abstinence rather than teaching ways to engage in safe sex practices (Walcott, Chenneville & Tarquin, 2011). This is debatable considering that when children reach adolescence, many experiment with and engage in risky sexual behaviour and therefore need to be taught effective ways to reduce the chances of pregnancy and HIV infection (Walcott et al., 2011). This information is essential in the formulation of sex education programmes as this relates directly to the experiences of some young men and young women and could help in reducing the rate of HIV infection.

Sexuality education has become a fundamental component in the education curriculum in many Sub-Saharan African countries (Wood & Rolleri, 2014). Sex education tackles issues that are pertinent to adolescents; however risky sexual behaviour continues to be a contributive factor to the HIV & AIDS epidemic. Wood & Rolleri (2014), express that arguments prevail regarding whether or not under-resourced schools are equipped to provide support to those infected and affected by HIV & AIDS, however there is consensus that schools are an integral factor in imparting knowledge to young people regarding ways of reducing the risk of contracting the HIV infection. The Department of Basic Education has made provisions to incorporate sexuality and HIV & AIDS education within the curriculum in the form of a mandatory subject, namely Life Orientation (Wood & Rolleri, 2014). This has been done to highlight the seriousness of the HIV & AIDS epidemic. The South African National Curriculum does not include a detailed description on what topics to teach in this subject and the approaches required to implement curriculum. Wood & Rolleri (2014), further state that this has led to the implementation of CAPS (Curriculum Assessment Policy Statements) which provided the necessary guidelines, content and strategies to incorporate Sexuality and HIV & AIDS within the curriculum. Wood & Rolleri (2014) deduced that socio-economic and cultural forces play a role in the success of the revised curriculum.

There are many social and cultural factors that shape understandings, perspectives and practices surrounding sexuality and HIV & AIDS (Govender & Edwards, 2009). These socio-cultural forces cannot be ignored when discussing the implementation of sex and HIV & AIDS education. Govender & Edwards (2009) highlight that socio-cultural factors are embedded within the minds of individuals, making it a taxing task to deconstruct these norms. Although Africa consists of a variety of cultures, there are commonalities within certain cultures and practices and these need to be discussed. Furthermore, Wood & Roller (2014) add that there are many cultural beliefs that govern sex practices and serve as a barrier to the implementation of sex and HIV & AIDS education.

While intervention programmes at school level have the ability to provide a positive impact on reducing risky sexual behaviour, there are schools which do not implement these intervention programmes (Mathews et al., 2006). Issues pertaining to sexuality and HIV & AIDS may cause many schools to be reluctant to implement these programmes due to the complexities of the topic. Mathews et al. (2006) state that topics such as these may be controversial and many schools wish to avoid controversy.

Barriers to implementation to Sex and HIV & AIDS education include the inability to teach and a lack of confidence or willingness by teachers to teach these HIV and sex related topics (Wood & Roller, 2014). Mathews et al. (2006) suggest that teacher training would assist in the implementation of sexuality and HIV & AIDS education. If teachers are confident about teaching HIV & AIDS and sexuality then they would be willing to teach the subject. Peltzer & Promtussananon (2003) express that attempts have been made in 1997 in South Africa, whereby 10 000 teachers were trained to teach Life Skills that incorporated HIV-related topics. The aim was to train two teachers in each high school, in each province, however there were limitations to this implementation which was not addressed further. Teachers are the driving force to implementation however there are many teachers who lack knowledge and feel uncomfortable about teaching sex related topics (Peltzer & Promtussananon, 2003). In this study by Peltzer & Promtussananon (2003), most of the teachers were knowledgeable and competent to teach HIV & AIDS, however they lacked the resources and the support to teach. Many teachers felt that adolescents would want to experiment sexually at an earlier stage if these issues were discussed. On the contrary, there is no distinct link between sex education and early sexual engagement and

this misinterpretation needs to be confronted during teacher training (Peltzer & Promtussananon, 2003).

The vulnerability of young women to HIV & AIDS and the reasons therefore become crucial aspects to be addressed in order for sex education to be effective (Wood & Rolleri, 2014).

## **2.5 Gender and women's vulnerability to HIV & AIDS**

In South Africa, the rate of HIV infection is extremely high and South Africa has one of the highest infection rates in the world (Karim, Humphries & Stein, 2012). Women aged 15-24 years are more vulnerable to HIV infection when compared to men (Smit, 2008). Within this section I will focus on women who practice the 'traditional' form of femininity whereby women are considered complicit, passive and inferior to men, thus giving men power (Gill, 2007). Although some women do practice agency, it is largely conventional forms of femininity and hegemonic masculinity that reproduce gender inequality. According to Connell (2002), we are living in a patriarchal social environment whereby men are in power. It is this power that places women at a disadvantage and makes them vulnerable (Connell, 2002). Connell (2002) further states that men strive to maintain their power due to the notion that once gender equality increases, patriarchy decreases. This is vital in understanding why women are vulnerable to HIV infection and this will be discussed further.

The constructions of femininity are key to understanding young women's views on risky sexual behaviour. Femininity and masculinity are interrelated; therefore in order to fully understand these constructions it is essential to explore them collectively (Jewkes & Morrell, 2012). Women are considered to be more vulnerable than men to HIV infection; therefore by understanding the constructions of masculinity we can identify reasons for this. Jewkes & Morrell (2012) explain that there are various forms of masculinity and femininity however a certain form of masculinity and femininity is emphasised in many communities which perpetuates gender inequalities.

'Traditional femininity' is the most emphasised form of femininity whereby women are characteristically complicit, passive, subordinated and merely internalise and accept their position within their social context (Gill, 2007). These women are expected to respect and 'obey'

men and submit to men by allowing them to make pertinent decisions pertaining to their relationship (Jewkes & Morrell, 2012). By providing men with this power reinforces gender inequalities within social contexts. There are women in the community who have a tendency to go against the social norms, however these women do so privately and in public portray 'decent', passive and complicit behaviour to avoid negative labeling by members of the community (Jewkes & Morrell, 2012). Jewkes & Morrell (2012) further state that this form of femininity is centered on pleasing men, sexually or otherwise. According to Connell (2002), gender roles and identities are shaped by social processes and place men in power. Hegemonic masculinity can be described as the dominant form of masculinity whereby men are superior, dominant, in control and ensure the inferiority of women (Jewkes & Morrell, 2012). "As with masculinity there are social rewards..." (Jewkes & Morrell, 2012, p.1730). According to this statement it is clear that the social environment plays a major role in normalising certain behaviours' of men. Most men are determined to be accepted within their social context and in order to be accepted, these men have to resort to certain acts that would demonstrate their masculinity. Those who do not demonstrate this form of masculinity are marginalised within their social context. According to Paechter (2003), it is more problematic for men who do not conform to the norms of hegemonic masculinity as compared to women who do not conform to the norms of conventional femininity.

Risky sexual behaviour tends to leave people vulnerable to HIV infection, STI's as well as unwanted pregnancy (Wozniak, 2013). Most causes of HIV infection are due to individuals engaging in risky sexual behaviour therefore it is important to understand what risky sexual behaviour is and why people tend to engage in this kind of behaviour considering the consequences. According to Wozniak (2013), as children reach adolescence they become curious and are inclined to experiment with the 'opposite sex' and in some cases engage in risky sexual behaviour. Wozniak (2013) explains what behaviour is considered risky. This includes, having sexual intercourse without the use of contraceptives, as well as having multiple sexual partners (Wozniak, 2013). There are many reasons as to why individuals engage in risky sexual behaviour. One of the main causes at the school level is peer acceptance (Wozniak, 2013). The need to fit in and be accepted by peers has proven to be significant in forming relationships at school level (Gevers et al., 2012).

Early sexual debut is seen to increase the chances of HIV infection among young women, however there is no concrete evidence that proves this claim to be true (Stockl et al., 2013). Stockl et al. (2013) illustrates four explanations of early sexual debut that could possibly heighten women's vulnerability to contracting HIV & AIDS. Firstly, the earlier the engagement in sexual debut the longer the period of engagement. This could result in an increase in HIV risk. Secondly, women engaging in early sexual debut may be more inclined to engage in risky sexual behaviour, such as having a larger number of sexual partners over time. Thirdly, there may be biological justifications that heighten women's susceptibility to HIV infection. This is explained by Gilbert & Selikow (2011, p.327) who state that young women's genital tracts are not fully developed therefore making it easier for the virus to enter the young women's body. Lastly, younger women may have older sexual partners who could be carrying the virus due to the possibility of these men having multiple sexual partners (Stockl et al., 2013). Chirinda et al. (2012) add that prevention campaigns should also focus on early sexual debut in an attempt to curb the spread of HIV. Furthermore, parents should show more interest in the lives of their children and provide the necessary support.

One of the major challenges that many women are faced with in certain patriarchal communities is lack of knowledge regarding HIV & AIDS and sexual behaviours. According to Karim, Humphries & Stein (2012), women mostly contract HIV through sexual experiences proving that a lot of women are engaging in risky sexual behaviour. Many of these sexual relationships are hidden due to the notion that it is inappropriate behaviour for women (Harrison, 2008). There are campaigns that provide information pertaining to HIV & AIDS and preventative programmes are implemented to educate men and women on the consequences of risky sexual behaviour (Marston & King, 2006). It becomes difficult for some of these women to attend these campaigns as they are judged negatively and thought to be engaging in sexual activity (Marston & King, 2006). Some women are therefore vulnerable to HIV infection due to a lack of knowledge, not because of a lack of preventative campaigns but due to societal norms and reputations that need to be upheld. According to Dupas (2009), HIV & AIDS programmes are implemented in the school curriculum, many of these programmes however are focused on 'abstinence' rather than ways to reduce the risk of HIV infection if engaging in sexual activity (Dupas, 2009, p.2). It is clear that the social norms impact what is taught in schools and thus many young women become fearful of admitting their sexual behaviour due to the fear of being

marginalised. This possibly results in a lack of knowledge about the consequences of risky sexual behaviour and therefore makes them vulnerable to HIV infection.

Another practice that contributes to the vulnerability of young women is transactional sex. Conventional forms of femininity portray women to be nurturing and domesticated and men to be the breadwinners of the household (Gill, 2007). This results in many women staying at home, taking care of the children and the domestic duties whilst the men work. This makes many women vulnerable because they are financially dependent on men. According to Booysen & Summerton (2002), poverty is one of the factors that contribute to the spread of HIV. One of the many drivers of the HIV & AIDS pandemic in South Africa is transactional sex (Zembe et al., 2013). Understanding transactional sex can assist in curbing the spread of HIV & AIDS. 'Transactional sex' can be defined as the exchange of goods for sexual favours (Jewkes, Morrell, Sikweyiya, Dunkle & Penn-Kekana, 2012, p.2). It is largely economic, social and political factors that model transactional sex (Stoebenau et al., 2011). Some women may be financially unstable and require the financial support of certain men; these men supply the financial support in return for sexual gain (Jewkes et al., 2012). This shows the link between transactional sex and a low economic standing. This transaction reinforces the inequalities that exist in terms of gender and makes women vulnerable to HIV infection due to the socialised notion that men are 'entitled' to engage in sexual activity if they have provided financially for the women (Hoffman, O'Sullivan, Harrison, Dolezal & Monroe-Wise, 2006, p.56). In addition, engaging in unsafe practices increases the chances of material gain therefore exposing women to an array of risky sexual behaviour (Zembe et al., 2013). According to Zembe et al. (2013), transactional sex takes place between young women and older men, these men being financially stable. The mere fact that the men are older makes it difficult for the women to negotiate safe sex practices (Van Der Heijden & Swartz, 2014). Stoebenau et al. (2011) add that there are two reasons for engaging in transactional sex, that is survival and consumption. Survival refers to engaging in transactional sex in order to acquire the fundamental necessities and consumption refers to the choice made by young women to engage in sex in order to acquire material gain (Stoebenau et al., 2011, p.2). Furthermore, consumption stems from globalisation, the need to obtain material goods in an attempt to live a modernised lifestyle. This results in multiple sexual partners and therefore the possibility of contracting HIV & AIDS.

Sexism refers to the negative and unequal manner in which women are treated (Herrera et al., 2012). Whilst men treat women unfairly and as inferior, they still require women for sex. According to Jewkes & Morrell (2010), hegemonic masculinity is responsible for producing unequal gender power relationships which place women at a higher risk of HIV and AIDS infection. Power is important within gender relations and gender violence is generally the result of losing power (Herrera et al., 2012). This could be due to the social and cultural norms which maintain that men are meant to have power within intimate relationships. Herrera et al. (2012) add that violence is utilised as a strategy to regain power. Men who hold lower status positions than their female partners are more likely to resort to violence to restore power within the relationship. According to Njie-Carr (2013), intimate partner violence can be described as various types of 'abuse' within a relationship. This type of violence results in increasing the vulnerability of women to HIV infection (Njie-Carr, 2013). The UNAIDS Global Report (2013) claims that women who are in violent relationships and experience intimate partner violence are more likely to be infected with HIV & AIDS. Gevers et al. (2012) investigated relationships among young men and young women. Dating relationships are crucial, necessary and play a vital role in the development of future adult relationships (Gevers et al., 2012). Young people have admitted to formulating intimate relationships and some find great difficulty in managing these relationships. In a survey conducted by Gevers et al. (2012), it was found that some young people were guilty of inflicting physical violence on their partners. It is this violence that is relative to risky behaviour and a heightened risk of HIV infection. Gender largely influences these relationships as it is mostly young men who initiate these relationships. It was also found that young women expect young men to initiate relationships and make decisions pertaining to sexual behaviour (Gevers et al., 2012). This shows that many young women internalise the gender roles and the identities that have been constructed within their social contexts.

Sexual coercion mostly affects women and is a result of the unequal gender power relations between men and women (Soomar, Flisher & Mathews, 2009). Sexual coercion refers to the engagement in sexual acts despite the unwillingness to engage in these sexual acts within intimate relationships (Santhya & Zavier, 2014). Men feel the need to be in power and demonstrate sexual entitlement. Santhya & Zavier (2014), state that less than 3% to over 20% of young women have experienced sexual coercion within developing countries. In addition, women act passively out of fear of losing their partner or fear of their families gaining

knowledge of their sexual relations. There is a strong association between condom use, love and trust (Marston & King, 2006). According to Marston & King (2006), if a woman requests the use of a condom, then it is believed that she does not trust her partner enough to engage in sexual intercourse without the use of a condom. Reddy & Dunne (2007) add that the need to be loved is far greater than the need to practice safe sex. Resorting to unsafe sexual acts to obtain love compromises the sexual health of these women. Many women believe that insisting on engaging in safe sex practices is risky as it could lead to the demise of a love based relationship (Reddy & Dunne, 2007).

The consumption of substances such as drugs and alcohol is greatly associated with the engagement in unsafe sexual practices (Casale et al., 2011). When an individual has consumed alcohol, the ability to think clearly diminishes, making it difficult to make informed decisions (Morojele et al., 2006). Casale et al. (2011) further states that women are more vulnerable to risky behaviour when under the influence of alcohol and this increases the exposure of women to HIV infection.

Whilst this section has highlighted that gender inequality is rife in most communities and places many women vulnerable to HIV infection, there are women who resist the social norms that perpetuate gender inequality.

## **2.6 Gender, sexual agency and HIV & AIDS**

Agency, according to Maxwell & Aggleton (2010), refers to resistance to hegemonic practices and expectations that are socially and culturally influenced. Studies have shown that women have been becoming agentic. For example, findings from a study by Gill (2007) in a small town within a particular community who believed in maintaining the power differentials between men and women, certain women have demonstrated powerful resistance to the expectations of the social environment. According to Gill (2007), when women go against these social norms it causes 'instability' within various social contexts. Certain sports are rough and thus are perceived as sports for men. Gill (2007) interviewed a group of girls who had formed a rugby team which was a sport that was considered for men only. These women went against the

expected social norms of women being decent and weak and this caused concern within the community. The women were marginalised within the community due to their resistance to conform to what was expected of them. Gill (2007) further states that by playing a violent sport i.e. rugby, the gender roles and identities of these women changed.

“Women should not be involved with violence visibly because it reflects badly on the man involved.” (Gill, 2007, p.421). This statement provided a reason as to why most men in this town were unable to form relationships with the women who were part of the rugby team. If they were perceived as being unable to control their women they would be ridiculed within the community. In this study it was noted that many men resorted to acts of violence to prove their masculinity and women were considered the ‘targets’ and this was socially accepted (Gill, 2007). These men were resistant to the change in gender roles and in the identities of women due to the possible redistribution of power among men and women, possibly giving women more power than would be considered normal (Gill, 2007). Therefore in order to maintain the power in this small town, certain measures such as rape and sexual assault were possibly undertaken to ensure that women remained complicit and conformed to the unequal gender power relations. The women who were part of the rugby team displayed a form of agency, however marriage was important to some and out of fear of not being able to acquire a husband, had decided to behave in a docile manner and conform to certain social norms by dropping out of the rugby team.

