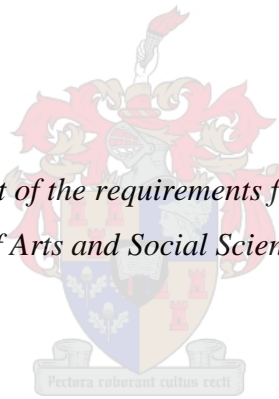# THE ART OF MAKING YOUNG GENDERS AND SEXUALITIES IN SOUTH AFRICA

A Participatory Visual Arts-Based Study with Grade 11 Learners

BY

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Thesis presented in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Sociology in the faculty of Arts and Social Sciences at Stellenbosch University

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DECLARATION

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February 2021

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ABSTRACT

This thesis is a visual arts-based exploration of young genders and sexualities in South Africa. The data presented here was generated by a uniquely designed participatory online visual arts course conducted with four young women aged 16-17 years who attend a co-educational high school in KwaZulu-Natal. This research set out to centre young people's perspectives and experiences in understanding the making of young genders and sexualities, but also to provide a space where participants were able to explore, question and unpack these ideas that they hold. Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) was used to bring together the artworks that participants made with the broader systems of power within which they operate to understand the simultaneous forms of conformity, compliance, agency, and resistance that young people enact. The analysis showed how multiple versions of gender and sexuality are constructed, performed and experienced over various temporal and spatial contexts. The ways in which femininities and young women's bodies become sexualised through the gaze of the heterosexual matrix was shown to be a product of the intersection of age with gender and sexuality. This study also showed what happens when participatory arts-based methods are used not to explore a particular social issue or identity, but rather the making of gender and sexuality more broadly – the four young women raised significantly under-researched topics such as divorce and asexuality. Furthermore, the analysis revealed the inescapability of race in research focusing on gender and sexuality. In post-apartheid South Africa these identities and systems of power are deeply and unmistakably intertwined. It is in reflecting on the insights that a participatory visual arts-based approach to engaging young people about gender and sexuality generates, that I argue for the value – analytically, methodologically, and pedagogically – that this study holds.

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CHAPTER 1

PICKING UP THE PAINTBRUSH: AN INTRODUCTION

This thesis centres around two key questions; I ask how young people construct, experience and perform gender and sexuality, and how a participatory visual arts-based approach to gender and sexuality research might generate interesting and important insights. These questions formed the starting point for the design of my research. As my research progressed, these questions were refined, reshaped and reworked to produce the thesis that I present here. In this thesis, I attempt to answer my initial research questions by exploring the versions of gender and sexuality that four young women visually create, paying particular attention to intersectionality as well as the value that my participatory visual art-based methods hold in this endeavour.

In this chapter, I set out to make two introductions to the reader. First is an introduction to myself as the researcher that conducted this project, and as the author of this thesis. Such an introduction is necessary for the reader to understand better how and why I have conceptualised and designed my research in the way I have, and how I shaped the data presented later on in this thesis. I want to make clear the role that I have had in this research, how my interests, background, positionality and experiences have guided me in navigating this research journey and in producing a thesis that is both personal and productive in what it contributes to the field of young genders and sexualities. The second introduction is to that field within which my research is situated. I set out to familiarise the reader with the broader context within which young women in South Africa operate and the existing areas of focus that gender and sexuality researchers have worked on. In bringing these two introductions together, I argue for the necessity, importance, and value of my research project. It is my hope that the reader's expectations are set here in this chapter and consequently met as the rest of my thesis unfolds.

1.1 Introducing myself

In introducing myself, there are three key aspects of my identity and sense of self that I would like to explicate. Firstly, I am a critical feminist scholar. This should become apparent to the reader throughout this thesis, in the theorists I draw on, in the design of my methodology, in the analytical arguments that I make and in the way that I write the thesis itself. This research

project is founded on the assumption that gender and sexuality are socially constructed, and ideas or experiences relating to these identities should thus be examined, questioned and challenged. How I present and analyse my data is rooted in critical and intersectional feminism – I am not seeking to present myself as a neutral or objective party. I am present in the design of the art course, in the implementation thereof, in what parts of the findings are presented, in how they are analysed, and in the conclusions that are ultimately drawn. There will be moments in this thesis where I explicitly bring the reader's attention to my positionality and my experiences, but the style in which I have written this thesis – guiding and engaging the reader in a conversation – should serve as a reminder of my presence in all aspects of the research. The reader will also note my use of the word 'we' when speaking about my findings and analytical insights. This is done intentionally to indicate the democratic and participatory nature of my process as well as my presence and positionality throughout.

I am also someone who loves visual art. I grew up attending art classes with a teacher who encouraged her students to use art as a way to step out of the rules and normalcy of everyday life. This is most clearly illustrated in the exercise that she started each class with – my teacher would get us to close our eyes with a piece of charcoal in hand and draw as we listened to a poem that she read. The purpose of this exercise was to let go of expectations of what looks 'good' or technically correct, and rather let the inspiration for the artwork, in this case, a poem, take centre stage. I included this exercise itself in the original design of my research but excluded it when redesigning my project in lieu of COVID-19 restrictions – a topic that I will unpack in a later chapter about my methodology. What remained, however, was the essence of this exercise. Throughout the course, I reminded my participants that what is most important when making their artworks is not to create a 'good' artwork but rather a useful one, one that enables them to visually communicate what they feel, think and experience in relation to the theme and prompts I gave them. We see here how visual art becomes a different approach to knowing, being and doing. My intention in using participatory visual arts-based methods was not to generate better or more accurate knowledge about young genders and sexualities, but rather different insights. Using visual arts methods shaped what my participants chose to share, a fact which I argue makes this data valuable. With this research thesis, I aim to deepen, expand and in some areas redirect the existing conversations about young genders and sexualities in South Africa, and it is my unique arts-based methodology that I believe enables me to do so.

