A GROUP OF SEMI-RURAL, LOW-INCOME ADOLESCENTS' CONSTRUCTIONS OF INTIMACY IN ROMANTIC RELATIONSHIPS
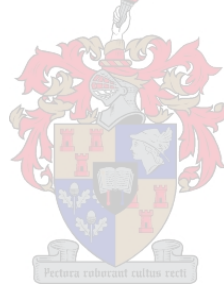
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Thesis presented in fulfilment for the requirements of the degree of Master of Arts (Psychology) in the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences at Stellenbosch University

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DECLARATION

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ABSTRACT

Intimate and satisfying relationships in adolescence are connected to mental health and well-being and have significant implications for adolescent psychosocial development. Despite the benefits of romantic involvement, research into adolescents' experiences within their romantic relationships is limited. Few studies on adolescent intimacy experiences, especially those leading to conceptualizations of intimacy, have been undertaken. The majority of studies that have been conducted on adolescents' intimacy experiences have been conducted in White, Euro-American, middle-class samples, using quantitative methodology and researchers' definitions of the construct. In South Africa adolescent romantic relationships are often studied because of their links with pressing social issues, such as teenage pregnancy, intimate partner violence and risky sexual behaviour and HIV/AIDS, rather than for the value of understanding the relationships themselves. The resultant negative constructions of adolescent romance in research literature serve to continue the narrow scope of inquiry into adolescent intimate relationships and also limit the ability of professionals and care-givers to respond to the relationship challenges of South African youth.

The present study was aimed at addressing some of the limitations of previous research on adolescent romantic relationship experiences, with a particular focus on intimacy. Coloured adolescents from a low-income, semi-rural community in the Western Cape were selected as participants for the inquiry due to the overwhelming lack of knowledge about the constructions of intimacy in this group. Social constructionism was used as a theoretical framework to ground and inform the study. The research objective was to develop an understanding of the constructions and experiences of intimacy of middle adolescents within the specific target community. A social constructionist grounded theory method was used. In-depth interviews were conducted with 20 young men and women.

The social constructionist grounded theory analysis indicated that participants appeared to strive toward having ideal relationships as portrayed in the Western popular media. Participants' constructions of intimacy centred on behaviour rather than on abstract, emotional experience, Their relationship experiences and behaviours reflected discourses of gendered romantic relationship interaction, with boys emphasizing commitment and girls focusing on "doing emotion work" as pathways to experiencing and expressing intimacy. The researcher raises the possibility that adolescent boy's and girl's striving toward ideal Western relationships, media and peer reinforcement of these ideal relationships and adolescents' specific developmental cognitive limitations may limit their capacity for knowing themselves and their partners in their romantic

relationships and contribute to inauthenticity in romantic relationships. As Western mainstream intimacy discourses stress the importance of self and partner knowledge, as well as authenticity in romantic relationships, these discourses therefore make it difficult to recognize and validate adolescents' intimacy experiences. In fact these discourses imply that adolescents have a limited ability to experience intimacy. The researcher argues that by situating intimacy in the context of behaviours rather than emotional experience, understandings of intimacy can move beyond the essentialist depictions of what is and is not intimate, thus allowing for a range of behaviours to count as intimate, broadening the possibilities for conceptualizing and acknowledging intimacy.

OPSOMMING

Intieme en bevredigende verhoudings in adolessensie is verbind aan geestelike gesondheid en welsyn en het beduidende implikasies vir die adolessent se psigososiale ontwikkeling Ten spyte hiervan, is navorsingoor adolessentese ervaringsin hulromantiese verhoudingsbeperk. Minstudies ooradolessenteintimiteit, veral dié wat lei totbegrippevanintimiteit, isonderneem.Diemeerderheid van studiesooradolessente seintimiteitservaringsis uitgevoer inWit,Euro-Amerikaanse, middelklas steekproewe. In Suid-Afrika word adolessente se romantiese verhoudings dikwels bestudeervanweehul assosiasie met dreigende sosiale kwessies soos tienerswangerskappe, intieme maatgeweld, riskante seksuele gedrag en MIV/VIGS, eerder as vir die waarde van die begrip van die verhoudings self. Die gevolglike negatiewe konstruksies van adolessente se romantiese betrokkenheid dra by tot die beperkte fokus en omvang van ondersoekeoor adolessente se romantiese verhoudings, en ook die beperkte vermoë van professionele mense en versorgers om te reageer op die verhoudingsuitdagings van die Suid-Afrikaanse jeug te beperk.

Die huidige studie was daarop gemik om van die beperkings van vorige navorsing oor adolessente se romantiese verhoudingservarings, met 'n besondere fokus op intimiteit, aan te spreek. Kleurling adolessente van 'n semi-landelike gemeenskap in die Wes Kaap is gekies as deelnemers as gevolg van die oorweldigende gebrek aan kennis oor die konstruksie van intimiteit in hierdie groep. 'nSosiaal-konstruktionistiese raamwerk is gebruik om die studie te begrond en te rig. Die navorsingsdoelwit was om 'n begrip van die ervarings van intimiteit van middel-adolessente binne die spesifieke teikengemeenskap te ontwikkel. Hierdie doel is bereik deur gebruik te maak van 'n sosiaal-konstruksionistiese gegrondeteoriemetode.In-diepte onderhoude is gevoer met 20 adolessente mans en vrouens.

Die sosiaal konstruktionistiese gegronde teorie analise het aangedui dat deelnemers se konstruksies van intimiteit gedrag eerder as emosionele ervaring in hul intimiteitsvertellings beklemtoon het. Hul verhouding ervarings en gedrag weerspieël diskoerse van geslagtelike romantiese verhoudinginteraksie met seuns wattoewyding en meisies wat die "doen van emosie werk" beklemtoon as roetes na intimiteit. Deelnemers blyk om te streef na ideale verhoudings soos uitgebeeld is in die Wes-populêre media, duer 'n behoefte om in te pas en aanvaar te word deur hul eweknieë. Hierdie proses kan deelnemers lei om op te tree en hulle gedagtes oor romantiese verhoudings uit te spreek in ooreenstemming met wat algemeen aanvaar word binne hul portuurgroep, eerder as in die maniere wat hulle eie oortuigings, begrip en begeertes weerspieël. Hierdie proses lei tot 'n beperkte kennis en bewustheid van die self as' n romantiese vennoot sowel

as 'n neiging tot onoutentieke grdrag in romantiese verhoudings. Hierdie beperkte self-bewustheid en onoutentieke gedrag inhibeer dan adolessente se vermoë om intimiteit te ervaar wanneer dit volgens die hoofstroom konstruksies daarvan beskou is. Die bevindinge dui op die behoefte aan die gebruik van breër definisies van intimiteit in die oorweging van adolessente romantiese verhoudings, die bou van alternatiewe diskoerse van intimiteit en'n verhoging van leiding deur volwassenes ten opsigte vanadoloesente se romantiese verhoudings Sekere beperkings van die huidige navorsing het ook verwys na 'n behoefte aan meer navorsing oor die invloed van' n wyer kontekstuele faktore in adolessente se konstruksies van intimiteit.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION AND MOTIVATION FOR THE RESEARCH

1. Introduction

In Western society the importance of building and maintaining relationships is emphasized in socialization and by the time individuals reach late adolescence society expects them to be able to make a commitment to a partner and be intimate in their romantic relationships (Bakken & Romig, 1992). As individuals move from preadolescence to adolescence, romantic relationships take an increasingly central position in their social world (Furman, 2002). Adolescents report that their romantic relationships are of the most important and influential of all their interpersonal relationships (Adams, Laursen & Wilder, 2001).

Emotional intimacy is considered an essential feature of adult romantic relationships (Gaia, 2002). Researchers have identified adolescence as an important time in the formation of the capacity for intimacy (Paul & White, 1990; Prager, 1995; Zimmer-Gembeck & Petherick, 2006). The increased capacity for intimacy is linked to developmental changes in the concerns, needs and stresses adolescents face during this stage of development (Prager, 1995). As individuals proceed to lessen their dependence on their parents and seek other close relationships during adolescence (Miller & Benson, 1999), romantic relationships begin to serve as contexts in which emerging non-familial intimacy and affiliation needs can be met (Connolly & McIsaac, 2009). Changes in physiology, social cognition and social roles have been identified as contributors to adolescents' increasing need and capacity for intimacy in close relationships (Paul & White, 1990).

Even when adolescent romantic relationships are of short duration, it is important to avoid the adult perspective that longer-lasting relationships are more intimate or somehow superior when addressing adolescent relationships (Giordano, Manning & Longmore, 2005). When adolescent relationships are short-lived, they are nevertheless, intimate and intense (Feiring, 1996). Indeed, as with adult romantic relationships, intimacy is a central feature of adolescent romantic relationships (Taradash, Connolly, Pepler, Craig & Costa, 2001) and adolescents place a great deal of value on intimacy in their romantic relationships (Shulman & Scharf, 2000).

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2. Motivation for the study

Despite the known physical and mental health benefits and developmental implications of romantic relationships, there is a general lack of research on the romantic relationships of adolescents. Particularly, there is a lack of qualitative research which could provide a deeper understanding of adolescents' experiences within their romantic relationships from the perspectives of the adolescents themselves. The need for increased research contributing to such an understanding is discussed below.

2.1. The importance of romantic relationships for individual well-being

Intimate and satisfying relationships in adulthood are considered essential for good health, ability to adapt, happiness and a sense of meaning in life (Popovic, 2005). They also have the ability to affect individuals' mental and physical health (Popovic, 2005). Not only do adolescent romantic relationships play an important part in the development of adult relationships (Shulman & Scharf, 2000) but romantic involvement also has important implications for behaviour, development and well-being in adolescence (Brown, Feiring & Furman, 1999; Collins, Welsh & Furman, 2009; Heinrich & Gullone, 2006; Welsh, Galliher, Kawaguchi & Rostosky, 1999). Positive mental health benefits of romantic relationships in adolescence include: the development of intimacy, receipt of social support, positive identity development and increased self-esteem (Collins, 2003; Connolly & Konarski, 1994; Paul & White, 1990).

Intimacy itself is also related to physical and psychological well-being (Hook, Gerstein, Detterich & Gridley 2003). This may be because of the positive affect and perception of understanding that arise from intimate experience (Prager, 1995). According to Hook and colleagues (Hook et al., 2003), people who do not have intimate relationships experience greater stress related symptoms of illness, are more likely to become ill with a slower recovery rate, are at increased risk of relapse or the recurrence of illness, have higher mortality and accident rates, show greater depressed immunological functioning and are at a greater risk for developing depression than those who are involved in intimate relationships. Conversely, the presence of intimate relationships has been shown to have positive effects on the lives of those who experience them as it is associated with happiness, contentment and a sense of well-being and social support (Hook et al., 2003).

It is important to identify the features of adolescents' romantic relationships in order to gain an understanding of what effects experiences in these relationships may have on development and

well-being (Sippola, 1999). However, little is presently known about what relationships are like at this time (Brown et al., 1999; Furman & Simon, 1998; Shulman & Kipnis, 2001; Shulman & Scharf, 2000). Most research on aspects of romantic relationships has been conducted on individuals in late adolescence and adulthood (Feiring, 1996; Shulman & Scharf, 2000). It is only in the last decade that researchers have begun to extensively investigate adolescent romantic relationships (Furman & Shomaker, 2008).

The past lack of interest in adolescent romance has impeded attempts to conceptualize adolescent romantic experience (Shulman & Kipnis, 2001). According to Allen (2004), research has paid little attention to the meanings adolescents make of their relationships, instead assuming these relationships to be self-explanatory. By taking for granted that what adolescent romantic relationships entail is known, their diversity and complexity are hidden (Allen, 2004).

2.2. A need to challenge negative constructions of adolescent romantic interactions

In the South African context, adolescent romantic relationships are often studied because of their links with pressing psychosocial issues, rather than for the value of understanding the relationships themselves. Research indicates high rates of adolescent pregnancy (Kaufman, De Wet & Stadler, 2001) and the presence of violence in adolescent romantic relationships in South Africa (Swart, Seedat, Stevens & Ricardo, 2002), It is estimated that 10-12% of people aged between 15 and 24 years in South Africa live with HIV, making up 15% of the world's HIV-infected young people (Harrison, 2008). It is thus not surprising that a vast amount of South African research into adolescents' romantic behaviour and experience has focused on intimate partner violence, sexual behaviour and HIV/AIDS. When risky behaviour has dire consequences for individuals and relationships, as it does in the case of the contraction of HIV (Varga, 1997), it is understandable that research in South African on adolescent romantic relationships has focused on risky sexual behaviour (Frizelle, 2004). However, Frizelle (2004) argues that the resulting negative constructions of adolescent romance in research literature lead to "limited and narrow responses to the challenges of youth" (p. 79). These constructions may also have led to the narrow and limited scope of inquiry into adolescent intimate relationships, reinforcing the constructions and further impeding abilities to respond to the challenges of youth in South Africa.

It would be difficult to determine what the ideal developmental outcomes of romantic involvement are if the normal variances in development are not known. "Using a single conceptual template to represent all adolescents' experiences limits the extent to which we can understand variations in

normal development" (O'Sullivan, Cheng, Harris, & Brooks-Gunn, 2007, p. 100). Increasing our knowledge of young people's interpersonal experiences is necessary for developing resources that go beyond treating problem behaviours or preventing negative outcomes by promoting positive development in the interpersonal lives of young people (Lerner, Fisher & Weinberg cited in Montgomery, 2005).

2.3. Understanding adolescents' experiences of intimacy from their perspectives

Duck and colleagues (Duck, West & Acitelli, 1997) argue that there exists a discrepancy between the actual lived experience of interpersonal relationships and the way that interpersonal relationships are portrayed in abstractions derived from the type of interpersonal relationship research that is currently being conducted. The authors go on to say that losing sight of the lived experience of interpersonal relationships is tantamount to losing sight of the purpose of interpersonal relationship research.

There is still much disagreement about what intimacy actually is and how it manifests (Mackey, Diemer & O' Brien, 2000). Few studies on adolescent intimacy experiences, particularly those leading to operational definitions of adolescent intimacy, have been conducted (Collins et al., 2009; Thériault, 1998; Winstanley, Meyers & Florshein, 2002). Particularly little is known about adolescents' perceptions of their romantic relationship experiences (Williams & Hickle, 2010) with research investigating intimacy mostly employing researchers', rather than participants', definitions of the construct (Monsour, 1992). By using quantitative measures of emotional intimacy, researchers have approached studies of adolescent romantic relationships with a preconceived notion of what emotional intimacy is and what it means to adolescents. However, a more complete picture of adolescent romantic relationships necessarily requires an understanding of subjectively experienced aspects (Giordano et al., 2005). Rather than working on assumptions of what emotional intimacy in adolescent relationships entails, the qualitative approach adopted in the present study aims to access adolescents' meanings and understandings (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999) of their relationships to broaden our understanding of the subjective experiences of adolescent romance.

2.4. The need for contextual research

The benefits of intimacy can only be understood in the context in which intimacy occurs (Prager, 1995). However, the lack of attention paid to the lived experience of interpersonal relationships has

obscured the importance of context in modifying and influencing the ways in which relating is carried out (Duck et al., 1997).

Adolescents' interpersonal relationships are shaped by a host of unique developmental and social issues (Winstanley et al., 2002). Since socio-cultural factors play an important role in shaping adolescent development, including their interpersonal experiences (O'Sullivan, et al., 2007), adolescents from different socio-cultural backgrounds may have different interpersonal experiences, such as those of intimacy in their romantic relationships. Most previous studies on the interpersonal dimensions of romantic relationships, such as emotional intimacy, have been conducted in white, Euro-American, middle-class samples (Conradie, 2006; Pagano & Hirsch, 2007; Furman, 2002). Research on other groups is needed (Furman, 2002). Considering the unique challenges faced by previously disadvantaged groups in South Africa, it is reasonable to assume that Coloured adolescents may have interpersonal experiences that are not addressed by existing research. Thus, research on South African Coloured adolescents would be particularly valuable.

Appropriate behaviour and ways of experiencing are learnt in families and communities that are gendered (and racialized) sites in which dominant definitions are reproduced and reinforced (Reddy & Dunne, 2007). Thus, race, gender and class interact in complex ways in the construction of gender and heterosexual identities as these identities are racialized and ethnitized and are expressed through social class positions (Bhana & Pillay, 2011; Frosh, Phoenix & Pattman, 2003; Luyt, 2003; Pattman, 2002, 20005). In South Africa, ways in which gender inequalities operate at a contextual level to reinforce unequal power relations between women and men, has been well documented (Bhana & Pattman, 2009). Women continue to experience inequality and are oppressed in their everyday lives (e.g. Gouws, 2005). As a group, female farm workers in the Western Cape (who are primarily Coloured) are particularly marginalized and powerless members of South African society (Kritzinger & Vorster, 1996). The inequality and oppression women face, can be understood as a function of the discourses that prescribe traditional gender roles for men and women. According to Shefer et al. (2008), traditional gender roles and relations predominate in economically disadvantaged and historically disenfranchised Western Cape communities. Traditional beliefs about male dominance and female subservice are still evident (Shefer et al., 2008), thus reinforcing gender inequalities in relationships.

Reddy and Dunne (2007) argue that "understanding the ways in which sexual identities are constructed within gender relations is crucial for the achievement of gender equity" (p. 159). Research has drawn attention to contemporary forms of masculinity characterized by uncertainties

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in social roles and identity, sexuality and personal relationships, which often manifests in violence or the abuse of self or others (Frosh et al., 2003). Women are positioned as passive victims without agency rather than as complicit in their gender positioning as they actively construct their sexuality and create their identities in ways that shape and regulate gender and sexual relationships (Bhana & Pillay, 2011). Challenging the discourses that associate masculinity with violence and dominance over girls and women (Bhana & Pattman, 2009) and thus as the inevitable perpetrators of violence on passive female victims, is essential for creating gender equity in relationships.

As Pattman (2002) suggests, the aim of challenging discourses of hegemonic masculinity is not to replace the discourse of men as strong and hedonistic with one which constructs men as romantic and emotional, but rather to encourage men to examine how they embody these contradictions. Uncovering and examining the discourses that construct women as passive victims may be addressed by encouraging women to address how their identities are constructed in relation to powerful masculinities (Pattman, 2002). Rather than placing girls unquestioningly into representations of passivity there is value in exploring the cultural and social variants that could tell us more about specific formations of femininity (Bhana & Pillay, 2011).

Heterosexuality is central to young people's cultures and relationships (Bhana & Pillay, 2011) and will shape how they construct their identities as romantic partners. These constructions prescribe certain ways of behaving in and experiencing romantic relationships, including those behaviours and experiences related to intimacy. While the present study does not address sexual identities specifically, the heterosexual identities prescribed by dominant cultural discourses on gender may be played out in all aspects of heterosexual relationships, including the experience of intimacy. Influenced by constructions of gender and heterosexual identities, intimacy intersects in complex ways with race, gender, class and sexuality. Individuals' gender and heterosexual identities are socially derived and constructed from the cultural resources available to them (Pattman, 2006). An array of different gender and heterosexual identities are constructed within South Africa's unique socio-historical contexts (Luyt, 2003). An "uneven landscape of social interaction locates each individual in pre-existing, while at the same time changing," notions of identity (Luyt, 2003, p. 65) as identities are constantly re-negotiated as individuals interact with others (Pattman, 2006). Thus, the group studied in the present research may have constructions of gender and heterosexuality unique to their context. A more contextualized understanding of low-income, semi-rural Coloured adolescents' constructions of gender, heterosexuality and intimacy within their specific context will be valuable in helping to challenge prevailing discourses. It will also allow for a wider range of

identities or versions of identities that influence how men and women relate in more equitable and positive ways to be created and brought to the fore.

3. Conclusion

Little is presently known about the nature of adolescents' romantic relationships and intimacy experiences. Adolescents' relationships were once considered trivial, transitory, or artefacts of social dysfunction (Collins et al., 2009). This conception is, in part, implicated in the dearth of research on adolescent romantic relationships.

In light of troubling HIV/AIDS, pregnancy and intimate partner violence statistics among the youth, South African research on adolescent romantic relationships has unsurprisingly focused on sexual risk behaviour, violence and victimization in these relationships. The negative constructions of adolescents' romantic experiences cultivated by such research and past lack of academic interest in adolescent romantic relationships for their own sake, has impeded the expansion of our knowledge and understanding of these formative relationships, particularly regarding the experience of such interpersonal qualities as intimacy. Research must serve to challenge negative constructions. Furthermore, the importance and value adolescents attach to romantic relationships, as well as these relationships' significant implications for the well-being and development of adolescents, underscore the need to better understand the features of adolescents' romantic relationships. Despite the knowledge that socio-cultural factors play an important role in shaping adolescents' interpersonal experiences, the majority of studies on adolescent intimacy experiences in their romantic relationships have been conducted among white, middle-class North American and European samples. Research among other groups, specifically South African groups, is needed to broaden our understanding of the contextual influences on romantic interaction in adolescence. Specifically, a contextualized understanding of low-income, semi-rural Coloured adolescents' constructions of intimacy is needed in order to challenge prevailing discourses and allow for a wider range of identities to be constructed and brought to the fore.

Even in light of the disagreement about a definition of intimacy and how it manifests, few studies have been conducted on the conceptualizations of adolescent intimacy. Particularly little is known about adolescents' own understanding of their romantic relationship experiences. A more accurate picture of adolescent romantic relationships requires an understanding of subjectively experienced aspects of these relationships and a qualitative approach to conducting research will be useful in accessing participants' own meanings and understandings rather than working on assumptions of

what emotional intimacy in adolescent relationships. A qualitative approach is also better equipped to incorporate the contextual features known to have a significant impact on romantic relationship experiences and behaviour and which are crucial for understanding the benefits of intimacy.

The present study therefore aimed to address the limitations of previous research and broaden our understanding of the intimacy experiences from the adolescent perspective by exploring the experience and expression of emotional intimacy in the romantic relationships of South African Coloured[1] adolescents living in a low-income, semi-rural community in the Western Cape.

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[1] [1] The term as a marker of a specific political history and cultural identity is discussed on page 21.

CHAPTER 2

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND DEFINITIONS OF KEY CONCEPTS

In this chapter, social constructionism as the theoretical framework which informed the present inquiry is discussed. This will be followed by a discussion of the social construction of romantic relationships and intimacy.

1. Social constructionism as a framework for psychological inquiry

In order to acquire knowledge through scientific inquiry, we need to have a theoretical framework as a basis from which to assess our judgments (Liebrucks, 2001). One such framework, social constructionism, was used to guide the present research. Social constructionism refers to a number of differently nuanced, overlapping perspectives which represent a way of knowing the world, a particular belief system or worldview that defines the nature of the researcher's inquiry in terms of its ontology, epistemology and methodology (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Durrheim, 1997; Guba & Lincoln, 2005).

A move toward a social constructionist approach to psychological research was, in part, spurred by the realization that the predictive models of positivist-empiricist methods favoured in the natural sciences have failed to adequately contribute to knowledge production in the field because they are not appropriate to the subject matter of psychology (Durrheim, 1997). Treating human beings as natural scientific objects which react in a mechanistic way to the environment, as psychology has done in the past, has meant that the discipline has ignored a fundamental feature of the subject of inquiry, that is, the *meaningful* nature of human activity (Durrheim, 1997). Durrheim (1997) argues that meaningful activity rather than predictive models of human behaviour should be the subject of psychological investigation (Durrheim, 1997).

From a social constructionist perspective social reality is constructed by people as they formulate representations of reality by assigning meaning to objects and experiences to make sense of them (Sarantakos, 2005). The assignment of meaning is guided by cultural mechanisms such as socialization, which teach people to recognize meanings in subjects (Sarantakos, 2005). In this way meanings are produced by a process of reflexivity, in which people reflect on a set of actions from within a frame of reference, or discourse, which provides them with a way of interpreting the world (Burr, 1995; Durrheim, 1997). The discourses held at a particular time by a particular group make

meanings readily available to individuals, already having been constructed, sustained and reconstructed through interaction and conveyed through language (Liebrucks, 2001; Sarantakos, 2005). Making sense of the world is thus a social and not an individual, solitary process (Hosking & Morley, 2004) and the meanings which motivate actions are defined in terms of shared convention.

The social constructionist perspective does not negate the role of the subject of interpretation in the construction of meaning but emphasises the important role that culture and society play in this construction by providing frameworks through which we can understand objects and experiences (Sarantakos, 2005). Meanings are employed in various contexts based on cultural instructions. Thus meaning is always defined by and situated within cultural and historical contexts (Sarantakos, 2005). Action and experience are then only meaningful within a context; against an inherited, historical, social background (Durrheim, 1997). It is therefore only possible to ascertain people's meaning of their creations, words, actions and experiences through the contexts in which they occur (Terre Blanche & Kelly, 1999).

Since all meanings, including culturally specific behaviour patterns and psychological functions, are formed by discursive means, the origin of these behaviours and functions depend on social interaction (Liebrucks, 2001). Psychological terms thus do not represent the 'inner world' of mental events but are rendered meaningful only through the social practices in which they function and are constituents of social processes (Gergen, 1985). As Liebrucks (2001) argues, "meanings are intrinsically intersubjective phenomena" (p. 384) and cannot exist only in the mind of the individual. Since meanings originate in socially shared constructions, these constructions, not the fictional inner, subjective experiences, must be the object of psychological investigations (Durrheim, 1997).

Since the social world and psychological concepts are culturally and historically situated products of social processes there can be no given or determined nature of people (Burr, 1995). Thus, except in highly abstract terms, there can be no universal psychological accounts of facts about the psychological realm that can be discovered as the truth (Gergen, 1985), but only accounts of culturally specific psychological phenomena (Liebrucks, 2001). Thus, rather than focusing on universal principles, social constructionists focus on the discursive processes by which people construct their worlds (Liebrucks, 2001). Social constructionist psychological research is thus not interested in producing causal explanations, but rather makes references to social rules and conventions in order to show how an event makes sense in the way that it happens (Liebrucks, 2001).

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Social constructionist research then is concerned with understanding the meaning making processes (Guba & Lincoln, 2005), "explicating the processes by which people describe, explain or otherwise account for the world (including themselves) in which they live" (Gergen, 1985, p. 266). This may be achieved by identifying the various ways of constructing social reality that are available to people, exploring the conditions of their use and tracing their implications for human experience and social interaction (Willig, 2001).

2.   A critique of social constructionism

While useful in allowing for the study of the appropriate subject matter of psychology and providing a framework for assessing the knowledge produced by psychological research, social constructionism does not escape criticism.

2.1. The problem of personhood

The social constructionist understanding of language holds that the relationship between words and the world is arbitrary; language does not function to provide labels for objects and events that exist 'out there' in the world (Edley, 2001). Rather, words represent a construction of that to which they refer. However, the notion that every object of our consciousness, everything we think of and talk about is constructed through language, manufactured through discourse, raises problems related to the nature of personhood and agency (Burr, 1995).

From this view, Burr (1995) argues, all 'psychological properties' such as attitudes, opinions, drives, motivations and emotions are only present in discourse and do not have an existence outside of or beyond language. The social constructionist that accepts that persons are created in and through conversation treats people as having no intrinsic nature at all (Maze, 2001). What is left is an empty person, devoid of any psychological properties. Thus, the social constructionist perspective leaves questions surrounding personhood and subjectivity unresolved.

The question of the existence of the individual and subjective experience is partially answered by the capacity of an individual to create particular configurations of self-representations and conceptions, made up of the conventions available within a culture to organize experience (Burr, 1995; Jenkins, 2001). That is, people develop a sense of self due to the personal constructions or meanings that they place on what they are presented by their social and physical environments

(Jenkins, 2001). People construct their own subjectivities albeit under conditions that are not of their choosing (Nightingale & Cromby, 2002).

2.2. The problem of agency

Then, as Burr (1995) asks, if people are products of discourse and the things they say and do only have status only as manifestations of these discourse, can we be said to have any agency? According to Burr (1995) it has been argued that individual agency resides in people's active production and manipulation of discourses in addition to their reproduction of them. People are not deterministically bound by their position in a particular discourse. Individuals are able to practice a degree of agency in their ability to frame events in the way that they choose and negotiate their positions in a particular discourse, to accept or resist the positions offered to them, thus making social and individual change possible (Burr, 1995; Jenkins, 2001).

2.3. The problems of making claims of truth

Since there are multiple and conflicting discourses that describe the same object and there can be no 'truth'. Since claims of truth or facts can never be objective and there is no way of judging one perspective as being more truthful than another, it is meaningless to say that one version of reality is more accurate than another (Durrheim, 1997). Social constructionism however does not endorse a relativistic, 'anything goes' view of knowledge.

Different descriptions do not reflect different worlds but rather refer to the same world seen from a different perspective (Liebrucks, 2001). While different descriptions of a phenomenon given by two people of differing conceptual backgrounds can both be true at the same time (i.e. true for them), this does not mean that every description can be as valid as any other. Rather it follows that since descriptions are always based on historically contingent assumptions and ways of investigating a phenomenon, each description is only able to pick out certain aspects of the phenomenon (Liebrucks, 2001). Social constructionism does not deny that there are truths but maintains that truths and facts always arise from interpretations from a certain perspective which can only emerge against the backdrop of socially shared understandings (Durrheim, 1997). Thus, as Gergen (2001) puts it social constructionism espouses a *situated* form of realism in that it is "located within a historically and culturally circumscribed tradition or form of life" (p. 424).