“Rape has been theorized as a means by which women are controlled...” (Gill, 2007, p.423). This indicates that some men are resorting to violence and rape to preserve the power that they have traditionally had over women. This form of sexual harassment leaves many women vulnerable to HIV infection. According to Herrera et al. (2014), women who show agency in the work place in terms of sexual harassment are seen in a negative light. According to the men in this study, women who are head strong do not understand their role within a patriarchal social environment and are therefore not considered ‘wife’ material. These men are unaware of the seriousness of sexual harassment and see women as over exaggerating the truth (Herrera et al., 2014). The fact that sexual harassment is not taken seriously and women who show agency are disregarded, places these women at risk and vulnerable to HIV infection.

Sexual agency takes many guises; it refers to taking initiative, understanding one’s desires and being confident to assert one’s sexuality (Averett et al., 2008, p. 332). I will now draw on a study

by Maxwell & Aggleton (2010), who suggest that in order to easily grasp the concept of sexual agency, it is important to comprehend power differentials. Power, as explained in this study is related to the ability to make decisions or the inability to make decisions within a relationship. Maxwell & Aggleton (2010) show that there are women who exert power within relationships. The young women in the study conducted by Maxwell & Aggleton (2010) believed to have power within their relationships due to the level of commitment of their partners. Their partners' commitment to the relationship was seen as a weakness and these young women felt that they were able to make decisions within the relationship. The young women who were faced with problematic situations which included cheating were able to show resistance by ending the relationship rather than merely accepting the notion that it is innate that men have sexual desires and therefore cannot be blamed for acts of deception.

Maxwell & Aggleton (2010) point out another form of sexual agency whereby young women take control of their sexual freedom and are able to freely initiate sexual debut. There are 4 ways that power can be achieved, these include; making decisions, showing confidence, being strong and powerful and showing ambivalence (Maxwell & Aggleton, 2010, p.336). The study showed that one of the reasons behind the agentic behaviour of these young women was as a result of emotional distress brought on by the unequal distribution of power within their intimate relationships and the need to change their current situation. Averett et al. (2008), state that by giving women the freedom to openly deliberate sexuality contributes to the empowerment of women. Furthermore, parent and child discussions on sexuality are fundamental in the development of the child and in the child understanding sexuality. Lesch & Kruger (2004), add that the focus is largely on societal norms and sexual behaviours that are considered appropriate that women forget to share in on their sexual experiences. The focus should therefore be on understanding their desires and pleasures in order to make informed decisions about sex.

It is clear that women are at a greater risk of contracting HIV mostly due to gender inequalities that persist in certain communities and in certain relationships. As much as there have been major changes in terms of empowering women in South Africa, there is still a vast majority of men and women who maintain the outdated ideals on how men and women should behave. This places many women at a disadvantage. In order for major changes to be made, women need to be empowered and need to be made aware of their rights.

## **2.7 Single-sex schools and femininities**

Since the study is located in a single-sex school, it is important that the literature related to single-sex schools for girls are reviewed. The term single-sex is self explanatory and can be used to describe a particular group that is of the same sex. Single-sex schools are schools that contain a single sex i.e. boys-only or girls-only. In the past, single-sex schools mostly referred to schools for young men (Shah & Conchar, 2009). This shows that a greater emphasis has been placed on the education of men rather than women. Prestigious institutions such as Harvard initially only enrolled men into the institution preventing women from obtaining high status positions (Salomone, 2013). Salomone (2013), further states that although there were schools provided for women, these schools were not well equipped with resources as compared to the schools for men. According to Shah & Conchar (2009), many feminists were opposed to single-sex schools being exclusively for men as this perpetuated gender inequality and did not provide equal opportunities for women. Feminists in the United States fought for the rights of women which included that women were given the same educational opportunities as men and this campaign resulted in women being given the same access to education as men (Salomone, 2013). Salomone (2013) further states that in the US, whilst private schools were allowed to be single-sex institutions, public schools were 'prohibited' from segregating learners according to sex and those who did not comply with the new laws were not provided with funds for the functioning of the school. This however changed over the years for public schools whereby these schools were allowed to be single-sex institutions and parents were given the opportunity to decide what type of institution (single-sex or co-educational) they wanted their children to attend, thus providing different learning experiences (Cable & Spradlin, 2008). Cable & Spradlin (2008) explain that the reason for this change is due to a law that was implemented which was the 'No Child Left Behind Act of 2001'.

In mid to late nineteenth century, South African single-sex schools were designed according to the British system (Morrell, 2000). These schools were considered elite and due to the Apartheid era, were mainly schools for whites. Post Apartheid, the government took strides in ensuring equal access to education and desegregated these schools (Morrell, 2000). Since the racial desegregation of single-sex schools, these schools are open to anyone who can afford the higher than normal school fees.

Patterson (2012) conducted a study that looked at the behaviour of young women from single-sex schools and young women from co-educational schools and how their behaviour differed in terms of aggression. It was found in this study that young women from single-sex schools displayed more aggression as compared to young women from co-educational schools. Many researchers believed that young women were vulnerable and in need of protection in co-educational schools however, according to Bhana & Pillay (2011) single sex schools can be sites for violent expressions and that many young women are in need of protection from each other in single-sex schools. It was found that certain young women in single-sex schools display a form of femininity that perpetuates violence in schools among other young women. It is important to examine constructions of gender in different settings. “Teasing, name calling, verbal abuse, humiliation and belittling other girls, including acts of physical assault, have been identified as transgressive of gender norms.” (Bhana & Pillay, 2011, p.68). It is clear that there is violence in girls-only schools among peers over issues such as boyfriends and this aggressive behaviour goes against the social norms of conventional femininity. These constructions of femininities are not focused on in many social contexts due to a major emphasis being placed on the violent behaviour of young men (Bhana & Pillay, 2011).

## **2.8 Theoretical approach: Social Constructions of Gender**

In this section of my literature review I will discuss the theory which forms the theoretical underpinning of the study. This theory provides an insight on how gender and specifically sexual identities are constructed.

The study draws on the Social Constructionist Theory in understanding how these young women give meaning to gender and sexuality and how identities are constructed by social processes. These social processes are influential in the understandings of sexual risk and possibly afford the basis of sexual risk engagement in the context of HIV & AIDS. Burr (1995) suggests that communication and interactions with people are key in acquiring knowledge. Language is used as a tool to enable communication with people and is considered the medium through which we are able to express cognitive ideals (Burr, 1995). Through various interactions, diverse realities

are constructed. The Social Constructionist approach therefore can be utilised to review how knowledge is constructed through interactions and how language impacts these interactions.

Burr (1995), states that this theory calls for the notion that 'conventional knowledge is acquired through impartial observations', to be challenged. This highlights that there are various constructions of the world, proving that there are various identities that are constructed, including sexual identities. It therefore cannot be said that sexuality and gender is homogenous in nature. By socially interacting with various individuals, numerous interpretations of knowledge are formulated. People therefore become influential factors in perceptions of the world (Burr, 1995).

There are social forces that construct gender roles and identities, and they are constructed at an age as young as birth (Paechter, 2003). Paechter (2003) explains that when a child is born, he/she is immediately gendered when the doctor points out the sex of the child. The second this happens the baby is socialised. Meier-Pesti & Penz (2008), points out that there is a differentiation between sex and gender. Sex refers to the biological differences, looking at the genitalia to deduce 'male or female', whereas gender refers to socially constructed behaviours of how men and women are expected to behave (Meier & Penz, 2008). Once the sex of the baby is determined, there is an immediate difference in terms of how these babies are treated. A fair example would be the colours of the clothes of these babies (Paechter, 2003). The girls generally are clothed in pink and the boys are generally clothed in blue. Paechter (2003) conducted a study that required participants to play with girl and boy babies. The difference was that the babies were clothed in their 'opposite' colours i.e. the girls wore blue and the boys wore pink. The results of this study proved that boys and girls were treated differently. "In particular, those children believed to be boys were given more verbal encouragement to physical action and more often given whole-body stimulation in response to gross motor behaviour, than was the case with those babies believed to be girls." (Paechter, 2003, p.545). It is thus evident that at an early age the constructions of masculinity and femininity occur.

Paechter (2003) identifies that constructions of masculinity and femininity are based on social context and culture. Masculinity and femininity is not stagnant but changes according to the context therefore there are many forms of masculinity and femininity as explained above depending on the context. Community forms part of the social environment and individuals

across the world belong to a community whether close knit or not. People of the community become active participants of the community over time (Paechter, 2003). “A community of practice is, put simply, a community engaging in a shared practice.” (Paechter, 2003, p.542). According to this statement made by Paechter (2003), it is apparent that when an individual is a part of a community, he/she tends to participate in certain ideals that are believed to be shared by other members of the community. Therefore, members become aware of social constructions of femininity and masculinity that are accepted within their context and tend to conform to these behaviours. In this instance the Social Constructionist Theory becomes apparent and Paechter (2003) clearly draws on this particular theory within a context that displays gender inequalities. Elders may teach boys to do certain chores that require the strength of the boys and girls are expected to do chores that are meant for women and are ‘traditionally feminine’ in nature (Paechter, 2003). These boys and girls due to social interactions are now aware of certain tasks that are meant for their particular sex (Burr, 1998). Paechter (2003) further states that at a young age boys and girls may not have immense power or be able to make pertinent decisions. Boys and girls will be treated similarly due to age, however through social interactions the boy and girl identify that when they become adults men will hold greater power and will be dominant as compared to women. It is vital to note at this point that not all communities practice certain forms of masculine and feminine behaviour and that certain identities are constructed based on social context. The Social Constructionist Theory is utilised as the lens through which this study is viewed. This study delves into the experiences of 10 young women from a single-sex school in an attempt to understand their positioning in relation to gender and sexuality and analyses how these young women construct their sexual identities through their experiences that were articulated during the individual interviews and focus group discussions.

## **2.9 Conclusion**

The review of literature suggests that although there is a decline in the number of individuals newly infected with HIV in South Africa, it continues to be a serious concern. Research shows that women are most vulnerable to HIV infection and one of the leading causes of this is gender inequality that persists in most communities. The literature that I have reviewed in this chapter suggests that social forces have contributed to the construction of gender norms, identities and

sexual behaviours that position women at a disadvantage compared to men. While this may be the case, there are also women who display sexual agency. This chapter has provided an insight and discussion on literature encompassing gender, sexuality and HIV & AIDS, looking at both local and international scholarly works. This chapter has also presented the theoretical approach which is used as a lens through which this study is viewed and the data interpreted. The next chapter takes a look at the research design and methodology that was employed throughout the study.

## **Chapter 3: Methodology**

### **3.1 Introduction**

In this chapter, I discuss the methods of research that was utilised to understand risky sexual behaviour among young women in a single-sex school in the Durban area within the context of HIV & AIDS. This study sought to understand how these young women construct their sexual identities and give meaning to gender and sexuality and how these particular meanings are related to sexual risk. I begin with an explanation of the broad methodological design which includes the research population and the research site, the type of sampling used in this study and the data collection process. The data collection process illustrates the instruments used to collect data as well as a reflection on the data collection process. In every study, ethical issues need to be considered, and in this chapter I will explain what lengths I went to, to ensure that these ethical issues were considered. I will also explain the attempts made to ensure that the data was considered trustworthy and thereafter discuss the limitations to my study.

### **3.2 Research Design**

The research study in question aimed to find data on the understandings and experiences of young women in a single-sex school with regard to them engaging in risky sexual behaviour. The purpose of this research study was to understand the perspectives of these young women in terms of gender and sexuality, how they construct and present their sexual identities and the relation to sexual risk taking within a context where HIV & AIDS is rife. The research design is qualitative as opposed to quantitative due to this study requiring the experiences as well as understandings of young women within the HIV & AIDS context. Qualitative research investigates 'words' as opposed to 'numbers'. (Patton & Cochran, 2002, pg. 2). Qualitative data consists of the in-depth experiences of the participants and gives others an insight into the lives of the participants (Cohen et al., 2000).

### **3.2.1 Paradigm and theoretical approach**

The study was conducted within a qualitative interpretivist paradigm. The interpretivist paradigm aims to understand the detailed experiences of individuals and how they make sense of their world, keeping in mind that there are various interpretations of reality (Bunniss & Kelly, 2010). The interpretivist paradigm takes social contexts into consideration and aims to explain exactly how an individual feels about a given situation. I will be interpreting data through a specific lens, a theory that forms the theoretical underpinning of the study, namely the Social Constructionist Theory (Burr, 1995). This theory provides an insight into how gender and sexual identities are constructed and how certain behaviours are acquired at a young age. This is explained extensively in chapter 2. The reason for choosing this type of paradigm is due to the fact that the study aims to interpret the experiences, understandings and possible reasons behind the risky sexual behavior of young women in a single-sex school. This paradigm produces qualitative data which is essential to answer the research questions as mentioned in Chapter 1.

### **3.2.2 Research population and Research site**

The research population, as explained in Chapter 1 includes young women from a single-sex school in the Durban area. Although the interviews were not conducted at the school, it is essential to understand the school environment as this could be an influential factor in the understandings of the participants. Sunnyhill Girls High (pseudonym) is a single-sex girls' school that is situated in the Durban area. The school is a former whites-only school that is now desegregated. There are approximately 70% black learners, 15% coloured learners, 10% Indian learners and 5% white learners. The school is a high school and has grades 8-12. Each grade consists of 6 classes each. The staff consists of 45 educators. The school is managed by a female principal. Learners are given the option to select subject areas that they are interested in and are placed into classes according to the subjects they have chosen. The school is well resourced and has many facilities such as 2 computer rooms, netball and volleyball courts, 3 grounds that are designated for specific grades, as well as a large swimming pool. There are a number of clubs in school such as 'Teenagers against drug abuse', COAL, Hindu Association, Interact, Chess etc. that allow learners to broaden their knowledge out of the classroom. The school is known for its

excellent pass rate and continues to strive to ensure a 100% pass rate. A major emphasis is placed on learners acting as ladies and encourages learners to behave in a manner that is deemed lady-like. At assemblies and throughout the school day, the learners are addressed as ladies.

The interviews were conducted at a local library. The reason for choosing this location and not at the school was to provide a degree of comfort for participants, away from the learning environment. This also demonstrated to participants that any information disclosed during the interviews would not be discussed with their educators and peers. This library is situated in close proximity to the residences of the participants. The library is a small facility and has friendly staff that is always willing to help, thus providing a relaxed environment for the participants. The participants reside in the area and make use of the library when the need arises. The majority of participants (8) have library memberships. I found this to be a crucial aspect and contributive to the data collection process as participants were being interviewed in a relaxed, familiar environment. The library has a room that is available to the public on request. I found this room to be the ideal venue to conduct the interviews without being disturbed.

I had initially planned on interviewing 12 participants however only 10 participants were available for the interviews. This number was still sufficient considering that the study does not generalise and focuses on a specific group of young women from a single-sex school. I was unaware that 2 participants were going to withdraw from the study therefore both groups consisted of an unequal amount of participants. Focus group 1 consisted of 6 participants and Focus group 2 consisted of 4 participants.

### **3.3 Sample**

#### **3.3.1 Sampling Strategy**

The type of sampling that I made use of was non-probability (purposive) sampling due to the fact that I was targeting a particular group of individuals who were in a particular age group (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2000). In this study, I specifically targeted young women in a single-sex school, aged between 16-18 years. The necessary requirements for a participant to be included in the study were: the participant had to be a young woman aged between 16-18 years and the

participant had to be from a single-sex school. The study was not restricted in terms of race. All races were welcome to participate in the study, provided that they were young women aged 16-18 years, from a single-sex school. I hoped for a racially diverse group. Even though race would not be a unit of analysis, patterns that might occur in the data would be interrogated. Participants did not have to engage in high-risk sex or be sexually active in order to be considered, due to the study being centered around their understandings and not necessarily their experiences. If participants wanted to share experiences that they may have had then they were welcome to do so.

As explained by Cohen et al. (2007), there is no specific sample size that had to be used to make the research study credible and that sample size is entirely dependent on the type of study itself. I had selected a smaller sample size considering that this was not action based research and my aim was not to generalise, instead to look at a particular group of young women and understand their experiences and reasoning.

I made use of snowball sampling due to the sensitive nature of this topic which would make it difficult to access many participants (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2000). I am not employed at a single-sex school and this made it difficult to identify participants on my own, therefore snowball sampling was ideal in identifying participants. Snowball sampling requires the researcher to identify individuals who possess characteristics that are key to the study. These individuals will act as informants to identify other individuals who will be of great importance to the study until the sample size is obtained (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2000). This form of sampling made it easier to obtain participants who were important to the study.