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Lastly, I am a young queer woman who is still asking so many questions about my own ideas, feelings and experiences of gender and sexuality. While I am not suggesting that these identities grant me some kind of essentialist understanding of young genders and sexualities, they have been central to my motivations behind what and how I research. As someone who grew up in a predominantly white, middle-class, conservative Christian community and attended the same private Christian all-girls school for 13 years, compulsory heterosexuality and heteronormativity were unquestioned and well-camouflaged norms for me. Attending university and stepping into spaces such as the sociology classroom and new friendship groups, spaces where these norms were challenged, was a transformative experience for me. These spaces and the counter-normative knowledges produced within them opened up a much more extensive range of possibilities for exploring my identity, and it is the creation of such spaces in schools that motivates the research that I choose to design and engage young people in. One of the most exciting moments for me when wrapping up my data collection was a comment one of my participants (Sandy) made in our follow-up interview when asked what she would change about the course:

> I think if it was like a consistent course, if we did this every year, termly, we did different aspects. I think this course would actually be helpful to a lot of people who are trying to figure themselves out. And you know if we did this during LO actually because it's usually so bad. So if we did this during LO, it would actually make it more effective, like this would be a perfect exercise for us to be doing in LO.

That Sandy, who I will introduce later on, conceptualises the art course as something that helps young people to 'figure themselves out', and positions the course as a needed addition to her formal curriculum, demonstrates just how clearly my personal motivations for the project materialised in my participants' experiences as well, despite not explicitly stating them.

I will be exploring other aspects of my positionality in the chapters to come, but I ask the reader to keep these three understandings of who I am in mind as they read on, remembering that this is the person who made these theoretical, methodological and epistemological choices, who my participants interacted with, and who is writing this thesis.

1.2 Introducing the broader research context

In this second introduction, I would like to provide insights into the broader context within which South African youth operate and how gender and sexuality research such as mine is conducted. Gender and sexuality are shown to be centrally important in the lives of young people in South Africa, not only as personal identifications but as structural forces shaping their lived realities. Extensive research has shown that despite its progressive Constitution stipulating multiple protections for citizens on the basis of gender and sexuality, South African society is a highly gendered (read patriarchal) and (hetero)sexualised space. A central concern in South African society is the high rates of gender-based violence. A relatively recent nation-wide outcry, catalysed by the rape and murder of 19-year-old UCT student Uyinene Mrwetyana, reflects both the dire state of gender-based violence in South Africa and its personally felt relevance to the public. Learners across the country stood in solidarity by wearing black and participating in marches (Pijoos & Njilo, 2019), illustrating the impact that gender-based violence has on young people's lives.

Not unrelated to gender-based violence is the high prevalence of HIV/AIDS in South Africa (Francis & Francis, 2006). South Africa's status, as one of the countries most affected by HIV/AIDS globally, has been a motivator for a large body of research about HIV/AIDS in South Africa. Age, gender and sexuality are shown to be central to addressing the HIV/AIDS pandemic in South Africa, with young, heterosexual women being the most affected. Epstein and Morrell (2012:474) highlight that "masculinities and femininities in contemporary South Africa are being produced in the unavoidable context of HIV and AIDS". This argument is supported by many researchers exploring gender and sexuality with young people in this context (Mathe, 2013; Bhana & Pattman, 2009; Reddy & Dunne, 2007). HIV/AIDS is therefore, shown to play a central role in young people's constructions and experiences of gender and sexuality.

Another crucial aspect of South African society shaping young people's understandings and experiences of gender and sexuality is widespread homophobia and heteronormativity. An overview of the extensive literature about homophobia in South African schools reveals that learners, teachers, parents and school administrators alike are invested in upholding compulsory heterosexuality and the gender binary (Francis, 2017a; Msibi, 2012; Butler, Alpaslan, Strümpher & Astbury, 2003). Learners' gender expression and sexuality identities are policed through violence, bullying and ostracism, making the school environment a site of exclusion and isolation.

The hostile and exclusionary nature of the schooling environment in South Africa shapes the way that both queer and heterosexual learners conceptualise and experience sexuality, making homophobia and heteronormativity central considerations in understanding gender and sexuality amongst young people.

The violence outlined here highlights the inextricability of social justice concerns and gender and sexuality. These considerations are imperative in understanding the wider context of gender and sexuality in South Africa, and the way that these identifications are experienced by young people. Equally important, however, is the collection of qualitative research conducted with South African youth which reveals their agency and innovation in thinking about and experiencing gender and sexuality, despite their prescriptive and violent context (Francis, 2019b; Mathe, 2013; Mudaly, 2013; Msibi, 2012). Gender-based violence, HIV/AIDS and homophobia in South Africa, while shaping young people's experiences of gender and sexuality, do not determine their experiences. Participatory research conducted with young people shows them to be active agents who push back against dominant discourses of young sexualities, despite operating within a violently gendered and (hetero)sexualised environment. Research that acknowledges the simultaneity of agency and oppression is crucial in understanding the lived reality of young people. It is this line of inquiry that I set out to continue with the research presented here.

1.3 Putting myself in the research context picture

I have thus far introduced the reader to myself and the context within which my research is situated. The question then emerges, how does a critical feminist scholar, a visual arts enthusiast, a young queer woman, approach the task of engaging young people in gender and sexuality research that acknowledges both their agency and structural restraints? The answer is, she designs and facilitates a participatory, visual arts-based course exploring different aspects of gender and sexuality over time and space. I chose to design what became an online course because of COVID-19 restrictions, a course that carved out space and time for four young women to explore, question and express their identities, particularly in relation to gender and sexuality, a course that positioned them as agents and knowledge producers and that prioritised visual ways of knowing, doing and being.