3. Social constructionism and the present study

3.1. Adolescence

In the present study 'adolescence' is used to denote a specific period in an individual's life demarcated by upper and lower boundaries of chronological age. This conceptualization of adolescence understands it as a stage of life situated between the onset of physiological puberty and recognition of adult status (Feixa, 2011). It is based on biological determinism in which the onset of puberty is seen as natural, inevitable and irrevocable and as the defining feature of adolescence (Feixa, 2011; Stevens et al., 2007). This conceptualization informs the prevailing Western developmental discourse that constructs adolescence as a natural, inevitable, universal time of change in which an individual moves, following a developmental blueprint, from a less to more complex organization of physiological, emotional and psychological attributes (Feixa, 2011; Macleod, 2003). However, research in recent decades has indicated much variability and plasticity across space and time of the period in life termed adolescence (Feixa, 2011). Both the chronological boundaries of adolescence and the goals and expectations for this period have varied greatly throughout history and across cultures and societies (Feixa, 2011).

While biological and psychological changes clearly influence adolescent development, it is also moulded by the social and cultural context in which it occurs (Crockett, 1997; Feixa, 2011). Cultures structure adolescent experience by ascribing social significance to various changes that take place in the individual during the period between childhood and adulthood, defining the normative course of the transition to adulthood in each culture and society (Crockett, 1997). Thus, no single, natural or universal pathway for the transition from childhood to adulthood can be said to exist. Rather than viewing the category 'adolescence' as an objective, universal scientific fact it must be viewed as a social construct that is historically and culturally situated, possessing different meanings in different contexts. In South Africa, for example, Macleod (2003) argues that the construction of adolescence "reflects an intertwining of Apartheid ideology and historical and cultural practice" (p. 421). Civil law, customary law, initiation and other rites of passage, amongst others, construct the images and practices regarding children, adolescents and adults in South Africa (Macleod, 2003).

The recognition of the role played by historical, cultural, social, and economic factors in shaping adolescent development and experience poses a challenge to existing theoretical and empirical scholarship on adolescent development (Lam, 2005). The assumptions associated with a

developmental discourse of adolescence are problematic not only because they fail to take into consideration that adolescent development is a social category that is defined by the context in which development occurs, but also because of the way in which they construct adolescence.

The prevailing Western discourse of adolescence as a transitional stage between childhood and adulthood defines adolescence as a category of exclusion in which the adolescent is neither a child nor an adult (Macleod, 2003). The constructs of 'child' and 'adult' each represent characteristics that are absent in the adolescent, but adolescents' lack of adult capacity is emphasized in constructions of adolescence in scientific literature and society in general (Crockett, 1997; Macleod, 2003). When adolescents are thus characterized as lacking in terms of knowledge, decision-making competence, responsibility and emotional maturity, the adult (who is implicitly viewed as the absent trace and that which the adolescent is not), is positioned as knowledgeable, capable of mature decision-making, able to reason, responsible and reliable (Macleod, 2003). This latter decontextualized person is given the ideal status; the self-fulfilling person; the result of development (Macleod, 2003).

The project of development thus becomes tautological, self-serving and self-maintaining: "if the more developed possess what the less developed lack, then not only do those in power define what development is, they also obscure the exercise of such power within the naturalizing language of development" (Burman cited in Macleod, 2003, p. 431). The adult processing the abovementioned cognitive attributes that appear to have universal and timeless utility are invested with power based on the utility of the attributes they possess (Macleod, 2003). The informed logical decision-maker is able to render those lacking these traits as inferior – as lacking. This construction has the potential to marginalize the young person in important decisions that directly affect them.

Furthermore, the positioning of the social scientist as expert in possessing characteristics of the ideal adult and the construction of adolescence as a transitional period also have implications for reinforcing inequalities along gendered lines. According to Macleod (2003) the 'adolescence as transition' discourse constructs the period as one involving restlessness, experimentation, searching, testing the boundaries of existence, and turmoil, which are romanticized to represent a developmental imperative. Some scholarly work, however, stresses the incompatibility of the experimenting adolescent and traditional constructions of femininity. Such scholarship constructs the characteristics associated with the adolescent experimenter, that is, the restlessness, experimentation, searching and testing of the boundaries of existence, as masculine. Female adolescents are frequently construed as passive recipient of external forces (Macleod, 2003). Thus,

as argued by Fine and MacPherson (cited in Macleod, 2003), attempts by girls to satisfy the tenets of the construct of the restless experimenter, that is, by being restless, experimenting, searching and testing boundaries, involves "displaying notably a lack f maturing but also a lack of femininity" (p. 428). Girls are thus depicted as even more deviant and deficient than boys when engaging in experimenting behaviour requiring even more intervention and control from the ideal adult.

3.2. Romantic relationships

Romantic relationships are fundamentally social psychological phenomena (Cavanagh, 2007). People's beliefs and behaviours are influenced and shaped by historic, economic, familial, social and environmental factors that define appropriate behaviour and inform expectations for relationships (Graber, Britto & Brooks-Gunn, 1999; Harding, 2007). Culture has an extensive influence on how people experience the world since culture informs the practice and understanding of social norms, customs and roles, beliefs and attitudes (Peplau, 1983).

Thus, while the feelings individuals have about romantic activity stem from their most personal values, they also reflect the widely adopted ideological beliefs deployed by society and culture (Cavanagh, 2007). These contextual ideological beliefs guide thoughts and actions, shape emotional experiences and influence romantic expectations, feelings and behaviours (Cavanagh, 2007), providing individuals with a lens through which to interpret and react to events associated with romantic experience. Since the understandings and experiences of romantic relationships are likely to be products of cultural meaning systems that already exist (Collins & Madsen, 2006) they reflect socially constructed representations of reality.

The social construction of romantic relationships has important implications for how behaviour is organized through scripting (Rose, 2000). At the cultural level scripts serve as guides that exist in collective life that instruct individuals on the requirements of certain roles within relationships. These cultural prescriptions are then adopted by an individual in a specific social context, becoming interpersonal scripts. The scripts adopted by an individual then represent his or her personal wishes and desires (Rose, 2000). These scripts are informed by culture and so ultimately it is cultural scripts that primarily serve as the blueprints for behaviour (Rose, 2000).

3.2.1. Romance

'Romantic' in the term 'romantic relationship' is used in the present study to refer to a boyfriend/girlfriend relationship that involves some sort of "romantic love". Romantic love is used to refer to a distinct collection of values and beliefs that are commonly associated with a deep emotional bond and attraction between partners that is expected to last for some time (Campbell, 2006; Jankowiak & Fischer, 1992) and not necessarily to the behaviours and rituals associated with romantic love relationships. Romantic relationships in Western societies, however, do usually involve specific behaviours and rituals and are associated with certain values (Coates, 1999) such as giving certain gifts and going on certain kinds of dates.

Some historians and ethnographers have claimed that romantic love is a near-universal phenomenon that can be found in almost all societies across the world and over all historical periods (Campbell, 2006). However, the ubiquity of romantic love across societies is unproven (Lindholm, 2006) and the concept of romantic love and the idea of romance in dyadic relationships as they are thought of in Western cultures today is not some inherent quality of relationships that exists universally across space and time. Rather they must be seen as social constructions (Schäfer, 2008), arguably with origins in eighteenth century Europe as products of the great cultural movements of romanticism and sentimentalism and developments of the mediaeval idea of courtly love proliferated through the medium of the novel (Campbell, 2006). A modern view of romantic love and romance associates their origins with the rise of capitalism as they served as an antidote to the social void created by the individualism that was said to result from the breakup of traditional communal life (Lindholm, 2006; Schäfer, 2008).

This is not to say that people from societies outside of Western cultures do not experience strong emotions akin to the Western construct of romantic love in their dyadic relationships. However, the construct of romantic love and its associated rituals are popularly viewed as central to Western social life (Campbell, 2006; Schäfer, 2008). The role of the media, industry and consumerism in the contemporary production and distribution of the guidelines, scripts, scenarios, materials and words used to organize and give meaning to romantic love and romance cannot be denied. Romantic love and romance are ubiquitous features of popular culture with images of romantic love and romance permeating film, music, print media and advertising (Burns, 2000; Campbell, 2006; Schäfer, 2008). However romantic love should not be summarily dismissed as a delusion created by industry and the mass media (Campbell, 2006).

Rather, romantic love and romance are created through participation in sets of meanings which are constructed, interpreted and deployed through culture, scripts, positioning within discourses and construction of narratives of self (Schäfer, 2008). Romantic love or a context-specific approximation thereof as well as its associated rituals and behaviours are embedded and embodied in local social practices and occur within the context of cultural expectations (Coates, 1999; Schäfer, 2008). They thus have different meanings and implications in different societies at different times (Coates, 1999; Schäfer, 2008).

3.2.2.   The gendered construction of romantic experience

Gender stereotyped scripts "polarize" expectations for behaviour in women and men, feeding "restrictive" gender roles in romantic relationships (Perrin et al., 2011, p. 614). Roles refer to the "consistent patterns of individual activity (e.g., behaviour, cognition or affect) within a relationship" (Peplau, 1983, p. 222). The organization of roles around gender, one of the most basic social categories upon which roles are ordered (Peplau, 1983), creates masculine and feminine gender roles for people. Traditional, Western ideologies of masculinity are associated with instrumental ideals which define a male role as based on agency, achievement, individual responsibility and autonomy. Expressive ideals are valued in feminine ideology which is associated with communication, affiliation, self-exploration, intimacy and nurturance (Bakken & Romig, 1992; Moore & Lueng, 2001).

A social constructionist view of gendered behaviour argues that people are assigned predetermined masculine or feminine sex roles, as deemed appropriate by their culture, based on their biological sex (Luyt, 2003). Individuals must then act in accordance with their assigned sex role in order to avoid negative social sanction (Luyt, 2003). Thus, as feminist psychologists in particular have argued, gender differences in relationship behaviour and experience are not biological imperatives but rather the result of misperception, prejudice, gender-role conformity, social conditioning, modelling, and reinforcement (Perrin et al., 2011). It is stereotypes, mediated through language and social interaction that drive gender differences in romantic experiences and behaviours (Burns, 2002).

The socialization into and adoption of masculine or feminine roles in relationships by their designated recipients thus should not simply be accepted without question. Such acceptance reinforces and sustains a discourse of male power in which Western society values the masculine qualities above those associated with femininity (Bakken & Romig, 1992) leading to women being

positioned as deficient in relation to men (Burns, 2002). A social constructionist reading of gender differences with regard to romantic relationships calls for a more multifaceted and contextual account that does not reinforce gender stereotypes (Perrin et al., 2011).

3.2.3. Adolescents' views of romantic relationships

After the gender segregated interactions of childhood adolescents must re-orientate themselves with the opposite sex but with the objective of establishing romantic and sexual relationships (Brown, 1999). Since re-establishing interaction with the opposite sex and engagement in romantic relationships is a new domain of interaction it involves a series of new demands, decisions and expectations (Zimmer-Gembeck & Petherick, 2006) and so requires the development of new thoughts, beliefs, expectations and understandings of appropriate behaviour. Just the same as adults, the beliefs and behaviours of young people in relation to appropriate behaviour and expectations in romantic relationships are influenced and shaped by a variety of contextual factors.

Furman and Simon (1999) refer to the thoughts, beliefs and expectations individuals have about romantic relationships as mental representations called views. Due to adolescents' level of cognitive development, their representations of romantic relationships are more limited and less sophisticated than those of adults. However, a great deal of development in the sophistication and expansion of relationships representations are expected in adolescence (Furman & Simon, 1999). Advances in cognitive ability that accompany the emergence of formal operations, such as increased information processing capability, the advent of more complex reasoning and the ability to think about the abstract aspects of self and others, allow adolescents to formulate more complex representations as they develop (Furman & Simon, 1999). Representations are not fixed but are able to change through personal insight and reflection. The advances in perspective taking and self-reflection abilities that accompany adolescent cognitive development allow individuals to compare existing views, consider alternatives and conceive of their representations as dynamic rather than static (Furman & Simon, 1999).

Cognitive developmental changes however are not sufficient themselves to allow for the development of more complex relationship representations. Mental representations of romantic relationships are socially constructed (Harding, 2007) and depend on interaction with others to be formed. Attachment theory emphasizes the importance of repeated interaction experiences in the formation of representations (Furman, Simon, Shaffer & Bouchey. 2002). Similarly, in Furman and Simon's (1999) conception of views, an adolescent's repeated experience with romantic

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relationships plays a crucial role in the formation of representations of these relationships. The norms, goals and standards for relationships established within particular relationships shape interaction in subsequent relationships (Laursen & Bukowski, 1997). Lack of such experience may restrict the emergence of more sophisticated reasoning about relationships even after the developmentally normative cognitive advances have been achieved (Furman & Simon, 1999).

In addition to past experience with specific relationships, adolescents' representations of romantic relationships may be based on cultural cues and media portrayals (Furman & Simon, 1999). Romance takes centre stage in adolescent popular culture in Western society (Brown et al., 1999) and movies, books and music provide information about and scripts ideal romantic experience and interaction in that society (Miller & Benson, 1999). Scripts of dating behaviour also often characterize romantic relationships as including emotional intimacy between partners (Seal & Ehrhardt, 2003). Furthermore, family members, including parents, media figures and other adults in the community model relationships for young people. These adults also attempt to instil culturally prescribed orientations that will help young people to successfully engage in romantic relationships (Brown, 1999).

3.3. The developmental perspective

The important role that socialization and the influence of cultural discourses deployed by the media play in adolescents' formulation of ideas and expectations about relationships as well as the behaviour undertaken within these relationships is widely accepted. However, various elements of traditional conceptions of adolescent romantic relationships, particularly the expectation that they *will* occur and that they change over time, reflect the developmental discourse that is frequently used to explain adolescent romantic interaction. The developmental perspective assumes a predetermined, universal pathway of adolescent development and the development of adolescents' romantic relationships. However, the majority of studies conducted within a developmental framework have included adolescents from mostly White, Euro-American contexts. The relevance of these findings for other population groups should be investigated. Since adolescents' interpersonal relationships are shaped by a host of unique developmental, ethno-cultural, economic and social issues (O'Sullivan, et al., 2007) adolescents from different socio-cultural backgrounds may experience different developmental pathways and the findings presented by adolescent romantic relationships framed within a developmental framework cannot be accepted as universal.

There is a great variance in the time that adolescents become interested in romantic relationships and the experiences they have within these relationships (Furman, 2002). For this reason, it cannot be said that there is a single normative pattern of development (Furman, 2002). However, some aspects of the nature and sequence of heterosexual experiences are common among the majority of adolescents (Furman, 2002). Most theorists agree that relationships start at a superficial level and proceed systematically to more interdependent levels of involvement (Berscheid & Reis, 1998).

According to Furman and Wehner's (1994) behavioural systems theory relationships serve four primary functions: a) affiliation, b) sexual or reproductive needs, c) attachment and d) care-giving. Development of romantic relationships from superficial to fully formed attachment relationships involves the integration of the behavioural systems. In adolescence the affiliation system, which maintained engagement with peers in childhood, supports the emergence of romantic involvement (Kobak, Rosenthal, Zajac & Madsen, 2007). In combination with the development of sexual interest as a result of the advent of puberty, the sexual and affiliative behavioural systems are most salient and it is these two systems that drive romantic behaviour at the time (Furman & Wehner, 1994). Affiliation is the companionship and stimulation components of a relationship and includes: spending time together, engaging in shared activities and sharing interests (Berger, McMakin & Furman, 2005).

The initiation of romantic relationships in early adolescence is seen as brought about by an emerging need for sexuality with an increased need for intimacy and affiliation outside of the family (Connolly & McIsaac, 2009). During the earlier stages of adolescence affiliative motives and behaviours are prominent in romantic relationships, reflecting the companionship quality of mixed-gender interactions at this time (Shulman & Scharf, 2000). Thus, in early adolescence it is believed that relationship partners serve as companions and friends.

The care-giving and attachment features of romantic relationships only emerge later when the need for attachment figures outside of the family increases (Scharf & Mayseless, 2007). While maintaining attachment bonds with parents throughout adolescence, most teens begin to test their peers as sources of security and support. It is only in later adolescence relationship partners are expected to provide support, comfort and care-giving (Shulman & Scharf, 2000). When sexual needs arise a romantic partner is turned to, to fulfil these needs as well. Through fulfilling these needs, a romantic partner becomes a major figure in the life of an individual in late adolescence or early adulthood.

Developmental theories generally focus on the physical, cognitive and psychological changes that occur within the adolescent. However, development occurs as a result of interaction between the individual and the environment (Dupree, 2010). Thus, it is recognized that all aspects of development takes place within a social context and that this context, including family, peer, cultural and social features of the adolescents' environment may affect development in a myriad of ways (Louw & Louw, 2007). Furthermore, romantic relationships take place within a broader peer context and cannot be removed from this context.

3.4. Social context and the construction of romantic relationships

Interpersonal relationships and the experiences within them are affected by the context within which they are situated (Neff & Karney, 2004; Prager, 1995). People's beliefs and behaviours surrounding romantic relationships are influenced and shaped by historic, cultural, economic, familial, social and environmental factors (Graber et al, 1999; Harding, 2007; Peplau, 1983). Since identities are constructed with the cultural meanings available (Burr, 1995) and are thus only meaningful in particular social contexts, it is necessary to have an understanding of the context in which participants experiences are situated. Participants for this study were drawn from a small semi-rural, farming communality, in which many of the residents are Coloured farm labourers.

I am mindful of the ideological and political contention surrounding the use of such racial designations as Coloured. The term 'Coloured' in this study does not denote race.   Rather the term is understood in the sense of Bourdeius's concept of *habitus* – all those social and cultural experiences, as part of a shared meaning system that shape people (Laubscher, 2003). According to Laubscher (2003) habitus is:

> a set of embodied dispositions inclusive of a material form of life 'turned into second nature'; it is recursive in that it is both a product of early socialization and continually modified by experiences of the outside world; it reflects the social and cultural position of its construction, as well as its transformations in current circumstances; it is mindful of the interrelationship of the individual action and group mores (p.134).

As with other racial categories used in South Africa, the socially constructed Coloured identity holds important social meanings (Swartz, Gibson & Gelman, 2002). Since meaning is always situated within a particular social and historical context, it is important that its socio-political, historical, cultural and spatial contexts are understood (Erasmus & Pieterse, 1999). Adhikari (cited

in Engelbrecht, 2009) argues that the interaction of "racial hierarchy, marginality, assimilationist aspirations, ideological conflicts, negative racial stereotyping, and class divisions" have all worked together in combination to construct the Coloured identity (p. 7).

The former apartheid policies situated farm workers as a particularly marginalized group in society and this situation persists today (London, 1999). Poverty rates are higher among agricultural dwellers compared with those in urban centres (De Lange & Faysse, 2005). People living in rural areas have relatively low levels of education, with research indicating an average of five years' schooling (London, 1995), and high rates of illiteracy (Kritzinger & Vorster, 1996) amongst the rural population of the Western Cape. Health and social services are also scarce in rural farming areas (Harrison, Barron & Edwards, 1996). Economic, social and emotional distress is often associated with such adverse conditions (Swartz cited in Engelbrecht, 2009). Within the context of the semi-rural Coloured community from which participants were drawn, psychosocial problems are prevalent, including stress, drug and alcohol abuse and dependency, family fragmentation, school truancy, conflict and violence including intimate partner violence, and the use of weapons (Engelbrecht, 2009). By shaping the identities of the individuals in the community from which the participants are drawn, and by shaping the meaning systems that accompany this identity, the social context in which the participants live and relate will also shape their construction of romantic relationships.

Gender is another important contextual factor to consider in understanding the development of adolescents' romantic relationships (Feiring, 1999a).The construction of gender roles in particular may have an impact on adolescents' romantic relationship experiences, since gender roles establish what is expected of boys and of girls in relationships. Despite constitutional changes in South Africa and the increase in national resources to promote gender equity and fight oppression (Shefer et al., 2008), it has been argued that women continue to experience inequality and are oppressed in their everyday lives (e.g. Gouws, 2005). As a group, female farm workers in the Western Cape (who are primarily Coloured) are particularly marginalized and powerless members of South African society (Kritzinger & Vorster, 1996). The inequality and oppression women face can be understood as a function of the discourses that prescribe traditional gender roles for men and women.

According to Shefer et al. (2008), traditional gender roles and relations predominate in economically disadvantaged and historically disenfranchised Western Cape communities. Traditional beliefs about male dominance and female subservience are still evident together with

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traditional gender roles that prescribe a division of labour which constructs a woman's domain as the household and a man's domain as the paid workforce (Shefer et al., 2008). Such divisions are related to the view that women should be submissive to men who are considered to be the primary decision makers within households, and the leaders and authorities in society (Shefer et al., 2008). Shefer and colleagues (Shefer et al., 2008) go on to say that these views and roles are supported by the church and are prominent in discourses of 'traditional culture' in rural communities.

These culturally available discourses provide people with "conceptual repertoires" that they use to represent themselves and others, providing possibilities for and limiting what and who a person can be within the discourse (Burr, 1995, p. 141). Since the meanings made available by discourses pervade every aspect of human lives (Burr, 1995), the requirements of traditional gender discourses are lived out by individuals in their romantic relationships. In this way the discourses surrounding traditional gender roles will likely place restrictions what boys and girls can and cannot experience in their romantic relationships in accordance with the positions afforded them by the discourses available.

4. Intimacy

In recent decades, researchers have come to consider emotional intimacy to be an essential part of adult relationships (Gaia, 2002). Despite the assertion of its importance however, no single definition of intimacy exists (Prager, 1995). There is good reason for this.

Intimacy is a "natural" or "fuzzy" concept, in which the boundaries that separate the features included in a category from those that are not included, are not clearly demarcated (Prager, 1995). The fuzzy principle states that everything is a matter of degree, and a concept is characterized not by a clearly bounded set (Kosko, 1994), but rather by a "shifting template of features" (Prager, 1995, p.13). Thus, according to Prager (1995), intimacy as a concept cannot be defined precisely enough for research purposes. However, basic intimacy concepts can be more precisely defined and are therefore more useful in the study of intimacy (Prager, 1995). Prager (1995) divides intimacy into two basic concepts: *intimate interactions* and *intimate relationships*.

Intimate interactions refer to dyadic behaviour which takes place within a distinctive moment (Prager, 1995), while *intimate relationships* exist over an extended period, the beginnings and endings of which are difficult to pin-point (Prager, 1995). Intimate relationships also continue in the absence of any observable intimate interactions. Interaction may be defined as "a dialogue between

two people that have certain specific characteristics", while an intimate relationship "involves multiple dialogues over time" (Prager, 1995, p. 19).

Prager (1995) conceptualizes intimate interaction as consisting of both *intimate behaviour* and *intimate experience*. Intimate behaviour occurs when partners share that which is personal and private. Intimate experience, on the other hand, is the positive affect and perceived understanding that partners experience in conjunction with intimate behaviour or as a result thereof.

A behaviour considered by both lay people and scholars to be an essential part of intimate interaction is self-disclosure: sharing that which is personal and private about oneself (Hook et al., 2003; Prager, 1995). Self-disclosure is described variously as: mutual self-disclosure and other kinds of verbal sharing (Lewis cited in Gaia, 2002), appropriate and honest self-disclosure (Popovic, 2005), sharing between partners of "personal thoughts, feelings, and other important aspects" of the self in "such an intensive manner that each becomes visible to the other in his or her wholeness and unique individuality" (McAdams, 2000, p. 118) resulting in a "deep privileged knowledge of the people involved" (Popovic, 2005, p. 32).

Self-disclosure is said to facilitate the development of intimacy if a partner's responses to self-relevant disclosure results in the other partner feeling understood, validated and cared for (Berscheid & Reis, 1998). As such emotional intimacy has also been referred to in experiential terms as the "experience of closeness, of being listened to, understood and free in expressing oneself" (Popovic, 2005, p. 32); "mutual perceptions of understanding, validation and caring" (Berscheid & Reis, 1998, p. 224); and the search for emotional closeness, self-validation and support (Thériault, 1998).

Weingarten (1991) argues that constructions of intimacy incorporate a discourse she refers to as the "Quality of Relatedness" discourse. This discourse constructs intimacy as the "product of a kind of relatedness" in which people are able to know each other to a great and deep extent. Implicit in these definitions is the assumption of the existence of a self that can be known and understood (Weingarten, 1991, p. 2). As Weingarten, (1991) argues, such a definition is "at odds with a social constructionist view of the self," which holds that the experience of the self is continually created through narratives derived through interaction with others and into which these others are woven (p. 3).

Thus, echoing Prager's (1995) concept of dialogue, intimacy is not the revelation of some inner self to another but an interaction in which an acceptable self is being created. From this perspective a goal of intimate interaction may be to re-narrate one's life by co-creating meaning with others without constraint (Wiengartern, 1991). A social constructionist definition of intimacy proposed by Weingarten (1991) which reflects Prager's (1995) intimate interaction component of intimacy is: "Intimate interaction occurs when people share meaning or co-create meaning and are able to coordinate their actions to reflect their mutual meaning-making", that is, understanding another as evidenced by shared communication (p. 2).

5. Conclusion

The series of related theoretical frameworks which comprise social constructionism emphasize the constructive powers of the human mind and the origins of the constructions of the mind in conversations, conventions and cultural traditions (Hosking & Morley, 2004), highlighting the social, historical, and collective nature of human consciousness (Durrheim, 1997).

From a social constructionist perspective the conceptualization of adolescence as a transitional stage of life, romantic relationships and associated experiences such as intimacy, must be seen as products of social processes, constructed and reconstructed within ever-changing discourses situated within a particular social and historical context. As frames of reference which give meaning to various objects and experiences, discourses inform the practice and understanding of social norms, customs, roles, beliefs and attitudes. It is important to consider the prevailing discourses of development and romantic relationships and intimacy when researching adolescent intimacy experiences. These discourses inform the norms, goals and standards for relationships, shaping how people interact in and experience these relationships.

The construction of adolescence as an inevitable, universal and 'normal' transitional stage through which all individuals pass is problematic. This is because not only does this construction not take into account the contextual factors that define what adolescence is and determine the course of adolescent development, but also because of the way such constructions marginalize the young person, particularly girls, in the decisions that affect them.

Adolescents' romantic relationships are a new domain of social interaction with which they have little experience. Adolescents also exhibit more limited and less sophisticated representations of romantic relationships and their associated experiences. This renders adolescents more susceptible

to adhering uncritically to the behaviours and assumptions prescribed by the prevailing discourses. Thus it is important to consider the way in which adolescents construct their romantic relationship experiences in accordance with the discourses made available to them through experience with others, the popular media and advice from adults.

The use of a social constructionist definition of intimacy may be particularly useful when researching experiences of intimacy because it constructs intimacy as a process of meaning making, thus attending to the fundamental aspect of being human that psychology should strive to investigate, that is, the meaningfulness of activity. Furthermore, since a social constructionist definition includes any behaviour, experience or instance wherein meaning is co-created, such a definition allows for a broader scope of behaviours and experiences to be included in conceptualizations of intimacy, challenging the widely held beliefs and assumptions espoused by prevailing discourses, thus expanding our understanding of the intimacy in adolescent relationships. A focus on intimate interaction rather than intimate relationships can also reveal the nature of intimacy even in the short-lived relationships in which adolescents generally engage.

CHAPTER 3

LITERATURE REVIEW

In this chapter previous research on intimacy in adolescent romantic relationships will be critically reviewed. The literature review begins by examining the focus and findings of primarily international research on adolescent romantic relationships before attending to contextual factors in the construction of heterosexual relationships and experiences in the African context. It must be noted that the majority of studies focussing specifically on the construct of intimacy were conducted in contexts outside of Africa, and these findings can therefore not be accepted as universally true and pertaining to adolescents' from the context in which the present study is conducted.

1. Focus on structure and function in intimacy research

When investigating adolescents' romantic relationships most contemporary research takes either a structural or functional approach (Van Horn & Marques, 2000). Structural approaches emphasize quantitative aspects of relationship networks such as the size and gender composition of peer networks and the frequency and duration of romantic involvement. Functional approaches on the other hand focus on the implications of qualitative aspects of relationships, such as support and conflict, in relationships within the social network (Van Horn & Marques, 2000).

1.1. A developmental perspective in intimacy research

Investigations into the structural and functional aspects of romantic relationships and intimacy experiences are frequently framed within a developmental perspective. It is argued that the study of development and the study of personal and social relationships overlap since the two are so inextricably linked (Bukowski, Adams, & Santo, 2006).