I was familiar with 2 young women who were a part of a lift club that operated in the area in which I reside. I approached both young women and had explained exactly what my study entails and I had told them that my study required the assistance of 12 young women from a single-sex school to participate in focus group discussions and individual interviews. I told them where the interviews would be held; approximately how many questions would be asked, approximate duration and what the interviews would be based on. Both young women seemed keen and knew of potential participants. Although the study was not restricted in terms of race, I did not plan on having a majority of young Indian women. I had 9 Indian participants and 1 Coloured participant. According to Rude & Herda (2010), although schools are no longer segregated in

terms of race, it is more common for individuals to form same race friendships. Race as well as the fact that these young women travel together could be the reasons why they have formed friendships mostly with young women of the same race, resulting in a sample of 9 young Indian women and 1 young Coloured woman.

### **3.3.2 Brief description of participants**

There are 10 participants and pseudonyms will be used for all participants. A brief description of each participant as well as their pseudonyms is as follows:

*Maiyuri is 16 years old and resides in the Durban area with her mother and brother. She is currently in grade 11. It was her mum's idea to send her to a single-sex school so that she would be more focused on her studies. She did not object to her mum's decision. She is currently in a relationship with an older boy.*

*Avashni is 17 years old and resides in the Durban area with her parents. She is currently in grade 11. It was her parents' decision to send her to a single-sex school and she was a part of the decision process. She is currently in a relationship with an older boy.*

*Shasmita is 16 years old and resides in the Durban area with her parents. She is an only child. She is currently in grade 11. It was her parents' decision to send her to a single-sex school so that there would be no distractions. She currently has a boyfriend who is 1 year older than her.*

*Mishka is 17 years old and resides in the Durban area with her parents and older sister. She is currently in grade 11. It was her parents' decision to send her to a single-sex school, which she did not object to. Her parents felt that a single-sex school would provide a better education. She is currently in a relationship with an older boy.*

*Sanusha is 17 years old and resides in the Durban area with her mother. She is currently in grade 11. It was her mum's decision to send her to a single-sex school because she felt that a single-sex school would provide a better education. This enraged the participant. She is currently in a relationship with an older boy.*

*Trishalia is 17 years old and resides in the Durban area with her parents, her sister and her 2 aunts. She is in grade 11. It was her parents' decision to send her to a single-sex school. She is currently in a relationship with an older boy.*

*Janine is 16 years old and resides in the Durban area with her parents. She is a young Coloured woman and is currently in grade 11. It was her decision to attend a single-sex school. She is currently in a relationship with an older boy.*

*Husna is 16 years old and resides in the Durban area with her parents. She is currently in grade 11. She is a Muslim and believes strongly in her religion. It was her parents' decision to send her to a single-sex school because they felt that a co-ed school might affect her negatively. She had attended a single-sex school since grade R. She was not a part of the decision-making process. She is not in a relationship.*

*Simeshni is 16 years old and resides in the Durban area with her mother and sister. She is currently in grade 11. It was her mother's decision to send her to a single-sex school. She is not in a relationship.*

*Denise is 16 years old and resides in the Durban area with her parents. She is currently in grade 11. It was her parents' decision to send her to a single-sex school because they felt it would provide better opportunities. Denise however was not impressed by this decision and tried to show resistance. She is currently in a relationship with an older boy.*

### **3.3.3 Ethical Considerations**

Before I could move forward with my study I had to obtain ethical clearance from the university. According to Patton & Cochran (2002), there are many aspects that need to be taken into consideration when conducting a research study. This is to ensure that the participants are protected throughout the duration of the study. These aspects aim to ensure that the participants' identities are concealed throughout the study, to ensure that the participants do not experience stress or anxiety during interviews and that no harm comes to the participants throughout the study (Patton & Cochran, 2002). Patton & Cochran (2002), explain that consent letters are of great importance as they provide a detailed description of the research study and thus the

participants are aware of exactly what the study entails. In my research study I had designed consent letters (Appendix 2A and 2B) that explained in detail what the study was about. Consent letters were given to participants (Appendix 2B) as well as their parents (Appendix 2A) via the 2 participants that I am familiar with and who had assisted me in identifying participants who were interested in the study. In order for research to be considered credible, participants should be informed of exactly what the research entails, participants should be allowed to withdraw from the study whenever they wished to do so and all work should be kept confidential (Priebe, Backstrom & Ainsaar, 2010, pg. 439). Each consent letter included a brief description of the study. The consent letters stipulated that participation is voluntary and that a participant may withdraw from the study if she feels the need to do so. My topic is based on risky sexual behaviour and parents may feel that I have chosen their daughter for a specific reason, therefore I emphasised that the participants were not chosen for any particular reason and were in no way considered as high risk. Cohen et al. (2007) states that ensuring anonymity is crucial especially in studies that is sensitive in nature. The second most important point that I had mentioned in the consent letter to both the participants and their parents is that the participant would remain anonymous and that pseudonyms would be used throughout the study. I had also asked participants' permission to audio record the interviews. Only once full permission was granted by signed letters of consent, I interviewed the participants. I was lucky that all parents and participants signed the consent letters and participants produced these consent letters on the day of the focus group discussion.

The study did not aim to cause stress and anxiety however if participation had caused stress and anxiety then participants were encouraged to contact the psychologist based at Edgewood campus and contact details were provided on the consent letters. Participants were also assured that if they needed support I could be contacted. This was to show participants that as a researcher, the well being of the participant was a priority. The research study did not aim to violate the constitutional rights of the participants (Ringheim, 1995). Parents and participants were notified of the venue, times, duration and dates so that transport arrangements could be made.

I will now refer to the 4 ethical principles that must be taken into consideration when dealing with 'human subjects' (Ringheim, 1995, pg. 1692). These 4 principles include; 'respect for

persons, beneficence, non-maleficence and justice' (Ringheim, 1995, pg. 1692). In my study I ensured that these ethical principles were taken into consideration by ensuring anonymity, providing a study that would provide an insight into the experiences and understanding of young women in a single-sex school thus contributing to knowledge and possible preventative measures regarding risky sexual behaviour and HIV & AIDS. I made sure that participants would not be harmed throughout the data collection process and had provided the services of a psychologist if participants required a psychologist. Most importantly I provided a platform that allowed participants to share their experiences and learn from others about sexual risk by discussing a case study (Appendix 3C) that highlighted the consequences of risky sexual behaviour.

### **3.4 Research Methodology**

#### **3.4.1 Data collection**

The data collection methods that I used to obtain qualitative data were interviews. "Interviews enable participants – be they interviewers or interviewees – to discuss their interpretations of the world in which they live, and to express how they regard situations from their own point of view." (Cohen et al., 2007, pg349). This statement explains in a nutshell what the research study aims to achieve, which is, bringing to light the experiences and the understandings pertaining to risky sexual behaviour of the young women in a single-sex school and how they construct their sexual identities and give meaning to sexuality. I have made use of both focus group discussions (Appendix 3B) as well as individual interviews (Appendix 3A). Focus group discussions are seen as interviews that allow for interaction between participants (Kitzinger, 1994). I chose this data collection method so that debates on the topic could occur by discussing their understandings and possible experiences with others who possibly have or have not had similar experiences. I chose individual interviews as well to eliminate the possibility of participants feeling intimidated when speaking honestly in the presence of their peers. In some instances not all participants will be outspoken therefore individual interviews accord the opportunity to be heard and to share their own experiences. The types of questions that were asked included descriptive, experience, background, demographic, feeling as well as behaviour questions (Cohen et al., 2000). These types of questions provided the platform for effective data collection. I employed semi-

structured, open-ended questions to allow for the participants to go in-depth with their experiences, whilst, ensuring that the participants did not stray off the topic (Cohen et al., 2007). The individual interview (Appendix 3A) consisted of a number of open-ended questions that were suitable in answering the three critical questions of the study. The focus group discussions (Appendix 3B) consisted of a case study (Appendix 3C) that acted as a stimulus during discussions. The interview questions were based on the case study which is included in the appendices (Appendix 3B and 3C).

The interviews were conducted at the local library in a room that is made available to the public. This room was ideal considering that interviews require participants to discuss their views, understandings and experiences without being disturbed. Interviews were conducted after school at around 3:00pm. This time was decided upon by the participants. As mentioned above, all participants were aware of the times, venue and approximate duration of the interviews due to correspondence with the 2 young women from the school that I am familiar with. Consent letters were given to these 2 young women to give to the participants. I decided to have 1 focus group discussion per focus group, thereafter 1 individual interview per participant.

I decided to conduct focus group discussions before the individual interviews so that I would be able to further explore issues that came up in the focus group discussions. Furthermore, this order would reduce anxiety among participants who may not have wanted issues that they raised in private to be discussed in a group setting. The duration of the interviews was approximately 25-30 minutes. Thereafter individual interviews were conducted on separate days. After transcribing the interviews, I met with each participant to allow them to view their transcripts to ensure that I had correctly captured their thoughts, experiences and understandings.

### **3.4.2 Reflections on the interviews**

The first interview that I had conducted was a focus group discussion which comprised of 6 participants. This was the first time that I had conducted interviews and therefore was a new experience for me. I was unsure of what to expect or how the participants would react to the questions. The interview commenced in a controlled manner due to hesitance of many of the

participants. After approximately 5 minutes into the interview the participants relaxed and began commenting whilst other participants were speaking. Some participants were screaming out in agreement or disagreement. I knew that this would cause chaos and disturb the members of the library and considering that the interviews were being recorded it would be difficult to transcribe if all participants spoke at the same time. I halted the interview and asked the participants to speak in turn instead of speaking at the same time. The participants took my request into consideration and started speaking one at a time. There were a few participants who spoke out whilst another participant was speaking but quickly stopped when they were aware of their actions. The second focus group consisted of 4 participants only. This number was easier to work with and the interview was easier to control as I now knew what to expect. Prior to the interview I explained to participants that they needed to respect the person who was speaking and only respond once that participant completed what she needed to say. The participants in the second group were not as outspoken as the first group. A few participants were reluctant to speak during the focus group discussion and provided minimal input.

The individual interviews provided a similar platform for participants to share their experiences and understandings with some differences. Some of the participants were more outspoken during the individual interview than they had been in the focus group discussion. A few participants were reluctant to open up although others opened up and shared experiences to some degree it seemed they did not feel they needed to elaborate and explain in depth. I attempted to get participants to respond openly by asking a variety of questions but 2 out of the 10 participants were reserved and did not speak openly. There were participants who dominated the focus group discussion and at times drifted off topic.

### **3.4.3 Trustworthiness**

Validity can be seen as something that is accurate and justifiable (Lubisi, 1998). In the case of the research study the data that is obtained must be accurate and must measure exactly what it is meant to measure and should respond to what has been asked in order for the data to be trustworthy. According to Elo, Kääriäinen, Kanste, Pölkki, Utrainen & Kyngäs (2014), good preparation is key in providing trustworthy data. It is of great importance that various aspects of

the study are looked at in great detail to ensure that questions to the study are answered. I used various approaches in order to ensure trustworthiness within my study by focusing on the 3 main sources that impact the data collection process (Mouton, 1996). These sources include; the researcher, the participants and the context.

In a research study it is essential that data is captured correctly. To ensure that data was captured correctly I used a voice recorder to collect mechanically recorded data. This way the data could be transcribed directly from the recording thereby eliminating any bias and ensuring the results were a true reflection of the accounts' of the participants. I also made use of member checks. This is an approach to prevent bias and to ensure that I had not added my own information to steer the results in a particular direction. Once I collected the data and understood the results, I met with the participants for a final meeting and allowed the participants to view their interview transcripts to ensure that I had captured the data correctly and had not added my personal opinion. I also shared findings in group sessions with my peers as well as my supervisor to ensure that I had interpreted the data correctly.

The participants are key in the success of the research study and in answering the research questions of the study. According to Elo et al. (2014), it is the sample that must be appropriate in answering the research question of the study. The sample must be relevant to the study and if it is not then the data is considered untrustworthy. The topic of my study is 'Understanding risky sexual behaviour amongst young women in a single-sex school in the Durban area in the context of HIV & AIDS'. In order to answer the research question I required the participation of young women from a single-sex school. The study would be considered untrustworthy if I had collected data from participants who did not fit the criteria of the study.

In some cases the participant may feel intimidated especially in focus groups or the participants may feel the need to answer questions in a manner that is deemed appropriate, producing data that is not considered trustworthy. To avoid this I explained to the participants that they would remain anonymous throughout the study and that whatever was discussed would remain strictly confidential. I further explained that pseudonyms would be used rather than their real names. I explained that there is no right or wrong answer and that everyone's opinion would be respected and that these opinions should not leave the interview.

The context can impact the results of the research study. The participants may, for example, be writing a test on the day of the interview and this pressure could result in data that is not considered trustworthy. To ensure that this did not occur, I conducted the interviews in an environment that was relaxed and familiar to the participants; the library. This also showed participants that I was not going to discuss their experiences and understandings with their peers and educators by conducting the interviews away from the school and thus removing the possibility of coming into contact with their educators and peers. To avoid the pressures of tests and exams and the possibility of it affecting the data, I discussed with participants the days that would be convenient for them to be interviewed.

#### **3.4.4 Research challenges**

There were many challenges that I faced as a researcher and I will discuss these in detail in this section. Although there were challenges, I attempted to overcome them using various approaches. My research study is based on a small sample size of a specific group of individuals. The findings cannot be generalised to a wider population. With this in mind, I looked at the experiences of each participant and tried to go in depth with each participant, drawing on their experiences in the data analysis chapter of the research study. I did not generalise and throughout the study made mention that this study is based on a particular group.

The second challenge that I faced as a researcher was, considering that this is a sensitive topic participants were initially hesitant to respond during the interviews. If participants did not share their experiences and understandings openly then data would have been insufficient to answer the research questions. I was aware of the importance of developing a trusting relationship with the participants. I also emphasised to the participants that confidentiality and anonymity were key to my study and that their names would not be used in the study. I explained that they were free to withdraw from the study if they felt uncomfortable and this reassured them and thus they were able to share their experiences and understandings openly.

The next limitation to my study was access to participants. It was initially difficult to access participants due to the sensitive nature of the topic. I do not teach in a single-sex school and this made it difficult to find participants on my own. To overcome this problem I made use of

snowball sampling. I knew of 2 young women in my area from a single-sex school. These 2 young women identified other young women from the same single-sex school, who were interested in participating in my research study.

The next challenge that I was faced with was that 2 participants dropped out of the study without warning. A focus group discussion was scheduled and both participants did not pitch for the interview. It was too late for me to make adjustments and to get 2 more participants to replace those 2 participants in such a short time. 4 participants were already at the venue and were ready to be interviewed. I therefore made the decision to continue with the interview without replacing the 2 participants. I now had 10 participants altogether and this number was still sufficient to answer the research questions.

Lastly, as a researcher conducting focus group discussions for the first time, I did not know what to expect. The first Focus group consisted of 6 participants. This was a large number to work with. As the participants eased into the interview there were some participants who began shouting out their opinions and attempted to talk over the other participants. Considering that the interviews were being recorded, I knew that it would be difficult to transcribe. To reduce this difficulty I spoke to the participants about speaking one at a time so that I could listen to everyone's opinions and experiences. I explained that each participant's response was important.

### **3.5 Data analysis after data collection**

“Qualitative data analysis involves organizing, accounting for and explaining the data; in short, making sense of data in terms of the participants' definitions of the situation, noting patterns, themes, categories and regularities.” (Cohen et al., 2007, pg. 461). According to this statement the analysis of the data includes familiarising yourself with the data and this would assist in understanding the data. The interviews were conducted using a voice recorder to be transcribed verbatim into textual data. Once the interviews were transcribed and the participants had viewed the transcriptions and were satisfied with the outcome, I began reading through the transcripts many times to familiarise myself with the data. The data was analysed through the use of an inductive process. This process allows for the scrutiny of the interview transcripts in an attempt

to identify themes and patterns that may emerge (McMillan & Schumacher, 1993). Whilst I was reading through the interview transcripts I began categorising the data into codes and then categorised these codes into themes. These themes became my subheadings for my data analysis chapter. I used the theoretical approach to analyse the data. Considering that I made use of individual interviews as well as focus group discussions, I began analysing both sets of data in isolation before combining the themes that emerged from the focus group discussions and the individual interviews. I made notes of participants who responded differently in the focus group discussions compared to the individual interview and looked at possible reasons for this.

### **3.6 Conclusion**

This chapter highlighted the steps that were taken throughout the research study. I looked at the broad methodological design which includes the research population and the research site, the type of sampling used in this study and the data collection process, which includes the instruments used to collect data as well as reflections of the data collection process. I indicated the ethical issues that needed to be considered as well as the lengths I went to, to ensure that these ethical issues were considered. I also explained the attempts made to ensure that the data was considered trustworthy as well as the limitations to my study.