In this research, I sought to use the uniqueness of participatory visual arts-based methods not to generate better or more accurate understandings of gender and sexuality amongst young people, but rather to generate different insights. I aimed to create opportunities for young people to explore their own ideas about and experiences of gender and sexuality in new ways, but also to use participatory arts-based methods to stimulate critical thought and discussion about how and why they have these perceptions and experiences. Much of the existing research that utilises participatory arts-based methods in exploring gender and sexuality focuses on a specific social issue (Magudulela, 2017; Hoosain Khan, 2014; Francis & Hemson, 2006). Like this research, mine is also founded on principles of social justice. Unlike this research, however, my project sought to be more exploratory in understanding gender and sexuality. Instead of introducing a particular social issue such as gender-based violence and exploring its significance and meaning in young people's lives, my research sought to allow young people to move freely and openly explore gender and sexuality in the ways that are most meaningful to them. At the same time, topics of gender-based violence and homophobia emerged, but how these topics were introduced was left to the participants.

This thesis constitutes the product of my participatory visual arts-based course, comprising nine chapters. First, I conceptually orient the canvas so to speak, bringing together the theoretical insights and positionings about young genders and sexualities underlying my research into a conceptual framework. In Chapter Three, I review the earlier works, that is, the existing literature that makes use of participatory visual arts-based methods to gain insights into the making of young genders and sexualities in South Africa. In Chapter Four, I describe and justify my medium of expression, my methodological choices, paying particular attention to how the COVID-19 pandemic shaped what research I conducted and how. In Chapters Five and Six, I present my findings, giving the reader a picture book look into the making of young genders and sexualities in South Africa. In Chapter Five, I focus on the temporality of young genders and sexualities, while in Chapter Six, I focus on the spatiality thereof. In Chapter Seven, I embark on a critical interpretation of meanings where I discuss the analytical insights that my findings produce into young genders and sexualities. In Chapter Eight, I apply the analytical insights generated to the case of my art course itself to understand what was and was not made visible by my methodology. Finally, in Chapter Nine, I move towards a conclusion. Given the exploratory nature and limited scope of my research, I set out not to state absolute conclusions, but rather to present a summary

of what original contributions this thesis has made to the conversation about young genders and sexualities and the value of participatory arts-based methods. I discuss the implications of my work in practice and make a number of recommendations for how other scholars and I should further deepen this conversation.

CHAPTER 2

WHICH WAY UP: CONCEPTUALLY ORIENTING THE CANVAS

This study explores young people's depictions, experiences and understandings of gender and sexuality. In building a conceptual framework, I draw on some of Connell's (2009, 1995) key theoretical contributions to the field of gender and sexuality studies. This study is situated in the context of South Africa, specifically, and the global South more broadly. In drawing on theory developed in other contexts, consideration of that theory's applicability to my location as a researcher and that of my participants is necessary. The present chapter, therefore, begins with a discussion of the use of Northern theory in the global South more broadly, as well as my use of an Australian theorist's work in my South African research context. I then proceed to discuss each building block of my conceptual framework: gender and sexuality as multiple and relational; the role of structure and agency in understanding gender and sexuality; the intersectionality of gender and sexuality; and considerations of class and race. Throughout this chapter, I draw on ideas proposed by Connell (2009, 1995), but situate and critically apply these ideas to my research context by drawing on the work of key gender and sexuality scholars in Africa and South Africa (Francis, 2014, 2019a; Bhana, 2014; Msibi, 2013; Tamale, 2011).

2.1 Building a conceptual framework fit for the global South

In developing a conceptual framework for this research, its location in the global South is crucial. While theory developed in the global North or metropole has historically been most prominent within the social sciences, this by no means implies that Southern theory has not existed or that it is not useful. In her book dedicated to Southern theory, Connell (2007: xii) argues "that colonised and peripheral societies produce social thought about the modern world which has as much intellectual power as metropolitan social thought and more political relevance". In conceptualising research about young genders and sexualities in South Africa, a localised, context-sensitive approach is necessary. In considering how African sexualities are and should be researched and theorised, Tamale's (2011) position aligns with that of Connell. She argues for the importance of context-specific forms of knowledge that engage with the nuances and complexities of African sexualities. However, in the same vein, she highlights the importance of not throwing the baby out with the bathwater, so to speak. She argues that "though it is extremely important to

develop our home-grown theories of African sexualities and to always be keenly aware of the dangers of uncritically using theories that are constructed from the global North to explain African societies, the latter cannot be ignored" (Tamale, 2011:25). The reason for this is twofold. Firstly, to abandon all theorisation and conceptualisation developed in the North would create unnecessary amounts of work for African scholars. While Northern theory cannot be uncritically applied to Southern contexts or any contexts for that matter, this does not mean that some of these concepts and ideas are of no value or relevance at all. The task of the Southern scholar is rather to critically appropriate and rework existing concepts and theories, customising them to fit the context within which they are working, and using these research contexts to challenge and deepen the explanatory power of those concepts. Secondly, the interconnections and relationships between the global North and South cannot be ignored. The colonial history of most African countries and the present influence of globalisation means that overlaps between these two broad socio-geographical contexts do, in fact, exist. Northern theory can be useful in understanding some of these overlaps.