Stage-developmental models of adolescent romantic relationships suggest that romantic activities in adolescence are sequentially organized so that individuals move along a continuum to increasingly intimate interaction (Shulman & Seiffge-Krenke, 2001). Movement from one stage to another, and the qualitative and structural changes to relationships associated with this progression, are expected because of the saliency of developmental changes in the individual during adolescence (Furman & Simon, 1998; Shulman & Seiffge-Krenke, 2001). Changes occur throughout adolescence

(relationship 'milestones' being achieved at different ages) as well in the course of the development of a particular relationship (Furman & Simon, 1998; Shulman & Seiffge-Krenke, 2001).

The formation and development of the capacity for intimacy are seen as important psychological tasks in adolescence and early adulthood (Zimmer-Gembeck & Petherick, 2006). Developmental perspectives on intimacy emphasize the psychological maturity that is said to be required to maintain an intimate relationship (Prager, 1995). Research supports a stage developmental conception of romantic interaction and intimacy in adolescence (Connolly, Craig, Goldberg & Pepler, 2004; Zimmer-Gembeck & Gallaty, 2006), with evidence to suggest that older adolescents have a higher capacity for intimacy (Scharf & Mayseless, 2001; Taradash et al., 2001) and experience more intimacy in their romantic relationships (Adams et al., 2001; Nieder & Seiffge-Krenke, 2001). The importance of romantic partners as targets of intimacy also increases with age (Shulman & Scharf, 2000).

Despite support for a stage-developmental model of intimacy, research shows that features of each stage of romantic development are not necessarily distinct from one another (Seiffge-Krenke, 2003). Furthermore, individuals do not necessarily move through the stages of development in a smooth, lock-step fashion, with both individual and contextual factors resulting in variability in developmental pathways (Connolly et al., 2004; Seiffge-Krenke, 2000). Both age (Connolly, Craig, Goldberg & Pepler, 1999; Zimmer-Gembeck & Gallaty, 2006) and experience (Connolly et al., 1999; Connolly & McIsaac, 2009; Montgomery, 2005; Seiffge-Krenke, 2003) are related to changes in relationship experiences, such as increasing closeness and commitment (Shulman & Scharf, 2000), as well as conceptions of relationships (Connolly et al., 1999). The degree of intimacy experienced by adolescents in their romantic relationships has also been shown to vary according to relationship length, The longer the duration of the relationship the greater the level of intimacy reported (Giordano et al., 2005; Scharf & Mayseless, 2001) and higher levels of intimacy in a relationship have been found to predict the how long couples maintain their relationships (Rostosky, Galliher, Welsh & Kawaguchi, 2000).

The abovementioned contemporary findings suggest that romantic relationships not only change as a function of development but relationships also provide developmental contexts (Laursen & Bukowski, 1997). Furthermore, an increase in intimacy is a key feature of the developmental course of romantic relationships in adolescence and intimacy with romantic partners is increasingly sought during this time (Feiring, 1999b; Simon, Kobielski & Martin, 2008).

However, past theorists and researchers have argued that adolescents are unable to experience intimacy their romantic relationships. Erik Erikson's seminal theory of psychosocial development poses that attainment of intimacy is the primary developmental goal of early adulthood, rather than an adolescent concern. According to Erikson (1980), an individual cannot form an intimate relationship if that person has not established a sense of identity. This is because intimacy is both a distinction of one's own identity and the fusion of identity with another. Adolescents cannot experience intimacy because they are primarily concerned with developing a sense of identity and since adolescents do not yet have a clear sense of their own identity they cannot fuse their identities with others in the way that intimacy requires. Attachment relationships between boys and girls in adolescence serve as mechanisms by which individuals explore and define their identities by endlessly talking things over, disclosing how they feel and discussing plans, wishes and expectations.

Despite the widespread support Erikson's psychosocial theory of development has garnered, there is evidence to suggest that intimacy and identity are both developmental tasks of late adolescence and mastery of these tasks takes place concurrently with both boys and girls gaining a sense identity through experiencing intimacy (e.g. Lacombe & Gay, 1998; Paul & White, 1990; Thériault, 1998).

1.2. A focus on maladaption in adolescent romantic relationship research

Research into the developmental significance of adolescent romantic relationships has been impeded, in part, by the assumption that these relationships are associated with problems of behaviour and adjustment (Collins, 2003). Thus, interest in the developmental significance of romantic relationships in adolescence has largely been concerned with maladaption and negative behaviour (Collins et al., 2009). The literature often constructs adolescent romantic relationships as resulting in undesirable consequences. A larger amount of research has focused on negative aspects of romantic relationships than those which can be seen as adaptive and beneficial.

Romantic relationships have been identified as a stressor in the lives of adolescents that may cause psychological distress (La Greca & Mackey, 2007). Difficulties linked with problems in adolescent romantic relationships include: depression (Joyner & Udry, 2000; Davila, Steinberg, Kachadourian, Cobb & Fincham, 2004), anxiety (Glickman & La Greca, 2004), poor academic achievement (Brendgen, Vitaro, Doyle, Markiewicz & Bukowski, 2002), intimate partner violence and victimization (Halpern, Oslak, Young, Martin & Kupper, 2001; Ramisetty-Mikler, Goebert,

Nishimura & Caetano, 2006; Swart et al., 2002), non-exclusivity (Giordano et al., 2005), relational conflict (Rodrigues & Kitzmann, 2007) and self-silencing (Harper, Dickson & Welsh, 2006).

2. Adolescents' experiences of intimacy

Perhaps due to the focus on maladaption, with some notable exceptions (e.g. Adams et al., 2001; Lacombe & Gay, 1998; Mayseless & Scharf, 2007; Montgomery, 2005; Roscoe, Kennedy & Pope, 1987; Seiffge-Krenke, 2000; Scharf & Mayseless, 2001; Thériault, 1998; Zimmer-Gembeck & Petherick, 2006), studies directly addressing the experience of intimacy in adolescent romantic relationships appear to be rare. Most studies usually investigate other aspects of romantic relationships with intimacy being addressed as a variable related to the actual construct of interest.

Even though adolescents' romantic relationships increasingly become the setting for the experience of intimacy, many more studies have specifically explored emotional intimacy in adolescent same- and cross-gender friendships (e.g. Bauminger, Finzi-Dottan, Chason & Har-Even, 2008; Chou, 2000; Elbedour, Shulman & Kedem, 1997; Field, Lang, Yando & Bendell, 1995; Kuttler, La Greca & Prinstein, 1999; Laursen, Noak, Wilder & Williams, 2000; McNelles & Connolly, 1999; Monsour, 1992; Radmacher & Azmitia, 2006; Rice & Mulkeen, 1995; Selfhoud, Branje, & Meeus, 2009; Townsend, McCracjen & Wilton, 1988) than in romantic relationships.

Despite the experience of intimacy being addressed infrequently, some studies have found that adolescents with a broad range of ethnicities, from economically diverse backgrounds and both urban and rural settings, from early adolescence to late adolescence, do experience some degree of intimacy in their romantic relationships (Allen, 2003; Crawford, Cohen, Johnson, Sneed & Brook, 2004; Harris, 1998; Pagano & Hirsch, 2007; Rostosky et al., 2000, Scharf & Mayseless, 2001; Shulman & Scharf, 2000; Winstanley et al., 2002).

These studies have shown that the experience of intimacy in adolescents' romantic relationships is similar to that experienced between close friends and often includes affiliative experiences. Adolescents have reported that their intimate experiences in their romantic relationships include some degree of: closeness (a positive quality of relationships occurring when partners feel connected with one another; Zimmer-Gembeck, Siebenbruner & Collins, 2001), support (Furman & Shomaker, 2008), ease of sharing (Roscoe et al., 1987; Zimmer-Gembeck et al., 2001), respect, affection, communication (Scharf & Mayseless, 2001), self-disclosure (Giordano et al., 2005; Radmacher & Azmitia, 2006; Zimmer-Gembeck & Petherick, 2006), trust (Zimmer-Gembeck &

Petherick, 2006), interdependence, mutuality (Adams et al., 2001; Zimmer-Gembeck & Petherick, 2006), physical/sexual interaction, trust, openness and love (Roscoe et al., 1987).

Research also indicates gender differences in the experience, expression and perception of emotional intimacy in the romantic relationships of adolescents. Female adolescents have been found to experience higher levels of intimacy in their romantic relationships than males (Crawford et al., 2004; Shulman & Scharf, 2000). Research on gendered patterns of intimate behaviour has included shared activities as a pathway to creating an experience of intimacy in relationships. Research has shown that while self-disclosure is the primary pathway to intimacy for girls, self-disclosure as well as shared activities provide boys with a means of experiencing intimacy (Radmacher & Azmitia, 2006).

3. An emphasis on the peer context

While research has generally focused on the structural and functional aspects of adolescent romantic relationships, researchers have identified the importance of studying adolescence from a relational perspective (Brown, 2005). Thus, rather than solely attending to structural and functional features, researchers have investigated the influence of other significant relationships on adolescents romantic relationships and related experiences.

Research shows that while romantic partners increasingly become the targets of intimacy as individuals get older, friends and family members remain important objects and sources of intimacy in individuals' lives throughout adolescence (Shulman & Scharf, 2000). The study of adolescent development has focused primarily on parents as having the most significant influence (Collins & Laursen, 2004). Most theories have emphasized the role parents play in shaping adolescent romantic relationships (Connolly, Furman & Konarski, 2000).

Despite the theoretical emphasis on the important role of parents in the development and nature of adolescents' romantic relationship experiences, a significant number of studies have also been done on the links between adolescents' peer groups and their romantic relationships (Brown, 1999). Studies on peer influences have revealed the importance of the peer group as a context for the development of romantic relationships, in that the peer group can influence the timing and emergence of romantic relationships (Connolly et al., 2000).

In addition to the peer group generally, close friendships have been shown to influence romantic relationship experiences in various ways. Adolescents' friendships and romantic relationships have many features in common. There appears to be significant congruence between adolescents' friendship experiences and behaviours and their experiences and behaviours in romantic relationships (Pagano & Hirsch, 2007), including comparable relational style (Seiffge-Krenke, Shulman & Klessinger, 2001).

Research indicates that in early and middle adolescence especially relationship partners serve primarily as companions and friends, thus providing adolescents with an opportunity to develop skills of cooperation and reciprocity (Shulman & Scharf, 2000). Companionship, important in same-sex friendships, appears to form the foundation of romantic relationships in adolescence as well (Feiring, 1999b). It is unsurprising then that adolescents often identify their romantic partners as friends (Bukowski, Sippola & Hoza, 1999) and conceive of their romantic relationships in terms of affiliation (Connolly et al., 1999), emphasizing the importance of the affiliative aspects of relationships such as companionship (Feiring, 1996; Connolly et al., 1999; Hand & Furman, 2009; Shulman & Scharf, 2000; Zimmer-Gembeck et al., 2001), frequent interaction (Furman & Shomaker, 2008; Zimmer-Gembeck, 1999) and self-disclosure (Giordano et al., 2005) in their romantic relationships.

Intimacy in close friendships has been shown to be highly related to intimacy in romantic relationships (Seiffge-Krenke, 2000). Companionship has also been found to be an important forerunner in the development of intimacy characterized by emotional sharing and support (Bakken & Romig, 1992). Furthermore, the frequency and quality of interaction with friends contributes to the adolescents' capacity for intimacy and to the experience of security in romantic relationships (Seiffge-Krenke et al., 2001; Scharf & Mayseless, 2001). These findings suggest that intimacy in friendships may provide a developmental base of intimacy in romantic relationships in early adolescence.

Research shows that individuals in the beginning stages of romantic involvement tend to perceive their relationships in an idealized, romanticized and stereotypical way (Cavanagh, 2007; O'Sullivan & Meyer-Bahlburg, 2003; Scharf & Mayseless, 2007). Romanticized conceptions of romantic relationships as well as conceptions of romantic relationships in affiliative terms and valuing affiliation in these relationships have been associated with involvement with friends and larger other-sex social networks respectively (Cavanagh, 2007).

The romantic ideals that are frequently discussed among friends translate into behaviour in romantic relationships (Cavanagh, 2007), showing that conceptions of relationships formulated through interaction with friends has a powerful influence on the way adolescents behave in their romantic relationships. The evidence that conceptions of romantic relationships are embedded in the peer network and that relationship conceptions are associated with behaviour in romantic relationships, indicates that adolescent peer networks are arenas in which romantic thinking and behaviour are constructed (Cavanagh, 2007). Socialization into the romantic role thus appears to be an important function of the peer network in adolescence.

Research shows that the emphasis on companionship in romantic relationships declines with an increase in age (Shulman & Scharf, 2000; Zimmer-Gembeck & Gallaty, 2006). Adolescents' engagement in affiliative behaviours such as frequent interaction and self-disclosure can be seen as an expression of companionate intimacy (Giordano et al., 2005). The affiliative motives and behaviours associated with companionate intimacy characterize relationships of short duration but as adolescents' romantic relationships endure, emotional closeness emerges and there is a shift from companionate to emotional intimacy (Taradash et al., 2001). An increase in age and relationship experience is associated with a changing of romantic relationships from affiliations that resemble friendships to those that begin to resemble adult heterosexual relationships (Adams et al., 2001).

4. Limitations of adolescent romantic relationship intimacy research

While the wealth of information made available through the few studies on adolescent intimacy that have been conducted has helped further our understanding of adolescent romantic relationship experiences, these studies and the data they provide are not without limits. Not only have the vast majority of studies on adolescent intimacy experiences in their romantic relationships been conducted among white, middle-class North American, European and Israeli adolescents but they have also been primarily positivist in nature, employing inadequate definitions and conceptualizations of intimacy. They have also largely ignored the impact contextual factors have on relationship experiences.   The following section will illustrate the need for an increase in South African, qualitative and social constructionist research into adolescent intimacy experiences.

4.1. A dearth of South African adolescent romantic relationship research

South African literature that focuses on the interpersonal experiences of romantic relationships, such as that of emotional intimacy, is particularly sparse (Conradie, 2006, Le Roux & De Beer,

1994). This may be because, as an area of academic interest, relationship research is still developing compared to the more established traditions internationally (Conradie, 2006).

In light of high rates of adolescent pregnancy (Kaufman et al., 2001), a heightened risk for HIV infection (Mantell et al., 2006) and the presence of violence in adolescent romantic relationships in South Africa (Swart et al., 2002), South African research into adolescent romantic experience has often explored issues of sexuality and pregnancy (e.g. Jewkes, Vundule, Maforah & Jordaan, 2001; Kaufman & Stavrou, 2004; Manzini, 2001; Netswera, 2002), sexual behavior and HIV/AIDS (e.g. Harrison, 2008; Harrison. O'Sullivan, Hoffman, Dolezal & Morrell., 2006; Kaplan & Van den Worm, 1993; Mantell et al., 2006; Varga, 1997) and intimate partner violence (e.g. Flisher, Myer, Mèrais, Lombard & Reddy, 2007; Swart et al., 2002; Wood, Maforah & Jewkes, 1998). Thus, it appears that, in the South African context, adolescent romantic relationships are often studied because of their links with pressing psychosocial issues, rather than for the value of understanding the relationships themselves.

4.2. Limitations of positivist-empiricist research

Most research into adolescent romantic relationship experiences to date has primarily focused on the observable characteristics of romantic relationships (Collins et al., 2009) and thus taken the form of positivist-empiricist studies using standardized instruments to measure various pre-defined relationship constructs. Research has given less attention to the meanings adolescents make of their relationships (Allen, 2004) and social constructionist studies of adolescent romantic relationship experiences, especially those pertaining to intimacy are rare.

The use of positivist methodology is problematic in the study of intimacy. The predetermined measures used in positivist-empiricist romantic relationship research may not necessarily represent a true reflection of people belonging to other groupings than white, Western groups, on which the measures are likely to be based, and may fail to capture narratives of romance familiar to such groupings. . The use of these measures may thus not only create an inaccurate picture of the intimacy experiences of adolescents from other ethno-cultural groups, but may also deny certain marginalized groups the opportunity to voice their own thoughts and experiences. A social constructionist approach on the other hand requires a contextual account of intimacy experiences (Perrin et al., 2011).

Furthermore, the quantitative approach to researching intimacy associated with the positivist-empiricist perspective, has served to reproduce the gender stereotypes of women as emotional and orientated toward intimacy and men as sexual and less orientated toward intimacy (Burns, 2002). According to Burns (2002), these stereotypes are often reinforced by forcing respondents to choose between two opposing options that are very narrowly defined and based on gender stereotypes (e.g. asking respondents to choose which would be more upsetting: a scenario involving sexual infidelity or one involving emotional infidelity, in which men more frequently choose the former and women the latter).

Research shows that in general women are stereotyped as "innately emotionally communicative, hyper-emotional, caring, relationship-orientated and asexual, while men are stereotyped as innately emotionally inept, hypo-emotional, insensitive, individually-orientated, and overly sexual" and that love is more central to women and more peripheral to men (Perrin et al., 2011, p. 614). However, the experience of intimacy has been shown to be far more complex than a simple dichotomy the gendered construction of intimacy creates (Allen, 2003). Romantic relationship research has shown that cultural variables account for a significant amount of variance above and beyond gender effects, and that dichotomous cultural differences counter gender effects found within a single culture (Perrin et al, 2011). From a social constructionist perspective, it is stereotypes, mediated through language and social interaction, which drive gender differences in romantic experiences and behaviours (Burns, 2002). A social constructionist reading of gender differences with regard to romantic relationships thus calls for a more multifaceted and contextual account that does not reinforce gender stereotypes (Perrin et al., 2011).

4.3. Inadequate definitions / conceptualizations of intimacy

The construction of gender differences in the ability to experience intimacy and the ways in which intimacy is appropriately expressed can be problematic for male experiences of intimacy. The assumption of a biological basis of gender differences has led to researchers being reluctant to question theoretical models of gender difference in romantic experience (Burns, 2002). This position has served to support negative gender stereotypes and gender-based oppression (Perrin et al., 2011). From a social constructionist perspective it is not biological imperatives but stereotypes, mediated through language and social interaction that drive gender differences in romantic experiences and behaviours (Burns, 2002) and this perspective will thus be able to challenge previously held assumptions and broaden our understanding of gender differences on romantic experiences.

Definitions of intimacy have focused on elements of communication, affection and closeness. However, gender role socialization usually emphasizes these behaviours in female development who are expected to be more relationship focused (Patrick & Beckenbach, 2009), When masculinity is defined in opposition to femininity, this 'feminization' of intimacy may impede men from using methods of expressing seen as feminine because in order to be masculine, as is expected of them, they reject all that is feminine. The commonly employed definitions of intimacy privilege the female "way" of relating over men's "way" of relating, rendering the feminine norm the "better" way (Langan & Davidson, 2005). Thus, the feminization of intimacy positions any possible male expression of intimacy, such as task focused behaviours like completing a chore, as pathological at worst or deficient at best (Korobov & Thorne, 2006; Patrick & Beckenbach, 2009). Social constructionist research will enable researchers to challenge academic constructions of gender differences in relationships which frequently position women as being more relational and orientated toward seeking and experiencing intimacy (Burns, 2002; Gilligan, 1982; Heller & Wood, 1998; Langan & Davidson, 2005; Perrin et al., 2011).

Much past research on adolescents' romantic relationships employed concepts adopted from studies of adult (Shulman & Kipnis, 2001). In light of this practice it is unsurprising that Shulman and Scharf (2000), for example, found that the romantic relationships of the adolescent participants in their study closely resembled those of adults. This approach however, is problematic as applying concepts relevant to adult romantic relationships may fail to capture the unique features of adolescent relationships (Shulman & Kipnis, 2001). Shulman and Kipnis (2001) argue that at best research of this nature can indicate that participants know that such concepts related to adult love relations as closeness, care and support are central to love relationships. This does not answer questions about whether adolescents have different experiences in their own romantic relationships.

5. The influence of context on adolescents' romantic relationships and intimacy experiences

5.1. Cultural context

Ethno-cultural factors have been shown to have an effect on romantic relationships and their associated experiences (Connolly et al., 2004; O'Sullivan et al., 2007). Research has found that cultural orientations, patterns of socialization and thus individuals' romantic beliefs, attitudes and experiences, as mediated by learning processes, differ among different cultures (Hofer & Chasiotis, 2004; Medora, Larson, Hortaçsu & Dave, 2002). The subjectivity of the experience of intimacy is,

for example, reflected in the way people from certain cultural backgrounds prioritize intimacy in romantic relationships. Some cultures do not view intimacy in the same light as it is in Western culture, believing intimacy to be unnecessary in relationships (Hatfield & Rapson cited in Hook et al., 2003). Furthermore, the beliefs and behaviours of young people are influenced and shaped by cultural, ethnic, historic, economic, familial, social and environmental factors that define appropriate behaviour and inform expectations for relationships (Collins et al., 2009; Giordano et al., 2005; Graber et al., 1999; Harding, 2007; Peplau, 1983; Winstanley et al., 2002). Interpersonal scripts that specify the cultural expectations for appropriate romantic interaction become particularly salient in adolescence (O'Sullivan & Meyer-Bahlburg, 2003).

Research shows that when interacting in and conceptualizing their romantic relationships, adolescents largely conform to romantic scripts that are traditional such as those adhering to traditional gender roles (Harrison, 2008; Morr Serewicz & Gale, 2008; O'Sullivan & Meyer-Bahlburg, 2003). Studies have found evidence of considerable support for scripts that prescribe conventional (or mainstream) norms for behaviour on the margins of society, such as those living in poor or rural communities (Harding, 2007; Harrison, 2008). Adolescents also tend to adhere to the culturally endorsed views of adults (Connolly et al., 1999). However, romantic relationship scripts are not necessarily universal amongst members of a particular community or cultural group. Adolescents from disadvantaged urban communities (Harding, 2007) as well as those from culturally diverse backgrounds such as the children of immigrants (Luo, 2008) have been shown to exhibit greater diversity in their romantic relationships scripts. Thus, local or group cultural contexts also have a significant impact on behaviours related to romantic relationships (Harding, 2007).

Bhana, Morell, Hearn and Moletsane (2007) argue that the AIDS pandemic has spurred a rethinking of African masculinities. HIV infections have consistently been linked with heterosexual transmission, especially in cases where men have a large number of sexual partners (Bhana et al., 2007). This has led, in part, to "the construction of a hypersexualized African masculinity which has worked to recuperate racist colonial versions of African male lust and desire where women are often seen as passive recipients of sex and sexuality" (Bhana et al., 2007, p. 134).

Gendered power relationships are seen to affect the dynamics within heterosexual relationships, as South African young adult males exert their power through violence and the pursuit of multiple partners (Bhana & Pattman, 2009). Bhana and Pattman (2011) argue that the effect of such constructions is to produce a version of sexuality located in the domain of fear and oppression.

The construction of powerful and hyper-sexualized masculinity appears to work to prevent girls and boys from interacting with each other socially. In the African context adolescents' have frequently been shown to construct heterosexual relationships as being problematic, particularly by girls, including such issues as infidelity, the pressure to have sex, the consequences of pregnancy, contracting HIV, and rape (Bhana & Epstein, 2007; Unterhalter, Epstein, Morrell & Moletsane, 2004). Unlike studies from European and American samples, Pattman (2005) found that boys and girls from East and Southern African countries tended not to socialize with the opposite sex. Socializing with members of the opposite sex was particularly anxiety-provoking for girls as they believed that boys and girls could not just be friends due to male's inevitable sexual feelings. In order to be 'good' as is expected of them, girls were seen to have to protect themselves against the sexual motivations of boys.

In the African context, cultural prescriptions produce and reinforce opposing positions for women and men in heterosexual relationships, which also encourage gender inequality and female oppression through control of women's heterosexual behaviour. Constructions of traditional masculinity associate masculinity with emotional detachment and power, multiple partners with sexual prowess, and views men as being providers in heterosexual relationships (Bhana et al., 2007; Luyt, 2003, Pattmen 2002, 2005). Constructions of traditional femininity expect women to be passive, submissive and innocent in relation to matters of sexuality (Bhana & Pattman, 2009; Pattman, 2002; Reddy & Dunne, 2007). Research shows that constructions of heterosexuality in the African context places great emphasis on the traditional, 'good' girl and the hyper-sexualized, powerful boy, resulting in an African cultural discourse that sets higher moral standards for women than men (Pattman, 2002). This leaves women's behaviour more open to regulation and control than men's behaviour (Pattman, 2002).

In a study by Pattman (2005), for example, girls having multiple sexual partners were considered a violation of the image girls wanted to present of themselves as 'good'. In order to present the image of a good girl in interviews, girls may have characterized heterosexual relationships as bad, involving inevitable oppression, distraction from schoolwork, resulting pregnancy and abuse and conflicting with Islamic or Christian teachings. Women and girls who sought the attentions of older, wealthy (urban) men for economic gain, by staying out at night, being loud and wearing fashionable and provocative clothing were seen by boys in the study as being too 'modern', violating cultural norms. Pattman (2005) argues that the appeal to uphold cultural and traditional values thus results in the monitoring of girls' heterosexual behaviour.

The strong influence of culture on the construction of gender identities can be seen in women reproducing and reinforcing traditional constructions of masculinity and femininity, despite the articulated wish to have more equality with men. Women in studies from East and Southern Africa often defined their femininity and heterosexual identities in relation to men. In this context, conventional and traditional femininity includes being married and pleasing a man (Pattman, 2002; Reddy & Dune, 2007). In a study of Black and Indian South African adolescent females, the participants constructed sexual activity as a means of meeting male needs and desires. Men's satisfaction, both sexual and otherwise, was seen as their right while women were to derive satisfaction from succeeding in pleasing their male partner and in the possibility of this leading to intimacy and love. For the women in the study, "to be conventionally feminine was to aspire always to an ideal relationship, to trust and to love and to make men happy" (Reddy & Dunne, 2007, p. 165). In a study conducted in Botswana, women constructed their boyfriends in highly romanticized ways and brushed off their cheating on them, accepting male infidelity as a cultural expectation and as part of relationships that women have to tolerate (Pattman, 2002). Their discontent with relationships with men who cheated on them was played down by constructing the nature of relationships as inevitable.

Similar to boys, for girls securing a boyfriend is an indicator of heterosexual success and the competition for boys often results in abuse among girls (Bhana & Pillay, 2011). The embodiment of sexuality is gendered and mediated through culture, producing different relations of power (Allen cited in Bhana & Pillay, 2011). Girls have been shown to place great emphasis on physical attractiveness in the quest to secure boyfriends (Bhana & Pillay, 2011). Participating in sexual cultures and vying for power is done through bodily regulation and policing, as girls in Bhana and Pillay's (2011) study who did not live up to an idealized bodily standard were taunted and mocked by other girls. Boys did not have to be physically present to influence the power of sexuality. Girls were complicit in sexual objectification, serving the interests of a compulsory heterosexuality (Bhana & Pillay, 2011). Thus, due to the strong influence of cultural discourses, women participate in constructing themselves as passive and as subject to male sexual dominance.

5.2. Socio-economic context

Little research on the effects of socioeconomic status (SES) on relationships and intimacy, especially within the South African context, has been conducted. However, it has been found that the nature and specific features of romantic relationships may vary for individuals from different

socioeconomic contexts (Collins et al., 2009), indicating the influence that SES has on romantic relationships and associated experiences. In one study the socioeconomic risk factors of neighbourhood income, neighbourhood crime and race/ethnicity were associated with lower levels of intimacy with partners among a sample of African-American adolescent fathers from a low SES. The aforementioned risk factors also represented good predictors of the capacity for intimacy. This may be because family SES has been shown to have an impact on adolescent social development (Winstanley et al., 2002).

In addition, socioeconomic context may influence the development and application of scripts and views of romantic interaction. Harding (2007) found that individuals from poor neighbourhoods display greater cultural heterogeneity in their romantic relationship scripts and views than people form more affluent neighbourhoods. It is argued that the isolation from mainstream culture brought about by unemployment and poverty may lead to people in disadvantaged neighbourhoods developing cultural repertoires that are different from the mainstream. Harding (2007) argues that the cultural context of poor communities has been derived from the mainstream but has been adapted or reinterpreted to fit the local context and compensate. Thus individuals from disadvantaged communities may adhere to different scripts and have beliefs about and attitudes toward romantic relationships and intimacy that differ from individuals in wealthier communities.

Research has found that economic factors are salient in shaping heterosexual relations in African societies. One particularly prevalent and visible way in which socioeconomic circumstances are shaping the heterosexual relationships of African youth is through the practice of transactional sexual relationships. Hunter (2002) argues that discourses that place a high value on men having multiple sexual partners; the relatively privileged position of men that brought about their access to more lucrative segments of the formal and informal economy and to resources such as housing; and the agency of women in their ability to peruse men for material gain have worked together to create a heterosexuality among people living in relative poverty based on transactional sex in the context of on-going relationships. Transactional sex occurs in a situation in which women and girls have sexual relationships with men who are chosen by the women and are considered boyfriends (important in distinguishing the relationship from a prostitute-client relationship) in order to attain material benefits. However, the relationships in which young women gain material benefits from men do not always involve sex and, as Masvawure (2010) found, women use innovative strategies to ensure that they do not have to have sex with a boyfriend despite his provision of material goods and money. Furthermore, men do not benefit from transactional sexual relationships only through sex but also gain status within their peer groups from being seen with younger, attractive women, as

men that are seen with these women are envied by their peers and regarded as sexually successful (Hunter, 2002; Masvawure, 2010). In addition, as Hunter (2002) found, men also benefit from the provision by women of such services as cooking and other comforts of home. In intimate relationships in the African context the exchange of material goods is often used as a way of expressing commitment and the practice is not necessarily exploitative as is often assumed (Masvawure, 2010).