In the next chapter I will discuss the various themes that were identified whilst I was analysing the interview transcripts. Each theme is explained in detail with literature to support the findings.

## Chapter 4: Data Analysis

### 4.1 Introduction

In this chapter I present and interrogate the data in an attempt to understand how girls between the ages of 16 to 18 give meaning to gender and sexuality in relation to sexual risk within the South African context of HIV & AIDS. The findings are presented and analysed within the themes that emerged from the data. The data within the themes is interpreted and discussed in relation to the theory of Social Construction (as discussed in Chapter 2), together with relevant literature. Pseudonyms, namely, Sanusha, Trishalia, Simeshni, Janine, Denise, Husna, Avashni, Maiyuri, Mishka and Shasmita will be used throughout this chapter to ensure anonymity as discussed in chapter 3. The following themes emerged from the data:

- Love and dating
- Love and Risk
- Sex Education and risk awareness
- Sexual coercion and gender dynamics
- Mature partners and materiality
- Substance abuse and sexual risk
- Performing for peers
- Performing and challenging femininities

### 4.2 Love and dating

Overwhelmingly, the participants in this study showed a great interest in romantic love. This was similar to findings by Reddy & Dunne (2007). Some of the responses were:

*‘well, you don’t see boys everyday and when you do see them its...its new. It’s nice. I like it’*  
(Simeshni)

*'I think in an all girl school when they see a guy they just wana do as much as they can with that guy (laughs) before he runs away or whatever the case is but with a co-ed school I think you have more time' (Denise)*

Single-sex schools are assumed to be sites that prevent the distraction of young men by young women and vice versa (Jackson, 2010). Jackson (2010), states that many parents tend to send their children to single-sex schools due to fear of pregnancy and sexual harassment, basically to keep the young women away from young men. The data from this study suggests that is not the case for these young women. All the young women had been in relationships and some were currently in a relationship. There were 7 out of the 10 participants who had engaged in sexual activity despite attending a single-sex school. The data suggests that being in a single sex school did not make much difference to the attraction of finding partners and that the desired partners were boys and men. This is not surprising given the dominant culture of heterosexuality.

From my own experiences, there is a common understanding that single-sex schools for young women are associated with homosexual relationships. None of the participants claimed to be lesbian or admitted to forming homosexual relationships. This could be because of the dominance of heterosexuality within and outside of schools that there continues to be silence around same-sex issues.

The participants were aware of the notion that lesbianism is rife in single-sex schools:

*'I think everyone thinks that there's only lesbians in all girl schools and it's totally wrong' (Denise)*

*'All the time'* was mentioned by many of the young women to describe whether people associated single-sex schools and lesbianism. There were 2 out of the 10 young women who admitted to experimenting but not forming relationships with the same sex. These 2 young women emphasised that they were in heterosexual relationships and distanced themselves from the identity of lesbianism.

*'I...err...kissed my friend once because all my friends decided to do it. We said people think we doing it anyway so let's just do it' (Mishka)*

*'yes because my friends did it so I wanted to do it also. It doesn't mean I am a lesbian though'*  
(Trishalia)

Both of these young women had decided to experiment with the same sex because of their friends. This may have placed certain pressures on these young women so that their experiences could be similar to that of their friends. Mishka explains that the reason why her friends had decided to experiment with the same sex was due to stereotypes that the social environment had formed on lesbianism and single-sex schools. This also demonstrates the social dynamics present in the construction of their sexual identity. Social interactions have impacted the decisions that these particular young women have made, although they may not have an interest in pursuing homosexual relationships.

The majority of the young women mentioned that even though being in a single-sex school meant that they did not interact with boys in school, it was not difficult for them to find partners. When asked how they were able to find boyfriends, the typical responses were:

*'at first I thought it would be difficult but as you start talking with different girls then eerrr talking to them and going places then you meet a lot of people'* (Denise)

*'eerrmm..my friends are always hooking up with other girls' brothers and cousins. One way or the other you end up chatting to someone and then meeting them. Also there's Facebook, people inbox you and then you like chat to them'* (Mishka)

*'you come across guys from all boy schools'* (Husna)

The excerpts above show that there are many networking avenues through which young women could make contact with men and arrange to meet outside of school. The interest in forming relationships encourages young women to communicate with young men. Denise suggests that schools are not the only place to meet boys. Husna mentions *'all boy schools'* that attend certain functions that are held at the girls' school. Strict rules are implemented when these young men attend these functions so that certain behaviours are controlled. Mishka and many of the other participants also mentioned social networks as a form of communicating with young men. According to O'Keeffe et al. (2011), social networks such as Facebook provide a platform for adolescents to communicate, increasing their ability to socialise and in this case, to socialise with

young men. Mishka states that eventually they meet these young men that they chat to. This indicates that although it may seem challenging to form heterosexual relationships when in a single-sex school, many of the participants found ways to work around this challenge.

A few of the young women however, found that being in an all-girl school limited their opportunities to get boyfriends. This is evident in the following responses:

*'when you in an all girl school there's hardly...there's no time and then because of..eerr...my age, I'm restricted'* (Shasmita)

*'like you know you not meeting guys like if you in a normal school like you know...they not there so you can't like...you know...hook up and stuff'* (Maiyuri)

Shasmita and Maiyuri did not share the majority view that it was easy to meet young men out of school. Shasmita mentions that because of her age her parents had placed restrictions that prevented her from going out to meet young men. Maiyuri also sees school as the main source to meet people and that the absence of young men makes it difficult to obtain a boyfriend. Both these young women however have boyfriends that they met at school during a function that the local all boys' school was invited to. The preceding excerpts suggest that there are restrictions that most Indian families place on girls' movements and that these young women felt that being in a single-sex school limited their opportunities to form heterosexual relationships.

However, some of the participants indicated that they found creative ways to work around these restrictions, including lying to their parents:

*'they lie to their parents to go out and say oh I'm going with my girlfriends or I'm studying'* (Shasmita)

*'after school they lie to their parents and say that they going to hockey and stuff but in fact they gone out gallivanting with their boyfriends'* (Janine)

Jackson (2010), states that parents send their children to single-sex schools to remove the distraction between young men and young women. Therefore, some of these young women have to resort to lying to their parents out of fear that their parents would not accept their relationships. This implies that if parents chose to send their daughters to single-sex schools

because they wanted to protect them, this may have had the opposite effect. Furthermore, while it seems as if the young women were taking control of their lives by making their own decisions, they may be putting themselves at risk by going to places that are unsafe. This shows the importance of parental communication and interest, as explained by Chirinda et al. (2012) which plays a vital role in reducing sexual risk.

### **4.3 Love and Risk**

Many participants indicated that love and trust are closely connected. Trying to maintain both may compromise their ability to negotiate safe sex within relationships. In certain relationships condom use becomes a huge factor and determines whether there is trust within the relationship (Reddy & Dunne 2007). According to Karim et al. (2012), when a woman requests condom use, she is almost immediately accused of questioning the relationship in terms of love and trust. This makes it difficult for women to negotiate the use of condoms and is illustrated in the following statement made during the focus group discussion:

*'so like they'll ask you like why do we need to use it, you think that I sleep around with other girls and stuff like that...like you know...you really don't want to bring that up' (Maiyuri)*

From this statement it is clear that a certain degree of fear of losing the relationship is present when it comes to discussing the use of condoms. Reddy & Dunne (2007) mention the risk involved in engaging in safe sex practices, which is losing a love based relationship. Maiyuri expresses that men in general act defensively when a woman voices the desire to use a condom during sex, proving that condom use is associated with trust. In her individual interview she reiterated:

*'(if he) uses the condom then you not that close, you know, he doesn't really trust you' (Maiyuri)*

In this statement it is clear that a man initiating condom use implies that he does not trust the woman and that the relationship is not considered serious. Maiyuri shows that the more serious a relationship is, the greater the chances of risky sexual behaviour. Marston & King (2006), echo the same sentiments, that in a 'long-term relationship' the chances of using a condom are slim as

compared to a short-term relationship (Marston & King, 2006, pg. 1583). A man initiating condom use is not treated the same as when a woman initiates condom use, perpetuating gender inequality. This shows that the power lies with men as compared to women (Jewkes & Morrell, 2012). The decision of whether or not to use a condom is therefore not for women to make and in certain instances a woman tends to be complicit, despite her reservations about having unprotected sex, out of fear of losing her partner. This is shown in the following response made by Janine and Trishalia during their individual interview:

*‘as much as I kept telling myself I shouldn’t do it, I was just like hypnotized by his good looks, I use to just do everything he use to ask me to do coz I just wanted to keep him around coz he was so good looking and I use to just brag to all my friends’ (Janine)*

*‘maybe some do it to keep the guy’ (Trishalia)*

And in the following response made by Shasmita during the focus group discussion:

*‘maybe she was afraid because she felt she would turn him off’*

The young women were of the same opinion that many women engage in risky sexual behaviour in order to keep their partners. This shows that having a partner and the status that it brings were more important than their sexual safety. Trishalia and Shasmita did not refer to themselves in their responses but made general statements about women they knew of. Janine on the other hand had spoken from experience. Although women are aware of the consequences of risky sexual behaviour, they still engage in this behaviour in order to please their partner in an attempt to keep their partner. Reasons for wanting to keep a partner may vary but in Janine’s case it appears that having a good looking boyfriend in a single-sex school increased her popularity among her friends, which is something she didn’t want to lose and may compromise her safety in trying to hold on to the relationship.

#### 4.4 Sex education and risk awareness

The South African government mandated that a national Life Skills programme should comprise wide-ranging information about transmission and prevention of HIV and other sexually transmitted infections, reproductive biology, contraception and pregnancy, domestic violence and sexual negotiation (President's Office, Republic of South Africa, 1996). The programme has since become part of a broader Life Orientation curriculum which includes health, physical and career education. It is essential to have an understanding about the nature and sources of young women's knowledge about sexual behaviours in order to educate them so they will be able to make informed decisions regarding risky sexual behaviour. These young women had been asked what they believe the consequences of risky sexual behaviour are, to which most responded:

*'well you could fall preggo's (pregnant)' (Sanusha)*

*'like STD's and stuff' (Shasmita)'*

*'your reputation could get ruined, number one. Number two you can get pregnant...number three...err...STD's' (Husna)*

It is clear from the above responses that these women are aware of the consequences of engaging in risky sexual behaviour. All 10 young women were able to provide details of the consequences of risky sexual behaviour. Husna firstly mentioned reputation as one of the consequences of engaging in risky sexual behaviour, showing an internalised conformity of what the social environment believes to be appropriate behaviour in terms of sexuality (Marston & King, 2006). She also mentions that damage to young women's reputation is most serious, followed by pregnancy and lastly, STDs. Here she is suggesting that the social cost of women's risky behaviour are more severe than the possible consequences to her health.

*'we are taught about...errm...HIV, AIDS, having a baby' (Simeshni)*

Simeshni mentions that they are *'taught'*, which was what sparked the next question: 'What was the source of information?'. Most young women cited the school curricula as the main source of information, whilst some young women added other sources. The main source of information that all the young women had mentioned was the school. They have Life Orientation (LO) education which includes topics such as sex and risky sexual behaviour.

*'they teach us at school. we have LO and they tell us all about these and what could happen to us and we watched this one disgusting video which I will never forget in my whole life'*

*(Denise)*

Denise suggests that the content in Life Orientation programmes is designed to scare them in an attempt to create behaviour change. The effectiveness of this strategy is not known.

*'we have a guidance counselor right...she's always going on and on about these things plus we have so many talks and people come talk about HIV and stuff like that and obviously on tv I hear about these things'* (Maiyuri)

*'I know a lot of eerrm people that are older than me and they tell me about all the things that are happening in their lives'* (Janine)

Within their school there is also a guidance counselor present, as mentioned by Maiyuri, who they are able to consult with on these topics. By Maiyuri stating that the guidance counselor *'goes on and on about these things'* demonstrates that they may not be receptive to messages about safe sex and expresses fatigue about HIV education.

Janine based her knowledge on the experiences of her friends implying that friends could be a contributive factor to knowledge that is gained on sexual behaviour. This knowledge may not be factual and could lead to the engagement in risky sexual behaviour if positive feedback is given on unsafe sex practices. Another source has been noted by Trishalia. She mentions, *'yes, I am fully aware, I did my research online'*. Whilst there are only two young women who had mentioned that they had looked for answers on the internet, I feel the need to mention the importance that the internet plays in providing people with information on sex. According to Minichiello et al. (2013), the internet is seen as a platform for old and young people to gain access to information pertaining to sex, anonymously. This removes the fear of exposing certain sexual relations that they may not feel comfortable in communicating with others.

Shasmita was the only young woman who had revealed, from experience, the difference that being in a single-sex school made to her concerning sex education. She mentioned; *'especially in an all girl school, there's no boys to make you feel uncomfortable...I think boys make things more childish than it actually is'*. Shasmita had declared explicitly during the focus group

discussion and the individual interview that she did not engage in sexual acts, therefore making this topic a little uncomfortable. She implies that discussing this topic makes it easier and removes a level of awkwardness when young men are absent. This illustrates that single-sex schools could make it easier for certain young women to explore topics such as sexual behaviour. Despite the inclusion of sex education within the curriculum and a guidance counselor made available to assist young women with issues relative to sex, there are still young women who are engaging in unsafe sex practices.

#### **4.5 Sexual coercion and gender dynamics**

Many of the participants' discussions suggest that they are mostly unknowingly coerced into engaging in sexual acts and risky sexual behaviour. Sexual coercion as described by Santhya & Zavier (2014) is an act whereby one person is forced into engaging in sexual activity, be it risky or not, by their partner. This suggests that the act is not consensual and infringes on the rights of the individual being coerced. In some cases women may not be aware that they are being coerced.

On viewing the transcripts I noticed that although the young women did not blatantly mention that they were being coerced into engaging in sexual acts, namely risky sexual behaviour, there was a certain degree of coercion within most of their relationships and this resonated in the following responses:

*'Well yes like my boyfriend, sometimes he wants to have sex without a condom. I don't mind and stuff because I trust him but...ya...when he wants to do it then he wants to do it whether I feel like or not' (Mishka)*

*'forced in the sense like I didn't want it, no, but when I didn't feel like it yes'(Avashni)*

When Avashni was asked if she engaged in sex even though she did not *'feel like it'*, she answered:

*'Yes I did...just to please him'*

It is clear from these responses by Mishka and Avashni, that a certain degree of sexual coercion exists within their relationships whether they are aware of it or not. They are being unknowingly coerced by their own understandings about what is expected from them by their partners.

According to Marston & King (2006), there are limitations in terms of women and sex, that is women are expected to maintain their virginity whilst men have freedom regarding sex and in this response it is evident that it is men who are given the authority on whether to engage in risky sex or not. According to Reddy & Dunne (2007), this shows that these young women compromise their safety to please their partners. Mishka expresses her trust in her partner and uses this as a justification to engaging in risky sexual behaviour. Ultimately, from this response, the decision lies with the male partner regardless of the young woman's feelings or opinion, perpetuating coercion that the participant is unaware of. Reddy & Dunne (2007) state that sexual activity and pleasure is driven by male agenda. In the case of Avashni, she made mention that her reason for engaging in sex was to please her partner and did not consider that her partner had influenced her decision in any way. This places women at a disadvantage as they perpetuate complicit behaviour, conforming to traditional femininities. This complicit behaviour is seen as the norm and is therefore never internally questioned. The underlying question to be asked is why are young women unaware that they are being coerced into engaging in risky sexual behaviour considering the vast amount of information available? The answer is clear in the following response:

***'well it's not like he's violent or anything but I do it just to please him, so that there's no fight because these boys like to fight for that but not like physical fight' (Mishka)***

This response again shows that her actions are driven by her intention to please her male partner (Reddy & Dunne, 2007). According to Soomar et al. (2009), although there are certain instances whereby men are sexually coerced, it is mostly women that are affected by sexual coercion. This shows that unequal gender power relationships do exist and that they place women vulnerable to HIV infection. Avashni's response implies that she associates sexual coercion with forms of violence, therefore by her partner not behaving in a violent manner she believes that sexual coercion does not exist in that relationship. This is explained by Jewkes & Morrell (2010), who see violence as a form of control that is perpetuated by hegemonic men. This however causes individuals to believe that coercion is defined by signs of violence as in the case of the above

mentioned participant who emphasises that her partner is not violent therefore she is not in a relationship that causes her to be vulnerable in any way. The fact that it is mentioned that it is '*boys*' who '*like to fight for that*' shows that it is the norm for '*boys*' who dictate the terms of engaging in sexual acts proving that social and cultural forces have played a role in the construction of sexual behaviour and this behaviour has been internalised, normalised and accepted by women. According to Hoffman et al. (2006), members within the social environment who conform to certain behaviours tend to strengthen these behaviours within their social context thus making them the 'norm'. These kinds of behaviours are therefore accepted by women in relationships and are not seen as threatening.