The main theoretical work that I employ in conceptualising the core concepts of my research, namely gender and sexuality, is that of Connell (2009, 1995). As an Australian theorist, she is positioned in somewhat of a middle ground between the global North and South. While Australia's past is colonial in nature, much like the majority of the global South, its present reality is more similar to that of the global North. Connell (2007:85) captures this apparent contradiction in her description of Australia's geopolitical positioning as "a rich peripheral country [with] the history of settler colonialism". The racial demographic of Australia, with the majority of the population comprising persons of European descent, is also markedly different to that of South Africa and other Southern or peripheral countries. In keeping with Tamale's assertion that theory developed outside of Africa should not be disregarded but rather critically appropriated, I draw on some of the key components of Connell's (2009, 1995) work, more specifically her notions of gender as multiple, as relational and as a social structure, as well as her intersectional approach to the interrelations between gender and sexuality. In doing so, however, I draw on Southern theorists and literature, as well as my own data, to shape these understandings in a way that is appropriate and applicable to the particularities of my research context and participants.

2.2 Gender and sexuality as multiple and relational

Central to Connell's (2009) theorisation of gender, is the premise that masculinities and femininities are multiple and relational. Masculinity is constructed in an oppositional relation to femininity, masculinities are constructed in relation to one another, and the same is true of femininities. None of these gender identifications exist or operate in isolation. Connell (1995:37) explains that the relations between various masculinities are that of "alliance, domination and subordination". While she refers specifically to masculinities here, the same is true of the relations between masculinity and femininity, and those amongst femininities. She emphasises that "gender is, above all, a matter of the social relations within which individuals and groups act" (Connell, 2009:10).

Important to note here, in speaking about the multiplicity of masculinities and femininities, is a critique of Connell put forward by Francis (2014). Francis (2014:549) asserts that the typology of masculinities proposed by Connell – hegemonic, complicit, subordinated, and marginalised masculinities – suggests that an individual man is solely one of these four types. Instead, Francis argues that the multiplicity of masculinities applies not only to men as a group but to individual men too; a man can and does enact multiple masculinities. Acknowledging that various 'types' of masculinities and femininities are constructed in relation to one another does not imply that they are mutually exclusive. Rather, a person's gender identification and expression can draw on multiple masculinities or femininities simultaneously. It is this understanding of masculinities and femininities as multiple that my research is informed by.

A similar understanding of sexuality, more specifically of African sexualities, is proposed by Tamale (2011). She highlights the tendency of Northern theory to essentialise or homogenise African sexualities, framing African sexuality solely in terms of reproduction, violence and disease. In challenging this oversimplification, Tamale (2011:11) argues that "a reference to sexuality in the plural does not simply point to the diverse forms of orientation, identity or status". An understanding of sexuality as multiple or plural also refers to the non-binary and heterogenous nature of these identifications. In the literature that I use to frame my research and my analysis, my aim is to draw attention to this plural nature of both gender and sexuality, pushing back against essentialist understandings and seeking to explore the nuances and complexities of these concepts as they operate and are experienced in the lives of young people in South Africa. My aim is not to create a typology of South African genders and sexualities, but rather to explore the diversity and

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commonality in a group of young people's expressions of gender and sexuality through participatory visual art.

2.3 Structure and agency

Connell (2009) also conceptualises gender as a social structure, which relates to the body both as an object and agent through embodied gender practices. Important in thinking of gender as a social structure is an acknowledgement of what Connell (2009:90) refers to as 'crisis tendencies', defined as "internal contradictions or tendencies that undermine current patterns, and force change in the structure itself". While gender has material force in shaping social practice and experience, its content is contestable. Important to note here is a common critique of Connell's theory as being overly structuralist and thereby deterministic (Francis, 2014:541). Therefore, it is crucial to employ Connell as part of my conceptual framework to recognise the material force of social structures such as gender and to acknowledge the agency of individuals operating within those structures.

Connell (2011) herself raises this issue in her work in her keynote address at the annual South Africa Sociological Association (SASA) congress. In discussing the role of social structure in creating, reproducing and experiencing gender, Connell (2011) highlights the importance of a sociological concept of agency and the value of Southern perspectives in generating this. She identifies the problematic tendency of Northern theory to frame agency as individualistic in nature. Such a tendency creates a conception of an individual agent who is surrounded by fixed, macro-scale structural impositions and who is only able to exercise single, small-scale, agentic actions within those structures. This is problematic for two reasons – it is overly deterministic, and it misses the often collectivist nature of agency. Connell highlights the value of Southern conceptualisations of agency in transcending these limitations.

Connell (2011:110) writes that Southern analyses "see practice in terms of the capacity for the creation of social reality, or for the transformation of social structures through historical time", and that this perspective is informed by the colonial history, anti-colonial struggles, and post-colonial present of the global South. I would add that in the South African context specifically, the country's apartheid history, anti-apartheid struggle and post-apartheid present also become crucial in such an approach to understanding and analysing agency. Conceptualising agency not only as

the capacity of persons to negotiate the structural constraints imposed on them but also as their capacity to transform the structures themselves transcends the overly structuralist and deterministic approach commonly drawn on in conceptualising gender and sexuality and is more in line with the realities of agency in the global South particularly.