Relationships take on different meanings in contexts of poverty as they become a means for individuals, particularly women, to improve their lives. Research in Africa shows that it is virtually taken for granted, by men and women, that heterosexual relationships involve gifts as well as other material benefits (Hunter, 2002; Masvawure, 2010). In East and Southern African nations Pattman (2002, 2005) found that men and boys are expected to and want to be the providers in heterosexual relations, constructing a 'provider masculinity'. Research shows that in many African countries it is commonplace for women and girls to engage in relationships, usually sexual relationships, with men in order to gain material benefits and economic security (Bhana & Pattman, 20011; Hunter, 2002; Masvawure, Terry, Adlis, Mhloyi, 2009; Pattman, 2202, 2005). Women's investment in provider masculinity is reflective not only of their material poverty but also of their agency as they seek to attain a middle-class life (Hunter, 2002; Pattman, 2002). Thus, in socially and economically depressed contexts women have been shown to reject prescriptions of passivity and mobilize their sexuality, using a variety of strategies to benefit maximally from heterosexual relationships (Bhana et al., 2007; Masvawure, 2010).

Research indicate that girls from poor backgrounds are more likely than affluent girls to engage in transactional sexual relationships in order to have their basic needs met (Hunter, 2002; Masvawure et al., 2009). According to Masvawure (2010), existing scholarship on transactional sex connects the behaviour almost exclusively to economic survival and in so doing often portray the women involved as victims. However, economically advantaged women also engage in transactional sexual relationships and do so for reasons that do not include survival or subsistence (Hunter, 2005; Masvawure, 2010). For these women engaging into such relationships is motivated by the desire for items of conspicuous consumption that enhance a women's status in her peer group (Hunter, 2002; Masvawure, 2010). It is through the provider masculinity that women's status is sealed through access to status items such as cell phones and fashionable clothes and by being in relationships with wealthier men (Bhana & Pattman, 2011; Masvawure, 2010). As Masvawure (2010) found in Zimbabwe, engaging in transactional sexual relationships was often about being able to appear "flashy", indicating the role of the practice in competing with peers, asserting one's superiority over

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one's rivals and creating an image of oneself as a high status individual. Unlike findings in European and American samples in which simply having a boyfriend or girlfriend increases an adolescent's status in the peer group, the economic position of a partner is a crucial factor in determining status in the context of poverty in Africa.

Provider masculinity is not only implicated in the construction of transactional sexual relationships but also in constructions of aspects of relationships such as love. Boys and men who can offer material benefits become attractive as partners for love for women and girls as they provide a situation that is in direct opposition to the poverty they face in their daily existence (Pattman, 2002, 2005; Bhana & Pattman, 2011). Bhana and Pattman (2011) found that in the context of poverty, boys and girls strategise around power and status in their constructions of love. In their study boys and girls responded in gender specific ways regarding their meanings of love that brought love into tension with materiality and culture (Bhana & Pattman, 2011). Girls were shown to think about and enact sexual subject positions that entangled love and money (Bhana & Pattman, 2011). For the South African girls in Bhama and Pattman's (2011) study, love and money both exalt provider masculinity and enhance girls' own status. Thus the girls are actively seeking access to power and resources that both challenge and reproduce patriarchal structures (Hunter 2002) by reinforcing the image of the provider masculinity as they aspire toward middle-class futures through their relationships with men (Bhana & Pattman, 2011; Masvawure et al., 2009). Girls' endorsement of provider masculinity both reinforces men's positions of economic power over women and reflects their agency in attaining a middle-class life (Bhana & Pattman, 2011).

In their accounts of relationships, boys idealize rural girls thought to be virgins and respectable, poor, subordinate, conservative and naive (Bhana & Pattman, 2011). The role of provider, while positioning men as materially powerful, also elicits anxiety as poor boys are not able to live up to the role constructed for them, making girls unattainable or leaving boys with fears that their girlfriends will leave them for wealthier men, placing women in the position of power (Pattman, 2002). The rural girls' status is elevated by being identified as virgins and as disinterested in material accumulation, compared with girls from urban townships. Thus, boys who are not able to live up to provider masculinity respond by strategising around love and consumerism to construct a different version of provider masculinity in relation to rural girls through which they gain prestige (Bhana & Pattman, 2011). Boys' investment in rural girls is enmeshed with African historical and cultural dynamics through the idealization of a rural/traditional way of life in which female respect and virginity are important considerations in the value of a woman as a wife.

In addition to the influence of socio-economic factors on how people construct heterosexual relationships and aspects of them such as love, individuals' economic situation and hence their living conditions have also been found to influence constructions of sexuality. In one study which examined young children's (6 to 8 years old) understandings of HIV/AIDS, Bhana and Epstein (2007) found that constructions of gender amongst participants from a lower socio-economic background more often included discourses of male violence, including rape, compared with those from a more affluent background. While those children living in informal settlements and experience HIV and AIDS as a part of everyday life do associate sexuality with pleasure, it was strongly correlated with danger and disease. The authors argue that the way in which these children construct sexuality and violence may be unsurprising considering the legacies of apartheid, "itself a violent, patriarchal and highly sexualized system of Government" (Bhana & Epstein, 2007, p. 117). In addition, life in informal settlements is such that there is little opportunity for privacy and it is thus commonplace for children to witness sexual activity, some of which may be difficult or traumatic.

5.3. Changing identities

The changing context in South Africa has seen the emergence of new gender roles that are based on notions of respect and equity (Bhana & Pattman, 2009). Studies have shown that men and boys, while performing hegemonic masculinities as they are reproduced and reinforced by cultural discourses of traditional masculinity, also express dissatisfaction with the construction of, and thus their performance of, men as hedonistic and sexually, economically , physically and emotionally powerful in relation to women (Luyt, 2003; Pattman, 2002, 2005). Furthermore, Bhana and Pattman (2009) argue that South African females exercise far more agency in their relationships with men than research has indicated, and are not simply passive victims conforming to gender roles and norms.

The context of HIV may also be changing constructions of heterosexual and gender identities. There is evidence to suggest that men and women both comply with and resist gender prescriptions in the context of HIV (Reddy & Dunne, 2007). Bhana et al. (2007) argue that the emergence of new definitions based on responsibility, moderation and health in light of high rates of mortality and morbidity indicate the contingency and fluidity of masculinity. Evidence suggests that men are beginning to distance themselves from a masculinity that celebrates multiple sexual partners in light of the threat of AIDS (Hunter, 2002).

6. Conclusion

Past research into adolescent romantic relationships and intimacy experiences have been most revealing on structural and functional issues. The developmental perspective has been particularly influential in research and theory on adolescent romantic relationship experiences. However, as a consequence of the focus on structure and function, research into adolescent romantic relationship experiences has contributed to a construction of adolescent romantic interactions as being problematic and maladaptive. The focus on the maladaptive features of adolescents' romantic relationships may account for the paucity of research into adolescents' experiences of intimacy, generally considered a positive, necessary and adaptive feature in these relationships.

In addition to the general dearth of research on adolescent intimacy experiences in their romantic relationships, South African research on the matter is particularly scarce. Far more research has been conducted into aspects of romantic relationships related to pressing social matters such as HIV/AIDS, pregnancy and intimate partner violence and adolescents' constructions of romantic relationships. While research into sexual risk behaviour and intimate partner violence is undoubtedly essential and greatly beneficial, the negative constructions of adolescent romance perpetuated by research literature and the resultant narrow and limited scope of inquiry into adolescent intimate relationships, may be impeding efforts to respond to the broader challenges associated with romantic involvement in adolescence.

On the other hand, attending to dominant discourses that problematize young people's relationships and situate their sexuality within a danger and risk narrative lends depth to a social constructionist analysis of adolescents' constructions of gender and heterosexual identities within the South African context. Heterosexuality is central to young people's cultures and relationships (Bhana & Pillay, 2011) and a contextualized understanding of adolescents' constructions of heterosexuality may be of value in understanding their relationship experiences, including that of intimacy. African and South African research into adolescents' constructions of heterosexuality specifically shed light on how constructions of powerful masculinity and passive femininity produce a version of sexuality located in the domain of fear and oppression and reinforce opposing positions for women and men in heterosexual relationships, which also encourage gender inequality and female oppression. Furthermore, the socioeconomic situation of many poor people in Africa and South Africa shape their constructions of heterosexuality. The prevalence of HIV and AIDS in South Africa has also not only shaped young people's constructions of heterosexuality but is also encouraging the construction of new gender and sexual identities.

Intimacy research outside of the family context has centred not on romantic relationships but on friendships. The experience of intimacy in adolescents' romantic relationships is similar to that experienced between close friends and friendships provide an important context for the development of intimacy in adolescence. However, it has been found that adolescents' relationships with romantic partners do differ from their relationships with their friends in many respects (Furman & Shomaker, 2008) and adolescents' romantic partners increasingly become the sources and targets of intimacy. Thus, in order to have a broad understanding of adolescents' intimacy experiences, researchers must attend to these experiences in romantic relationships as well as in friendships.

The limitations of positivist romantic relationship and intimacy research as well as the inadequate definitions and conceptualizations of intimacy that are frequently employed in this research point to the need for alternative accounts of such experiences. A social constructionist perspective employing qualitative methods can provide such an alternative. The use of qualitative methods will enable adolescents to give their own accounts of their experiences from their perspectives. A social constructionist approach will challenge previously held assumptions based on prevailing academic discourses on romantic relationships. The social constructionist approach lends itself to producing a multifaceted account of intimacy experience that takes contextual implications into consideration and will help to ensure that gender stereotypes that promote inequality are not reinforced.

The present study addresses the shortcomings of past research by moving beyond maladaptive features and examining adolescents' intimacy experiences in the lesser studied context of romantic relationships, in a South African sample, using a social constructionist approach and qualitative methodology.

CHAPTER 4

METHODOLOGY

This chapter outlines the procedures and methods used to obtain and analyse participants' narratives.

1.   Aim of the research

The goal of the study is to develop a contextual understanding of the experience and expression of emotional intimacy in the romantic relationships of Coloured, adolescents, aged 16 to 18 years, who reside in a semi-rural, low-income community in the Western Cape.

2.   A qualitative research design

Qualitative research methodology refers to a general approach to studying research topics which includes different types of methods chosen according to the theoretical perspective that frames the inquiry (Guba & Lincoln, 2005; Willig, 2001). The use of qualitative methods is determined by the nature of the researcher's inquiry in terms of the ontological and epistemological positions held by the researcher as well as the research question (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999). Qualitative methodologies are generally concerned with meaning, that is, how people make sense of and experience the world (Willig, 2001). In attending to what it is like to experience certain phenomena, qualitative researchers are concerned with the "quality and texture of experience", rather than causal relationships (Willig, 2001, p. 9). Rather than starting with variables defined by the researcher, qualitative research explores the subjective meanings attributed to phenomena by the participants themselves (Willig, 2001). Qualitative research methodology provides the researcher with a collection of material methods of conducting scientific inquiry that make the world of personal, subjective experience visible (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005).

Qualitative researchers put aside the idea of an unequivocal 'real' world in favour of dealing with accounts that people formulate about their own personal realities (Ashworth, 2003). Qualitative researchers are interested in the *way* in which participants make meaning, not simply *that* they make it or what that meaning is (Henning, van Ransburg & Smit, 2004). Thus, the goal of the qualitative researcher is to try to understand or interpret phenomena in terms of the meaning people assign to them (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005).

A qualitative design was chosen for the present study based on the epistemological, ontological and methodological positions of the social constructionist theoretical perspective that informs the research. Furthermore, in light of the tendency of past (quantitative) researchers to apply constructs and variables that were derived from research with adults to the study of adolescent romantic experiences, qualitative research methodology was chosen for its ability to give a voice to the young participants (Stein & Mankowski, 2004). The metaphor of giving voice is not used here to denote advocacy for the issues of the socially marginalized and disenfranchised in order to bring about social change, but rather as a way of allowing adolescents to speak for themselves about their own experiences instead of having the views of adults imposed upon them.

3.   Constructivist grounded theory

The grounded theory approach was chosen as the qualitative method for conducting the research. Grounded theory is an interpretive approach that provides systematic, yet flexible, guidelines for conducting qualitative research for the purposes of constructing theory that is grounded in data (Charmaz, 1990, 2006; Bryant & Charmaz, 2007). The goal of the grounded theory approach is to develop a theory, based on research participants' actual actions and interactions, of how individuals make meaning by showing how certain concepts and actions fit together to produce an abstract, theoretical understanding of the studied phenomenon (Charmaz, 2006; Holloway & Todres, 2003). Grounded theory is thus a means of producing theory through research rather than using research to test hypotheses based on extant theories (Dey, 2004).

Producing theory through research is achieved through abduction, the "process of studying facts and devising a theory to explain them" (Cunningham cited in Richardson & Kramer, 2006, p. 499). Abduction can be described as inference to the best explanation (Thomas & James, 2006) as it involves considering all possible explanations of the data and pursuing the one which is most plausible (Charmaz, 2006). The method combines the rational and imaginative by providing analytical strategies that deal in principled and practical ways with the demand for logical inference while recognizing the role of insight, speaking to the creative requirements of interpretive research (Henwood & Pidgeon, 2003).

The grounded theory method has become a subject for great debate among its practitioners and critics due to the controversial nature of the methodology of the method (Rennie & Fergus, 2006). While the method has endured since its inception in the 1960's, integration of methodological developments over the past 40 years has led to the formulation of different approaches to

conducting grounded theory research and different conceptions and understandings of the theory that these approaches produce (Bryant & Charmaz, 2007; Rennie & Fergus, 2006). There exist some disparities among the various grounded theory methods. The original grounded theory concept held that data could be 'discovered' due to its objective existence and could represent a true reality (Witz, 2007). However, Charmaz (2006) has criticized this objectivist conception for being too positivistic. The conception of data as real in and of themselves does not attend to the processes of their production (Charmaz, 2006). Thus, Charmaz (2006) endorses a 'constructivist' methodology that falls somewhere between the objectivist realism of the original method and the relativism associated with later postmodernist views of research (Rennie & Fergus, 2006).

In line with a social constructionist stance, Charmaz (2006) views the use of grounded theory method and theorizing as "*social actions* that researchers construct in concert with others in particular places and times" (p. 129). Charmaz (2006) views grounded theory as interpretative, prioritizing the studied phenomenon and viewing data collection and analysis as being created from shared experiences and relationships among the researcher, research participants and other sources of information. In other words, unlike objectivist grounded theory methodology which views data as representing facts about a knowable world that already exist for a researcher to 'discover', constructivist methods hold that data and analyses are social constructions and the resultant theory depends on the researcher's view and cannot be independent of it (Charmaz, 2006).

The constructivist grounded theory method defines what is happening in the data, addressing questions of how, and possibly, why people construct meanings in specific situations by focusing analysis on actions and processes embedded in context (Charmaz, 2006). Thus, the theory produced by the constructivist approach is interpretive. It is an imaginative understanding of the studied phenomenon, that assumes emergent, multiple versions of reality; indeterminacy; the inextricably linked nature of facts and values; truth as provisional and social life as processional (Charmaz, 2006).

From a constructivist perspective any analysis is situated in time, place, culture and setting (Charmaz, 2006). Since researchers using this approach recognize that facts rest on values they attempt to become aware of their predispositions and understand how they affect the research. This method emphasizes how data, analysis and methodological strategies are constructed, taking into consideration the research context and the researcher's positions, perspectives, priorities and interactions (Bryant & Charmaz, 2007). Constructivist approaches thus foster researcher reflexivity about their own and their participants' assumptions (Charmaz, 2006).

As the research question requires, grounded theory methods aim to lead to an understanding of participants' views and actions from their perspectives (Charmaz, 2006). However, while being concerned with understanding experience from within the context and perspective of human experience (Kelly, 1999b), grounded theory also aims to interpret this understanding. That is, it aims to show how experience can be understood from outside of its context (Charmaz, 2006) by using theoretical knowledge to develop descriptions into theories about the studied phenomenon (Richardson & Kramer, 2006). Thus, grounded theory acts as a bridge between contextual understanding and theoretical interpretation (Kelly, 1999b), providing, in this case, not simply a description of the experience and expression of emotional intimacy of adolescents but an abstract conceptual understanding thereof.

4. Method

4.1. The research question

In accordance with qualitative research methodology and grounded theory methods, a broad topic of inquiry served as the starting point for the research. The research question was: how do Coloured adolescents from a semi-rural community in the Western Cape experience and express intimacy in their romantic relationships?

4.2. Participants

The present study was conducted with Coloured participants from a semi-rural area in the Western Cape. Qualitative research strives to understand social action or human experience in terms of a specific context (it is idiographic) rather than attempting to generalize findings to a theoretical population (Babbie & Mouton, 2001). Thus, participants were not chosen to ensure generalizability or a representative reflection of the population. Sources were flexibly selected based on the theoretical relevance of the information the source can provide and for extending or refining ideas that arise during the analysis of data (Dey, 2004).

Even though romantic relationships emerge in early adolescence, such relationships are not typical at this time (Connolly et al., 2004). In addition, research consistently indicates a change in the expression and experience of emotional intimacy across different stages of adolescence (Giordano et al., 2005; Paul & White, 1990; Shulman & Scharf, 2000). In order to increase the likelihood that participants had had some experience of dating and romantic relationships and to focus the research

on a more homogenous developmental group, the study focused on individuals in middle adolescence, aged from 16 to 18 years. In addition to being aged between 16 and 18 years participants had to be involved in a romantic relationship at the time interviews were conducted.

The 20 participants in the present study, half of whom were male and half of whom were female, ranged in age from 16 to 18 years and were in grades ten, eleven and twelve. Participants lived with one or both of their parents. When asked to give an indication of the monthly household income participants stated that they did not know what their parents earned. To help participants give a rough indication they were asked if they felt that that their parents' income was high or low. Participants usually said that it was somewhere in the middle, indicating that compared with many of their peers participants did not feel particularly deprived but also that they were not privileged. Participants lived on farms or nearby villages, often with relatives. The majority of participants' parents were both employed. Most of the men worked on farms while the women were mostly employed as domestic workers. These additional socio-economic indicators reflect that, while participants do not see themselves as especially deprived within their immediate social contexts, they could be viewed as relatively economically deprived in the global context. . The participants all reported high levels of academic achievement and had leadership positions either at school or in their churches. Most had intentions of perusing tertiary education and had aspirations toward professional careers. All participants reported that they did not use any illegal narcotics and the majority of participants do not drink alcohol, except for a few boys who reported drinking in moderation on weekends. All but one participant, who preferred to be alone, reported having large numbers of friends of both sexes with whom they socialized in groups and had one 'best' friend of the same sex.

4.3. Theoretical sampling

Qualitative sampling, data collection, analysis and interpretation occur in an iterative way. Research begins with broad questions reflecting the aims of the study. Then, to gain a deeper understanding of studied phenomenon questions need to be refined to reflect specific information that emerges from initial analysis, evolving in response to setting, data and analysis (Fossey et al., 2002).

Theoretical sampling is one approach to recruiting participants that reflects the "emergent nature of the qualitative research process" (Fossey et al., 2002, p. 726). Theoretical sampling refers to the further collection of data after conducting initial interviews in order to elucidate and develop emerging the theoretical categories that emerged from the data initially obtained (Charmaz, 2006).

To determine whether further data collection is required and who should be included in this data collection, the method of comparison is used (Charmaz, 2006). This method involves determining how categories are related, what variations within categories and gaps in knowledge within categories exist. Sampling continues until the categories that emerge from the analysis are fully developed in that no new information is emerging and patterns are recurring (Fossey et al., 2002).

Charmaz (1990) recommends that theoretical sampling takes place as late in the research process as possible to ensure that the relevant issues are well-defined and theoretical insight is trained so as to allow for significant data to emerge. Sampling in the present study proceeded, as Charmaz (2006) suggests, by "starting with data, constructing tentative ideas about the data, and then examining these ideas through further empirical inquiry" (p. 102).

In order to start addressing the research question an initial group of nine participants was sampled. The initial sample served as a departure point for the grounded theory process. Following the first wave of interviews, it became clear that the data that had been collected was thin and lacking in detail. As outlined below, three additional waves of interviews were carried out, each time either following up with participants interviewed in preceding waves or with new participants. Each time the interview schedule was altered in such a way as to elicit information that would fill out data already gathered or to gather data on ideas that emerged out of preceding interviews. This process continued until no new themes emerged and enough data of sufficient depth to build the analysis had been gathered. Table 1 below contains the details of the participants, including which wave they participated in, gender and age, the romantic partner's age and relationship length.

TABLE 1:

PARTICIPANT NUMBER	GENDER	AGE	PARTNER'S AGE	RELATIONSHIP LENGTH	WAVE OF INTERVIEWS
1	Female	17	20	2 months	1st
2	Male	17	16	3 months	1st
3	Female	18	18	2 months	1st and follow-up
4	Male	17	15	1 year, 3 months	1st
5	Female	18	19	4 years	1st
6	Male	18	18	3 months	1st
7	Male	17	17	2 months	1st
8	Male	17	14	2 years	1st
9	Female	17	22	2 years	1st
10	Male	18	18	2 months	2nd
11	Female	17	18	9 months	2nd
12	Female	17	16	2 years	2nd
13	Male	18	17	7 months	2nd
14	Female	17	20	4 months	3rd and follow-up

15	Male	16	17	1 year 3 months	3rd and follow-up
16	Male	17	17	8 months	3rd
17	Female	18	17	1 month	4th
18	Female	16	17	1 year, 2 months	4th
19	Male	16	16	2 months	4th
20	Female	18	17	3 months	4th

4.4. Data collection

Grounded theory requires that data is detailed, focused and full, revealing participants' subjective views, feelings, intentions and actions embedded in the context of their lives (Charmaz, 2006). To attain the rich and detailed data required, participants must be asked to give their interpretations of a phenomenon, describe it and reflect upon it (Charmaz, 2006). In-depth interviews were conducted as they are well suited to gaining access to participants' interpretations of their experiences, feelings and social worlds (Charmaz, 2006; Fossey et al., 2002).

In-depth interviews in the grounded theory method are "open-ended yet directed, shaped yet emergent and paced yet unrestricted" (Charmaz, 2006, p. 28). Since interviewers were relatively inexperienced in conducting interviews and lacked in-depth knowledge of the research topic, they were provided with an interview schedule (see appendix A) to ensure that the topics necessary for gaining relevant information were covered. The interview schedule was semi-structured in that the researcher directed the interview (Charmaz, 1990). However, in order for the young participants, who were undoubtedly unfamiliar with the research process, to feel most at ease, and to ensure that their own views came across, interviewers were instructed to keep the interviews as unstructured and conversational as possible. They were to follow the participants' lead wherever possible, allowing participants' voices to be heard, privileging their knowledge.

4.4.1. The interviewers

The interviews were conducted in Afrikaans, the participants' home language. I have a basic knowledge of Afrikaans and I conducted the first three interviews in the first wave myself, because it was thought that it would help me to get as close as possible to the respondents and their responses. After completion of these three interviews, I felt that the interview material that I elicited was not rich and textured enough. I therefore had to consider that my limited ability in Afrikaans as a spoken language may have contributed to the quality of the interview material. My supervisor and I decided that first language Afrikaans speaking interviewers would conduct the remainder of the interviews.

The Afrikaans-speaking interviewers in the first wave were three white, female postgraduate students in psychology who were in their twenties. I felt that despite their proficiency with the language, the responses elicited by these interviewers lacked rich texture and detail. To collect the rich data required for grounded theory analysis, it is argued that researchers must get close to participants and be accepted by them (McCann & Clark, 2003). I suspected that the brief, undetailed responses in the interviews may have been due to participants feeling uncomfortable or self-conscious in the presence of somewhat older women from a completely different background to participants, thus inhibiting the ability of the interviewers to get close to participants.

Two Coloured female Psychology students, aged 21 and 22, who came from semi-rural, Coloured communities, and had an open and warm interactional style, were selected to conduct interviews in the third wave because participants are often more comfortable and trusting of interviewers of a similar background as themselves (Bassett, Beagan, Ristovski-Slijepcevic & Chapman, 2008). Furthermore, sharing cultural subtleties can play a role in interviewer-participant interaction with cultural understandings shared by both participant and interviewer aiding in turning a stilted interview into a flowing conversation (Bassett et al., 2008). The interviews conducted by these two interviewers, however, did not differ greatly from those conducted by the white interviewers. Participants did not seem to open up any more or give responses that were any more detailed or richly textured. While participants did seem slightly more at ease in the presence of the young, Coloured interviewers, their apparent increased comfort did not seem to have an effect on how they responded to interview questions. I had to consider if the interviewers' lack of experience with in-depth, qualitative interviewing, especially with adolescents, may have restricted their abilities to elicit the rich data I required.

The fourth wave interviews were conducted by a white, female post-graduate student in psychology who had teenage children of her own. It was hoped that, despite not sharing a socio-economic background with participants, her experience with communicating with adolescents could be useful in eliciting detailed data from participants. Even though previous researchers have found that adolescents are often reluctant to share personal information with adults (Brown, et al., 1999), the participants' responses in the fourth wave were comparable with those in the preceding waves and the interviewer's age and socioeconomic profile did not appear to affect participants' responses in a meaningful way. When I looked at the transcriptions of the interviews, it was clear that interviewer inexperience may have played a role in the types of responses elicited by participants. Despite the training and orientation sessions that interviewers attended, they were less successful in following up participants' responses and to ask for clarifications and descriptions. This is perhaps the kind of

skill that comes with accumulative experience and training. Nevertheless, after all the interviewers failed to co-produce the rich and textured interview material that I expected to elicit, I concluded that the relatively thin interview material was not only due to the characteristics and skills of the interviewers and that it may have something to do with how the young participants articulate themselves about the specific topic. I therefore used this process information as interview material to be interpreted.

4.4.2. Procedure for the interviews

After discussing the research project with the school principal and gaining his permission to conduct the research in the school, all participants were recruited through a teacher and counsellor at the school the participants attended. This teacher suggested that the best place to interview the students was at their school and that this could be done during his class times.

Once the teacher had been briefed on the research he approached students who met the inclusion criteria for the study and asked them if they would like to take part. The teacher provided five boys and five girls who were eligible for participation in the study with consent forms that had to be signed by the participants and a parent or guardian. The participants were told to give the completed forms to the interviewer when the interview was conducted.

The interviews took place in two small rooms at the end of a corridor usually used by the school's psychologist when having sessions with individual students. I was told that these were the best rooms available for the interviews and although the noise from the corridors and field outside did penetrate the venues somewhat, the rooms provided privacy in that they were on the top floor at the end of a corridor where no one needed to pass. Once settled into the venue, the interviewers reiterated points from the consent form including the purposes of the interview and study and that the interview would be audio taped.

4.4.3. The initial interviews

To start the interview the participants were asked their age, their partner's name and how old their partner was. To get the participants relaxed and comfortable with the interview process they were then asked to describe their partner's personality and what they liked most and least about their partner. While remaining flexible, the interviewers went on to ask the questions on the interview schedule.

Charmaz (2006) suggests initially formulating broad, open-ended questions, which can be focused to elicit detailed descriptions of particular topics. Research has shown that the intensity and frequency of emotions experienced daily in relationships are an accurate indication of the level of how close individuals feel to their partners (Simpson, Collins, Tran & Haydon, 2007). Interview questions thus asked participants to describe and reflect upon their emotional experiences within their romantic relationships. Since the research is situated within a social constructionist theoretical framework, questions focused on participants' definitions of terms, situations and events.

In order to avoid leading participants in their responses and to gain participant's interpretations of intimacy in their terms, participants were not asked directly to provide a definition of intimacy or to identify possible components of intimacy. Rather they were asked to describe how they felt about their partners and how they felt about their relationship with their partners.

To make it easier to answer questions related to closeness and intimacy, participants were asked to give specific examples of certain experiences and to describe how they felt at the time of the experience. Participants were asked to give an example of: a time or situation when a participant felt close to his or her partner, something about themselves or their life that they would find difficult to tell their partner, a time when they felt special and important to their partner, and what they do to make their partner feel special and important. Participants were also asked what sorts of things they do when they are with their partners and also what they talk about when they are together.

Once the interviews were complete, the participants were asked how they felt about being interviewed. Some participants said that it was difficult to answer the questions but all said that they felt fine. Some added that they enjoyed being able to talk about their relationships and the feelings they had in connection with them.

Following Glaser's maxim that all is data (Bryant & Charmaz, 2007), the interviewers discussed their experiences of each interview with me, describing their feelings about the interview and their interaction with the participant as well as informing me of their initial impressions of the data and their interactions with the participant.