Not all the young women in this study had experienced sexual relations. One young woman in particular had mentioned during the focus group discussion, '*it should not happen, we are too young to take on that kind of burden*' (Simeshni). Although the young women within the focus group discussion had shared their experiences of sexual behaviour, Simeshni refused to stray away from her beliefs. This shows that not all young women are engaging in sexual acts to please their partners.

Young women being unknowingly coerced into risky sexual behaviour has serious implications regarding their ability to protect themselves from the consequences of such behaviour and thus makes them vulnerable to HIV infection and unplanned pregnancy. The data highlighted how many young women are unaware that they are being sexually coerced within a relationship. Many young women tend to engage in sexual acts to please their partner, showing that having a partner and the status that it brings is more important to them than their sexual safety but not all young women display a lack of judgment, there are young women who are strong in their beliefs and are determined to ensure their sexual safety regardless of influential factors.

#### **4.6 Mature partners and materiality**

The majority of the participants (7) were in relationships with older men. One more participant had mentioned that she was in a relationship with an older man and that relationship had ended. The participants did not specify how much older their partners were but that they were out of school.

In South Africa there have been cases of young women showing interest in older men. This according to Kaufman & Stavrou (2004) is a cause for major concern as it may increase the rate of HIV infection in both men and women. Many older men show interest in young women for egotistical reasons. According to Morrison-Breedy (2013) having relationships with older men increases the chances of sexual relations and there is an increased possibility that risky sexual behaviour may occur that places these young women at a higher risk of HIV infection.

Kaufman & Stavrou (2004) have made mention that there are a large number of young women considering relationships with older men. The question that arises is why older men? The participants in my research study had been asked what their reasons were for accepting relationships with older men. Their typical responses were:

*'Boys my age are very immature. They only want to laugh and giggle and you can't really have a nice conversation or a decent conversation I can say and they only (sigh) they like to play games and I'm not into playing games' (Denise)*

*'because of the maturity level. Sometimes...well it's said that girls mature faster than boys and for some reason our generation is so messed up that you kinda just attract or feel attracted to somebody that a few years older' (Husna)*

Many of the young women expressed that they felt that young men from a similar age group as themselves were too immature and that they looked to older men for mature conversation which was something that the younger men lacked. Denise pointed out that the younger men were not serious about relationships and that was something she was clearly looking for, therefore she had decided to undertake a relationship with an older man. Many of the participants believed that the reason why they did not prefer relationships with young men who are the same age as themselves was because they were at a different level when compared to these young men due to the notion that *'girls mature faster than boys'*. This suggests that they conform to an essentialising notion of age and maturity.

Studies by Kaufman & Stavrou (2004) and Luke (2003), suggests that older men tend to exchange material goods for sexual relationships, therefore when in relationships, young women view older men as providers. Luke (2003) states that there is an obligation for young women to engage in sexual relations when gifts are given to them and this increases the chances of risky

sexual behaviour and ultimately HIV infection. When participants were asked what their reasons were for forming relationships with older men, their answers suggested that they were not interested in gaining materials from their partners, however when asked a general question about other young women in their school, their answers were:

*'a sense of security I think...like money and the fact that they can get a lot of stuff from them like you know...clothes and cellphones and airtime' (Shasmita)*

*'for money, for airtime, for free taxi rides' (Mishka)*

Many of the young women were able to provide reasons as to why other young women formed relationships with older men however none of the young women admitted to having the same reasons. Mishka mentions within her individual interview that *'lots of girls in my school like those ugly looking taxi drivers who are a bit too old I think'*. Her response suggests that the only reason why these young women consider older taxi drivers is because they are able to provide material goods. Kaufman & Stavrou (2004) echo the same sentiments; however they add that older men exchange these material goods for sexual acts. This led me to ask Mishka if the young women had to provide anything in order to get these material goods, to which she responded:

*'I don't know...well I heard the taxi drivers make the girls sit in the front next to him and as he changes gears he touches the girls legs and the girls allow it. So who knows what else they giving'*

The fact that these young women allow these older men to touch them shows that they have a sense of obligation to provide certain pleasures for these men who shower them with material goods. The next question arises is why do these young women go to such lengths to keep these older men and it is clear in Avashni's response:

*'eerrr...they feel safe..errr..i think number 1, money issues'*

From Avashni's response it can be said that those who are experiencing financial difficulty are more likely to make many attempts to keep their partner, be it sexual or not, out of fear of losing their partner. This is seen in Kaufman & Stavrou's (2004) article, which states that those young

women who require financial support stand a greater chance of engaging in sexual activity with older men as a means of keeping their partner.

Kaufman & Stavrou (2004) and Luke (2003) show that young women exchange sexual relations for material gain. Morrison-Breedy (2013) claims that young women who were in relationships with older men were more likely to engage in sexual acts and those young women were more likely to have sex at an earlier age as compared to those young women who were in relationships with young men of a similar age to themselves. This, although not explicitly said, suggests that older men do have a high expectation in terms of sex. Within my study, 8 out of 10 participants were in relationships with older men and 7 out of the 8 participants who were in relationships with older men engaged in sexual activity with these older men. The one young woman, who did not admit to engaging in sexual acts, was in a relationship with a young man who was only 1 year older. Shasmita's reason for being in a relationship with a young man who was only 1 year older, was:

*'too mature then they just expect a lot more from you than what you willing to give'*

Shasmita's response suggests that she believes that older men expect more in terms of sexual activity, which is something that she is not ready for. This shows a certain degree of agency, to make the decision not to engage in sex, be it risky or not. The responses made by Trishalia on the other hand, provides a different insight:

*'hoping they don't have...eerr...ulterior motives'*

*'all guys do'*

*'like...eerr...wanting to do it'*

Trishalia believes that all men have ulterior motives when it comes to sexual relations, not just older men. This shows that certain behaviours are socially constructed and according to Marston & King (2006), men are expected to be more sexually active as compared to women. This behaviour is seen as the norm and women like Trishalia accept and internalise these behaviours.

Many of the young women show some awareness of increased risks involved in having relationships with older men. The following is an excerpt from a focus group discussion:

*'eerr..yaa...well that depends on how much he has done. The trust thing though I don't know' (Denise)*

*'I think the older the guy, the more girlfriends he had, the more experience he has...but that don't mean you can trust the dude' (Janine)*

In the second focus group Avashni responded:

*'you can be our age like 16, 17 and by that age a guy could have had like 20 different sexual partners and you could have someone who is 30 and they had like 5'*

Avashni and Denise did not agree that the older a person is the more experience he has. They believe it is dependent on how many sexual experiences he has had. Janine on the other hand believes that if a man is older then he has more experience due to the fact that he would have been in more relationships with different women. This shows that Janines' views are socially constructed on how men are expected to behave, which is, have many girlfriends and have sexual relations with these women. To date, literature on this is limited and there are no claims that suggest the older the man is, the more experience he has. In terms of trust, most of these young women believe that if a man is experienced then he cannot be trusted and this is shown in the following response:

*'it's about the more people you sleep with then the more experienced you are but then when it comes to trust I don't think you can trust those guys because you don't know what they have' (Mishka)*

Mishka is aware that the rate of HIV infection and other diseases would increase if more sexual partners are involved. She is under the impression that when it comes to sexual experience a man cannot be trusted and is more likely to carry HIV and other diseases. Trishalia on the other hand, has a different point of view:

*'well if he's been with soo many girls and none of them are pregnant then maybe you can trust him' (Trishalia)*

Trishalia's response implies that HIV infection is not considered and that pregnancy is the most frightening aspect. She believes that a man can be trusted based on his past experiences with

previous women. If there are no cases of pregnancy then that is a sure way that she can trust him to not get pregnant by him.

According to Morrison-Breedy (2013), young women who were in relationships with older men were more likely to engage in sexual activity as compared to young women in relationships with same-age young men. Morrison-Breedy (2013), further states that the young women who were in relationships with older men were prone to begin sexual activity at a younger age. Discussing the use of contraceptives is important in a relationship and for women shows agency against the social norms that women are expected to be passive and complicit. When these young women were asked about decision making in terms of sex with older men and why young women engage in risky sexual behaviour, they again did not refer to themselves but referred to the case study during the focus group discussion. The typical responses were:

*'maybe what happened was he's old right and she's young so she was feeling like maybe she wanted to fit in with him' (Janine)*

*'she would have thought that he knew more and so she just let him' (Maiyuri)*

*'I think...errm... viewed as immature or like scared...like I know about it but I won't tell you about it' (Avashni)*

From these responses we can suggest that although young women are aware of the consequences of risky sexual behaviour, they choose not to mention it to their partners out of fear of being considered immature in front of these older men. This implies from Avashni's response that being with an older, mature partner means behaving maturely and questioning the use of contraceptives may come across as being immature. Morrison-Breedy (2013) states that young women are hesitant to discuss the use of condoms with older partners and this is clear in these responses made by the participants. Wood et al. (2011) claims that men who are 6-10 years older than their partners are more likely to engage in risky sexual behaviour with their younger partners and men who are 2-5 years older than their partners are more likely to coerce their partners into engaging in sex. It is apparent from these responses that young women allow their partners to make decisions reinforcing the gender norms that are created within their social context, perpetuating gender inequalities.

In many cases it can be suggested that young women only embark on relationships with older men to increase their popularity among their school mates, therefore by choosing a man who has a car and is able to visit her at school proves that she has succeeded and has achieved popularity.

*'I have an older boyfriend as well...well you...we just want to fit in with the crowd'*  
(Sanusha)

*'they think it makes them look cool you know like I'm dating a guy who's driving and I'm so cool and he does this for me and that for me coz he got moola (money) and whatever'* (Janine)

The main reasons for forming relationships with older men were for the status and the material benefits that it provided. However, the age gap between the younger women and the older men also imply a power differential within which the woman's capacity to negotiate the conditions of the relationship, including safe sex practices are compromised.

#### **4.7 Substance abuse and sexual risk**

All participants were aware of the effects that alcohol and drugs have on an individual, some speaking from personal experience and some speaking about others' experiences. It is important to note however that all participants are under the age of 18 and it is therefore illegal for the participants to consume alcohol or drugs, yet 3 out of the 10 participants have admitted to consuming alcohol at some point and this is shown in the following responses:

*'when I have alcohol I become very brave'* (Denise)

*'because when I am tipsy...'* (Trishana)

*'I don't know coz I don't drink so often'* (Janine)

Denise, Trishalia and Janine have all mentioned in their responses that they have consumed alcohol at some stage although they were not specific as to when this had happened. This illustrates that there are people who illegally sell alcohol to minors and this possibly places these minors at risk when they are intoxicated. Substance abuse is one of the contributive factors to sexual risk as mentioned by Mehra et al. (2014). These types of substances, specifically alcohol

and drugs cause the individual to behave in a certain manner that may be inappropriate in terms of social norms (Morojele et al., 2006).

None of the participants admitted to using drugs however they appeared to have some knowledge about others who had used drugs. This could be due to the seriousness associated with drug use and as a much older researcher participants were probably afraid to admit to using drugs out of fear of getting into trouble. The young women were very descriptive when speaking about the effects that alcohol and drugs have, speaking from personal experiences and from observation of others. Within this study, 3 young women out of 10 had spoken from personal experience and 7 young women spoke in general about what they knew and what they heard from friends. The typical responses were:

*'it makes you loose, it makes you more open...I think you'd say things you wouldn't say out loud, you do things that you normally wouldn't do so it's not like you that quiet person anymore. It makes you more loud and open to become more daring'* (Denise)

*'you can't even remember the choices you made'* (Sanusha)

*'like with alcohol you feel different, you feel nice, you want to have fun and do whatever you want'* (Mishka)

Almost all participants concurred with Denise, Sanusha and Mishka implying that these young women understand alcohol and drugs to be substances that cause a change in character and thinking, causing a person to relinquish responsibility for their actions and possibly leading to sexual risk. According to Morojele et al. (2006), these substances put people in a state of pleasure and cause certain individuals to behave in a manner that is considered unacceptable within their social context and thus goes against social norms. During the individual interview with Denise and Mishka, I had noticed that when they spoke about the effects of alcohol, they displayed feelings of excitement. They did not see alcohol as something dangerous and instead saw it as a 'feel good' substance. Sanusha on the other hand saw alcohol and drugs from a negative perspective and had displayed feelings of disgust when speaking about alcohol and drugs. The participants indicate that when intoxicated with alcohol or drugs there appear to be very little or no boundaries and this is shown in Mishka's response. She states that *'you want to have fun and do whatever you want'*, implying that there are very little limitations and that not

much thought goes into the decisions that are made. Mehra et al. (2014) study shows that when under the influence of alcohol there is a decline in people's ability to think logically resulting in potentially risky behaviour that places them at risk to sexual coercion and ultimately HIV infection.

According to Morojele et al. (2006), an individual is unable to think clearly and make logical decisions when intoxicated. These substances cause individuals to behave in a certain manner that deviates from how they would normally behave. This is understood by Husna who states that *'it puts you in a whole different space of mind'* (referring to alcohol and drugs). Mehra et al. (2014) explains that alcohol consumption and sexual coercion are related and that those who consume alcohol often, are more likely to be sexually coerced and Casale et al. (2011) point out that it is women who are more vulnerable to risky sexual behaviour when under the influence of alcohol. Morojele et al. (2006) claims that consuming alcohol or drugs may lead to sexual arousal and this is indicated in the following excerpt:

*'when I am tipsy every now and then, it makes me...errr...horny (laughs) and I just want to get frisky (laughs)' (Trishalia)*

This excerpt is indicative that alcohol consumption plays a role in engaging in sex as it leads to certain sexual urges and in some cases may increase the chances of risky sexual behaviour. As in the case of Trishalia, it causes her to behave in a certain manner where she wants to try and satisfy those urges. During the interview Trishalia laughed when speaking of her own experiences and this indicated a sense of nervousness. This could be due to the nature of the topic and she possibly felt a certain degree of awkwardness out of fear that she would be judged. This reaction again demonstrates that social processes have caused women to be discreet in terms of their sexuality. These behaviours may not seem to be conventional or acceptable to others. When participants were asked what their views on alcohol, drugs and risky sexual behaviour are, their responses showed that they believed that the consumption of alcohol and drugs cause young women to become prone to engaging in risky sexual behaviour. This resonates in the following responses:

*'you don't like really think about what you doing so like imagine how many people have sex without a condom. Who really has the time to go look for a condom when you gone like that' (Mishka)*

*'if you use drugs or alcohol you not in your right state of mind and then you might not use like protection' (Maiyuri)*

These responses indicate that young women are aware of the manner in which alcohol and drugs can diminish their power to behave responsibly and thereby place them at risk. Mishka's response describes the experience of intoxication. She speaks of condom use when intoxicated and how it becomes irrelevant to worry about having safe sex. Mishka mentions, *'gone like that'*, referring to feelings of intoxication. When a condom is difficult to obtain, it is clear that it is not seen as a necessity when in that *'state of mind'* (Maiyuri).

*'people getting drunk and then they don't know what they doing so they like easy prey for older boys then boys just grab them and they'll do whatever they want them to coz they so drunk out their minds' (Janine)*

*'well, I think when you under the influence, you don't exactly know what you doing so you can't exactly just say oh my gosh please use a condom you know...and then people talk about that in the moment story and...so I think for girl when they in that moment you can't just say stop, use a condom because they feel oh maybe it will turn the guy off or whatever' (Shasmita)*

The responses imply that when consuming alcohol, women become more vulnerable to sexual coercion and risky sexual behaviour. Janine explains that young men tend to initiate increased sexual advances when a young woman is intoxicated. According to Janine it becomes easier for young men to engage in sexual behaviour due to the inability of these young women to make sound decisions. Mehra et al. (2014) suggest that alcohol can be used as an avenue to achieve sex and women who have consumed alcohol are more likely to behave in a passive and complicit manner when approached to engage in sexual acts.