Connell (2011:110) also highlights that analyses from the South "emphasise the collective agency of social groups and movements, in such processes as the formation of gender identity". One such analysis is that by Francis and Reygan (2016) in their study exploring experiences of intimacy and desire with lesbian, gay and bisexual youth in South Africa. They found that while the participants' heteronormative and heterosexist contexts produced feelings of isolation and marginalisation, "they are [also] rooted in a culture of relationships and interconnectedness that is distant from the discourse of individual, agentic destiny apparent in much of the literature on sexual and gender diversity emanating from the West" (Francis & Reygan, 2016:80). Here we see how a Southern conceptualisation of agency as collectivist enables analysis of how individual agency is created, enabled or strengthened by relationships with others. These two distinctly Southern considerations in conceptualising agency that is agency as transformative and as collectivist, shift an analysis of agency from the question of how individuals push back against the structural constraints imposed on them, to the question of how individuals and groups exercise agency in transforming the social structures comprising their particular contexts. This approach to agency is reflected in my research. Through my visual arts programme, I sought not only to uncover participants' understandings and experiences of gender and sexuality, but to challenge them; I sought to explore not only individual depictions of gender and sexuality, but to engage young people in a participatory group discussion about the meanings of those depictions and how they may be collectively constructed and contested.

In speaking about the power of gender as a social structure and people's agency in negotiating and transforming this, another important point about the nature of agency is necessary. Crucial in examining structure and agency is an avoidance of the tendency to create a binary impression of the relations between these forces. Just as individuals may be multiple in their gender identifications and expressions, so too can a person both conform to and challenge normative understandings of gender. This possibility for coexistence is highlighted in Msibi's (2013) study with African men who engage in same-sex relations. Msibi (2013) found that his participants

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demonstrated both internalised homophobia and agency in speaking about their experiences and identifications as men who engage in same-sex relations. He highlights that his participants operate within a highly homophobic and heterosexualised context, and that this imposes structural restraints while still allowing space for agency. In conceptualising the coexistence of internalised homophobia and agency, Msibi (2013:108) argues that while the former is structuralist in nature and the latter is associated with poststructuralism, "both concepts speak directly to and are relevant in unpacking material conditions of individuals and actors residing in repressive policing regimes". In the gendered and (hetero)sexualised context of South Africa, agency and conformity to social norms cannot be understood as mutually exclusive. In my visual arts programme, I sought to create a critical and participatory space that offers young people greater scope and opportunity for exercising their already existing agency, and for challenging and critically discussing the structural forces that shape these possibilities for agency.

2.4 The intersections of gender and sexuality

In conceptualising African sexualities, Tamale (2011:11) writes that "researching human sexuality without looking at gender is like cooking pepper soup without pepper". While gender and sexuality each intersect in important ways with other identifications and social structures such as race and class, it is their intersection with each other that is so intertwined, so inseparable, that it is near impossible to speak of one and not the other. Tamale (2011:29) asserts that "researchers in the field of sexuality must remember that the concepts of sexuality and gender, as normatively used, both denote power and dominance. It is therefore useful to speak of gendered sexualities and/or sexualised genders" (Tamale, 2011:29). In highlighting that sexualities are gendered and genders sexualised, Tamale (2011) is pointing to the complex and changing intersections between these two concepts both as social structures and as personal identifications. In producing knowledge and insights into gender or sexuality, the ways that one informs the other are crucial. This is an argument that numerous South African scholars in the field of gender, sexuality and schooling make as well (Francis, 2019b; Ngabaza & Shefer,2017; Msibi, 2012). Recognising and examining the changing relations of power, privilege, oppression, dominance and subordination that are produced by different intersections of gender and sexuality, and in different spatial and

temporal contexts, is an important analytical tool. Just as the meanings and constructions of gender and sexuality are multiple, context-specific and unfixed, so too are their intersections.

Connell also recognises the intersections of gender and sexuality in her conceptualisation of masculinities. She points to the need to consider "the mutual conditioning of structures", that is, how gender intersects with other social structures, and how these intersections produce particular social practices and embodiments (Connell, 2009:86). In the case of gender and sexuality, we see the mutual conditioning of structures reflected in the connections between sexual reproduction and gender practice. Connell explains that "the distinctive feature of gender (compared with other patterns of social embodiment) is that it refers to the bodily structures and processes of human reproduction" (Connell, 2009:68). The gendering (and femininisation) of practices relating to human reproduction such as pregnancy and childrearing highlights the intimate connections between structures and practices of gender and (hetero)sexuality. Important to note here is that while the relation between gender practices and sexual reproduction is clear, there are still many forms of gendered behaviour that have no direct or apparent relation to sexual reproduction. Connell (2009:68) explains that the uniqueness of human sexual reproduction lies in the way that we have "produced complex, historically changing social structures in which that reproductive capacity is deployed and transformed". Normative gender practices and structures need then to be conceptualised in conjunction with normative, and therefore hetero, practices and structures of sexuality. Connell (2009:81) summarises this idea by explaining that while "sexuality cannot be reduced to gender, … sexuality is often organised on the basis of gender". Gender and sexuality are conceptualised, constructed and performed in conjunction with one another.

While both Tamale and Connell's contributions are important in understanding the intersections between gender and sexuality, I argue that the addition of Butler's (1990) concept of the heterosexual matrix is a useful one in expanding and deepening my conceptualisation of gender and sexuality. The heterosexual matrix refers to "a model of gender intelligibility that assumes for bodies to make sense there must be a stable sex expressed through a stable gender (masculine expresses male, feminine expresses female) that is oppositionally and hierarchically defined through the compulsory practice of heterosexuality" (Butler, 1990:194). Here, the intersections of gender and sexuality are reflected in the naturalisation of a heteronormative relationship between sex, gender and desire, a relationship which Butler sets out to prove is incoherent and inconsistent.