4.4.4. Second wave interviews

An attempt at analysis of the first interviews led to the feeling that the initial interviews seemed to lack depth and detail with participants' stories appearing superficial. After consultation with my supervisor I conducted a further four interviews with two female and two male participants not only to follow up on emerging ideas related to the interpretation of data but in an attempt to gain more detailed data.

In order to gauge whether it was possible that the responses I perceived to be lacking in depth and detail may be connected to contextual issues such as socioeconomic status, representing the quality of participants' and their parents' education, their residence in a semi-rural community or differences in socioeconomic status of the interviewer and the participants, a white girl from a more affluent background was also interviewed. She was interviewed in Afrikaans at her school and the same interview schedule that was used in the first wave was used in this interview. Although this participant's demeanour was different from the others in that her body language and tone of voice indicated that she was not as shy during the interview and seemed more confident in the presence of the interviewer, her responses did not differ greatly from those of the other participants. We therefore concluded that it was not the context or background of the adolescents which explained the apparently thin accounts of intimacy.

With the other second wave interviews questions that followed on from the first interview schedule were asked. The interview schedule for the second wave interviews included questions on topics that were not covered in the first wave of interviews and were aimed at gathering information that augmented the narratives of the participants in the first wave (See appendix A).

Since the questioning in the first wave interviews did not lead me to an adequate understanding of how participants define intimacy for themselves, in the second wave interviews participants were asked directly what they believe an intimate relationship is. They were asked whether or not their current romantic relationship was like their conception of an intimate relationship and how it is the same or how it differs. In order to get a better understanding of how participants experience the development of intimacy over time, they were asked if their relationships were always intimate. If not, I asked them when they thought it changed to become intimate and how things changed at that time.

In addition to asking participants directly about their conceptions and experiences of intimacy they were also asked about their conceptions of the ideal relationship. These questions were asked in order to gauge whether or not their notion of the ideal relationship corresponds with an intimate relationship. In order to further explore participants' definitions of intimacy they were asked what changes they might make to their current relationships to make them more like their ideal relationship. These suggestions for changes could then be compared with participants' definitions of intimate relationships to ascertain whether or not their notion of an ideal relationship includes intimacy, which could in turn lead to an understanding of the value participants place on intimacy in their romantic relationships.

4.4.5. Third wave interviews

In the third wave three more participants were interviewed with two of them each participating in a follow-up interview. In accordance with grounded theory, the interview schedule was adjusted for the third wave of interviews based on cues given by data already collected. Questions which did not yield relevant data were removed and additional questions were included. In order to gain rich and detailed narratives participants were explicitly asked to tell the story of their relationships- where their relationships began, how they started, why they started and how they changed and developed. Because the wording of the question "what does the ideal relationship look like to you?" may not only have been difficult for young people to understand but also leading, it was replaced with "what do you think a close relationship between two people should look like?" Similarly, the question "what does an intimate relationship look like to you?" was replaced with "how do you think a close relationship between a boy and girl differs from other close relationships"? (see appendix A)

4.4.6. Fourth wave interviews

In the fourth and final wave of interviews three more participants were interviewed. New participants had to be used because previous participants were unavailable because they said that they did not want to participate again. As it is participants' right to withdraw from participation at any time, I felt that I should not press them for their reasons for not wanting to participate further. However, valuable insight regarding participants' experiences of the research process could have been gained if I had enquired. In hindsight, I realize I should have asked the participants why they chose not to participate again. This time, as another strategy for gaining the richest data possible, a female post-graduate student in psychology who had teenage children of her own conducted the interviews. It was hoped that her experience with communicating with adolescents could be useful

in eliciting detailed data from participants. The interview schedule was more focused on emergent ideas and was used flexibly in the same way as previous interviews.

Analysis of the fourth wave interview data revealed that no new information was coming to light and the main themes represented by the categories were being repeated. No further interviews were conducted.

4.5. Transcription of interviews

Charmaz (2006) suggests that recorded interviews should be transcribed. In order to immerse myself in the data and to become as fully acquainted with the data as possible, I chose to transcribe the interviews myself in an effort to begin formulating impressions of the data at the earliest stage in the process since data analysis in grounded theory should start as soon as the research process commences (Charmaz, 2006). I felt that the familiarity with participants' narratives I gained through transcription was of use in starting to develop ideas about the data even before the concrete steps for analysis were undertaken.

4.6. Data analysis

The interview data were used to interpret participants' constructions of their worlds and experiences. Developing an understanding of qualitative data requires that meanings, patterns or connections among data are explored at a conceptual level (Fossey et al., 2002). Grounded theory analysis of interview data can be seen as a process of converting text into concepts. This is done through building levels of abstraction from the data by conceptually clarifying the concrete actions and phenomena that appear in the data (Charmaz, 2006; Henning et al, 2004).

In accordance with qualitative methodology, grounded theory is an emergent method of conducting research that requires simultaneous data collection and analysis (Charmaz, 2006). Thus, analysis begins during the data collection phase. Once initial data is collected, the researcher may follow prescribed steps to analyse the data in a systematic way. The present study followed Charmaz's (2006) recommendation of analysis being undertaken in three phases, namely: 1) coding, 2) memo-writing and 3) writing the research report:

4.6.1. Coding and categorizing the data

The first step in moving beyond the concrete data and making analytic interpretations is coding (Charmaz, 2006). Qualitative coding involves selecting and separating segments of data and then "defining what the data are about" by categorizing, organizing and accounting for each segment of data (Charmaz, 2006, p. 43). Thus, codes emerge through an active process of sorting through data, scrutinizing them, attributing different meanings to them and asking questions of them (Charmaz, 2006). Each segment of data is coded by attaching a label to it, simultaneously summarizing and categorizing the data with the purpose of creating an analytic handle that will facilitate the development of abstract ideas (Charmaz, 2006).

Grounded theory requires that data be coded for processes, actions, assumptions and consequences rather than topics (Charmaz, 1990). Thus codes are analytic conceptualizations of the data, not simply a description (Dey, 2004). Through coding, what is happening in the data is defined and the researcher may begin to unravel its meaning (Charmaz, 2006). Consistent with Charmaz's (2006) conception of grounded theory, coding occurred in two phases. An initial phase consisting of the coding of each line of data was followed by a focused, selective phase of coding. Focused coding then organized and integrated the initial codes.

Line-by-line coding involves labelling segments of data represented by each line of the transcript, rather than each full sentence spoken by the participant (Charmaz, 2006). The researcher interprets the data by assigning each line a conceptual rather than a descriptive label. The researcher thus works with conceptualizations of data rather than the raw data itself (Corbin & Strauss, 1990). This is an important distinction since theories cannot be developed with the actual activities or happenings that are observed or reported (Corbin & Strauss, 1990).

Even though the analyst works with conceptualizations of data, grounded theory codes must nevertheless stick closely with the data for the resulting theory to be truly grounded in the data. This means that the codes and categories must provide a recognizable description of the data (Henwood & Pidgeon, 2003). Line-by-line coding aids the analyst in this regard by restricting interpretation to the data that is collected (Charmaz, 1990).

Grounded theory methods are intended to produce many theories about general problems, not to test existing hypotheses. Therefore coding must be conducted without imposing predefined codes onto data (Kelle, 2007). Coding for actions, rather than topics, and applying labels that denote these

actions lessens the likelihood of a researcher superimposing preconceived ideas onto the data which will also assist the researcher to avoid making conceptual leaps (Charmaz, 2006).

Charmaz (1990) suggests asking the following questions when conducting initial coding in order to meet the criteria for coding data in the grounded theory method of conceptualizing data, sticking close to the data and not imposing predetermined ideas on data while coding for actions, processes, assumptions and consequences:

- What is going on?
- What are people doing?
- What are people saying?
- What do these actions and statements take for granted?
- How do structure and context serve to support, maintain, impede, or change the actions and statements?

In accordance with the philosophy of the constructivist grounded theory method, the codes decided on by the researcher represent one interpretation of any number of possible interpretations of the data (Charmaz, 2006). In the present study a large number of initial codes were devised that informed the leads that should be taken up in further interviews and analysis. The initial codes led me to focus on aspects of participants relationships related to the way they spoke about their relationships, their behaviour within their relationships and their emphasis on affiliation and sacrifice in their relationships.

Comparison lies at the heart of grounded theory analysis (Dey, 2004). Grounded theory methods involve constant comparative methods to identify analytic distinctions as well as patterns in the empirical world, moving the analysis beyond individual cases (Charmaz, 2006). In the focused coding phase of analysis the initial codes, or segments of data, are synthesized and integrated by comparing the most frequently occurring or significant initial codes with each other to identify patterns of similarities and differences among them (Charmaz, 2006; Henwood & Pidgeon, 2003).

However, the analysis does not end with identifying patterns of similarity and difference. Dey (2007) argues that people's predisposition to recognizing patterns even among chance products, means that researchers need to be more circumspect, asking which patterns are worthy of recognition or further conceptual analysis and why this is so. These considerations suggest the significance of the theoretical context of the research. The identification of patterns is a theoretical

enterprise in which patterns are considered as underlying conceptualizations which can describe the empirical relationships in the data, not just superficial regularities (Dey, 2007).

The following codes were focused on:

- Participants' use of clichéd expressions
- Participants' scripted romantic behaviour accounts
- Downplaying undesirable experiences
- Experiencing intimacy through being together
- Being together alone: why is this so important?
- Gendered expression of care: What is the significance of a gender division of behaviour and experience?
- Difficulty putting emotional experiences into words

The focused codes then guide further interviews with a view to expanding the codes, filling them out. In order for focused codes to become concepts that can be used in the construction of a theory they must account for relationships defined in the data and must rest on the data in order to be grounded (Charmaz, 2006). The constant comparative method is again used to identify relationships among focused codes and the codes that make the most analytic sense are used to frame the data in categories (Charmaz, 2006).

Kelle (2007) argues that the belief that categories can emerge from generalizations from empirical data by researchers who are free from theoretical preoccupations is a rather outmoded view of scientific inquiry. In line with insights from the philosophy of science and cognitive psychology the construction of theoretical categories have to draw on already existing stocks of knowledge (Kelle, 2007). Thus, the development of categories from empirical data depends on the availability of adequate theoretical concepts (Kelle, 2007). Theoretical sensitivity, that is, insight into the area of study and the ability to make something of this insight, is a valuable tool in grounded theory analysis (Kelle, 2007). Empirically grounded theory combines categories that have emerged from the analysis with concepts arising from theoretical knowledge (Kelle, 2007). This does not mean forcing inappropriate theoretical concepts on data. The art of applying theoretical sensitivity effectively lies in using theoretical concepts only when they fit the data. As Glaser and Strauss (cited in Kelle, 2007) note, "the trick is to line up what one takes as theoretically possible or probable with what one is finding in the field" (p. 197).

The following categories were identified:

- Striving for ideal relationships: Why do participants use clichéd expressions, give such scripted romantic behaviour accounts and play down undesirable experiences?
- "Do"-ing intimacy: What does it mean that participants experience intimacy through being together and that participants have difficulty putting emotional experiences into words?

4.6.2.   The core category

Grounded theory method requires that categories are reconstructed in such a way that they demonstrate an understanding of observed social processes (Charmaz, 206). Simply grouping related concepts to build a category is insufficient for developing such understanding. To produce a constructivist grounded theory it must be recognized that categories are theoretically informed (Dey, 2007) and the researcher must ask how and why certain meanings and actions manifest in particular situations or under particular conditions (Charmaz, 2006).

To achieve the abovementioned Strauss (cited in Charmaz, 2006) suggests "building a dense texture of relationships around the axes of a category" (p. 58). This involves relating sub-categories identified during the previous phases to a core category asking how the categories and subcategories are related to each other (Charmaz, 2006) and to extant theory (Dey, 2007). The most significant category that emerged from the analysis was: Adolescents' emphasis on behaviour in accounts of romantic relationships and intimacy.

4.6.3. Memo writing

Memos are analytic notes that are constructed to explore and augment categories (Charmaz, 2006). Memo writing is a valuable tool in data analysis as it aids the researcher in demonstrating the processes, actions and assumptions that are created in relation with the codes. It is thorough memo-writing that the codes are examined, explored and expanded upon. Memo-writing allows the researcher to become immersed in the data, to develop ideas and insights by writing them down in a narrative form (Charmaz, 2006).

Unlike codes and categories that are required to fit the data, memos are not constrained in this way and may include "hunches and insights" as well as new ideas to be pursued and notes on the modification of the grouping of categories (Henwood & Pidgeon, 2003, p. 145). It is at this point in

the analysis process that theoretical sensitivity and researcher creativity are linked to literature and the researcher's emerging theoretical reflections are first documented (Henwood & Pidgeon, 2003).

For this study I wrote memos after coding, in a free-writing style. Using the codes as guides I wrote down any idea or insight that came to me, regardless of immediate relevance and without paying attention to grammar. I then reworked the memos, extracting the most analytically significant portions and tried to reflexively understand how participants make sense of their experiences.

4.6.4. Writing the report

In qualitative research the written report is a presentation of the research findings as a textual description that illuminates participants' subjective meaning of the studied phenomenon while placing this meaning in context to represent participants' real world and lived experiences (Fossey et al., 2002).

In the written report it is important to provide enough verbatim material to demonstrate the connections between the data and the analysis (Charmaz, 2006). Furthermore, to "keep the human story in the forefront of the readers mind" many interview quotes must be used when writing the report (Charmaz, 1990, p. 47). In the write-up of the analysis in the present study attention is paid to the concepts identified during the analysis. The concepts are explained and the relationships among various categories are demonstrated in order to create the general theory about participants' experiences and expressions of intimacy.

5. Evaluating grounded theory

When grounded theory was first introduced by Glaser and Strauss in 1967 it was probably the most important contribution to the acceptance of the legitimacy of qualitative methods in social research (Thomas & James, 2006). However, Dey (2004) warns that the impressive status that grounded theory has acquired should not obscure the approach's problems and ambiguities.

The primary criticisms of grounded theory stem from the inherent ambiguity in a method which has evolved and changed extensively over the years into several different versions which do not include concrete prescriptions or recipes for using them. What theory actually is in qualitative research poses a difficult question (Thomas & James, 2006) and, according to Dey (2007), there is "no consensus on what constitutes a grounded theory" and no "clear and consistent rules governing the

classification of theories as grounded or otherwise" (p. 173). Despite this lack of consensus, however, there are certain criteria to which a grounded theory analysis should comply in order to ensure its quality. According to Corbin and Strauss (1990), "the procedures of grounded theory are designed to develop a set of well integrated concepts that provide a thorough theoretical explanation of social phenomena" (p. 5). Furthermore, the constructivist grounded theory method applies an interpretive definition of theory, which emphasizes abstract, theoretical understanding which rests on the researcher's interpretation (Charmaz, 2006). Interpretive theories allow for indeterminacy and prioritize patterns and connection instead of linear reasoning (Charmaz, 2006). Charmaz (2006) concludes that theory in grounded theory aims to provide an understanding of a studied phenomenon in abstract terms through an imaginative interpretation which acknowledges the subjectivity involved in the process.

Charmaz (2006) suggests that the quality of a grounded theory is determined by its level of credibility, the extent of its conceptual rendering, its resonance and its usefulness Charmaz (2006). The credibility of the present analysis is bolstered through the provision of sufficient evidence to support theories and claims presented. In addition, the systematic treatment of data and the wide range of empirical observations (Charmaz, 2006) covered, also contributes to the credibility of the present analysis. The use of the process of constant comparison supports a creative but systematic examination of the data thus providing a conceptual rendering of the data (Charmaz, 2006). This creative and systematic examination of data facilitates analytical trustworthiness and quality, in turn reinforcing the credibility of the research (Henwood & Pidgeon, 2003).

The resonance of the grounded theory is bolstered by the richness of the studied experience the categories convey - revealing both the literal and implicit taken-for-granted meanings of the experiences (Charmaz, 2006). The usefulness of the grounded theory is reflected in its social and theoretical relevance and its contribution to existing knowledge by challenging and expanding it (Charmaz, 2006). Furthermore, the theoretical claims made are applicable to everyday life (Charmaz, 2006) and are consistent with established knowledge in the field (Dey, 2007).

Constructing a sound, good quality grounded theory is, however, not a straightforward endeavour. A frequent criticism of grounded theory is that the epistemological assumptions of the method have not been clearly explicated (McCann & Clark, 2003). Researchers are expected to be both objective and subjective in their methods, a position that is particularly difficult for novices to uphold. On the one hand researchers must move their analysis beyond description to a conceptual understanding but must, on the other hand, also be wary of what Glaser refers to as "immaculate conjecture" or

"immaculate conceptualizations", that is, leaping to generate theoretical statements without regard for the data (Bryant & Charmaz, 2007). A great deal of insight, experience and skill is required to develop sufficient confidence with the method to be able to make the kinds of judgments required for conducting grounded theory (Bryant & Charmaz, 2007) and novices' inexperience often comes to the fore during grounded theory analysis and particularly in the production of grounded theory (Mruck & Mey, 2007).

Constructing a grounded theory was difficult for me to achieve, not least because, as Bryant and Charmaz, (2007) suggest: "novices cannot obviously and intuitively grasp GTM [grounded theory method]" (p. 12). I did indeed find the ambiguous expectations of the process of constructing grounded theory both difficult to apply and to tolerate. As a novice, I also feel that the insecurity that resulted from the difficulty in applying the method may also have stifled the creativity required for imaginative interpretation. My supervisor, however, checked every level of my analysis and helped me to improve my analysis, which served as a triangulation mechanism assuring better quality of analysis.

6. Evaluating qualitative research

Even though hardly any interpretative study, using qualitative methodology can remain unchallenged by proponents of contending paradigms, the legitimacy of postmodern paradigms is well established and equal to that of the more conventional, positivist paradigms (Guba & Lincoln, 2005). As with more traditional, positivist methods, interpretive, qualitative research must be evaluated according to the truth value of the claims made and the approach provides researchers with methods and standards for ensuring and judging the quality of their research (Henning et al., 2004).

The evaluation of research must be consistent with the aims of the research and the paradigm within which the research is situated (Fossey et al., 2002). As interpretive, qualitative research progressed and the connection between human constructions and 'reality' were dismissed, the positivist terms, validity, reliability and generalizability, and how they were used as assessment tools took on different meanings to reflect the philosophies of the new, postmodern paradigm (Henning et al., 2004). As Henning and her colleagues (Henning et al., 2004) argue, in interpretative research the importance of correspondence as truth, that is, that research findings must correspond with reality, recedes and coherence and action take the foreground in the evaluation of qualitative research.

The recent study employed methods for conducting sound qualitative research that as Fossey and colleagues (Fossey et al., 2002) point out, "give privilege to the perspectives of research participants" and produce an "understanding of the subjective meaning of participants in a particular context" (p. 723). The quality of the research is reinforced by ensuring the authenticity of the representations of participants' accounts; the authenticity of the interpretations of the accounts; and the fit of the findings to the data and context from which they were derived (Fossey et al., 2002).

Fossey and colleagues (Fossey et al., 2002) identify several methodological requirements for ensuring that the aims of qualitative research are met. Firstly, *congruence* in terms of the design was achieved by ensuring that the methodology fit the research question; that the methods fit the chosen methodology; and that the research was conducted in a way that is congruent with the chosen methodology. Secondly, *responsiveness to social context* by the research question and the sampling, data collection and analysis was achieved by developing and adapting the research design to respond to real-life situations within the research setting and by engaging with research participants and becoming familiar with the research setting. Thirdly, *appropriateness* was achieved by ensuring that sampling and data gathering methods were suited to addressing the research question. Fourthly, the present research achieved *adequacy* through the use of sufficient sources of information to develop a full description of the studied phenomenon and the provision of detailed descriptions of the data gathering and analysis procedures utilized and how these procedures led to further data collection. Furthermore, every effort was made to ensure that methods of data collection, recording and documenting captured participants' views. Finally, *transparency* in data collection and analysis was achieved by considering rival or competing accounts in the analysis and ensuring that the participants' voices are privileged.

It is not only methodological rigour that can deliver a version of contextual, grounded truths but also the process of interpretation itself (Guba & Lincoln, 2005). The extent to which the experiences and meanings of others can be represented by a researcher depends on making interpretations that are "necessarily personal, experiential and political" (Fossey et al., 2002. p. 730). Thus trustworthiness of the interpretations made by a researcher rests on how meanings are presented (Fossey et al., 2002). Fossey et al., (2002) identify a further three criteria for evaluating the trustworthiness of interpretations or interpretive rigour relevant to research conducted within an interpretive paradigm. *Authenticity* in *the* presentation of findings and interpretations was achieved by presenting participants' views in their own voices. Descriptions are sufficiently detailed to allow for an understanding of participants' experiences in the context of the meanings that inform them.

Coherence was achieved by ensuring that interpretations fit the data and by taking multiple views into account. Finally, the *permeability* of the researcher's intention, engagement and interpretations are reflected in the transparency of the research as made possible by self- and epistemological reflection (see section 7 below).

Fossey and colleagues' (Fossey et al., 2002) methodological and interpretive methods for ensuring that the aims of the research are met while upholding the philosophical positions of the paradigm in which the research is conducted, also aid in achieving validity, reliability and transferability of research findings.

6.1. Validity

In qualitative terms validity asks if, using certain methods, we are investigating what the researcher purports to be investigating (Henning et al., 2004). The validity of a qualitative research project lies in the extent to which an account is an accurate representation of the studied phenomenon (Silverman, 2005). For the purposes of validation, the philosophical truth value of coherence - the internal logic and consistency of the research - is achieved by ensuring concord between the methodology and method of research, which requires precision at every step in the research process (Henning et al., 2004). Validation involves checking for bias or lack of precision; questioning all design and implementation decisions; looking for and addressing theoretical questions as they arise throughout the process; and discussing and sharing the research actions (Henning et al., 2004).

The supervision process enhanced the validity of the present research by ensuring that it was precisely conducted, with every design decision and step in the analysis questioned for its necessity, coherence, accuracy, utility and clarity. The input of an experienced supervisor ensured that the methodological choices I made and the methods I employed were coherent. My supervisor also helped me identify biases that would affect the research and challenged theoretical inconsistencies and problems when they appeared in my analysis, helping me address them.

6.2. Reliability

Traditionally, reliability refers to the degree to which research findings may be replicated (Silverman, 2005). Interpretive research, however, does not assume to be investigating a stable, unchanging reality and does not expect that other researchers will find similarly in separate analyses. Indeed, it is expected that the subject of study will behave differently or express different

opinions in different contexts or at different times (Kelly, 1999a). Thus, rather than ensuring that findings are replicable, it is more important that the reader is convinced that the findings reported did indeed occur as the researcher claims they did (Kelly, 1999a). This can be achieved by providing the reader with rich, detailed descriptions of how actions and opinions are based on and develop from contextual interaction (Kelly, 1999a).

6.3. Transferability

Meaning varies greatly from one context of human interaction to another, thus it may not be possible to generalize findings across contexts. However, provision of rich detailed description of the context being studied will allow readers to have detailed accounts of the structures of meaning that develop in a specific context. This understanding can then be transferred to new contexts in different studies, providing these studies with a framework for reflecting on the way that meaning and action occur in that study (Kelly, 1999a).

7. Reflexivity

Reflexivity in qualitative research is an awareness of the contribution a researcher makes to the construction of meaning throughout the research process (Willig, 2001). Personal reflexivity involves reflecting on how the researcher's own values; experiences; beliefs; interests; political positions; broader aims in life and identities have shaped the research (Willig, 2001). Epistemological reflexivity encourages the researcher to reflect on the assumptions that have been made in the course of the research as well the implications of such assumptions on the research (Willig, 2001). This type of reflexivity thus concerns such issues as how the research question has defined and limited what could be found; how the design and analysis method constructed the data and the findings; and the extent to which the research question could have been investigated differently and the findings this may have produced (Willig, 2001).

7.1. Self-reflexivity

Unlike traditional positivist paradigms of research that hold that there certainly exists one true reality, outside of the flawed human apprehension of it , which can be known only through use of methods that eliminate human contamination of its comprehension (Guba & Lincoln, 2005), sound qualitative research relies on the acknowledgement of the researcher's influence on the research

process. In the words of Denzin and Lincoln (2005) "there are no objective observations, only observations socially situated in the worlds of- and between- the observer and the observed" (p. 21).

Research is a product co-created by both the researcher and the researched (Ashworth, 2003) and the findings a study produces depend as much on the input from participants as on the tool for conducting the research, that is, the researcher him or herself. The research and its findings depend on the particular time, place and context to which the researcher belongs (Mruck & Mey, 2007). The process of scientific observation and understanding is best seen as a researcher's re-interpretation of a phenomenon within preferred epistemologies and thought systems which does not lead to a single truth but relative truths that reflect the researcher's style and depends on the researcher's system of reference (Mruck & Mey, 2007).

Due to the consequences for every aspect of conducting research, it is imperative for an interpretative researcher to understand his or her frame of reference, "personal history, biography, gender, social class, race and ethnicity" impact on the research process (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p. 6). The act of reflecting on one's own experience and critically examining the assumptions that stem from being culturally, socially, and academically situated is crucial when conducting qualitative research, particularly constructivist grounded theory research (Mruck & Mey, 2007).

The present research may primarily have been impacted on by my beliefs and values surrounding two major aspects of my identity: being a white woman from a middle-class background and having a visual impairment.

I grew up as a white female in a middle-class background without very much exposure to or interaction with people outside of this context. In my experience women were as educated as men were and were employed as often as men were, although this employment did appear to be divided along gendered lines. When one partner in a relationship was not employed I viewed this to be due to choice and believed all household income to be shared in a way that would benefit all in the household. While well aware of the violence that is often perpetrated against women by men in South Africa generally (but also believing that women very rarely, if ever, perpetrated violence against men), I was not aware of any violence or coercion taking place within the context of close relationships within my immediate familial and social surroundings. In the course of my tertiary studies in the humanities I was made aware of the widespread and profound inequalities that permeate all aspects of social life but due to my preconceived, and admittedly idealized and romanticized, notions of relationships I still found it difficult to grasp the impact of such

inequalities in the contexts of relationships. While my exposure to and experiences of a broader range of people from across the socio-economic, cultural and ethnic spectrum has increased over the years my experiences with others is still largely limited to my white, middle-class social circle and community. Based on my perceptions of the general economic and social equality of men and women in the communities within which I have always lived, I developed an understanding of relationships as apolitical spaces in which men and women were free to act as they pleased and did so in an equitable fashion. The politics of gender inequality fed by economic and social divisions between many men and women in South Africa thus did not initially motivate the study. My initial lack of awareness of the politics involved in relationships between men and women and the absence of such politics as a motivation for the study meant that I brought a certain amount of bias toward a white, middle-class understanding of relationships to the research. As I was not attuned to collecting or analysing the data in a way that would bring power inequities to the fore or challenge the discourses that reproduce and reinforce power inequalities in relationships, a central component of social constructionist inquiry may have been compromised.

I am visually impaired and it is a central part of my identity and my experience. Being "different" to those around me and viewing the limitations caused by my disability as a personal deficiency, have had a profound impact on my view of myself and on how I interact with others and experience the world. I tend to take on an unassuming role and find it difficult to be critical and evaluative of other people and their actions. This may have influenced the collection and analysis of the data in the present study in important ways as collecting and analysing research data demands not only an accepting and empathetic approach, but also an analysing, critical and interpretative stance towards others' experience and narratives. I am also a very private person and I am very respectful of others' privacy and was therefore reluctant in my own interviews of participants to probe them about personal experiences. Probing is an important part of conducting qualitative interviews and my reluctance to do so would have affected the depth of the data obtained in the interviews I conducted as well as those conducted by interviewers as I was responsible for ensuring that they used the techniques shown to elicit rich data in interviews.

7.2. Epistemological reflexivity

The research question assumes that the participants do indeed have and express intimate experiences. This assumption does have some support in literature and was not necessarily incorrect. However, the question itself may have led me to seeking and expecting to find intimate

experiences and expressions thus focusing my attention in that direction, thus perhaps obscuring some important insights related to the absence of such experiences.

Using grounded theory method, with all its versions and multitudes of suggested procedures and protocols with no clear recipe to follow, was difficult for me as I find it difficult to tolerate a lack of structure. My search for authorities and recipes led me down a convoluted and confusing research path obscured by self-doubt and I frequently lost sight of the essential points that could potentially have cleared the way to a sound grounded theory.

The high standard of academia to which I have been exposed, both through interaction with university staff and scholarly texts, has led me to put academics and their pursuits on a pedestal. I preferred not to entertain ideas that researchers are fallible and sometimes make mistakes in the process of getting to the end product. The level of abstraction I tended to apply during the coding process was limited by my tendency to stick to description for fear of making mistakes or unscientific interpretations, a tendency identified by Mruck and Mey (2007) as occurring frequently among novice researchers using the grounded method. Due to the uncertainty I felt, I tried to remove myself from the analyzing process. Ironically, my attempts of achieving the impossible and removing myself from the analysis process led to a poor quality of grounded theory that had to be revised over and over again.