## 4.8 Performing for peers

Peers play an influential role in terms of sexual behavior (Wood et al., 1998). The need to be popular among peers is a strikingly common factor that many young women share and this can influence major decisions pertaining to sexual behaviour. Within a single-sex school, although away from young men, the formation of heterosexual relationships becomes essential in order to be considered popular. The focal point of any discussion is young men and this is explained by Janine in the focus group discussion:

*'if you are in a co-ed school there are other interests to be spoken about that's over this boy-girl, boy-girl' (Janine)*

This response implies that heterosexual relationships become the main topic of discussion among young women in single-sex schools. In this instance, Janine believes that young women from a co-ed school would not be as interested in these relationships because they are constantly in contact with young men. It seems as if being in a single-sex school makes young women more interested in forming these relationships and it becomes a competition to see who can succeed in forming these relationships. To prove that these relationships exist, these young women tend to find ways to ensure that other young women from the school are aware of these relationships and this can be understood from the following response:

*'a lot of them like the first year university...eerr...types because oh they, you know, in varsity now and it's like a big thing and they have their first car and oh my boyfriend can pick me up from school' (Husna)*

Many young women form relationships with older men for the purpose of making others aware that they have boyfriends who are able to do things for them thus increasing their popularity in school. Janine further states, *'I don't even think she liked this guy to begin with, it was all for the braz'*. This shows that certain young women may form relationships just to please their friends. They might not genuinely have a personal interest in the person but as long as they are in a heterosexual relationship then they have achieved what they set out to which is being popular. These young women may not necessarily be ready to form these relationships and manage the repercussions of such relationships; however their peers have unknowingly pressured them into

forming these relationships and making certain decisions sooner than they would have (MacPhail & Campbell, 2001).

The majority of the participants were passionate about a particular reason as to why young women from a single-sex school engage in risky sexual behaviour, which is to have something to talk about. All participants agreed that sexual experiences were what fuelled many conversations and that piqued other girls' interest and this is clearly shown in the following excerpts:

*'coz in girl schools, girls are jux. They only wana know about who you did this weekend, how you did them and where you did them' (Janine)*

*'you hear the stories, I mean break time, after school, you hanging out with your friends. That's all they wana talk about' (Sanusha)*

It appears that conversations on sexual behaviour and sexual experiences are very popular among the young women at school. It is important to note that not all young women have the same experiences and in some cases this places pressure on these young women to engage in sexual activities in order to feel included, and this can be seen in the following excerpts:

*'I think sometimes girls might like you know, pressurise certain girls and some girls might think that...this is like...you dumb if you don't do this or you don't do that' (Maiyuri)*

*'I was peer pressured, my friends were looking at me like I was...eerr...like under them coz I wasn't pomping' (Janine)*

A lot of pressure is placed on some young women who feel out of place when surrounded by their peers who have had different experiences and this was discussed during the focus group discussion. The young women spoke about their group of friends and how they felt when sexual behaviour and experiences were spoken about. Janine expressed that her friends looked at her differently because she did not share the same experiences as them. Throughout the focus group discussion which was based on a case study (Appendix 3C) about a young woman who succumbed to peer pressure, Janine was adamant that the decisions that this young woman made were wrong. This however contradicted what she had mentioned during her individual interview. She had mentioned, *'as much as I kept telling myself I shouldn't do it I was just like hypnotized by his good looks'* and later she mentioned, *'I use to just brag to all my friends'*.

Many of the young women who were sexually active spoke about how they would feel if they were inexperienced and were not able to contribute to the conversation. These feelings were expressed in the following responses during the focus group discussion:

*'I think I'd feel alone if I didn't have the same experiences as them' (Mishka)*

*'if I didn't have the same experiences as my friends and they talking about it I'd just be really quiet and they'd think I'm judging them...which I'm not judging them' (Shasmita)*

*'if we all didn't all have the same things in common...we'd be like totally...I mean how do you be friends, you know...then you guys like drift apart' (Maiyuri)*

These 3 young women articulated expected feelings of isolation among their friends if their experiences were not similar. Maiyuri mentions that it makes it difficult to converse with friends when experiences are different. Shasmita had expressed that when she was unable to contribute to the conversation due to lack of experience, her friends felt as though she was passing judgment on them. This, according to Wood et al., (1998), pressures certain young women to engage in sexual activity at an earlier stage. These were all responses to their personal experiences with their friends and how they would feel if their friends did not have the same experiences as them. When discussing the young woman in the case study, the participants were very opinionated about her experience and expressed dissatisfaction with the choices that this young woman had made in terms of risky behaviour in order to please her friends.

Some of the women challenged the power of peer pressure. A debate emerged, as shown in the responses below:

*'she was pressured' (Husna)*

*'she put her trust in someone she didn't know and she based it on what her friends said' (Sanusha)*

*'she backed herself up into a corner. It wasn't her friends, she did it to herself' (Janine)*

*'yes, I agree, I know...eerr...peer pressure is a big thing but like...she still has a choice'(Trishalia)*

***'but then you get judged for it' (Husna)***

Husna and Sanusha felt that peer pressure played a major role in the decision that was made in terms of risky sexual behaviour. Husna mentions that many are judged if they do not share similar experiences and this could pressure certain young women to engage in risky sexual behaviour. Janine and Trishalia disagreed with the other participants and felt that the young woman had a choice and that everyone has a choice. This is contradictory to Trishalia's personal experience. She had mentioned during her individual interview, ***'I was afraid of the consequences but at the same time I..errm...wanted to experience it because I heard it felt nice'***. This referred to her first experience of risky sexual behaviour. According to MacPhail & Campbell (2001), peers act as a factor that share the responsibility in creating pessimistic views concerning the use of condoms. On listening to her friends' experiences of non-condom use and the positive feedback from her friends, it encouraged her to experience risky sexual behaviour regardless of the knowledge she had of the consequences. According to Wood et al. (1998), many young women are not ready to make certain decisions but do so in order to increase their popularity among their peers. These decisions relate to risky sexual behaviour:

***'I would think coz of peer pressure, everyone wants to be cool and try to fit in. No one really thinks of the consequences' (Sanusha)***

From Sanusha's response we can assume that some of these young women don't really think rationally about the decisions that they make with regard to risky sexual behaviour. Their main concern is being able to please their peers in an attempt to ***'fit in'*** and this can be seen in the following response made within the focus group discussion, based on the case study (Appendix 3C):

***'in a way I feel sorry for her because she's so worried about pleasing her friends and this boy that she forgot herself in the whole process. So she made a very stupid decision by putting him first' (Trishalia)***

According to Wood et al. (1998), peers play a major role in early, first time sexual experiences and also in risky sexual behaviour. These young women are so focused on what their friends think rather than on how they feel about the decisions they make for themselves. Trishalia shows concern for the young woman in the case study and believes that the decision this young woman

made regarding condom use was the wrong one, thus showing a form of agency to the social norms that are constructed on how women are supposed to behave which is passive and complicit. According to Hoffman et al. (2006), when sexual coercion occurs, be it knowingly or unknowingly, it is the views of peers that tends to internalise and normalise certain behaviours. Whilst some of these young women may be aware of the consequences of risky sexual behaviour and yet still engage in risky sexual behaviour, there are young women who practice resistance to the pressures created by their peers; as shown in the following response:

*'no...errm..coz I am my own person. I don't really do things coz of other people'* (Sanusha)

Sanusha has resisted the pressure of her peers and has not engaged in risky sexual behaviour. She makes mention of her friend's experience based on multiple sexual partners, *'my best friend is like that hey. We tried talking to her but she thinks she knows best'*. Sanusha shows that not all young women succumb to peer pressure. As in Sanusha's case, there are young women who advise their friends to make the right choices, regardless of whether her advice is heeded or not. In some instances, resisting peer pressure may lessen the chances of popularity and according to Teunissen et al. (2012), individuals are more likely to listen to those who are considered popular. Not all young women in this single-sex school are the same in terms of sexual behaviour. Some engage in risky behaviour in an attempt to *'fit in'* with their peers and some make the decision, on their own, not to engage in risky sexual behaviour.

This data highlighted the impact that peer pressure has on the decision making process in terms of sexual behaviour. Although there were young women who had succumbed to peer pressure and engaged in risky sexual behaviour, there were also young women who had practiced agency.

#### **4.9 Performing and challenging femininities**

The participants in this study demonstrated that they sometimes conformed to and sometimes challenged the traditional notions of femininity. In response to a question about women's power in relationships, the following responses were given:

*'to a certain point I agree that maybe you should give them a little bit control'* (Shasmita)

*'I feel like guys should have a say. Like obviously be the man in the relationship and wear the pants...I mean not to be a wiss...like you can't let your girlfriend tell you what to do' (Husna)*

It is clear that despite changes made in terms of gender equality there are still women like Husna and Shasmita who give men a certain degree of power within the relationship. From Husna's response it is apparent that a man who *'wears the pants'* in a relationship is considered more masculine. This behaviour is socially accepted therefore those who go against the social norms are marginalised within their social environment, as in the response by Husna who mentions that if a man does not *'wear the pants'* in the relationship then he is considered a *'wiss' (spineless)*. These social constructions of how men and women are 'supposed' to behave can make women vulnerable by allowing men to make decisions pertaining to sex and risky sexual behaviour, resulting in sexual coercion. Again it is important to note that not all young women conform to social norms and within this study there were also young women who did not believe that a man should make all the decisions within a relationship. This can be seen in the following response:

*'I won't want anyone to tell me what to do, where I should go, what I should do, but..errm...we all have a say and girls should really speak up' (Denise)*

Denise shares her perspective on men being in control over decisions that are made in a relationship. She expresses distaste for men who display control and feels that she could not accept being in a controlled relationship. This shows that not all young women conform to social norms, not all young women believe in behaving in a complicit and passive manner. Denise demonstrates a change in the thinking of certain young women in terms of being outspoken within a relationship.

Many of the participants demonstrated an awareness of sexual double standards that exist in the expectations of men and women with respect to their sexuality and sexual expressions. Mayuri seems to perpetuate this double standard by saying,

*'well guys usually have these things but like its wrong but I don't think a girl should do it'*

According to Maiyuri, it is normal for boys to have multiple partners but she did not approve of girls behaving in the same way. As mentioned by Marston & King (2006), a major emphasis is placed on the virginity of a woman and the exclusivity of a relationship as compared to men.

These social norms have been internalised and has caused Maiyuri to believe that women should not be engaging in this type of inappropriate sexual behaviour. However, many of the young women expressed their dissatisfaction with the leniency that young men are faced with in terms of their sexual behaviour as compared to women. This can be seen in the following responses:

*'with boys everyone thinks it's okay. The boys think they too cool if they slept with a lot of girls' (Mishka)*

*'people say it's okay for boys to have multiple sexual partners, when it's a girl she's called a slut or a ho and I think we...errmm we've been grown up with this you know...boys get away with a lot more than girls. You know what if a boy does this, this and this he's let off the hook and if a girl does this, this and this now she has to face the consequences. She's being called names' (Denise)*

Both Mishka and Denise expressed the unfairness and the inequalities that women are faced with. Both young women in these responses refer to engaging in sex with multiple partners. They have mentioned that when men engage in risky behaviour such as having multiple sexual partners it is considered the norm, whereas if women had to behave in the same manner then she would be branded negatively within a social context that perpetuates gender inequality. Men are expected to be sexually active whereas women who are sexually active are negatively labeled within their social context (Marston & King, 2006). Premarital sex and procreation for men is seen as a pathway to manhood and respect (Nzima, 2006) and according to Marston & King (2006), men within these social contexts tend to engage in risky sexual behaviour in order to be socially accepted and to show masculinity. These young women have voiced the unfairness that is created from conventional norms, however there are young women who have internalised these socially constructed behaviours and have perpetuated these inequalities themselves, as mentioned in the following response:

*'also as a woman you need to respect yourself and not open your legs to the whole world...as a female you also have a reputation to worry about, be it for yourself or your family so the last thing you want to do is ruin your name' (Trishalia)*

According to Jewkes & Morrell (2010), women tend to buy into the gender inequalities that persist without question, reinforcing these social constructions of how men and women are

supposed to behave. Trishalia has internalised the social norms, that is, that women are not expected to display their sexual behaviour or sexual desires. These views reinforce the gender inequalities that persist and place young women at sexual risk and hence vulnerable to unintended pregnancy and HIV infection.

Many of the young women indicated that they would not readily be tested for HIV because it would imply that they are sexually active. For example Mishka showed her disapproval of negative judgment against women in the following excerpt.

*'they don't want people to know what they doing. Especially for the girl. People like to pick on what a girl does and for a boy it's ok. I don't get that...I mean what year are we living in?'*

This shows that she thinks that there is a need to challenge the double standards. From Marston & King's (2006) study, it can be said that sexual behaviours are socially constructed and certain behaviours are deemed appropriate when compared to others. According to Marston & King (2006), a major emphasis is placed on abstinence of women as compared to men. Women are expected to be discreet in terms of their sexual behaviour as compared to men (Marston & King, 2006). Mishka asking the rhetorical question in the latter part of her statement implies that she believed these societal judgments to be views of the past and with the passing of time and new advancements she expected some changes in attitudes. HIV testing therefore exposes the sexual relations of women and places their reputation in jeopardy. Marston & King (2006) states that when women behave in a manner that goes against the social norms, they are marginalised within their social context. This prevents many women from getting tested for HIV as mentioned in the following excerpts:

*'like who wants to go to like places to get tested for AIDS and stuff, then people will know like you have sex' (Maiyuri)*

*'plus I think I would be kinda embarrassed, imagine everyone will know you there for a test and then they will all know what you getting up to' (Sanusha)*

*'sitting in that line to get tested and all these people watching. They will know and what about my parents. What do I say to them, why am I going to a clinic...they will know that I'm doing these things' (Mishka)*

All 3 young women articulate their fears of others knowing that they are sexually active. This implies that despite their knowledge of the various ways of contracting HIV, they believe that it is mostly sexual relations that are responsible for the contraction and spread of HIV infection. Therefore, the main fear is that people would assume that they are engaging in sexual activity and as mentioned by Marston & King (2006), this assumption may lead to the marginalisation of these young women. This evidently prevents women from getting tested for HIV. Not all of the young women however were fearful of their sexual relations being exposed, Janine, encouraged her partner to get tested with her. Getting tested with her partner did not spark any fears of others' socially constructed views.

#### **4.10 Conclusion**

The data suggests that change is underway and that many young women are challenging conventional gender norms that subordinate them and place them at risk to HIV infection. However, some young women conform to conventional notions of femininity that perpetuate gender inequalities and limit their capacity to protect themselves in intimate relationships. In this chapter, I have presented and analysed the findings of my study on how girls between the ages of 16 to 18 give meaning to gender and sexuality in relation to sexual risk within the South African context of HIV & AIDS. The data was discussed within eight themes, namely; Love and dating, Love and Risk, Sex Education and risk awareness, Sexual coercion and gender dynamics, Mature partners and materiality, Substance abuse and sexual risk, Performing for peers and lastly Performing and challenging femininities. The next chapter is the final chapter of this study and will consolidate the main findings of this study.

## **Chapter 5: Conclusion**

### **5.1 Introduction**

Within this final chapter of my dissertation I will present a synthesis of the study of how a group of young women, aged 16-18 years, attending a single-sex school in the Durban area, give meaning to gender and sexuality in relation to sexual risk within the South African context of HIV & AIDS. This is a qualitative research study that is embedded within an interpretivist paradigm

The theoretical approach that guides the research is the Social Constructionist Theory. Ideas of Burr (1995) and Paechter (2003) are drawn on, to understand how the young women in the study give meaning to gender and sexuality and how sexual identities are constructed by social processes. According to Burr (1995), this theory calls for the notion that ‘conventional knowledge is acquired through impartial observations’, to be challenged. It argues that sexuality and gender is complex and constructed. People therefore become influential factors in perceptions of the world (Burr, 1995). Paechter (2003) builds on these ideas and adds that constructions of masculinity and femininity are based on social context and culture.

The sample consisted of 10 young women who attend a single-sex school. The main data generation methods comprised individual interviews as well as focus group discussions in an attempt to answer the following critical questions:

1. What do young women in a single-sex school understand by risky sexual behaviour within the context of HIV & AIDS?
2. What explanations do young women in single-sex schools offer regarding the practice of risky sexual behaviour in the context of HIV & AIDS?
3. In a single-sex school, how are young women’s constructions of femininities connected to risky sexual behaviour?

The data generated from the individual interviews and focus group discussions were analysed simultaneously within eight themes that emerged from the data. The themes are:

- Love and dating
- Love and Risk
- Sex Education and risk awareness
- Sexual coercion and gender dynamics
- Mature partners and materiality
- Substance abuse and sexual risk
- Performing for peers
- Performing and challenging femininities

## **5.2 Summary of the main findings**

The study revealed that whilst these young women are segregated from young men at school level, there is still a powerful interest and desire centered on love and dating. Even though they were in a single-school, they found many creative ways and used networks to make contact with boys and men outside of school. This included acts of deception to avoid parental interference. Whilst these young women demonstrated agency in making their own decisions, they may have placed themselves at risk by going to places that are unsafe. A few young women were not afforded the opportunity to engage in after school social interaction due to parental restrictions. These young women found difficulty in forming heterosexual relationships.