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Gender and sexuality scholars, both locally (Bhana, 2018; Reddy & Dunne, 2007) and internationally (Renold & Ringrose, 2008; Renold, 2006) have shown how the heterosexual matrix as an analytical tool is valuable in understanding how compulsory heterosexuality operates in the lives of young people as well as recognising the agency that young people have in challenging, subverting and exposing the fragility of heteronormative logic. While Butler's conceptualisation of the heterosexual matrix does not fundamentally contradict the premises put forward by Connell, the approaches of Butler as a queer theorist and Connell as a post-structural feminist theorist are not necessarily complimentary. While Connell focuses on how intersections between gender and sexuality under a patriarchal gender order work to reproduce the overall subordination of women by men, Butler works to pull apart the very notion of identity to reveal the incoherence and illegitimacy of gender and sexuality identity categories and understandings. My intention in bringing these two theorists together in my conceptual framework is not to construct a master narrative of gender and sexuality in which their two positions are reconciled; rather, I present their conceptual understandings of gender and sexuality here and draw on these in my analysis later on when and where their theoretical insights prove applicable and useful to the task of understanding gender and sexuality in the lives of four young South African women.

2.5 Considerations of race and class

While Connell does recognise and include intersections of class and race in her theorisation of gender (and sexuality), a more contextualised approach to these intersections in my research is necessary. Given the colonial and apartheid history of South Africa, the centrality of race and class in the experiences and contexts of South African youth cannot be ignored. Ratele (2009:294), in writing about apartheid, anti-apartheid and post-apartheid sexualities, explains that "what South Africans favour or fear sexually is still largely determined by the history of race in their society". The racialisation of sexualities under apartheid law highlights the past and continued interdependence between race and sexuality in people's experiences and identifications, which in turn invokes gender and class too. Francis (2019a:12), in his study exploring race and same-sex sexuality in schools, argues that "race, racialisation and racism contribute to a normalising view of heterosexuality in some contexts and, in others, contradicts the power of heterosexuality". This argument is important in conceptualising sexuality (and gender) in two ways. Firstly, Francis

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highlights the intersectionality of race and sexuality as identifications but of racism and heterosexism as social structures. Research exploring gender and sexuality cannot ignore the ways that systems of patriarchy, heterosexism, racism and classism intersect in ways that reinforce one another. Secondly, Francis highlights that the relationship between racism and heterosexism is not fixed or essential, but rather contestable and changing; the one may not only reify but also delegitimise the other. This is in line with the understanding of intersectionality highlighted above – that intersections between social structures and identifications are multiple and differ between temporal and spatial contexts.

My research focuses specifically on gender and sexuality in the lives of young people. Tamale (2011:11) highlights the inseparability of these two concepts, explaining that "[sexuality and gender] give each other shape and any scientific enquiry of the former immediately invokes the latter". In explicitly naming only these two concepts in my research focus I am not failing to acknowledge considerations of race and class but am rather making a choice in my research design to position gender and sexuality at centre stage. In saying this, I do still recognise the importance race and class have in understanding gender and sexuality structures, identifications and experiences. This recognition is reflected in my inclusion of the intersections of race and sexuality in my conceptual framework, as well as my consideration of race and class in later sections where I discuss my research context and the existing literature that frames my current study. The inclusion of race and class, as well as other considerations such as age and religion, in my findings and analysis, is determined by whether and how my participants invoke these identity markers in their artworks and discussion throughout the visual arts programme.

2.6 Bring my conceptual framework together

At the core of this conceptual framework is the premise that gender and sexuality, as identifications and broader systems of power, are socially constructed. As such, they are multiple, context-specific, contradictory and contested. In pulling together the various components of this conceptual framework, we see the value that a Southern theoretical approach holds in conceptualising the relationship between gender and sexuality as individual identities and as broader social structures. While the structural constraints imposed onto young people by their heteronormative and patriarchal contexts is considerable, so too is their agency. Acknowledging

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the simultaneity of subordination, conformity, complicity, agency, and resistance is crucial to unpacking the multiplicity and unfixity of gender and sexuality. It is also important to recognise collective and transformative acts of agency, not just individualised points of difference from social norms – a valuable insight generated by Southern theorists specifically. Another pillar of this conceptual framework is the relationship between gender and sexuality as intersectional and mostly inseparable. It is here that I diverged somewhat from my critical appropriation of Connell's gender theory. While Connell's theorisation of the relationship between gender practices and sexual reproduction is important in understanding the subordination of women by men under a patriarchal gender order, necessary in addition to this is Butler's conceptualisation of the heterosexual matrix. Butler's thesis equips my conceptual framework with the tools needed to unpack and destabilise the relationship between sex, gender and desire. Finally, this conceptual framework acknowledges the importance of intersections of race and class with gender and sexuality, particularly in the context of post-apartheid South Africa. Having said that, these considerations are positioned as secondary to gender and sexuality, given my study's explicit focus on the latter.

Going forward, I draw on these theoretical standpoints, asking what versions of gender and sexuality young people (re)produce, how young people comply with, conform to and resist heteronormative and patriarchal systems of power, how and under what circumstances gender and sexuality intersect in particular ways, how race and class feature in young peoples' constructions and experiences of gender and sexuality, and how participatory visual arts-based research in South Africa can contribute to these theoretical understandings of young genders and sexualities.