The choice of a social constructionist framework for the study demanded that intimacy be viewed as a construction borne out of social processes, the meaning thereof thus existing at a social rather than an individual level. The liberal humanism discourse legitimized in Western society today, which has the self-contained, free individual at its heart, is central to the present social and economic organization of the society in which I exist as well as in the traditional views of psychology often exposed to through literature (Burr, 1995). The strong position this discourse of human beings has in Western society has possibly influenced my view of my research participants in line with a liberal humanist perspective.

Using a social constructionist framework was difficult for me, particularly in seeing participants' experiences and actions as products of social processes and analyzing their interviews as such. It was difficult to shake the view of intimacy as a personal, subjective experience as it is often conceptualized in psychological literature (e.g. Laurenceau & Kleinman, 2006), I found myself trying to apply grand theories and traditional psychological concepts taken as some real, inner experience to account for findings, rather than attending to social construction of meaning.

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8. Ethical considerations

Ethical research rests on principles of human autonomy, maximum benefits, minimum risks and "ethical ends exterior to scientific means" (Christians, 2005, p. 146). Every effort was made to ensure that the research was conducted in such a way as to uphold the principles of ethics in research that include:

- Autonomy
- Guaranteed confidentiality
- Accuracy
- Beneficence
- Non-malfeasance

In order ensure respect for human freedom and autonomy, participants had to agree voluntarily to participate in the research after being informed, in laymen's terms, of the nature and consequences of the research in which they were asked to participate (Christians, 2005). In accordance with legal requirements, a parent or guardian also had also had to provide their consent before a child could take part.

Consent was gained in the form of a written contract that was signed by the participant, a parent or guardian and the researcher (see appendix B). The document, which was explained to the participant before the interviews commenced, contained a complete and non-technical explanation of what would be required of participants; the goals of the study; the risks of participating; how the data would be collected, stored and processed; and who would have access to the collected data and resulting written report (Durrheim & Wassenaar, 1999). It was also made sure that participants understood that they did not have to answer any questions they did not want to and could terminate the interview at any time without any consequence to themselves.

To protect participants' confidentiality and privacy to the greatest degree possible only the researcher and supervisor had access to the interviews in audiotape form and as transcripts, which were kept in a secure location. No participant's name was used in written report. No fabrications or use of fraudulent materials ensured that the portrayals of participants' contributions were accurate, a cardinal principle of ethical research as well as sound scientific practice (Christians, 2005).

Research which upholds the principle of beneficence is designed in such way as to afford some benefit, if not to participants directly then to society at large (Durrheim & Wassenaar, 1999). Furthermore, beneficence requires that the well-being of participants is secured (Christians, 2005). Thus beneficence is understood in another way as ensuring non-munificence. The principle of non-malfeasance requires that the research conducted does no harm to the participant or any other person or group (Durrheim & Wassenaar, 1999). Through ensuring that all the ethical principles were upheld, no harm could be foreseen for the participants or anyone else in the present study.

Before the research commenced permission to conduct the research in schools in Stellenbosch was obtained from the Western Cape Education Department. Ethical clearance was also obtained from the Committee for Human Research at the University of Stellenbosch.

CHAPTER 5

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

In this chapter the findings of the research based on the social constructionist grounded theory analysis are presented and discussed. This data analysis yielded two conceptual categories that were used to build an understanding of the way that participants construct and experience intimacy in romantic relationships. In the following discussion I expand on the method of analysis outlined in chapter four, giving an account of how each of the focused codes build the two main categories. The focused codes: use of clichéd expressions, scripted romantic behaviour accounts, and downplaying undesirable experiences comprise the category "Striving for ideal relationships". The focused codes: experiencing intimacy through being together, being together alone, gendered expression of care, and difficulty putting emotional experiences into words, make up the category "'Do'-ing intimacy".

(Quotes from interviews are used to illustrate codes and show how categories were built. Quotes by the interviewer and the participants are labelled *I* and *P* respectively. Interviews were translated from Afrikaans to English and an unavoidable result may have been that much of the meanings of the original Afrikaans words were lost.)

1. Category 1: Striving for ideal relationships

The following discussion shows how the focused codes, clichéd expressions, scripted accounts of romantic behaviour and downplaying undesirable experiences form the category "Striving for ideal relationships".

1.1. Clichéd expressions

Participants often used words and phrases to describe their relationships and their feelings about their partners that have appeared so frequently in romantic discourse so as to become clichéd.

Participant 15 (16 year old male):

P: We are almost like one. She is the half of me... Like I already feel, like for me it's, she's my soul mate.

And:

P: For my girlfriend, only the best.

Participant 16 (17 year old male):

P: She means at the moment, not, my school work, my schoolwork comes first right now but she means the world to me.

And:

I: So you two get along well. And you've been together a long time.
P: There have been ups and downs.

Participant 1 (17 year old female):

When asked at the beginning of the interview what her boyfriend's name is, this participant looked down and hesitated for several seconds before saying his name. The interviewer asked her why she hesitated for so long before answering the question. She replied:

P: Trouble in paradise at the moment.

Then later on in the interview:

I: Why did you get together in the first place?
P: It was just chemistry.

Participant 17 (18 year old female):

P: It was a time that I very much thought but he is the one for me.

And:

P: Our relationship is very fifty-fifty.

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And:

P: He's the best. He's really what, he's really the reason that I get out of bed in the morning actually.

Participant 7 (17 year old male):

I: Can you describe to me how you feel about Ursula?
P: I'm crazy about her. I left my girlfriend for her. I am, I'll do anything for her. I am willing to endure any struggle with her.

Participant 2 (17 year old male):

P: There is no holding back when we talk. It's almost like we finish each other's sentences.

Furthermore, participants used words like trust and understanding but were not able to say what these terms mean to them or how they apply to their own relationships.

Participant 15 (16 year old male):

P: Like I say, we trust each other. I can't say, it's just, I don't know how it happens because this is the first relationship I've been in that's been like this.

Participant 3 (18 year old female):

Participant 3 identified the first time that she kissed her boyfriend as a time when she felt very close to him. When asked what it was about that first kiss that made her feel close to him, the question was met with silence. Further probing was also met with silence.

Participant 8 (17 year old male):

Participant 8 reported that his girlfriend understands him but he could not explain what this means or how he knows that she understands him.

Participant: 10 (18 year old male):

I: Do you think you have an intimate relationship?
P: Yes.
I: What does an intimate relationship look like to you? What happens in an intimate relationship?
P: I don't know.

1.2. Scripted romantic behaviour accounts

Participants' descriptions of behaviours with their romantic partners appear scripted in that they resemble behaviour prescribed by popular romantic discourse. For example, several participants indicated that they show their love and caring for their partners by buying them gifts like chocolates, teddy bears and roses.

Participant 17 (18 year old female):

P: Like for my birthday he said he's going to buy me ear rings. Then I said "Wow! It's ok, a rose is also ok."

Participant 8 (17 year old male):

I: And what does she do that makes you feel special to her?
P: When it was my birthday, she bought me something, a teddy bear with a heart, it said 'I love you' on it. The morning or the afternoon she gave it to me. Then I felt happy and good.

Participant 6 (18 year old male):

I: Ok, give me, if you can, an example of a time when you felt really special and important to Natasha.
P: It was Valentine's Day.
I: Valentine's Day, what did you do?
P: Um… together… made cards. I bought her roses.

And later in the interview:

I: How do you let her feel special?
P: Maybe I buy her special chocolates, and hugs.

Participant 5 (18 year old female):

I: Can you tell me about when you felt very special to him?
P: When he buys me chocolate and says he loves me.

The expectation that boys should initiate romantic relationships, even when girls are equally interested in pursuing such a relationship, is another indication of participants' engagement in what is regarded as the traditional and normative script for heterosexual dating (Morr Serewicz & Gale, 2008).

Participant 16 (17 year old male):

P: When I got to this school, it was last year, my friends told me about this girl that likes me and so, but I just ignored them. Then later on some of her friends came themselves to tell me that she has her eye on me, so then I went to her myself to ask her... Then I went to her and popped the question. Then she said yes, she'd been waiting a long time for this.

Participant 17 (18 year old female):

P: And then one time he said to me he's going to talk to me, second break he said he was going to talk to me. And then he told me what he expects in a relationship and I told him how I feel... And then he said to me "Ok, we can give it go."

Participant 18 (16 year old female):

P: Some of his friends told me he wanted to talk to me. And then I went to him. And at that time he told me how he feels about me and he asked me if we could start a relationship and we were together from then.

It was generally the case that boys were the ones who acted in scripted ways by giving their girlfriends presents such as roses and chocolate as ways of making them feel special and important, and girls who felt this way when presents of this kind were given to them. In East and Southern African nations Pattman (2002, 2005) has also found that men and boys are expected to and want to be the providers in heterosexual relations, in accordance with discourses of traditional masculinity that construct men as providers. While being a way for male participants to express their love and care for their female partners, both boys and girls may also expect boys to spend money on their girlfriends through the purchase of gifts. By engaging in such scripted and popularized expressions of romantic love, boys are able to meet the expectations posed by discourses of traditional masculinity.

Previous studies (e.g. Bhana & Pattman, 2011; Hunter, 2002; Masvawure et al., 2009) have found that in low socio-economic contexts girls and women often enter into (usually sexual) relationships with wealthier men. This is done in order to have their basic needs met in the case of relatively poor young women, or to gain access to status items like cell phones and fashionable clothes. In the present study I did not get the impression that the material benefits that could be attained through being in a relationship were of specific importance to participants and the gifts mentioned were small items like chocolates or flowers.

1.3. Downplaying undesirable experiences

The third code in the category, "Downplaying undesirable experiences", refers to participants' tendency to minimize relationship conflicts or other unpleasant aspects of their relationships.

Participant 14 (17 year old female):

P: We've never had a big fight

And:

I: How does it feel that you are the one that does all the talking while he's just quiet?
P: I feel like I'm being forward, the fact that I talk a lot every time and he just listens and yes and no. But otherwise it's ok.

Participant 15 (16 year old male):

P: There're now many times that we've argued, but not, it's over little things that we argue.

When asked later on in the interview if he and his girlfriend ever fight, participant 15 replied "Not at all".

Participant 19 (16 year old male):

P: Sometimes when we, we don't really argue, but we play as we argue... We don't really get angry with each other. We might argue, but then we're fine again.
I: What do you do when you argue?
P: We scream at each other.

Participant 1 (17 year old female):

P: If I tell him that I was in an abusive relationship, that's why I'm like this, I defend myself at all times. I was raised to stand up for myself. Then he'll say that it's because of my cheekiness that that guy hit me. I don't worry; he'll just do what he likes.

Certain physical acts of violence were minimized by comparing them to more serious acts of violence. For example, through her emphatic statements that her boyfriend does not hit her, participant 20 implies that this would be considered unacceptable behaviour while grabbing and shaking can be accepted as long as her boyfriend does not hit her.

Participant 20 (18 year old female):

P: He grabs me, then I know he's getting angry. Or he says "No man, you know I don't like that." And then he shakes me. Then I say "You're hurting me", and then he leaves me. But we, he never hits me, he doesn't touch me. He doesn't hit me.

Then later on in the interview she said:

P: We never argue. I shout at him. We shout at each other about funny things. Then we talk again. Then we shout. Then we talk again.

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In the following paragraphs I firstly discuss how participants' use of clichéd Western ideals for romantic relationships, scripted accounts of romantic behaviour and downplaying of undesirable experiences in romantic relationships may indicate a desire to have relationships that conform to the Western ideal exhibited in the popular media and are constructed as normative and expected through interaction with peers, romantic partners and adults. Secondly, I explore how these findings can be understood in these adolescents' developmental context.

Firstly, people enter into relationships with beliefs about what relationships should be like and what features would make the relationship satisfying and rewarding (Sprecher & Metts, 1999). Beliefs about the romantic ideal become salient when a new relationship is initiated (Sprecher & Metts, 1999). These romantic ideals are culturally deployed (O'Sullivan & Meyer-Bahlburg, 2003; Seal & Ehrhardt, 2003) and will thus reflect the discourse prevalent within the culture to which individuals are exposed. The beliefs, expectations and behaviours of young people are influenced by a variety of contextual factors that define appropriate behaviour and inform expectations for relationships (Graber et al., 1999; Harding, 2007). The popular media is an important contextual factor. It could be argued that its salience in the shaping of participants' responses is reflected by the prominence of popular Western romantic relationship images and ideals in the clichéd ways in which my participants described their relationship experiences and behaviour.

People have been shown to cultivate beliefs about the real world that coincide with images of the world projected by the mass media (Rivadeneyra & Lebo, 2008). The idealized images of romance that feature prominently in adolescent popular culture in Western society (Brown et al., 1999; Rivadeneyra & Lebo, 2008) and provide information about and scripts for ideal romantic experience and interaction (Miller & Benson, 1999), may have an impact on adolescents' attitudes about and behaviours in romantic relationships (Rivadeneyra & Lebo, 2008). Adolescents may be particularly susceptible to the messages about romantic interaction that they receive from the media both because their critical thinking skills, though developing rapidly, are not as sophisticated as they will be in adulthood and because they may not have other sources of information regarding these experiences (Rivadeneyra & Lebo, 2008). Adolescents' conceptions of expected relationships are derived partly from idealized portrayals of these relationships (Connolly & Goldberg, 1999). By using clichés to describe their feelings and relationships and behaving in scripted ways that coincide with idealized media images, participants' accounts of their relationships and feelings reflect idealized images of media portrayals of relationships. Participants may specifically want to conceive of and behave in their relationships in clichéd and scripted ways so that their relationships may reflect a Western ideal as portrayed in the media. They may strive toward having relationships

that reflect this ideal because it is established as normative and expected of them through interaction with peers and socialization by adults.

"Individuals are not passive recipients of relationship influences" but instead construct their relationship experiences according to situational demands (Laursen, 1997, p. 643). According to the studies of Cavanagh (2007) and O'Sullivan and Meyer-Bahlburg (2003) the norms and expectations for adolescents' conceptions of and behaviour in romantic relationships were constructed through interaction with peers and romantic partners with the knowledge about norms and expectations derived from their cultural backgrounds. In Cavanagh's (2007) study, involvement with friends was related to romanticized or idealized conceptions of relationships. For adolescents the knowledge derived from their cultural backgrounds used to construct conceptions of romantic relationships includes the romanticized images of ideal relationships in the media (Connolly & Goldberg, 1999). The interactions with peers, through which adolescents construct romantic conceptions, may serve to establish romanticized ideals as portrayed in the media as the norm and as expected.

In O'Sullivan and Meyer-Bahlburg's (2003) study, participants expressed a fear of condemnation by their peers for violating norms for romantic behaviour established within peer groups (O'Sullivan & Meyer-Bahlburg, 2003). Once romanticized or idealized conceptions of and behaviours in romantic relationships are established as the norm and are expected, fear of condemnation by peers for violating these norms and expectations, may lead participants to actively strive toward having relationships that reflect the romanticized ideals for relationships espoused by the media.

Furthermore, the discussions adolescents have with their peers about romantic relationships take place within a cultural context wherein adult norms and expectations of romantic relationships are known to the adolescents in conversation (Connolly et al., 1999). Adult norms and expectations for behaviour which are also culturally situated and reflecting the prevailing discourses of ideal romantic interaction become established as norms for behaviour in adolescents' romantic relationships through peer interaction. For example, Connolly et al. (1999) contend that, to some degree, adolescents' identification of intimacy as a characteristic of romantic relationships in their study, was as a result of the exploration with friends of relationship norms and expectations learnt from adults. In addition, knowledge of relationship scripts is acquired directly through socialization by adults (Seal & Ehrhardt, 2003).

Scripts for ideal romantic interaction posed by Western media and established as normative and expected through interaction with peers and socialization by adults, may allow participants to be aware of the desired presence in romantic interaction, according to a Western ideal, of such constructs as tenderness, love and intimacy. These desired characteristics are then attributed by adolescents to their romantic relationships, without them having an awareness of what these constructs mean to them on a personal, subjective level. A study by Banker, Kaestle and Allen (2010) empirically supports this notion. These authors found a disconnection between the language and meaning that young adult participants in their study attributed to their romantic relationships and their actual experience of these relationships. It was as if participants used this language and made attributions based on cultural or social norms rather than their actual experience.

Secondly, the emphasis adolescents place on ideal relationships can be understood from a developmental perspective. Specifically, the cognitive developments that take place in adolescence affect how adolescents approach interpersonal relationships, as well as their plans and goals for these relationships (Louw & Louw, 2007, Newman & Newman, 1997). Accompanying the increase in abstract thought with the advent of formal operations is the ability to think beyond the real to the possible and adolescents' thoughts are full of idealism and potential outcomes for actions and interactions (Dupree, 2010; Louw & Louw, 2007; Santrock, 2002). They may hold grand visions of perfection that leave no room for the shortcomings that are common in everyday life (Louw & Louw, 2007). Assimilation, incorporating new information into existing bases of knowledge, is particularly more prominent when formal operations first emerge than accommodation - in which individuals adjust their thinking in light of new information. This also leads to adolescents perceiving the world subjectively and idealistically (Santrock, 2002).

Furthermore, the scripts or norms for ideal romantic interaction that inform adolescents' romantic behaviour can be seen as cognitive heuristics (O'Sullivan & Meyer-Bahlburg, 2003; Seal & Ehrhardt, 2003). Romantic interaction in adolescence is a new social domain. Participants in this study indeed indicated that the relationship they were in at the time of the interview was their first or one of very few such relationships. The pre-existing attitudes and values with which individuals enter into a relationship are adapted according to the lived experience in each different relationship (Sprecher & Metts, 1999). In addition, critical thinking, which may allow adolescents to question the utility or value of the ideals they are striving toward for their own relationships, is a skill which is not yet mastered by the majority of individuals by late adolescence (Santrock, 2002).

Participants may lack the experience with romantic relationships and critical thinking ability to elaborate and expand on initial idealised, stereotypical representations of romantic relationships, required to develop personal belief systems (Furman & Simon, 1999). In lieu of a personal belief system, participants make use of clichés and scripts that represent ideals to make sense of their relationship experiences when they first enter into this new arena of social interaction. This finding is similar to one by Williams and Hickle (2010) who found that idealized conceptions of love may have been related to inexperience with romantic love. Adolescents who have had more experience with romantic relationships are more likely than less experienced adolescents to view their relationships as imperfect or not featuring "real love" (Williams & Hickle, 2010).

The downplaying of negative relationship experiences was more characteristic of those participants who had relationships of shorter duration. This may reflect an association between relationship inexperience and idealized constructions of romantic relationships, as found in Williams and Hickle's (2010) study. It was also these participants who tended to use clichéd expressions without conveying a sense of personal meaning which may indicate that they had not yet had the opportunity to become aware of and develop an understanding of the personal meanings of relationship experiences. Both these two findings may indicate that gender and age-related developmental factors, such as those related to cognitive ability, do not play as significant a role in participants' constructions and experiences of their relationships as time and relationship experience do.

Participants are likely exposed to similar sources of such clichéd and stereotypical images of romantic relationships and use these images to make sense of their relationships and experiences in similar ways. They also reproduce discourses of ideal romantic relationships as involving such experiences as trust, understanding, intimacy and affection in similar ways.

Idealized or romanticized conceptions of romantic relationships are considered normative for the developmental period (Brown, 1999; Collins, 2003) not only due to cognitive developments but also because of changing social demands placed on individuals during the adolescent developmental period. After the gender segregated interactions of childhood, adolescents must re-orientate themselves with the opposite sex but with the added objective of establishing romantic and sexual relationships (Brown, 1999). An important aspect of development from early adolescence is the gaining of an appreciation for the norms and expectations of romantic relationships (Connolly et al., 1999). Thus, scripts that specify the cultural expectations for appropriate romantic interaction become particularly salient in adolescence (O'Sullivan & Meyer-Bahlburg, 2003).

However, adults' experience with relationships and advanced cognitive development do not prevent them from adhering to scripts or having stereotyped or clichéd representations that reflect the broader cultural discourse. Young adults have also been found to apply scripts in their dating relationships, particularly regarding traditional gender role behaviour (Morr Serewicz & Gale, 2008; Rose & Frieze, 1993), to have stereotyped representations of marriage (Knobloch-Fedders & Knudson, 2009) and to have idealized images of relationships (Farrer, Tsuchiya & Bagrowicz, 2008). Thus, inexperience with romantic relationships and the adolescent period of cognitive development do not fully account for the idealized, romanticized or scripted conceptions participants have of romantic relationships.

In the present study, participants striving for relationships that coincide with Western, mainstream ideals represented in the popular media, may reflect a desire to distance themselves from the 'problem' relationships they may experience as being a part of the fabric of their community.

Studies have found evidence of considerable support for romantic scripts that prescribe conventional (or mainstream) norms for behaviour by people on the margins of society, such as those living in poor or rural communities (Harding, 2007). In line with Burr's (1995) conception for the possibility of agency and subjectivity in a reality constructed by available discourse, by identifying with a group whose relationships are idealized in the media participants may be looking to alternative conventions for relationships that will allow them to reorganize the meaning of relationship experience in a more positive way. A similar reconfiguration of conventions available to construct alternative possibilities for relationship interaction was found in a study of second-generation Chinese American youths' constructions of dating culture. Luo (2008) found that these adolescents actively constructed their views and scripts of dating by choosing the elements from both the predominant American and less prominent Chinese cultures that suited them best and resulted in the most positive construction of dating from their personal subjective perspectives.

2. Category 2: 'Do'-ing intimacy

The following discussion shows how the focused codes: experiencing intimacy through being together, being together alone, gendered expression of care, and difficulty putting emotional experiences into words, build the category "'Do'-ing intimacy".

2.1. Experiencing intimacy through being together

The first focussed code in this category, "Experiencing intimacy through being together" describes participants' emphasis on "being together". Being together is a way of engaging with a romantic partner which involves both spending time with a partner, that is, being in close physical proximity to a partner, and talking with a partner. For the participants in this study, seeing each other often and being together alone were highly valued and sought after; viewed as an important part of and even a necessary condition for romantic involvement; and was associated with love, caring and long-term committed relationships such as marriage.

Participant 16 (17 year old male):

P: I don't want to, I can't, not even over weekends, I can't stay away... My relationship with Jolene is like, I can't go a day without her.

Participant 12 (17 year old female):

I: How does an intimate relationship look to you, a relationship that is close?
P: spending more time together.
I: So is there anything else in an intimate relationship? You must spend time together, what else must there be?
P: Just to spend time together.

Participant 17 (18 year old female):

P: Say I phone him during the week and he can't come and then for me it's like he doesn't care about me anymore.

Participant 15 (16 year old male):

P: There's a great bond of love. Now she's, if I don't, say now she's absent from school that day or I'm not at school, then my whole day is spoiled.

Participant 7 (17 year old male):

P: She told me how I make her feel special. I don't actually spend a lot of time with her at school, when I do spend time with her at school she says that that makes her feel special. Or say she's amongst her friends and I come and fetch her, then I make her feel special.

Participant 16 (17 year old male):

P: Then they [his friends] say I can't get enough because we are together on weekends. Then I say "no, but I'm a married man, I can't help it."

Participant 9 (17 year old female):

P: And for me it's like, so far our relationship is very, like my mother and them say, we already live like married people because we are very, um, during the week then once a week he'll come to me because he lives [in another town]. Then he comes to me once a week and on the weekend he comes to me.

Participant 3 (18 year old female):

I: Ok.   What would you two argue about?
P: If he spends more time with his friends and less with me.
I: How do you feel when he spends more time with his friends than with you?
P: I feel neglected.

The role being together plays in the dissolution of romantic relationships further reflects the importance of these behaviours to adolescents. As one participant said about breaking up with her boyfriend "We are not at one school. We never see each other. So I said to him that he can go on with his life and I will go on with mine".

Being together is also necessary for developing romantic feelings for someone as participant 11 (17 year old female) indicated:

P: In the beginning for say three months I wasn't, I wasn't, at first I did love him but the second and third month I didn't love him anymore, I didn't get that feeling for him.

I: Why not?

P: I don't know. He was, we saw each other less but when we began seeing each other more often, talking like two people in a relationship then I started to get strong feelings for him.

Participant 15 (16 year old male):

P: Now it's when we're together that we're close. We're almost like one.

Participant 1 (17 year old female):

P: I can't say it is a close relationship. We see each other very little during the week. We see each other on a Tuesday, a Thursday and on the week end.

Being together, particularly being together alone and engaging in self-disclosure, was associated with feeling close to a partner.

Participant 2 (17 year old male):

I: Yes, a time when you felt close to each other, you have a connection with each other. Any example of that.
P: Last weekend, she was at my house, we lay in my room and talked about life, what she thinks about life, what I think about life.

Participant 18 (16 year old female):

I: Can you give me an example or paint a picture of a situation where you felt very close to your boyfriend?
P: We were in town, it was very quiet and we talked probably for the first time, say in the second week of our relationship.

    2.2.   Being together alone

The focused code "Being together alone" arose from participants' indications that being together is particularly valued as a private activity. Participants most like to be together alone, "away from

everyone" so that they can talk easily and engage in self-disclosure. Since being together alone is so valued, participants try to be together in this way as often as possible.

Participant 7 (17 year old male):

I: Can you give me an example of a time when you felt close to Ursula?
P: Um... two Fridays, two weeks ago, I felt very close to her. Me and her were alone at home, we talked and talked. We talked and carried on like that, then I felt very close to her.

Participant 15 (16 year old male):

P: We are mostly among people, seldom alone. For me it feels like I always want to be alone. When we're alone it's so nice to talk, to make jokes.

Participant 14 (17 year old female):

P: If my friends have said that they want to come with, want to go out with us then he always said that they mustn't come with; he wants to like be alone with me more to find out more about me and so on... We want to be alone together and then we'll tell each other what kind of person you are and so. Then we want to be alone together more, away from everyone... When we're alone then we talk more about our relationship, how we handle it, handle problems... I'll say when we're alone, that's when I feel closer to him.

Participant 20 (18 year old female):

P: Sometimes we're alone at home and then we talk nicely.

Participant 7 (17 year old male):

P: When we're alone then we talk well but here at school we don't talk nicely. When I go to her house then we talk nicely, we communicate everything with each other.

Participant 15 (16 year old male):

P: When we're alone we talk mostly about the difficult things. Maybe about her history or my history. She told me about her childhood.

Participants' accounts indicate that being alone with a partner means that time spent with and talking to friends or engaging in public activities have to be curtailed. Spending time with a partner may therefore strain relations with friends. This makes being together alone with a partner an even greater sacrifice.

Participant 14 (17 year old female):

P: Like before I was in this relationship, I was with my friends most of the time and now it happens that I don't spend a lot of time with my friends. Now they feel that I'm neglecting them.

Participant 15 (16 year old male):

P: Maybe I have to play soccer then I go to her instead.

Participant 16 (17 year old male):

P: That's the reason, I never wanted a girlfriend, they demand a man's whole life.

Later on in the interview he said that his friends get angry when he spends more time with his girlfriend than with them:

P: They get very angry. They say "You never come over to us" [during school break]. So I say "Well I don't want to come to you." They say "You're not right." I say "Leave me alone, I like it [spending time with his girlfriend]."

Participant 4 (17 year old male):

P: She makes me [feel important] every day because um sometimes she has to choose between me and her friends and then she always chooses me. Or they want to party or so and maybe I want to relax and then I can see she wants to be with me when she can be with them.

It is interesting that participants' accounts of being together alone did not include references to physical intimacy or sexual encounters. We did not specifically ask participants about sexual experience, as we did not conceptualize intimacy as necessarily including sexual interaction. In retrospect, this may have been an oversight with these participants who may have felt uncomfortable to speak about their sexual activities of their own accord. However, although sexual activity was not mentioned, specific unprompted mention was made by six participants of their sexual abstinence, while two participants spoke about other people's sexual experiences. The remaining participants did not speak about sex at all. Sexual abstinence was raised when participants were asked if they had anything to add at the end of an interview or when asked what they liked most about their partners or relationships.

Many of the participants referred to the wider community in their narratives about sex. Some mentioned that they thought that sexual activity amongst their peers was quite common:

Participant 15 (16 year old male):

P: Lots of people in relationships have sex in their relationships. What for me, what for me is so nice in a relationship, we have not even once thought about something like that. And lots of people say "you are having sex, you are sleeping together" but not at all.

Others referred to the scrutiny of the community. It appears that they perceive the community as watching and policing young people and that they fear the community suspecting that they have sex:

Participant 14 (17 year old female):

P: No, only when people, like in, interfere in our relationship, say "No, they don't have a real relationship, they have to have sex", and things like that.
I: Who says that?
P: The young people that already have children say things like that. I don't pay them any attention. I told my mother what people say and she said I mustn't pay them any attention.

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In a follow-up interview she said:

P: Most people think that because we have been together for so many months we are having sex and things like that. And my mother asked me why the people are saying that, is it true? So then my mother and I fought about that again. So I told her she can trust me. I won't do things like that that have consequences.

I: Mmm.

P: I don't feel, I don't feel good with them because every time that we talk its "Oh, I had sex with that guy". It doesn't feel good to me. The fact that, but I, how can they go on like that and I don't worry, or me and my boyfriend don't worry about things like that. They brag or…

Participant 15 (16 year old male):

This participant indicated that his girlfriend sometimes sleeps over at his house but he insists that they do not sleep in the same room:

P: The thing is, I say to her "I sleep in my bed where I sleep, you sleep there with my mother".