Heteronormative behaviour was dominant among the young women. The identification as heterosexual was emphasized regardless of a few who had chosen to experiment sexually with the same sex. This shows the dominant culture of heterosexuality that has been produced and reproduced which causes silence around same-sex issues. The root of homosexual experimentation was due to peer persuasion and stereotypical views that there is a strong association between single-sex schools and homosexual behaviour. Social interactions have impacted the decisions these young women have made in terms of their sexuality. Although heterosexuality is the preferred orientation and these particular young women have no desire to pursue homosexual relationships, social dynamics have persuaded many of these young women to experiment in homosexuality.

The need to be loved compromises the ability of many young women to negotiate safe sex practices. Fear of losing a partner in a love based relationship exceeds the fears of causing bodily harm. There were young women who afforded men power by permitting their partners to make decisions within their relationships in an attempt to please their partners, and thus compromising their own sexual safety. The data suggests that there is a connection between condom use and trust, that is, the belief that engaging in unsafe practices signifies trust. This caused hesitance of many young women to communicate their desire to practice safe sex thus jeopardising their sexual safety. These young women are unaware that they were being coerced to engage in unsafe sexual acts. This is due to the immense fear of losing their partner and the misconception that sexual coercion and physical violence are related. There were young women however, who showed resistance to this injustice and remained static in their beliefs in terms of safe sex practices and choosing to abstain from sexual acts.

Most of these young women had formed relationships with older men. The main reasons for this that emerged from the data were maturity, status and the material benefits that these types of relationships provide. Same-age young men were seen as immature and lacked stability and seriousness. Relationships with older men increase sexual relations and increase the possibility of risky sexual behaviour as in the case of most of these young women (Morrison-Breedy, 2013). The age gap between the younger women and the older men also imply a power differential within which women's capacity to negotiate the conditions of the relationship, including safe sex practices are compromised. It is these relationship dynamics that place young women vulnerable to HIV infection.

The findings confirm other studies that reveal that whilst sex education has been implemented at school thereby equipping young women with knowledge on HIV & AIDS, many of the young women were not receptive to the messages on safe sex practices and many continued to engage in risky sexual behaviour. It was found that the school was not the sole source of information. Other sources included the internet as well as peers. The internet was seen as a means to research sex related issues without public knowledge. The need for discretion was due to the belief that young women should not be engaging in premarital sex. The internet made it easy to acquire knowledge by asking questions that were relative to a particular situation. Peers also played a role in distributing sex related knowledge. This knowledge however was not legitimate and was

based on experience. Attending a single-sex school had reduced the pressure and awkwardness when discussing sex for one particular young woman. This particular young woman who had not engaged in sexual activity felt that the absence of young men assisted in exploring sex education.

It was also found that substance abuse was a contributive factor to sexual risk taking. Those consuming alcohol displayed an inability to make logical decisions while intoxicated, deviating from their traditional behaviour and thus resulting in potentially risky behaviour. Alcohol consumption caused heightened sexual desires and resulted in some young women engaging in sexual relations and also caused men to make sexual advances. Casale et al. (2011) and Mehra et al. (2014) state that alcohol consumption and sexual coercion are related and it is women who are most vulnerable. Alcohol can be used as an approach to achieve sex and women who have consumed alcohol are more likely to behave in a passive and complicit manner when approached to engage in sexual acts (Mehra et al., 2014). It is important to note that not all young women indulged in substances that caused a change in character. There were young women who practiced agency and did not allow social forces to impact the decisions that they made.

In addition, the data suggested that an influential factor in decision making was peer acceptance. These young women highlighted the importance of social status among peers. There is a need to feel a part of a social circle and this results in many young women engaging in certain activities to be on par with their peers. The data show that heterosexual relationships and sex related topics and experiences were what fueled many conversations. This put undue pressure on young women who did not share the same experiences. Many young women made sexual decisions based on peer influences whilst others were resistant to these influential factors.

It is clear that most of these young women continue to reproduce conventional forms of femininity which are harmful to their sexual health and well being, reproducing sexual identities that perpetuate gender inequality. Certain young women continue to give men a certain degree of power and men who lack power within the relationship are labeled as more feminine than masculine. This shows that women are in fact inhibiting their ability to progress. These young women were aware of the sexual double standards that exist between men and women and many had accepted and reinforced these double standards. Attending a single-sex school therefore does not free young women from gendered ideologies as many assume. While this is derived from the experiences of majority of the young women, there were young women who suggested a certain

degree of agency and demonstrated greater control over their sexual behaviour and sexual health, proving that experiences vary based on social context.

### **5.3 Conclusions**

In a context where young women's vulnerability to HIV remains high, despite numerous attempts to curb the spread of the virus, it is important to work with young women to challenge gender stereotypes that subordinate them within intimate relationships and make them vulnerable to unsafe sex. Women are constrained in their ability to negotiate safe sex practices with their partners due to a number of reasons which include the need to please their partner and fear of losing their partner. This shows that conventional forms of femininity are being reproduced in an attempt to maintain relationships. Young women need to be made aware of relationship dynamics that perpetuate gender inequality. Workshops exclusively for young women need to be held. The fact that these young women attend a single-sex school makes it easier to focus on women empowerment, especially within relationships.

Whilst there are sex education classes and the presence of a guidance counselor at the school who provides support to these young women, the emphasis is mostly on the consequences of engaging in sexual relations. This is essential and does not need to change, however the incorporation of gender and relationship dynamics within the curriculum could assist in making young women aware of the inequalities that are produced and reproduced which place them at risk. I would therefore recommend that the curriculum be revised in order to incorporate these aspects as it is important to encourage young women towards greater agency.

It was also found that peers are contributive to early sexual debut. Many young women feel the need to be on the same level as their peers. I would therefore recommend support groups at school level which would encourage individuals to discuss their views on peer pressure regarding sexuality. A single-sex school simplifies the task of targeting problems affecting young women, focusing on ways to empower women. This intervention could assist young women in reducing the urgency to engage in sexual acts and raising awareness that it is acceptable to have friends who share different experiences and beliefs.

This study has also demonstrated that single sex education cannot be a quick-fix solution to gender violence and sexually risky behaviour. It is more important to encourage young women towards greater agency so that they will be better equipped to protect themselves against the consequences of risky behaviour than to isolate them from boys and men. This study adds to the understandings of sexual risk among young people in South Africa. This is particularly important within the context as HIV is rife in this country. While many of the young women in this study appear to be reproducing traditional notions of femininities that position young women as dependent and helpless victims to male desire, some change is underway in the way in which some young women are constructing their femininities thus protecting themselves against the undesirable consequences of risky sexual behaviour.

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## Appendices

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07 October 2014

Ms Nicole Shaney (207508579)  
School of Education  
Edgewood Campus

Protocol reference number: HSS/1507/013M

Project title: Understanding risky sexual behaviour amongst young women in a single-sex school in the Durban area in the context of HIV & AIDS

Dear Ms Shaney,

**Full Approval Notification – Committee Reviewed Protocol**

This letter serves to notify you that your response in connection with the above was reviewed by the Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee, has now been granted **Full Approval**.

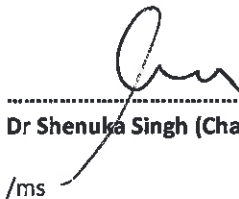
**Any alterations to the approved research protocol i.e. Questionnaire/Interview Schedule, Informed Consent Form, Title of the Project, Location of the Study, Research Approach/Methods must be reviewed and approved through an amendment /modification prior to its implementation. Please quote the above reference number for all queries relating to this study.**

**PLEASE NOTE: Research data should be securely stored in the school/department for a period of 5 years.**

**The ethical clearance certificate is only valid for a period of 3 years from the date of issue. Thereafter Recertification must be applied for on an annual basis.**

Best wishes for the successful completion of your research protocol

Yours faithfully



.....  
Dr Shenuka Singh (Chair)  
/ms

Cc Supervisor: Dr Shakila Singh  
Cc Academic Leader Research: Professor P Morojele  
Cc School Administrator: Mr Thoba Mthembu

---

**Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee**

**Dr Shenuka Singh (Chair)**

**Westville Campus, Govan Mbeki Building**

**Postal Address: Private Bag X54001, Durban 4000**

**Telephone: +27 (0) 31 260 3587/8350/4557 Facsimile: +27 (0) 31 260 4608 Email: [ximban@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:ximban@ukzn.ac.za) / [snymanm@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:snymanm@ukzn.ac.za) / [mohunp@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:mohunp@ukzn.ac.za)**

**Website: [www.ukzn.ac.za](http://www.ukzn.ac.za)**



To

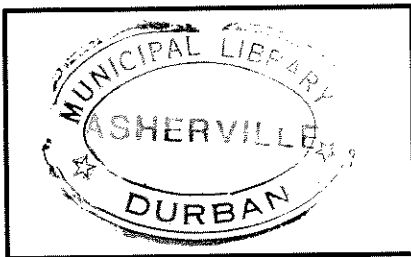
Whom it may concern.

I SANDILE ZUNGU, the librarian of Asherville library hereby grant the student, Nicole Shaney permission to conduct her interviews at the library for the completion of her Masters Degree in Gender Studies.

Best Regards:

S. ZUNGU

Contact No: 031-2087766



## Appendix 2 A



Dear Parent/ Guardian

I, Nicole Shaney am a MEd (Masters) student at the University of KwaZulu Natal (UKZN). I am enrolled in a research study and I wish to ask for permission for your daughter/ward to participate in my study.

**Title:** *Understanding risky sexual behaviour amongst young women in a single-sex school in the Durban area in the context of HIV & AIDS.*

**Key features of the project:** In this study I will seek to explore the understandings and reasons for engaging in risky sexual behaviour. Focus group discussions consisting of five other participants as well as individual interviews will be used to generate data for this study. Interviews will be conducted at the local library. Interviews will be audio recorded. A letter will be sent to you indicating the dates and times of the interviews so that arrangements can be made by you to fetch your daughter after the interview.

It is important to note that participation is voluntary and that your daughter/ward has not specifically been chosen for any particular reason and she is in no way considered as high risk but that her input will be valuable for me to understand risky sexual behaviour amongst young women in a single sex school.

Universal principles such as honesty, justice and respect will direct my research. Your daughter/ward will be treated with fairness and honesty and I will ensure confidentiality and anonymity. Your daughter/ward is free to withdraw from the research at any stage without negative or undesirable consequences to her.

A summary report of the findings will be made available to the participants.

The supervisor of this project is Dr Shakila Singh and she can be contacted on 031 2607604.

Ms P Ximba from the HSSREC Research Office can also be contacted on:

Tel: 031 260 3587

Email: [ximbap@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:ximbap@ukzn.ac.za)

Thank you for your co-operation.

Yours faithfully

Nicole Shaney

Contact number: 0786034516

Email: [shaneynicole@gmail.com](mailto:shaneynicole@gmail.com)



Informed consent of parent

Declaration

I \_\_\_\_\_ (full name of parent/guardian)  
hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of this research  
project and I consent to my daughter/ward participating in this research project.

\_\_\_\_\_  
SIGNATURE OF PARENT

\_\_\_\_\_  
DATE

\_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix 2 B



Dear Participant

### INFORMED CONSENT LETTER

My name is Nicole Shaney. I am a MEd (Masters) student in Gender Education at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Edgewood campus. I would like to invite you to participate in a study that I am undertaking.

A brief description of the study follows:

**Title** – Understanding risky sexual behaviour amongst young women in a single-sex school in the Durban area in the context of HIV & AIDS.

**Key features of the project:** In this study I will seek to explore the understandings and reasons for engaging in risky sexual behaviour. Risky behaviour refers to behaviour that is considered risky in terms of sexual behaviour, which includes; having sexual intercourse without the use of contraceptives, as well as having multiple sexual partners. This could lead to the contraction of HIV & AIDS as well as unwanted pregnancies. It has been found that young women have a higher rate of HIV & AIDS infection than men, it is thus essential to understand the reasons behind this statistic therefore the research study that I will conduct is understanding risky sexual behaviour amongst young women in a single-sex school.

I will require for you to participate in focus group discussions and individual interviews that will take 30 minutes of your time. The interviews will be conducted at the local library.

Universal principles such as honesty, justice and respect will direct my research. I hope that this research will add to the understandings of risky sexual behaviour of young women at school.

Please note that:

- Your confidentiality is guaranteed as your inputs will not be attributed to you in person, but reported only as a population member opinion.
- The interview may last for about 30 minutes and may be split depending on your preference.
- Any information given by you cannot be used against you, and the collected data will be used for purposes of this research only.
- Data will be stored in secure storage and destroyed after 5 years.
- You have a choice to participate, not participate or stop participating in the research. You have the right to withdraw without any negative consequences.
- Your involvement is purely for academic purposes only, and there are no financial benefits involved.
- The results of the study and any publications arising from the study will be sent to you by email.
- The study is not designed to create any stress or anxiety but if your participation gives rise to any anxiety or stress then you may contact the psychologist who is based at the Edgewood campus: Ms Lindi Ngubane. Her telephone number is 031 2603653 and email address is ngubanel@ukzn.ac.za.

I can be contacted at:

[shaneynicole@gmail.com](mailto:shaneynicole@gmail.com)

cell: 0786034516

My supervisor can be contacted at:

[Singhs7@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:Singhs7@ukzn.ac.za)

Tel: 031 2607326

You may also contact the Research Office through:

P. Ximba

HSSREC Research Office,

Tel: 031 260 3587 E-mail: [ximbap@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:ximbap@ukzn.ac.za)

Thank you for your contribution to the study.



DECLARATION

I..... (full names of participant) hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of the research project, and I consent to participating in the research project.

I hereby *consent/ do not consent* to an audio recording of the interview. (Please mark your selection with a **X**)

I understand that I am at liberty to withdraw from the project at any time, should I so desire.

SIGNATURE OF PARTICIPANT

DATE

.....

.....

## Appendix 3A

Individual interview schedule:

1. How old are you?
2. Who do you live with?
3. What are your feelings on attending an all girl school? Was it your decision to attend the school?  
If it was your parents' decision, what were the reasons that they have mentioned to you?
4. How do you think it differs from co-ed schools that some of your friends may be attending?
5. Do you hold any leadership positions within the school? What positions do you hold?
6. How has attending a single-sex school impacted the way you think in terms of what girls are capable of doing as compared to boys?
7. Do you feel that attending a single-sex school has empowered you in any way?
8. Looking back at your own life, do you feel that the role of a mother or mother figure has impacted the construction of your femininity?
9. Do you feel that the media has also played a role in the development of femininity?
10. Do you think that attending a single-sex school has played a role in the development of femininity?
11. Do you have or had a boyfriend?
12. Does being in an all girl school make it difficult to get a boyfriend? How so?
13. What do you feel is the appropriate time period to know a person before engaging in sexual acts?
14. What do you understand by risky sexual behaviour?
15. Are you aware of the consequences of risky sexual behaviour? if so, where have you received this information and by who?
16. Many men and women are aware of the consequences of risky behaviour yet they still engage in risky behaviour i.e. not using a condom, why do you think this is so?
17. How do you think alcohol and/or drugs impact on risky sexual behaviour?
18. Who do you feel is more to blame for engaging in risky behaviour? men or women? Why?
19. Many women are considered vulnerable, do you consider yourself vulnerable? Has being in a single-sex school influenced your point of view?
20. Do you think sexually active teenagers should get tested for HIV regularly? Why or why not?
21. According to literature, many men and women do not get tested for HIV, why do you think this is so?
22. Have you or your partner been tested for HIV?

23. Do girls in this school (without mentioning names) have much older boyfriends? Why do you think they do?
24. How do these girls get boyfriends considering that they are in a single-sex school?
25. How are these girls able to meet their boyfriends?
26. Would you consider having an older boyfriend? Why or why not?
27. What age of a boyfriend would be considered normal amongst your school mates?
28. What are your feelings on boys being in control in the relationship?
29. Have you been in a relationship where a boy was in charge and made decisions for you? Explain.
30. What are your views on multiple sex partners?
31. Do you think that it is wrong for a girl to have multiple sexual partners? Why or why not?
32. Do you think that it is wrong for a boy to have multiple sexual partners? Why or why not?
33. Has attending an all girl school impacted the decisions made in terms of sexual activity? Explain.
34. Are there any lesbians in your school?
35. Do you feel that being in a single-sex school has influenced the decisions of these girls in terms of their sexuality?
36. Have you heard of people associating single-sex schools with lesbianism?
37. Has being in a single-sex school caused you to want to experiment with the same sex?
38. Do you regret any decisions you have made? Why or why not?