CHAPTER 3

THE EARLIER WORKS: REVIEWING EXISTING LITERATURE ABOUT YOUNG GENDERS AND SEXUALITIES IN SOUTH AFRICA

The foci of my research are gender and sexuality, youth, schooling, and participatory arts-based methods. In selecting the literature to present here, I aimed to provide a relevant point of reference for the reader by situating my research both in terms of broader socio-historical context and methodological approach. While I originally set out to explore the making of young genders and sexualities with young people of all gender identities, in practice, my study involved only four cisgender[1] young women. As such, I have refocused my review of the existing literature to present research conducted with young women in South Africa specifically. In doing so, I do not seek to essentialise the identity 'young woman'. Rather, I aim to prioritise and give preference to research that highlights the voices and experiences of young women, thus aligning more with the way that my research project evolved. This chapter is divided into three sections. First, I set out to contextualise the making of young genders and sexualities in South Africa, identifying the hegemonic and intersecting systems of power that characterise the context within which young people operate. Next, I move to a review of existing participatory arts-based research about young women's constructions and experiences of gender and sexuality. In doing so, I keep with my commitment to prioritise visual ways of knowing and doing. In this second section, I set out to answer the question of what insights arts-based research has generated into the lived experiences of young women in South Africa thus far. Finally, I bring these two foci together, creating a backdrop for my own findings and analysis to emerge.

3.1 Contextualising young genders and sexualities in South Africa

Before moving to how young women actually construct and experience gender and sexuality, the broader context of thereof, particularly in relation to schooling, requires consideration. In my conceptual framework, I stress the importance of theoretically locating my research in the global South by drawing on Southern theory, but also by using South African

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[1] The term cisgender refers to persons whose gender identity aligns with that which they were assigned at birth.

literature specifically to guide my application of that theory. In order to achieve this, it is necessary for me to pay attention to the historical, political and social context within which my research takes place. It is this purpose that the present section seeks to fulfil.

In situating sexuality in the South African context, Steyn and Van Zyl (2009:10) write that "the profoundly racialised construction of sexuality in South Africa needs to be recognised as one of the particularities of 'our politics of location'". Apartheid legislation institutionalised the intersectionality of race and sexuality – racial categories shaped the regulation of sexuality, and sexual practices came to shape racial identifications. While these regulatory forces have been legally obsolete for more than twenty-five years, they remain socially and historically entrenched in post-apartheid society. There is a disjuncture between the country's Constitutional provisions relating to race and sexuality and the material effects these social constructions continue to have in people's everyday lives.

Looking at schools specifically, Soudien (2010) highlights the significant shifts in the racial composition of learner bodies in formerly segregated schools since legislation has prohibited the denial of access on the basis of race. Within the field of sexuality, scholars have found that the prohibition of discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation is an important discursive resource for teachers and learners alike in accepting and supporting sexuality diversity (HSRC, 2016; Francis & De Palma, 2014; Sigamoney & Epprecht, 2013). These legal protections framing post-apartheid South Africa are therefore significant in laying the foundation for addressing the legacies of racial and sexual discrimination in the schooling system. With that said, however, great disparities remain between the values of social justice underpinning the country's Constitution and the actual experiences of learners. The culture of many South African schools remains distinctly heteronormative, white[2] and middle-class in character.

In their analysis of the changing demographics of schools in post-apartheid South Africa, Chisholm and Sujee (2006) found that considerable movement of African learners into formerly

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[2] My use of terms such as white, African, coloured and Indian does not seek to reify these racial categories. I conceptualise race as a social construct, a kind of social position that is reproduced culturally and politically, but which is in no way essential. In discussing the social and historical context of schooling in South Africa, however, it is necessary to acknowledge the material impact that these constructs have on people's everyday lives.

white or coloured schools has occurred[3], but the inverse has not. They highlight the significant role that class has to play in this reconfiguration, particularly in the case of formerly white schools. It is these schools that were historically and continue by and large to be the most well-resourced. While post-apartheid policy prohibits the restriction of access by schools on the basis of race, schools are still able to determine their own fees. There is a material dimension of class, then, that works to maintain a predominantly middle-class learner body. Soudien (2007:454) argues that the effect of this has been "to draw politically and culturally weaker groups into the world of the dominant but in a consistently subordinate position". While black learners are able to access well-resourced formerly white schools if their parents are in the financial position to do so, their inclusion is marked not so much by genuine integration but rather assimilation. The culture of these formerly white schools remains white and middle-class, and black learners are expected to conform to this habitus. Soudien (2010:358) writes that the formal and informal curricula of the [formerly white] schools are geared to producing young people who are expected to be confident, worldly, and familiar with the cultural capital that is dominant in the Western curriculum". By situating themselves not within the political context of post-apartheid South Africa, but rather a global network, these schools rearticulate and reconfigure race and class thereby continuing to reproduce these social constructs in the lives of young people.

Just as the formal and hidden curricular are implicated in the reproduction of classed and raced school cultures, so too do they reproduce heteronormativity. In the formal sexuality education curriculum, heterosexuality is privileged and same-sex sexualities silenced (Francis & Kuhl, 2020; Francis, 2019b; Mayeza & Vincent, 2019). Outside of the classroom, queer learners experience homophobic violence from peers, teachers and school administrators. There is a hyperregulation of same-sex sexualities at school and, given the common yet mistaken conflation of gender and sexuality, queer learners' gender expression is strictly policed too (Francis, 2017a; Bhana, 2012; Msibi, 2012). This paints a bleak and singular picture of queer life at school, but the agency and resistance of queer learners have been well-documented too (Francis, 2019b; Zway & Boonzaier, 2015; Msibi, 2012). My intention here, however, is to highlight the heteronormativity

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[3] Formerly Indian schools were not included in their dataset.

and homophobia that is deeply entrenched in the cultures of South African schools, despite the progressive legal protections against discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation.