I: So you two are not sexually active?

P: Not at all.

I: Are you waiting until you get married or…?

P: We will wait until we get married.

I: Is that how your parents raised you or did you two just decide that?

P: My mother raised me like that.

I: And your girlfriend, does she feel like that?

P: She doesn't even worry about talking about that

I: Mmm.

P: When the kids talk like that then I think, do they even know what they're talking about.

I: So you feel that you do not want to take that step, you can wait.

P: I can wait, I have patience.

I: So for you, because they say that sex is very intimate, for you it feels that you are still intimate even though you don't have sex? You feel you don't need it?

P: It's not part of my life.

I: So it's not important?

P: Not at all.

Participant 14 (17 year old female) said:

P: I spoke a lot to my friend, my friend about that also, she's pregnant now by this guy. And I asked her but why did you decide for the first time to - did you decide or did it just happen? So she said that it just happened. So I asked her how and she said no, but um, they were alone and kissing in the house… It just happened. That's why I don't want to be alone in the house and kissing, then I know. My friend told me it just happened. Now I don't even want to be alone in the house.

Participant 16 (17 year old male):

P: If the time could just pass. If I could just be finished with school and be finished with my studies, and the two of us together, I'd like to marry her. I told my mother as well.
I: And what did your mother say?
P: Then my mother said there's no problem with that, she'll help me and everything, but then I must be able to show her that that I can finish my studies.
I: Mmm
P: Cause why? My brother was in matric, he was near the final exams and then he made a child. Then he, then my mother and them raised the child until he was finished with school. Then he went and studied further, IT.

These young people's mothers' voices and their families' expectations can clearly be heard in their motivations for sexual abstinence. It seems that they equate sex with pregnancy, and endangering their future and academic prospects. It needs to be kept in mind that this specific group of volunteer participants are very likely not representative of their peer group in this community. The majority of participants reported having high levels of academic achievement and having leadership roles at school or in the community and generally indicated that they prioritized school, worked hard at their studies, had aspirations for careers and were dedicated to their leadership positions. Sexual abstinence seemed important for them in order to achieve their life goals. It is, however, also possible that they may have thought that admitting to sexual activity may tarnish their image as good, hard-working achievers and leaders. Participants also reported being Christian and attending church regularly. It may be, as found by Pattman (2005), that participants feel that engaging in sex out of wedlock conflicts with the teachings of their Christian faith, meaning that they cannot talk about engaging in sexual activity or associate sex between unmarried people with positive experiences desirable in a romantic relationship, such as intimacy, without being 'bad' Christians or contradicting their Christian beliefs. A strong influence of the Christian church on attitudes, beliefs

and expectations regarding romantic relationships was found by Lesch and Engelbrecht (2011) in the community from which participants were drawn. The two factors discussed above may mean that alternate discourses of sexuality in adolescence as acceptable are not available to participants. The focus on sex as dangerous and sexual abstinence as "good" may indicate the lack of alternate discourses that construct teenage sex and sexuality as being acceptable and 'normal' and as being compatible with academic and career achievement and "good" sons and daughters.

The quotes below about sexual interaction also indicate the adherence to traditional gender roles when it comes to the pursuit and initiation of sexual activity:

Participant 14 (17 year old female):

When participant 14 was asked what she likes most about her boyfriend she said:

P: That he will respect me and not force me to do things that I don't want to do and the fact that he cares about me. And that he hasn't, like in, asked me to have sex with him yet.

Participant 18 (16 year old female):

As part of her account of what makes a relationship ideal participant 18 said:

P: And what makes it [her relationship] ideal is that he said to me "Don't think that I want to sleep with you or anything, because for me, I have to finish school and studies and then I'll only think about sex and things like that". And was like wow to me.

Participant 18 described her relationship with her boyfriend as a close friendship and the interviewer asked her if they had a physical relationship:

P: Most of the time we hold each other but we are not sexually active, we are not like that yet.

She goes on to say that sometimes she feels uncomfortable when he holds her because it makes her think he "wants more, he wants to be sexually active with me… And for me it's not normal because we are too young".

Implicit in these young women's talk is the acceptance of male traditional roles where men's sexual needs are the driving force in having sex and women's roles are to react to these needs. These young women do not portray themselves as responsible for setting the pace in the sexual arena.

2.3.   Gendered expression of care

The fourth focused code in the category concerns the way in which participants express their love for their partners and how their partners feel loved and cared for. "Gendered expression of care" refers to the way that boys and girls show their partners that they love and care for them differently according to their gender. Male participants indicated, as presented in the previous category, that care (showing a partner that he or she is special and important to the other partner), love and feelings of closeness are associated with giving gifts or taking a partner out, which invariably involves spending money. Spending money on a partner can be a reflection of care and love and elicit feelings of closeness because to these people, of limited means, it may demonstrate the lengths a partner will go to for the other. Girls indicated that they express their love and care for their partners, (and their partners feel loved and cared for) by making their partners feel good.

Participant 15 (16 year old male):

P: If I buy myself airtime, it can be R50, then I phone her. I phone it all up on her, then we'll talk everything out. Then she says, she tells me she's going to miss me so much.

Participant 14 (17 year old female):

I: You said that he spoils you a lot. How does he do that?
P: I'd say takes me out and buys me things... If we go to the beach, maybe walk along the beach, buys me anything that I say "Oh, that looks nice", then he'll buy it for me and so. He'll never take money out of my bag to buy anything.
I: What does it mean to you that he spends money on you. What does it say to you?
P: That he is very generous and...and that he doesn't mind buying me things.
I: Why do you think he doesn't mind spending money on you or buying you things?
P: Probably because he loves me... that he'll do anything for me and he respects me.

Participant 4 (17 year old male):

P: I do it often, buy her something that makes her feel special…If I have money then I think of something then I buy her something, which I won't even do for my mother.

When asked about how she felt on the very first time she and her boyfriend went out alone together the only reply she gives concerns his spending money on her:

Participant 18 (16 year old female):

I: And the first time that you went out alone, can you remember that? How did you feel?
P: He paid for me, [for the film], we watched a movie.

The female participants express their love or care for their partners and male participants also feel loved or cared for when females make their partners feel good, either about themselves or in general. This is done by paying a partner a compliment, giving him some attention, telling a partner that she loves him, or by singling him out and choosing him to be in a relationship.

Participant 1 (17 year old female):

I: Have you done something to make him feel special and important?
P: All the time. Like a friend of mine, the last time that all sat as couples, everyone was in a couple but he sat that side and I sat this side, then she said we must sit together. Another friend of his asked me "Aren't you going out then?" I said "Yes." He said "So make your man feel a little special." I sat on his lap and kissed him I said "Of all the girls sitting here, I am the prettiest." So he must feel good. Then he said "The prettiest girl is sitting with me."
I: Is that how you show him that you care?
P: Yes.

Participant 15 (16 year old male):

I: What, can, can you give me an example of when Jenny made you feel special or important?
P: For me it feels, when she tells me I'm well built, now I feel good. She says "I have a good looking man."
I: So you like it when she gives you a compliment? And then you feel special?

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P: That makes me feel special.

I: And times when she has made you feel important?

P: …Look most people say "My friends are more important to me than my girlfriend." But with her it's the other way around, almost like I am more important than them. That makes me feel good.

Participant 16 (17 year old male):

I: How does she make you feel special?

P: she looks at me almost like I'm a prince, or I am, one can say, I'm her man... That's what makes me happy in a way.

Participant 5 (18 year old female):

I: What do you do to make him feel special and important?

P: Every day, like in every day I am just myself, I'm just myself toward him. Like I am every day. Because I am just like that... I know I make him feel happy every day because that's how I am in my own way. And I can see it because that's how I see it every day, there's nothing I don't do, like in every day that makes him unhappy in these four years. I'm just myself.

Participant 18 (16 year old female):

I: Can you think of a time that you made him feel special and important?

P: I think the first time I said "I love you."

Initially, it appeared to me that the girls invested considerably less effort in expressing love and care for their partners by giving attention to them, singling them out or choosing them, in comparison with the male participants who were expected to put in more effort and 'work harder' at ensuring that a partner knew that she was loved and cared for. I interpreted this seemingly unequal position as girls placing a greater value on themselves as desirable romantic partners. I made the assumption that the female participants simply thought so highly of themselves - perhaps because a boy was interested in them, thus reinforcing their sense of themselves as desirable - that they felt that merely expressing interest in their partner was enough to denote love and care; i.e. 'I, as desirable as I am, could be with anyone, but am with you, therefore it must be clear to you and everyone else that I love and care for you'. However, on reflection, I realized that my own construction of equal work in romantic relationships contributed to this immediate sense of inequality. In rethinking my

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interpretation, I came to appreciate that girls' expression of love and care are very likely shaped in this form by certain gendered romantic discourses prevalent in Western society.

Girls may expect boys to be more demonstrative of their love and care as they may feel that it is the male's role to take a more active part in relationships, as an extension of the discourse that positions men as the "hunters or pursuers in the quest for love" (Williams & Hickle, 2010, p. 594). This discourse constructs men as action-orientated and emotionally inexpressive and prescribes an action orientated approach to love and relationships (Burns, 2002; Williams & Hickle, 2010). A further discourse of gendered interaction in romantic relationships positions men as providers and women as carers (Burns, 2002). Furthermore, Western romantic discourse also constructs women's roles as doing the 'emotion work' in relationships (Burns, 2002). Doing emotion work involves "helping others to feel special by letting them know that you care for them and admire them in order to help them feel good and being careful with their feelings to avoid their feeling bad" (Burns, 2002, p. 155). By choosing a boy or giving him compliments and attention, the girls in the study may be enacting their designated role as carer and the one who does the emotion work. In this way girls can be seen to be putting in the emotional effort that is perceived as a requirement for the maintenance of relationships (Duncombe & Marsden 1993).

The constructions of men as action orientated pursuers and women as emotional carers in relationships in romantic discourse may lead to both girls and boys having the same expectations for different ways of expressing their love and care.

The prevalence of discourses which position men as rational providers and women as the nurturers in participants' communitity may have an influence on participants' expectations of and adherence to gendered romantic interaction in their romantic relationships. In accordance with the dominance of traditional gender-role discourse in Western Cape rural communities (Shefer et al., 2008), a study by Lesch and Engelbrecht (2011) with adults from the same community in which participants in the present study reside, found that these individuals held more conservative views and practices regarding relationships. The conservative or traditional views and practices held by participants were reflected in the vast majority of men and women identifying men as being the head of the household which is accompanied by greater decision making power for men (Lesch & Engelbrecht, 2011).

The position of men as the heads of households and the decision makers and women as responsible for looking after the home and children may reinforce Western discourses that construct women as

emotional, caring and relationship-orientated and men as rational or hypo-emotional and individually-orientated. These constructions of men and women in turn inform discourses that construct men as action/work-oriented and women as emotion-orientated and as the carers and nurturers in relationships (Burns, 2002; Duncombe & Marsden 1993; Williams & Hickle, 2010). These constructions in turn may influence male participants' constructions of intimate interaction as centred on commitment and girls' association of doing emotion work with intimacy as discussed in section two above.

In addition, the discourses of gender and heterosexuality that position men as powerful, dominant and the inevitable perpetrators of violence against women, and women as passive in relation to powerful men, are also reproduced in two participants' accounts of their romantic relationship experiences. Both cases of physical abuse or violence occurring in past or current relationships were reported by girls as perpetrated against them by their male partners. Participant 20's (18 year old female) emphasis on her partner never hitting her, even when he physically hurts her in other ways, shows that violence will be tolerated as long as it does not extend beyond a certain level of force.

Participant 1 (17 year old female) reported explaining to her current boyfriend that she is defensive because she had been in an abusive relationship before and was raised to stand up for herself. She indicates that her boyfriend's response to this was to tell her that it is her fault that her boyfriend hit her. To be raised to take an active and powerful role in her defence of herself is contrary to traditional constructions of gender in which women are expected to be passive in relation to powerful masculinity. It seems that her current boyfriend supports violence against female partners as a means of controlling them.

From my perspective, any level of violence between romantic partners and blaming a woman for the violence perpetrated against her through being outspoken and pro-active, is unacceptable and outrageous. However, participant 20 accepts a certain level of violence and participant 1 reports that she does not "worry" that her boyfriend places the blame for her previous experience of intimate partner violence on her, saying that he will "just do what he likes".

It is possible that both participants purposefully downplay the incidents of being blamed for the violence in relationships and the acts of violence themselves in order to bring their relationships and experiences within them in line with an ideal relationship. However, the participants' reported lack of concern about being blamed for the violence and the acceptance of a certain level of violence may also reflect an acceptance and reproduction of the discourses of feminine passivity in

heterosexual relationships, and also of men's inevitable perpetration of violence against women (Bhana & Pattman, 2009). A study by Pattman (2002) found that women constructed their boyfriends in highly romanticized ways and brushed off their infidelity, accepting it as a cultural expectation and as part of relationships that women have to tolerate. Similarly, both of the above cases may reflect ways in which women can be complicit in their gender positioning as they reproduce discourses that create gender inequalities in heterosexual relationships. This complicity is not necessarily, however, an uncritical acceptance of females' passivity and lack of power in relation to men. Their reproduction of the dominant discourses may possibly reflect a situation in which women are not permitted to enact alternate constructions of femininity in their heterosexual relationships. Women may face the impossible choice of either asserting themselves and getting hurt, or continuing to be passive and submissive and keeping their partner happy. Without men cooperating in changing gender discourses, women's power to enact alternative discourses is therefore limited.

The traditional gender roles and relations that encourage the view of women as submissive to men who should   be the primary decision makers in households and society,   predominate in economically disadvantaged and historically disenfranchised Western Cape communities (Shefer et al., 2008). These views and roles are supported by the church and are prominent in discourses of 'traditional culture' in these communities (Shefer et al., 2008). If women are to be allowed to challenge dominant discourses and enact constructions of gender that allow them to be alternatives to being passive and submissive in heterosexual relationships, alternatives to the discourses of traditional gender roles and relations must be acceptable to both men and women. Alternate discourses will have to be accepted at a cultural and societal level and be supported by such impotent institutional structures in the community as the Christian church.

2.4.   Difficulty putting emotional experiences into words

The final focused code in the category is "Difficulty putting emotional experiences in words". Contrary to my expectations, participants appeared to have difficulty expressing their subjective meanings of their experiences. I believed, before conducting the first interviews, that participants would have no difficulty talking at length and in detail about the special and unique characteristics of their relationships. I expected that they would be excited to tell the world about their wonderful feelings, wanting to get across every ounce of meaning regarding this most important facet of their lives that occupies their thoughts almost every minute of the day. However, this did not occur.

Participants may simply have chosen not to answer questions with very much detail. The scant detail in participants' narratives may be accounted for by adolescents often being reluctant to share highly personal feelings or thoughts with adults (Brown et al., 1999), resulting in the common situation in which adolescents respond to interview questions with brief answers of a few words (Bassett et al., 2008).

Another consideration in the apparent lack of emotional experiences in participants' accounts of their romantic relationships is that questions in the interview schedule did not succeed in eliciting personal narratives. Layered and emotional personal narratives may have been better elicited through questions that focused on specific events. However, participants' lack of talk about their emotional experiences may, as the following discussion will show, also reflect their focus on behaviours rather than emotions in their accounts of their romantic relationship experiences.

Together the focused codes in this category demonstrate participants' focus on behaviour in their accounts of their relationship experiences and intimacy rather than on abstract, emotional experience. Participants emphasized being together in their narratives. Not only was being together necessary for romantic relationships and an essential part of participants' ideal relationships but it was also required for romantic feelings to develop and was associated with the experience of intimacy.

There did not seem to be age or gender differences in participants' emphasis on being together in their romantic relationships. For both male and female participants across the age range, 16 to 18 years, being alone together was highly valued, viewed as important in romantic involvement and was associated with love, caring and commitment. However, it was mostly younger participants who had relationships of relatively short duration who tended to emphasize being together. This may indicate, similar to findings by Feiring (1996) that short-term fascination characterizes the initial stages of participants' new relationships and hence they focus a great deal of attention on their partners, placing great value on being together. Feiring (1996) found in her study that the adolescent participants spent a great deal of time with their partners and spoke on the phone almost daily with a conversation lasting an average of 60 minutes. Given the amount of attention focused on romantic partners in the beginning of romantic relationships, Feiring (1996) suggests that the term fascination best "captures the brief but intense nature of adolescent romance" (p. 192).

While an element of fascination may be involved in participants' emphasis on being together, being together may also have been emphasized in accounts of intimacy as it is associated with feeling

close to a partner. Being together, while representing more abstract experiences, involves the physical activities of spending time together, preferably alone, and talking. Talking in particular, in the form of self-disclosure and general conversation, was associated with feeling close to a partner. Prager's (1995) conceptualisation of intimate interaction as consisting of both *intimate behaviour* and *intimate experience* helps to make sense of this phenomenon. According to her, intimate behaviour occurs when partners share that which is personal and private. *Intimate experience*, however, is the positive affect and perceived understanding that partners experience in conjunction with intimate behaviour or as a result thereof (Prager, 1995). Being together can thus be seen as representing intimate behaviour.

That participants identify intimate interactions when asked about their experiences of intimacy is expected as they were asked to describe a particular time when they felt close to their partners. However, no participant ever went beyond the concrete situation, never indicating that they felt close to their partners generally and that their feelings of closeness were not necessarily tied to specific moments. Moreover, participants did not move beyond the concrete behaviours involved in the situation they described as a time when they felt close to their partners. For example, they did not describe the emotions that may have been experienced at the time. Nor did they describe other abstract experiences such as the meaningfulness of the interaction or the experience of being understood.

Participants thus focused their descriptions of intimacy on the behaviour component of intimate interaction rather than the experience component. These descriptions reflect their understanding and making sense of the complex, abstract and new experiences involved in romantic engagement in adolescence in terms of more concrete, overt behaviours.

Participants' focus on intimacy in behavioural terms can be understood from a developmental perspective. Relationships undergo qualitative or structural changes related to developmental changes that an individual experiences throughout adolescence (Furman & Simon, 1998). Changes also take place within a relationship as that relationship develops over time (Furman & Simon, 1998). As adolescents and their romantic relationships develop, the needs romantic relationships and partners are expected to fulfil change. In accordance with behavioural systems theory (Furman & Wehner, 1997), in early and middle adolescence relationship partners serve as companions and friends and fulfil psychological needs related to these roles (Furman & Simon, 1998). Only in later adolescence and emerging adulthood, when the need to find primary attachment figures outside of

the family increases, are relationship partners expected to move beyond affiliative figures and fulfil needs related to attachment and care-giving (Shulman & Scharf, 2000).

The importance of affiliation in romantic relationships in adolescence is particularly underscored by one study that found that affiliation functions were served to a greater degree in romantic relationships than in other-sex friendships (Hand & Furman, 2009). Several studies have also provided empirical support for the notion that the affiliation system gains prominence in the romantic relationships of adolescence before the care-giving or attachment systems and that affiliative features are most salient in adolescents' romantic relationships (e.g. Adams et al., 2001; Bakken & Romig, 1992; Connolly et al., 2000; Furman & Buhrmester, 1992; Furman & Whener, 1997; Shulman & Kipnis, 2001; Zimmer-Gembeck & Gallaty, 2006). Thus, participants may construct intimacy as behaviour, specifically that of being together, due to the salience of the affiliative behavioural system, the affiliative motives for romantic relationships and the companionship needs that partners fulfil in these relationships.

However, affiliative behaviours and conceptions in affiliative terms are not limited to adolescence. Fully fledged attachments only occur in relatively long-term relationships and even then romantic partners are expected to be sexual and affiliation figures first before becoming attachment figures (Shulman & Scharf, 2000). The behaviours associated with the affiliation behavioural system thus continue to characterize romantic relationships throughout adolescence and adulthood (Berger et al., 2005). Affiliative behaviours such as self-disclosure (Zimmer-Gembeck & Petherick, 2006) and companionship (Banker et al., 2010; Knobloch-Fedders & Knudson, 2009; Sedikides, Oliver & Campbell, 1994) have also been identified as important benefits of romantic relationships by young adults. On the other hand, adults also talk about or identify more abstract experiences such as emotional attachment, deep bonds and close connections when defining romantic partnerships (Banker et al., 2010) as well as shows of empathy and vulnerability, a positive characterization of a partner (Korobov & Thorne, 2006), feelings of safety (Patrick & Beckenbach, 2009), acceptance, and the expectation that a romantic partner should and can reveal his or her 'true self' (Farrer et al., 2008) when talking about intimacy in romantic relationships.

Shaughnessy and Shakesby (1992) have argued that adolescents have difficulty with emotional intimacy as they lack the communication skills to label, let alone describe, their feelings. Participants in the present study did seem to have difficulty articulating more abstract or emotional experiences. When asked what about being together made participants feel close to their partners, they had difficulty answering the question, indicated that they did not know or most frequently

declined to give an answer at all.   Participants' apparent difficulty with articulating abstract experiences may be why their narratives about intimacy focused on concrete, physical activities.

However, I do not believe that the participants in the present study were incapable of identifying or describing their emotional experiences when talking about intimacy for two main reasons. Firstly, previous studies have shown that adolescents do use more emotive, less tangible words and concepts when describing the meaning of love. For example emotional involvement, care, the mystery of love, the pain it can cause and that love may change over time are all identified by adolescents as aspects of love (Montgomery & Sorell, 1998). Thus, it is not beyond the participants in the present study to do the same when talking about intimacy. Secondly, participants in the present study did refer to more abstract and emotional experiences, similar to those in the Montgomery and Sorell (1998) study when talking about other aspects of relationships. Thus, not explicitly referring to abstract or emotional experiences in relation to intimacy means neither that they cannot identify nor that they cannot describe such experiences.

It may be that participants did not articulate their conceptions of intimacy in terms of abstract experience because they do not perceive or understand their relationship qualities, including intimacy, in these terms. Rather, they construct intimacy as behaviour. This finding is similar to one in a study by Seal and Ehrhardt (2003), in which adult men's definitions of emotional intimacy included references to joint activities, sharing (e.g. talking about each other's hopes and dreams), giving gifts such as flowers, making time for their partners and disclosure.

That participants feel close to their partners when they are together is consistent with previous research that has found that greater frequency of both interaction and self-disclosure with romantic partners are associated with greater experiences of intimacy (Giordano et al, 2005). Being together reflects a condition for intimacy which Prager (1995) refers to as *cohesiveness*, being together, sharing time and sharing activities in a relationship. To interact intimately requires that people are together in positive ways (Prager, 1995). Self-disclosure has long been considered to be a pathway to feeling closeness and connection with a partner. Self-disclosure entails sharing that which is personal and private about oneself (Hook et al., 2003; Prager, 1995). The experience of intimacy is facilitated when, in the process of revealing one's deepest, personal thoughts and feelings, one feels understood, validated and cared for (Berscheid & Reis, 1998). McNelles and Connolly (1999) found that while disclosure of a personal nature was most strongly correlated with the experience of intimacy among their adolescent participants, conversations on non-personal topics as well as shared activities were also associated with intimacy in friendships. Similar to McNelles and

Connolly (1999), many participants in the present study indicated that they feel close to their partners not necessarily through personal, evaluative self-disclosure, but through the act of talking more generally. Participants in the present study identified conversation on general topics as eliciting feelings of closeness and did not refer to such feelings of validation or understanding when describing intimacy as being together. Thus the experience of feeling validated, understood and cared for that comes with engaging in self-disclosure is not what participants associate with intimacy. For participants, intimacy is centred on behaviour. Behaviour rather than abstract experience is given greater value in romantic relationships and participants place more emphasis on their and their partners' behaviours than on abstract experiences that may result from the behaviours. As one participant said "What I *do* for her is the important thing".

Since the affiliation behavioural system is most prominent in adolescents' romantic interaction, romantic relationships are motivated by affiliation and romantic activities are primarily associated with fulfilling needs for companionship. What participants do for each other revolves around behaviours related to affiliation and companionship, such as spending time together and talking in the present study.

Boys' constructions of intimacy are concerned with behaviours related to commitment more than they are for girls. Adolescents have described the meaning of love in terms of commitment represented by willingness to sacrifice and devote time to a partner (Williams & Hickle, 2010). Similarly, male participants in the present study's emphasis on devotion of time to their partners and material expression of care, which each involve a degree of sacrifice, may also be seen as commitment which reflects their love for their partners. In a study by Williams and Hickle (2010) it was found that even though adolescent participants' relationships were short-lived and they had very little relationship experience, they could still acknowledge and value the effort that is required to be in love and to establish intimacy and maintain a romantic relationship. In their study, boys described commitment as the meaning of love more frequently than girls. The authors argue that this reflects boys' more negative view of love relationships, that is, that loving someone requires work, whereas being in a relationship devoid of love involves less obligation. This view may develop from adherence to traditional gender role constructions in which men are the pursuers in the quest for love. "In loving relationships a traditional male role requires significant time and effort. Conversely boys may express their love through commitment" (Williams & Hickle, 2010, p. 594). The authors go on to say that boys' emphasis on commitment as love reflects an action-orientated, tangible expression of love which results from boys' socialization to identify more with action-orientated words and concepts (Williams & Hickle, 2010).

The same may be true for boys in the present study, as for the Mexican American and Caucasian American boys in Williams and Hickle's (2010) study, regarding their conceptions of intimacy as opposed to love. Boys' construction of intimacy in tangible action-orientated, rather than abstract, emotive, terms may be associated with their socialization to identify more with action-orientated words and concepts.

Girls show their love and care for their partners and make their partners feel special through engaging in behaviours related to 'doing emotion work'. The concept of doing emotion work reflects an emphasis on the idea that the emotional states involved in the experience of intimacy may entail emotional action rather than mere being (Duncombe & Marsden, 1993).

The construction of women as the carers in relationships and as the ones responsible for doing emotion work, places the responsibility for the development of intimacy in the hands of women (Duncombe & Marsden, 1993). By expressing her feelings of love and care through helping her partner to feel special by letting him know that she admires him a female participant affords her partner the opportunity to feel a sense of self-validation, traditionally recognized as a necessary condition for the experience of intimacy (Prager, 1995). Thus she is able to fulfil her role as the creator of intimacy in relationships. The emphasis on affiliation however, means that the focus of the construction of intimacy is not on the feeling of validation itself but on the means of eliciting that feeling. It may be as with Duncombe and Marsden (1993) that girls' in the present study feel more intimate when "behaving companionately in public", that is, showing affection and giving a boy attention (p. 226). This may be because they are expected to feel intimate when doing so as a result of the discourse that constructs women as the ones responsible for ensuring that intimacy develops in relationships (Duncombe & Marsden, 1993).

3. The core category: Adolescents' emphasis on behaviour in accounts of romantic relationships and intimacy

In the following section, I will explain how the two categories presented and discussed above, combine to create the core category.

As already discussed, interaction with peers and socialization by adults establishes the romantic relationships ideals as portrayed in Western popular media as normative and expected of adolescents in their romantic relationships. Adolescents may fear condemnation by their peers if they violate romantic norms and thus may act in and express their thoughts on romantic

relationships in accordance with what is generally accepted within their peer group (O'Sullivan & Meyer-Bahlburg, 2003).

Romantic involvement thus revolves around fitting in and young people's focus tends to be more on "how and what I should be" than "who and what I am" in romantic relationships. According to Brown (1999), in such status-focused relationships, which are characteristic of middle adolescence, the focus is not on the quality of interaction or the needs of the couple. In such relationships adolescents are not entirely genuine in their romantic relationships as their interaction is guarded because they are too concerned with being rejected by the peer group or their partner to reveal their true selves within a relationship (Brown, 1999). This desire to fit in and be accepted, and hence acting in accordance with peer group norms, may contribute to young people being less focussed on self-awareness and behaving authentically in romantic relationships.

The limited critical thinking skills of most adolescents as well as their inexperience with romantic relationships may inhibit their ability to question the utility or value of the ideals they are striving toward for their own relationships and to elaborate and expand on initial idealised, stereotypical representations of romantic relationships. By uncritically adopting views and behaving in ways that are positioned by Western romantic discourse as ideal in order to fit in, participants may not fully explore their own experiences and develop their own values and beliefs about romantic relationships and themselves as romantic partners. This is because uncritical thinking may not aid in expanding and elaborating on the idealized, romanticized views of relationships they have before they into such relationships (Connolly& Goldberg, 1999; Furman & Simon, 1999). Such a process fosters a lack of self-awareness with adolescents having limited knowledge and sense of who they are as romantic partners or of their own values and beliefs regarding romantic relationships. This limited self-awareness and self-knowledge could contribute to them being unclear about their own thoughts and feelings, inhibiting their ability to be authentic in romantic relationships, that is, being able to act in and express themselves in a manner consistent with their inwardly experienced desires, values and emotions (Tolman, Impett, Tracy & Michael, 2006).