## Appendix 3B

Focus group discussion schedule:

1. What are your feelings towards Ann's experience?
2. How does facebook and other social networks play a role in the decisions made in this case study? or does it really play a role?
3. Do you think if she wasn't on facebook, she wouldn't have experienced the things that she did?
4. Ann spoke to her friends and realised that her experiences differed. Does that really make one abnormal if their experiences differ? Explain.
5. What are your views on engaging in sexual activities as a teenager?
6. If your friend did not have the same experiences as you, how would you feel about that friend? Would you treat them differently as compared to friends who have the same experiences as you?
7. Ann felt ashamed and like a small child. Does engaging in sexual activity make you mature? Explain.
8. After reading the case study can you say that this is what Ann really wanted? Have the decisions you made been decisions that you really wanted?
9. Do you think that these girls were good friends? Explain.
10. Ann is an intelligent girl and has knowledge on contraceptives which was taught to her at school yet she felt immature to mention it to her partner? What are your views on this?
11. How do you feel about discussing the use of contraceptives with your partner?
12. Do you think most girls are engaging in risky sexual behaviour? Why or why not?
13. Ann had thought about what her teacher told her about the consequences of engaging in risky sexual behaviour yet she did not mention it to her partner. Why do you think she was afraid?
14. Ann thought that she would look stupid if she did not agree to having sex with the guy. What do you think about Ann's feelings?
15. How do you feel about Ann's friends' advice? Especially about guys knowing when to pull out?
16. Do you think that the older the guy is the more experienced he is and the more you can trust him? Explain.
17. Do you think having sex without a condom is better? Why?
18. Ann did not want to tell her partner how she felt and chose to listen to him about not using a condom. How do you feel about this?
19. Has being in an all girl school impacted the decisions Ann has made? How so?
20. What are your feelings towards Ann falling pregnant?

21. Ann couldn't believe that something like this could happen to her even though she had unprotected sex. A lot of girls feel this way. Do you feel this way? Why or why not?

## Appendix 3C

### Focus group case study:

#### Case study

My name is Ann, I am a 16 year old girl and I go to an amazing all-girl school that has a lot of fun extra-curricular activities to choose from. I have a group of friends who are all doing extremely well in school and are involved in lots of clubs at the school. We all hold leadership positions and are next in line to become prefects at the school. We are currently involved in a mentorship program where we mentor a group of grade 8 learners so that the transition into high school is easy. We have to be good role models to these learners. When I was in primary school I had a lot of friends that I was extremely close to but unfortunately they all went to another high school. As much as I love the school I am in and the friends that I have, I still miss those friends. We use to have so much fun together and we always enjoyed each other's company. Recently my cousin decided to hook me up with facebook. I wasn't really interested in it at first but then I started getting invites from my friends who were in primary school with me. I was so happy to finally be in contact with them again. We had messaged each other and had decided to meet at the nearest mall. My parents agreed because I hardly ever went out.

The day we met was the day I realised that there was so much that I did not experience. Most of them were in relationships with much older guys and were sleeping with them. I didn't even think about sex until they mentioned it. I felt like I was so abnormal to not have experienced the things that they did. My friends at school never spoke about things like this. In a way I felt ashamed, like I was a small child compared to them. I wanted that maturity also. We spoke about meeting again and they said that the next time they were going to bring their boyfriends and that they had the perfect guy for me. I really didn't want to but I wanted to feel like I was a part of the group again so I agreed.

The following week we met at my friends house. Her parents went away for the weekend and she has a really cool big sister who doesn't have a problem with boys coming over. I was so nervous. The boys came and everyone was automatically partnered up and doing their own thing in the different rooms. My friends didn't even ask me if I was comfortable with the guy, they expected me to be sociable like they were. I couldn't even look him in the eye and I really didn't know what to say. He sat next to me and put his hand on my leg. I didn't know what was happening or what to expect. He began talking to me and asked if he could kiss me. I didn't want to really but I thought how stupid would I look if I didn't so I agreed and then he started touching me all over and I mean all over. To be honest I really didn't want to be touched like that but when speaking to my friends they said it was fun so I allowed it. Then he wanted to have sex. It was my opportunity to be on the same level as my friends and I agreed to have sex with this guy that I just met. I thought about asking him about a condom but I

would look so immature if I did. All the talks about using condoms, all the warnings and advice that my lo teacher gave us went out the window. It's like for that moment I was blank. I am usually such a responsible person and before I could get back to my senses it was over. I did it. I didn't know how to feel, what to ask, how to react. I spoke to my friends when I got the chance to and they were so happy for me. I told them about not using a condom and they assured me that these boys knew what they were doing because they were older. They said that guys know when to pull out.

I met these friends a couple times after school. I skipped all the extra-curricular activities and the guy I was with picked me up and dropped me off back at school so that my parents wouldn't know. I was neglecting school but like my friends say 'you only live once'. It was so exciting, I felt so mature. We had sex often without a condom, he said it felt better without and I should just listen to him so I didn't want to say anything to make him think that I was immature.

About 2 months later I felt weird and started getting sick often and then my period stopped. I was so scared. I immediately called my friends. They told me to get a home pregnancy kit which I did and I found out that I was pregnant. I went to the doctor and I found out that I was 3 months pregnant. It was too late to have an abortion. How could this happen to me? I never thought that something like this would happen to me. I told the guy who I was with and he refused to take responsibility and said that I should have taken birth control and that this was all my fault. I am 16 years old. I am alone and I am pregnant. My life is over...

## Appendix 3D

Individual interview:

**1. How old are you?**

16

**2. Who do you live with?**

My parents

**3. What are your feelings on attending an all girl school? Was it your decision to attend the school? If it was your parents decision, what were the reasons that they have mentioned to you?**

At first I umm fought with my parents because I didn't want to go and then I...after a year, it was like you know you find your feet and then you find that group of friends that you know ok I can cope now and ya so after the first year I didn't have a problem. I really enjoyed it.

**So it was your parents decision to send you to an all girl school? what were their reasons?**

Yup, ummm I guess it was umm because our local school, well the school in the area everyone went to and I guess they felt uhh you that there would be better opportunities for me if I went to that school.

**4. How do you think it differs from co-ed schools that some of your friends may be attending?**

Yaaa, the co-ed schools seemed to be a lot of fun. Umm I keep hearing all of these stories and uhh most of my friends from my area go to that school so im like the only one that didn't. soo uhh but you know what my group of friends that I have are very uhh entertaining and when...we get up to a lot of shit I can say (laughs) but uhhs its okay.

**5. Do you hold any leadership positions within the school? What positions do you hold?**

Yes, im a mentor and im a prefect assistant (laughs) to my friend, not really a prefect but everywhere she goes I go.

**6. How has attending a single-sex school impacted the way you think in terms of what girls are capable of doing as compared to boys?**

Ok uhh when I was in primary school I was in a co-ed primary school and it was more about boys and the head boy and you know, who beat him and you know ...it was always like a competition girls against boys. Who gets the better marks and there was always this ummm...thing that boys are cleverer than girls, boys have more intelligence than girls. When you put yourself in a all girl school you realize you know that girls have so much of potential and you know what, we are , you can say empowered, you know what to go out and do twice as much as boys can do. I think we would do it even better.

**7. Do you feel that attending a single-sex school has empowered you in any way?**

A lot so yes.

**8. Looking back at your own life, do you feel that the role of a mother or mother figure has impacted the construction of your femininity?**

Absolutely ummm my mother is uhh, how can I say shes very strong but very quiet, I don't..she has taught me a lot and its really made me the person that I am today and umm because of her love and her caring. I think everyone likes my mother and everyone likes to come to her house and eat her food because she has this thing and I think that's how I'd like to be when I have my own family.

**9. Do you feel that the media has also played a role in the development of femininity?**

Yes, I think I went through different stages. I was once a sporty chick and umm played a lot of sport and did a lot of running and track and uuh after a while I ummm I think my dad use to call me Stephen coz of steffi graaf. He always wanted me to be a tennis player and ummm after that I was like short skirts and dresses and you know...

**So has the media influenced that?**

Yes, I think you know we watch a lot of music videos and you watch how people dress and I think id like to be a trend setter...so I really like to dress my own you know.

**10. Do you think that attending a single-sex school has played a role in the development of femininity?**

Yes iv learnt a lot from uhhhh from how to carry myself. I have this thing about walking on grass I just cant bring myself to do it (laughs). And um how to walk, how to carry myself, I think that is very important coz ummm I think girls have become so ummm not interested in those kind of things. It's like you know I have to stand out in a crowd and they forget about manners and how to be a lady...like I think that's really important.

**So the school that you are in, they teach you how to be lady-like?**

Yes, to carry yourself like a young lady, they teach you how to empower yourself. You don't have to be ummm how can I say, you don't have to be umm loud in what you have to do. You can do things with grace and you can get a lot accomplished.

**11. Do you have or had a boyfriend?**

Yes, I have several

**12. Does being in an all girl school make it difficult to get a boyfriend? How so?**

At first I thought it would be difficult but as you start talking with different girls then uuuhhh talking to them and going places then you meet a lot of people, people that you never thought you'd meet before and you make a lot of friends and I think that's more important than ummm...you know, trying to find a boyfriend, it's like trying to make friends I would think...yaaa but it was difficult at first but I think when you ummm, I wouldn't say put yourself out there but..you become more friendly...ya you do attract a lot of guys.

**So you say you have several boyfriends?**

Guy friends.

**Do you have a boyfriend.**

Yes I do have a boyfriend.

**13. What do you feel is the appropriate time period to know a person before engaging in sexual acts?**

Ummm I don't think that a time period would be uhh...you can put any time because ummm because how well do you know this person and how many years does it really take to know a person to be honest. I think when you are emotionally ready and that guys emotionally ready then you are ready to face the consequences of whatever may happen, then that's the right time.

**14. What do you understand by risky sexual behaviour?**

Ummm having sex without a condom, ummm having many partners, umm yaa that's about it I would think.

**15. Are you aware of the consequences of risky sexual behaviour? if so, where have you received this information and by who?**

Yes, STD's and HIV, well it's all very...they teach us at school. We have lo and they tell us all about these and what could happen to us and we watched this one disgusting video which I will never forget in my whole life. This thing that looked like a cauliflower and I will never ever want that to happen to me in my whole life.

**16. Many men and women are aware of the consequences of risky behaviour yet they still engage in risky behaviour i.e. not using a condom, why do you think this is so?**

I think they just uhhh I don't think they realize the full consequences of their actions or I think they living in some kind of denial...they don't want to accept the reality. My friend says they live in a dreamland. So I don't know.

**17. How do you think alcohol and/or drugs impact on risky sexual behaviour?**

Ummm....it makes you more loose, it makes you more open. If you are a quiet person and you have a couple of shots and a couple of drinks and a smoke of this and puff of that, you become more at ease with yourself and I think you'd say things you wouldn't say out loud, you do things that you normally wouldn't do so it's like you not that quiet person anymore. It makes you more loud and open to become more daring coz when I have alcohol I become very brave. I am a brave person but I would normally do things that I don't do.

**18. Who do you feel is more to blame for engaging in risky behaviour? men or women? Why?**

Both, I don't think, I think we blame guys as well but it's also girls that...you know...go into this, they let themselves into the situation and girls are also very risky, at school you'll see them, lots of girls dating girls and trying new things, kissing girls. You know umm I guess they just want to experience. I think in a all girl school when they see a guy they just wanna do as much as they can with that guy (laughs) before he runs away or whatever the case is but with a co-ed school I think you have more time.

**19. Many women are considered vulnerable, do you consider yourself vulnerable? Has being in a single-sex school influenced your point of view?**

Mmmm yaa, ok because I am sexually active and umm I do use a condom which is very grouse they say and I say. Uuuhhh but I try and protect myself ummm I'm trying my very best to protect myself against any kind of disease or pregnancy coz I don't want to have a baby right now, I'm too pretty.

**20. Do you think sexually active teenagers should get tested for HIV regularly? Why or why not?**

Yes, ummm it's very important to know your status I feel because you can be involved with someone that you have known your whole life and we don't know how they got it or if they got it but you in contact with that person. You may think its harmless but we don't know, I don't know uuuhhh if you get sexually involved with that person...you know what you are at risk so its better to know your status I believe. But I don't know mine yet coz I am too scared to get tested.

**Why are you scared? What are you scared of?**

I'm scared that, umm it's not that I'm scared of a positive ummm result. I'm just scared of actually going and doing the actual test coz I don't really like needles and...

**21. According to literature, many men and women do not get tested for HIV, why do you think this is so?**

I think they don't want to believe that you know what that this is a disease that has no cure and that you know what if I get it...you know what my life now has a time limit. There's a clock ticking and it's a very scary thought for anyone.

**22. Have you or your partner been tested for HIV?**

My partner has, I haven't.

**Whose decision was it? his or yours?**

Ummm he had to do it for work and I haven't yet.

**23. Do girls in this school (without mentioning names) have much older boyfriends? Why do you think they do?**

Yes, like myself. Boys my age are very immature. They only want to laugh and giggle and you can't really have a nice conversation or a decent conversation I can say and they only (sigh) they like to play games and I'm not into playing games

**24. How do these girls get boyfriends considering that they are in a single-sex school?**

Ummm boys around the area, ummm social clubs, groups, church, there's lots of ways, going out to the movies, to the malls. You meet people and now it's so easy coz you just get their number, you got them on facebook, you got them on bbm, whatsapp, chat you know...it's very easy to communicate, mxit.

**25. How are these girls able to meet their boyfriends?**

We normally go out to malls, to movies. Parents drop us off and pick us up and what we do in the mall they don't really know.

**26. Would you consider having an older boyfriend? Why or why not?**

Refer to question 23.

**27. What age of a boyfriend would be considered normal amongst your school mates?**

Well, up to 25 I would guess. 25 year olds.

**28. What are your feelings on boys being in control in the relationship?**

Oh, I always have a say. I always have, I have control problems myself. I like to be in charge, I don't do anything that I know...I feel like I'm not going to be in control of ummm....so if I'm putting myself in this risky situation I would definitely have a say and I would want my voice to be heard....ummm..I won't want anyone to tell me what to do, where I should go, what I should do. But umm I think we all have a say and girls should really speak up.

**29. Have you been in a relationship where a boy was in charge and made decisions for you?**

**Explain.**

No, I don't think he would of had a chance with me.

**30. What are your views on multiple sex partners?**

I really, I can't speak for anyone else, for myself I really cannot see myself doing that. I don't think I could do that. I would feel like ummmm like I'm being used or you know. I can't see myself doing that or being in that situation.

**31. Do you think that it is wrong for a girl to have multiple sexual partners? Why or why not?**

**32. Do you think that it is wrong for a boy to have multiple sexual partners? Why or why not?**

People say it's ok for boys but for boys to have multiple sexual partners when it's girls she's called a slut or a ho and I think we, it's...it's been ummmm we've been grown up with this you know what boys get

away with a lot more than girls can and when it comes to this its right and wrong. You know what if a boy does this, this and this and he's let off the hook and if a girl does this, this and this and now she has to face the consequences. She's been called names, she's been doing that. For example someone's having an affair, if it's a girl having an affair with another guy oh she's at the wrong but if it's a guy having an affair oh he's allowed to do it and I think when it comes to things like that.

**33. Has attending an all girl school impacted the decisions made in terms of sexual activity?  
Explain.**

Yes, I think it would. I think it has for me. My best friends are girls and I love them to bits but I wouldn't want to have sexual interaction with them or risky sexual behaviour with them.

**34. Are there any lesbians in your school?**

Of course yes, is that a trick question.

**35. Do you feel that being in a single-sex school has influenced the decisions of these girls in terms of their sexuality?**

I think so, I think it gave them a place where they feel they can do it, they feel safe, they can be themselves. Ummm I think if they were in a co-ed school it would be harder uhhh they would be named and shamed and people would mock them. I think when it's an all girl school people become, you know they accepted more easily. Even now when I see a lesbian couple it's like nothing, it's like you know what just another couple. I don't have any...because I've been with this for so long.

**36. Have you heard of people associating single-sex schools with lesbianism?**

Yes, I think everyone thinks that there's only lesbians in all girl schools and it's totally wrong.

**37. Has being in a single-sex school caused you to want to experiment with the same sex?**

Yes, it did once.

**38. Do you regret any decisions you have made? Why or why not?**

No, I haven't.

**39. Are there fights at your school amongst girls?**

Yes, there is a lot of physical fights ummm a lot of cattish talks and things but there is physical where girls are hitting each other and....

**Why? What are some of the reasons?**

Uhhh I think ummm sometimes it's just you stealing my boyfriend, you dancing with my boyfriend and you know very childish things I would say.

## PROFESSIONAL EDITING OF THESIS

This is to confirm that the thesis:

'Understanding risky sexual behaviour among young women in a single-sex school in the Durban area in the context of HIV & AIDS', by Nicole Shaney (207508579) has been professionally edited again.

Name: LESKE HALL

Signature: Leske Hall

Date: 5 MARCH 2015

## Dissertation

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<b>2</b>	Deevia Bhana. "Beyond passivity: constructions of femininities in a single-sex South African school", Educational Review, 02/2011 Publication	<1%
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