When Western mainstream discourses of intimacy are used to make sense of adolescents' constructions and experiences of intimacy, these mainstream discourses make it difficult to recognize adolescents' experiences of intimacy and suggest that adolescents' limited self-awareness and tendency toward inauthenticity in romantic relationships inhibit their ability to experience intimacy. The definitions most frequently used in research into intimacy experiences reflect the Western "Intimacy Discourse", as Langan and Davidson (2005) refer to it. This discourse

is based on the ideological assumptions that intimacy is an innate human need, achieved through mutual self-disclosure and an acceptance of the other, in (hetero)sexual romantic relationships characterized by equality and closeness. This is the discourse of intimacy most people have access to through the popular media and is thus the construction most people use to define intimacy (Langan & Davidson, 2005). This construction reflects the culturally endorsed frame of reference for people in Western society and shapes both their behaviours in relationships and their ideas of what is important in relationships (Langan & Davidson, 2005).

The way in which Western mainstream discourses of intimacy hinder the recognition of adolescents' experiences of intimacy or minimizes these experiences, is exemplified by a dscourse which follows on from the Western Intimacy Discourse that Weingarten (1991) terms the "Individual Capacity Discourse". The Individual Capacity Discourse suggests that individuals express the capacity for intimacy through mutual self-disclosure (Weingarten, 1991), which is responded to by a partner in a way that reflects an acceptance of the other in his or her uniqueness (Langan, & Davidson, 2005). This means that individuals must be able to "operate from a clear and informed knowledge of the self" in relation to another (Weingarten, 1991, p. 3). It is argued that authenticity is necessary in order to experience intimacy particularly because authenticity is linked to the experience of feeling validated (Theran, 2010). The Individual Capacity conceptualization of intimacy thus implies the need for presenting an authentic self in relationships in order to experience intimacy. The inauthenticity to which adolescents are predisposed in their romantic relationships impairs the experience of intimacy by removing the self from the relationship. Thus, from an Individual Capacity perspective, adolescents will have difficulty experiencing intimacy in their relationships.

Weingarten (1991) identifies another Western intimacy discourse which positions adolescents as unable to experience intimacy in their relationships. The "Quality of Relatedness Discourse" sees intimacy as developing naturally over time in a healthy relationship (Langan & Davidson, 2005) and as being more likely to arise in long-term, committed relationships than in casual relationships or ones of shorter duration (Weingarten, 1991). One expression of the quality of relatedness discourse is that of stage developmental models of intimacy (Weingarten, 1991). Stage development theories of intimacy direct attention to enduring relationships as the location of intimacy and suggest that experiences of intimacy in shorter, more casual relationships, like the one's most often had by adolescents (Brown, 1999; Feiring, 1996) are not 'true' intimacy (Weingarten, 1991).

However, participants' accounts of their romantic relationships indicate that they feel that they do experience intimacy in their relationships. After all, when asked to describe a time when they felt close to their partner, most of the participants did so and did not indicate that they did not have such experiences. Intimate behaviour elicits intimate experience (Prager, 1995), and participants' accounts focused on the behavioural rather than the experiential component of intimacy. In a conception of intimacy as intimate behaviours/interaction, intimacy between people who have not known each other for an extensive period of time is still possible since the individuals involved share or co-create meaning and co-ordinate their actions to reflect this combined meaning making. By situating intimacy in the context of intimate interactional behaviours rather than relationships, understandings of intimacy can move beyond the essentialist depictions of what is and is not intimate, thus allowing for a range of behaviours to count as intimate, broadening the possibilities for achieving intimacy (Langan & Davidson, 2005).

In agreement with McNelles and Connolly (1999), the findings in the present study therefore highlight the need to avoid the use of definitions of intimacy based on a narrow range of intimate behaviours. Definitions of intimacy which include a diverse array of behaviours will lead to a deeper understanding of the references in interpersonal connectedness, for adolescents in particular. In addition, McNelles and Connolly (1999) argue that a finding in their study that behavioural and affective aspects of intimacy are highly associated but that intimacy-supporting behaviours occur prior to the sustained affective involvement of intimate experience, underscores the importance of intimate behaviours in promoting intimate experience. An understanding of the behaviours that precede and result in intimate experience may aid adults in their attempts to help adolescents understand their romantic experiences and to encourage adolescents' development of the capacity for intimacy in romantic relationships. Thus, instead of solely focusing intimacy research on emotional experiences, research incorporating behaviours such as spending time together and making sacrifices could prove more useful.

What about social context?

I started the research with the aim of constructing a contextual understanding of the experience and expression of intimacy of Coloured adolescents residing in a semi-rural community in the Western Cape. A contextual understanding of participants' constructions of intimacy remained elusive for two reasons.

Firstly, few qualitative studies on adolescent intimacy experiences, particularly those leading to conceptualizations of adolescent intimacy constructions, have been conducted (Thérault, 1998). Furthermore, studies that have included contextual factors in their analysis have focused primarily on the influence of these factors on the development of intimacy, not on the constructions thereof, using quantitative methods (e.g. Pagano & Hirsch, 2007; Winstanley et al., 2002). While a significant number of studies have been conducted on the influences of the social context, adolescent peer groups in particular (e.g. Seiffige-Krenke, 2000; Seiffige-Krenke et al., 2001; Scharf & Mayseless, 2001) as wellas age (e.g., Shulman & Scharf, 2000) and gender (e.g. Crawford et al., 2004; Radmacher & Azmitia, 2006) on adolescents' romantic relationship experiences and intimacy, the more distal contextual factors such as socio-cultural and historical context have largely been ignored. Thus, it is difficult to determine whether my participants' focus on behaviour in their constructions of intimacy is unique to adolescents in their community, thus limiting possibilities for inferences about contextual influences.

Secondly, the participants themselves did not talk about their context in relation to their experiences of their romantic relationships and intimacy which made inferences difficult regarding the influence of their context on their romantic experiences and constructions of intimacy. Based on other research on adults in this community, we expected some references to social contexts like parental/family and religious contexts. For example, a study by Lesch and Engelbrecht (2011) in a Coloured farming community found evidence that adults' attitudes, beliefs and expectations regarding their romantic relationships were strongly influenced by their religious beliefs. Despite indicating involvement in Christian churches in their community, the adolescent participants in the present study did not refer to their religious beliefs in their accounts of their romantic relationships.

There are thus limitations of mainstream constructions of intimacy in researching adolescent romantic relationship and intimacy experiences. This factor together with the general dearth of qualitative research on adolescents' experiences of intimacy that address the influence of socio-cultural and historical context, underscore the need for future research into the social construction of adolescent intimacy.

However, an understanding of the discourses of traditional gender roles and heterosexual relationships prevalent in the community from which participants were drawn, provides some insight into participants' constructions of their romantic relationship experiences generally.

Gendered power relationships are seen to affect the dynamics within heterosexual relationships, as South African young adult males exert their power through violence and the pursuit of multiple partners (Bhana & Pattman, 2009). The effect of such constructions is to produce a version of sexuality located in the domain of fear and oppression (Bhana & Pattman, 2011). Participants in the present study did locate their constructions of sexuality in the domain of fear but not necessarily because of gendered power relations. Participants' perceptions of being relatively economically better off than many of their peers may mean that they have access to options for increasing their socio-economic status. Participants emphasized schooling and tertiary education as being of great importance to them. Participants appeared to fear sex due to the negative consequences of sex, such as pregnancy, that may act as a barrier to further education. Power was not associated with multiple sexual partners but with abstinence, as abstinence would ensure that future career prospects were not halted by pregnancy. While the value of the avoidance of unwanted pregnancy through abstinence cannot be denied, the socialization into the belief that teenage sexuality is wrong, has less desirable consequences for participants' experiences of intimacy.

Despite a focus on interactional behaviours as intimate, participants did not associate sex with intimacy. This may be because participants and their community construct adolescent sex negatively, as wrong and a barrier to achievement. Such a lack of alternate discourses available to them that construct teenage sexuality in positive ways, and as acceptable and 'normal', limits the possibilities for adolescents to experience intimacy through sexuality. Alternative constructions of teenage sexuality may allow participants to explore important aspects of their experience in relationships, perhaps allowing them to be more authentic in their relationships. It may also create opportunities for participants to have a greater variety of intimate experiences in their romantic relationships.

The discourses of gender and heterosexuality that position men as powerful, dominant and the inevitable perpetrators of violence against women, and women as passive in relation to powerful men, were also reproduced in two participants accounts of their romantic relationship experiences. Challenging the discourses that associate masculinity with violence and dominance over girls and women (Bhana & Pattman, 2009), is essential for creating gender equity in relationships. However, traditional gender roles and relations that encourage the view that women should be submissive to men predominate in economically disadvantaged and historically disenfranchised Western Cape communities, form part of discourses of traditional culture and are supported by the church (Shefer et al., 2008), making it difficult for individual men and women to challenge dominant discourses on their own. The present study's findings show that even when alternate discourses of gender identity

and heterosexuality are available, women may not be permitted by dominant discourses of powerful masculinity to enact the alternate constructions of powerful femininity.

The study's findings point to a need for alternate discourses of gender and heterosexuality to be made available and become acceptable. Challenging prevailing discourses of masculinity, femininity and heterosexuality does not necessarily mean replacing dominant discourses with their opposite construction. Rather than replacing discourses of men as powerful and hedonistic with ones that construct men as emotional and romantic, men could be encouraged to examine how they embody these contradictions (Pattman, 2002). Women and men can be encouraged to examine how femininities are constructed in relation to powerful masculinities (Pattman, 2002). If gender equality in heterosexual relationships is to be achieved and women are to be allowed to challenge dominant discourses and enact constructions of a different femininity in heterosexual relationships, alternatives to the discourses of traditional gender roles and relations that allow for more equitable power relations in heterosexual interactions must be acceptable to both men and women. Alternate discourses will also have to be accepted at a cultural, societal and institutional level.

CHAPTER 6

RECOMMENDATIONS AND LIMITATIONS

In this final chapter what has been learned from the present research, the implications of the research and its limitations will be discussed.

1. Recommendations

The use of quantitative methods which employ predetermined definitions of intimacy and the application of adult conceptions of intimacy in past research have meant that little is known about adolescents' own constructions of intimacy. In accordance with the goals of the study, the present research developed an understanding of the experience and expression of intimacy in the romantic relationships of Coloured, middle adolescents in a particular community, from the perspectives of the participants. In so doing the research made a contribution to the present knowledge base of adolescents' romantic relationships and interaction in the South African context.

The findings have implications for the future work of relationship scholars and researchers, and for those charged with adolescents' care and development. In particular the findings point to the need for scholars and researchers to broaden their definitions of intimacy when considering adolescent romantic relationships, the need to conduct research which will increase our knowledge of the influence of contextual factors on adolescents' constructions of romantic interaction and experience, the importance of developing new intimacy discourses, and the need for increased involvement by adults in adolescents' exploration of their identities as they relate to romantic involvement.

1.1.   A conception of intimacy tailored to the adolescent context

Applying an adult perspective to adolescent research may not fully capture the adolescent experience. In the present study, participants' views of intimacy did not concur in all respects with Western mainstream definitions of intimacy, thus not making participants' intimacy experiences immediately apparent to me as intimate. I later realized that my use of definitions of intimacy as they have been traditionally conceptualized based on research with adults, meant that I was looking for intimacy experiences as I understood them. When participants' accounts of their intimacy experiences did not reflect this understanding I did not recognize their experiences as intimate even though they were present albeit in a different form. Thus, starting out as I did, by unwittingly

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assuming a Western mainstream definition of intimacy, may not be appropriate in research into adolescent romantic experiences. The limitations of mainstream constructions of intimacy point to a need for investigating adolescent intimacy by focusing on adolescents' own constructions and experiences.

1.2.   Increasing our knowledge of the influence of contextual factors on adolescents' constructions of intimacy

The developmental importance of adolescents' mental representations of their relationship suggests that targeting young people's views of romantic relationships may be a useful approach in intervention programmes (Montgomery, 2005). There is evidence to support the influence of a variety of historic, economic, familial, social and environmental factors on adolescents' views of romantic relationships (Furman & Simon, 1999; Graber et al.,, 1999; Harding, 2007). Research which will broaden our knowledge about the influence of wider socio-cultural and historical contextual factors in shaping adolescents' views of romantic relationships and intimacy may be useful in amending measures taken to provide adolescents with appropriate information about romantic interaction.

1.3.   Developing new intimacy discourses

The restrictive nature of traditional definitions of intimacy based on Western Intimacy Discourse underscores the utility and value of developing new discourses, both in the academy and in popular culture, which emphasize exploring and understanding one's own experiences in relationships. Moving beyond the traditional depictions of what is and is not intimate allows for the inclusion of a range of behaviours that can be experienced as intimate, thus broadening the possibilities for achieving intimacy (Langan & Davidson, 2005).

1.4.   Increased involvement by adults in adolescents' exploration of their romantic identities

The susceptibility adolescents have to media messages regarding ideal romantic interaction and hence the restrictions placed on adolescent romantic experience and behaviour by the discourses present in these messages, indicates a need to provide adolescents with alternative messages about romantic relationships. All people use the information available to them to make sense of their experiences whether it is sufficient or not. The increased access to information and images afforded by new technologies increases the likelihood that adolescents will access information that will have

implications for their identity exploration without the presence of any scaffolding that could provide alternative interpretations of information (Dupree, 2010). It is important then for adults to be involved in adolescents' explorations of their romantic selves, providing information based on their own experiences and understandings of romantic relationships, rather than reinforcing Western discourses of ideal relationship interaction.

2. Limitations of the present research

While providing some useful insight into adolescent experiences of intimacy among a group of Coloured adolescents from a semi-rural setting, particularly for researchers and adults in the lives of such adolescents, I have identified two major limitations to the present study.

2.1. Interviewers in the present study, including myself, were honours or masters students in the psychology department of the university and had little experience with conducting in-depth interviews for the purposes of gathering data. I followed Charmaz's (2006) suggestions for eliciting the kind of detailed and full data necessary for useful grounded theory analysis when training interviewers. However, interviewing adolescents presents many challenges and can be a difficult undertaking (Bassett et al., 2008). Adolescents' usual reluctance to talk about their romantic relationships with adults (Brown, et al., 1999) further added to challenges that the inexperienced interviewers faced.

2.2. As Parker (1994) notes there will always be a gap between the subject of study and the way it is represented. The partial construction of research findings and conclusions by myself, as an outsider, may have further widened this gap of representation. However, it would be difficult to determine if or how the findings and conclusions of an insider researcher would differ from those of the present study.

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APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW SCHEDULES

<u>INTERVIEW SCHEDULE: WAVE 1 (INITIAL INTERVIEWS)</u>

- What is your girlfriend/boyfriend's name?
- How old are you?
- How old is your partner?
- How long have you been together?
- How did your relationship begin?
- Can you describe how you feel about your partner?
  - What do you like most about your partner?
  - What do like least about your partner?
- Can you give me an example of a time or situation when you felt close to your partner?
  - What about that situation made you feel close to your partner?
  - How did you feel at the time?
- What sorts of things do you and your partner talk about when you are together?
- Can you give me an example of something about yourself or our life that you would find difficult to tell your partner?
  - What makes it easy/difficult to share such things with your partner?
- Can you give me an example of when you felt your partner really listened to you?
  - What made you feel that you had really been heard?
- Can you give me an example of something that you and your partner might fight or disagree about?
- How do you and your partner try to work things out if you fight or disagree?
- Can you give me an example of when you felt special and important to your partner?
  - Do you feel this way often?
  - How does your partner make you feel that way?
- Can you give me an example of how you make your partner feel special and important
  - How often do you do this?
- How do you feel now that the interview is done?
- What was it like doing this interview?

Interview schedule: Wave 2

- What is your girlfriend/boyfriend's name?
- Tell me about (name of girlfriend or boyfriend).   What is he/she like?
- Can you describe how you feel about your partner?
- Can you describe how you feel about your relationship with your partner?
  - What do you like most about your relationship?
  - What do you like least?
- Can you give me an example of a time or situation when you felt close to your partner?
  - What about that situation made you feel close to your partner?
  - How did you feel at the time?
- What sorts of things do you and your partner talk about when you are together?
- Can you give me an example of something about yourself or our life that you would find difficult to tell your partner?

- What makes it easy/difficult to share such things with your partner?
- Can you give me an example of when you felt your partner really listened to you?
  - What made you feel that you had really been heard?
- Can you give me an example of something that you and your partner might fight or disagree about?
- How do you and your partner try to work things out if you fight or disagree?
- Can you give me an example of when you felt special and important to your partner?
  - Do you feel this way often?
  - How does your partner make you feel that way?
- Can you give me an example of how you make your partner feel special and important
  - How often do you do this?
- *What does the ideal relationship look like to you?*
  - In what ways does your current relationship resemble this ideal?
  - What changes would you make for your relationship to be most like your ideal relationship?
- *What does an intimate relationship look like to you?*
  - In what ways is your relationship like this?
  - Has it always been like this?
  - (If not) What was it like before?
  - When did it change?
  - How did things change?
- And in your relationship as it is now, would you say that you have an intimate relationship or that you have intense experiences of intimacy sometimes? If so, why?
- How do you feel now that the interview is done?
- What was it like doing this interview?

Interview schedule: wave 3

- What is your girlfriend/boyfriend's name?
- How old are you?
- How old is your partner?
- How long have you been together?
- *How did your relationship begin?*
  - Why did your relation hip start?
  - How has your relationship change since it started?
- Can you describe how you feel about your partner?
  - What do you like most about your partner?
  What do like least about your partner?
- Can you give me an example of a time or situation when you felt close to your partner?
  - What about that situation made you feel close to your partner?
  - How did you feel at the time?
- What sorts of things do you and your partner talk about when you are together?
- Can you give mean example of something about yourself or our life that you would find difficult to tell your partner?
  - What makes it easy/difficult to share such things with your partner?
- Can you give me an example of when you felt your partner really listened to you?
  - What made you feel that you had really been heard?
- Can you give me an example of something that you and your partner might fight or disagree about?

- How do you and your partner try to work things out if you fight or disagree?
- Can you give me an example of when you felt special and important to your partner?
  - Do you feel this way often?
  - How does your partner make you feel that way?
- Can you give me an example of how you make your partner feel special and important
  - How often do you do this?
- How do you think a close relationship between two people should be?
  - In what ways does your current relationship resemble this?
  - What changes would you make for your relationship to be most like this?
- ***How do you think a close relationship between a boy and a girl differ from other close relationships?***
- How do you feel now that the interview is done?
- What was it like doing this interview?

APPENDIX B

INFORMATION AND CONSENT FORM

DEELNEMERINLIGTINGSBLAD EN -TOESTEMMINGSVORM VIR GEBRUIK DEUR DEELNEMER <u>EN</u> OUERS/WETTIGE VOOGDE

TITEL VAN DIE NAVORSINGSPROJEK: Jong mense se ervarings in hul nabye verhoudings met die teenoorgestelde geslag.

VERWYSINGSNOMMER:

HOOFNAVORSER: Mej. Claire Furphy (MA sielkunde student, Departement Sielkunde, Stellenbosch Universiteit

ADRES: Departement Sielkunde, Stellenbosch Universiteit, Privaatsak XI, Matieland, 7602.

KONTAKNOMMER: 083 430 5538

Jy/U kind *(of pleegkind, indien van toepassing*) het ingewillig om deel te neem aan 'n navorsingsprojek. Lees asseblief hierdie inligtingsblad op jou/u tyd deur aangesien die besonderhedel van die projek daarin verduidelik word. Indien daar enige deel van die projek is wat jy/u nie ten volle verstaan nie, is jy/u welkom om die ondersoeker daaroor uit te vra. Dit is baie belangrik dat jy/u ten volle moet verstaan wat die navorsing behels en hoe jy/u kind daarby betrokke sal wees. Jy/U kind se deelname is ook **volkome vrywillig** en dit staan jou/u vry om deelname te weier. Jy/U kind sal op geen wyse hoegenaamd negatief beïnvloed word indien hy/sy sou weier om deel te neem of u weier om hom/haar te laat deelneem nie. Jy/U mag jouself/u kind ook te eniger tyd aan die studie onttrek, selfs al het jy/u ingestem om hom/haar te laat deelneem.

Hierdie studie is deur die Komitee vir Mensnavorsing van die Stellenbosch Universiteit goedgekeur en sal uitgevoer word volgens die etiese riglyne en beginsels van die Internasionale Verklaring van Helsinki en die Etiese Riglyne vir Navorsing van die Mediese Navorsingsraad (MNR).

<u>Wat behels hierdie navorsingsprojek?</u>

- ➢ Soos jy/u miskien reeds weet, is romantiese verhoudings baie belangrik vir die meeste tieners. Ons weet egter min van hoe tieners in jou/u gemeenskap dink, voel en doen in hulle nabye verhoudings met die teenoorgestelde geslag. Die doel van hierdie studie is daarom om meer kennis hieroor te kry.

- ➢ Die navorser sal met die skoolhoof reël vir 'n kamer by die skool waar 'n onderhoud met jou/u kind sal gevoer word. Die onderhoudskamer sal privaatheid en die vertroulikheid van jou/jou kind se inligting verseker. Dit sal ook 'n plek wees waar jy/u kind en die onderhoudsvoerder veilig sal wees.

- ➢ Aan die begin van die onderhoud sal die onderhoudsvoerder jou/u kind vra om 'n kort vraelys wat sekere lewensinligting soos ouderdom en deelname aan aktiwiteite insluit. Jy/U kind sal die vraelys anomiem voltooi en geen van jou/jou kind se identifiserende besonderhede sal op die vraelys verskyn nie.

- ➢ Na die vraelyste ingevul is, sal die onderhoud begin. Die onderhoudsvoerder **sal** vrae vra oor jou/u kind se ervarings in romantiese verhoudings met die teenoorgestelde geslag. Die onderhoud sal opgeneem word op oudiokasset om te verseker dat niks van die inligting verlore gaan nie   Die onderhoud sal tussen een en een en 'n half uur duur. Indien nodig, kan ons jou/u kind vra vir 'n opvolgonderhoud op 'n latere stadium.

<u>WAAROM IS JY / U KIND GENOOI OM DEEL TE NEEM?</u>

☐ Jy/U kind is gekies om deel te neem want jy/u kind is tans in 'n romantiese verhouding en jy/hy/sy val ook in die ouderdomsgroep waaroor ons meer wil weet.

Wat sal jou / u verantwoordelikhede wees?

➢ *Ouer/voog*: Om toestemming te gee dat u kind mag deelteneem aan die studie deur die toestemmingsvorm te teken.
➢ *Deelnemer*: Om jou in te stem om deel te neem aan die studie deur die toestemmingsvorm te teken en ook die toestemming van een van jou ouers of voog te kry om deel te eem aan die studie deur hul te vra om die toestemmingsvorm te teken..
➢ *Deelnemer*: Ons vra dat jy die onderhoudsvrae eerlik en so volledig soos jy kan, te beantwoord. Onthou egter dat jy enige tyd kan weier om vrae te beantwoord en enige tyd die onderhoud kan beëindig.

Sal jy / u kind voordeel trek deur deel te neem aan hierdie navorsing?

➢   Die meeste mense kry baie selde die geleentheid om in meer diepte oor hulle nabye verhoudings te dink en te gesels. Jou/U kind se deelname aan die navorsing gee hom/haar so 'n geleentheid en dit mag vir haar/hom waardevol wees.

Is daar enige risiko's verbonde aan u kind se deelname aan hierdie navorsing?

➢ Ek glo dat jou/u kind se deelname aan die navorsing vir jou/hom/haar interessant en leersaam sal wees. So 'n onderhoud kan jongmense die geleentheid bied om bietjie na te dink oor hule ervarings in romantiese verhoudings. Dit is egter moontlik dat sommige vrae u kind ongemaklik sal laat voel of vir jou/u kind te persoonlik voel. Onthou egter dat jy/u kind enige tyd kan weier om vrae te beantwoord en enige tyd die onderhoud kan beëindig.

➢ Dit is moontlik dat jou/u kind gedurende jou/sy/haar deelname bewus word van probleme wat jy/hy/sy in die verlede beleef het of tans beleef en waarvoor jy/u kind hulp benodig. Die onderhoudsvoerder sal jou/u kind nie van hierdie hulp kan voorsien nie, maar sal jou/u kind verwys na 'n persoon of organisasie wat hom/haar wel sal kan help.

Wie sal toegang hê tot jou / u kind se onderhoudsinligting en resultate van die studie?

➢ Enige inligting wat deur middel van die navorsing verkry word en wat met jou/u kind in verband gebring kan word, sal vertroulik bly en slegs met jou/u kind se toestemming bekend gemaak word of soos deur die wet vereis. Verder sal ek alle data in my kantoor bewaar en net ek en my studieleier sal tot die data toegang hê.
➢ Daar moet ook onder jou/u aandag gebring word dat indien dit duidelik sou word dat jy/u kind op een of ander manier mishandel word of iemand anders mishandel, die onderhoudsvoerder eties verplig sal wees om die saak te verwys na 'n toepaslike persoon of instansie wat dit verder sal aanspreek.
➢ Die resultate van die studie sal in 'n tesis verskyn en terugvoer sal gegee word aan die skoolhoof. Deelnemers sal genooi word na 'n terugvoersessie oor wat bevind is. Daar word beplan om die resultate van die studie te publiseer. Die vertroulikheid van jou/u kind se inligting sal beskerm word deurdat van skuilname in die tesis en publikasies gebruik sal word.

Sal u of u kind betaal word vir deelname aan die projek en is daar enige koste verbonde aan deelname?

U of u kind sal nie betaal word vir deelname aan die projek nie. Deelname aan die projek sal u niks kos nie. Deelnemers aan die projek sal egter 'n R30 *Mr Price* bewys ontvang.

Is daar enigiets anders wat jy / u moet weet of doen?

➢ Jy/U kan Me Maryke Hüsselman-Hunter by die Eenheid vir Navorsingsontwikkeling kontak by tel 021-8084623 indien jy / u enige verdere vrae het of enige probleme ondervind.

➢ Jy/U kan die Komitee vir Mensnavorsing kontak by 021-938 9207 indien jy / u enige bekommernis of klagte het wat nie bevredigend deur u studiedokter hanteer is nie.

➢ Jy/U sal 'n afskrif van hierdie inligtings- en toestemmingsvorm ontvang vir u eie rekords.

Instemming van minderjarige

Ek (naam van kind/minderjarige) …………………………………....................……………. is genooi om deel te neem aan bogenoemde navorsingsprojek.

• Die navorser en my ouers het die besonderhede van bogenoemde navorsingsprojek aan my verduidelik en ek verstaan wat hulle aan my gesê het.

• Ek weet ook dat ek te eniger tyd aan die navorsingsprojek kan onttrek indien ek ongelukkig is.

• Deur my naam hieronder in te vul, onderneem ek om vrywillig aan die navorsingsprojek deel te neem. Ek bevestig ook dat ek nie deur my ouers of navorser gedwing is om deel te neem nie.

....
Naam van kind   Onafhanklike getuie
(Deur kind geskryf te word indien moontlik)

Verklaring deur ouer/wettig voog

Met die ondertekening van hierdie dokument onderneem ek, (*naam van ouer/wettige voog*) ……………......................................….........…., om my kind *(naam van kind)* ……………......................................….........…., wat .... jaar oud is, te laat deelneem aan 'n navorsingsprojek getiteld *Jong mense se ervarings van hul nabye verhoudings met die teenoorgestelde geslag.*

Ek verklaar dat:

• Ek hierdie inligtings- en toestemmingsvorm gelees het of aan my laat voorlees het en dat dit in 'n taal geskryf is waarin ek vaardig en gemaklik mee is.

• My kind moet instem om aan die navorsingsprojek deel te neem as hy/sy ouer as 7 jaar is, en dat sy/haar INSTEMMING op hierdie vorm aangeteken sal word.

• Ek geleentheid gehad het om vrae te stel en dat al my vrae bevredigend beantwoord is.

• Ek verstaan dat deelname aan hierdie projek **vrywillig** is en dat daar geen druk op my geplaas is om my kind te laat deelneem nie.

- My kind te eniger tyd aan die projek mag onttrek en dat hy/sy nie op enige wyse daardeur benadeel sal word nie.

- My kind gevra mag word om aan die projek te onttrek voordat dit afgehandel is indien die navorser van oordeel is dat dit in sy/haar beste belang is.

Geteken te (*plek*) ....…………….. op (*datum*) …………...……….. 2008.

....

Handtekening van ouer/wettige voog

....

Handtekening van getuie

Verklaring deur navorser

Ek (naam) …………………………………………………… verklaar dat:

- Ek die inligting in hierdie dokument verduidelik het aan

  …………………............................…………..

- Ek hom/haar aangemoedig het om vrae te vra en voldoende tyd gebruik het om dit te beantwoord.

- Ek tevrede is dat hy/sy al die aspekte van die navorsingsprojek soos hierbo bespreek, voldoende verstaan.

- Ek 'n tolk gebruik het/nie 'n tolk gebruik het nie. (*Indien 'n tolk gebruik is, moet die tolk die onderstaande verklaring teken.)*

Geteken te (*plek*) ....…………….. op (*datum*) …………...……….. 2008.