Schools are therefore shown to be powerful mechanisms in the cultural reproduction of race, class, (hetero)sexuality and gender. It is within this schooling context that young people construct and experience their own gender and sexuality identifications. Steyn and Van Zyl (2015:391) write about the present-day South African context that "the legacy of apartheid histories of 'race' lives on through yearnings of desirability and desire enacted in the crossfires of gender – the making of modern South African men and women – and in the face of post-apartheid sexual liberation, the conspicuous consumption of middle-class global cultures and the lurking spectre of HIV/AIDS". Here, the intersectionality of race, class, gender and sexuality is illuminated. The social and historical force of these social identifications in the makings of young genders and sexualities is vitally important to acknowledge but, in the same vein, should not be understood as deterministic. As the next section will show, young women are agentic and innovative in the ways that they construct and perform gender and sexuality, even within their classed, raced, gendered and (hetero)sexualised schooling environments.

3.2 What do gender and sexuality mean to young women in South Africa?

The existing literature exploring how young women construct and experience gender and sexuality is extensive and reveals a vast multiplicity of femininities in South Africa. Some studies show how normative femininities are constructed in oppositional and heterosexualised relation to masculinities (Bhana, Morrell, Hearn & Moletsane, 2007; Pattman, 2005) and others explore how young women are invested in performing both heterosexually desirable and respectable versions of femininity (Bhana & Anderson, 2013; Lindegaard & Henriksen, 2012). Bhana (2008) shows how some young women enact violent femininities while Francis and Reygan (2016) focus on the interconnectedness of gender and sexuality in constituting queer femininities. A range of scholars have also explored the multiple intersections of gender and sexuality with race (Pattman & Bhana, 2009), class (Epstein, 2014) and disability (Chappell, 2014). Throughout this body of literature, we see how young women exercise conformity, complicity, agency and resistance in the ways that they navigate broader systems of heteronormative and patriarchal power. Rather than provide an exhaustive account of this research, my literary review prioritises visual insights and ways of

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knowing by focusing primarily on participatory arts-based research. Additionally, I draw on some of the visual art, music, television and poetry from South African creators to illustrate and represent the key themes in this more niche body of literature. This approach to reviewing existing literature follows from the epistemological foundations of my research; to conduct visual arts-based research is not to produce better insights into young genders and sexualities but rather different insights. Similarly, my focus on participatory arts-based research works not to give a more detailed or accurate understanding of young genders and sexualities in South Africa, but rather to provide a backdrop for my study that is most relevant to my research focus and methodological approach. In the next section, I ask what participatory arts-based research tells us about what gender and sexuality mean to young woman in South Africa.

Gender and sexuality are painful

Figure 3.1, *Untitled*, Thandiwe Tshabalala, 2017, illustration.

Pictured here is an illustration created by Tandiwe Tshabalala in response to gender-based violence in South Africa. The artwork formed part of a collection auctioned off to the general public to raise funds for the Sonke Gender Justice organisation and was intended to draw attention to the high rates of gender-based violence in South Africa and the role that men have not only in

perpetrating this violence but also in reproducing the patriarchal culture which legitimises such acts of violence. The focus of this artwork represents the first theme in how young women experience gender and sexuality in South Africa; for many, gender and sexuality are painful.

Represented in Tshabalala's work is a clearly binary conception of gender. Men are depicted as arrows attacking the central woman figure. Women are positioned on the receiving end of male violence. Masculinity is the aggressor, the attacker, the penetrator, while femininity is the victim, the recipient, the vulnerable. This depiction of normative gender aligns with many of the experiences of young women represented in the literature. When asked to draw what they understood by 'gender injustice', participants in Wood's (2012) study pictured women crying and with serious physical injuries, with one drawing showing the words "man don't take no for an answer" (Wood, 2012:353). In speaking about the violence and gender inequality that participants depicted, one young woman explained that "most women who get abused have grown up in that situation, and they feel like there is no way out" (Wood, 2012:354). These findings speak to the pervasive violence that young women see, experience and expect in their relations with men, particularly in the context of heterosexual relationships. Firmin (2013), in conducting focus group discussions with young coloured working class women about the meanings they attach to gender and sexuality, found that while her participants attributed great importance to heterosexual relationships, they discussed these relationships primarily in terms of violence, mistrust and heartbreak. Intimate partner violence is normalised as an inevitable feature of heterosexual relationships and shapes the ways that young women construct what it means to be a heterosexual woman.

In response to the high levels of gender-based violence in South Africa, De Lange and Geldenhuys (2012) conducted participatory video research with grade 9 learners from two schools in a rural area of KwaZulu Natal. One video made by a group of participants, titled *Be Strong and Face the Fear*, shows a young woman whose boyfriend pressures her to have sex with him. When she refuses, explaining that she is not ready, her boyfriend rapes her. In this video, participants bring attention to the sexual harassment and intimate partner violence that they face and fear. While the main character's resistance to pressure from her boyfriend demonstrates how young women negotiate unequal power relations in heterosexual relationships, the sexual abuse that follows highlights that many young women are limited in the extent to which they can exercise agency. In

this video, the incident of sexual abuse is the arrow that the woman in Tshabalala's illustration is unable to shield herself from. Throughout the video, the participants perform a rap, which ends with the lyrics "Let's be strong and say the facts" (De Lange & Geldenhuys, 2012:503). In coming together to think about, discuss and perform a video about gender-based violence, the participants are speaking out about intimate partner violence and encouraging others to break the silence as well. De Lange and Geldenhuys (2012:506) write that "participants in [their] study had a sound understanding of how to address gender-based violence in school" and exercised "a clear sense of agency" in developing their videos. While the violent context in which young women navigate heterosexual relationships certainly reflects in their experiences and constructions of gender and (hetero)sexuality, it is not determining. The normalisation of gender-based violence is not wholly achieved, and young women are seen to exercise agency in their knowledge and strategies of resistance.

Gender and sexuality are profitable
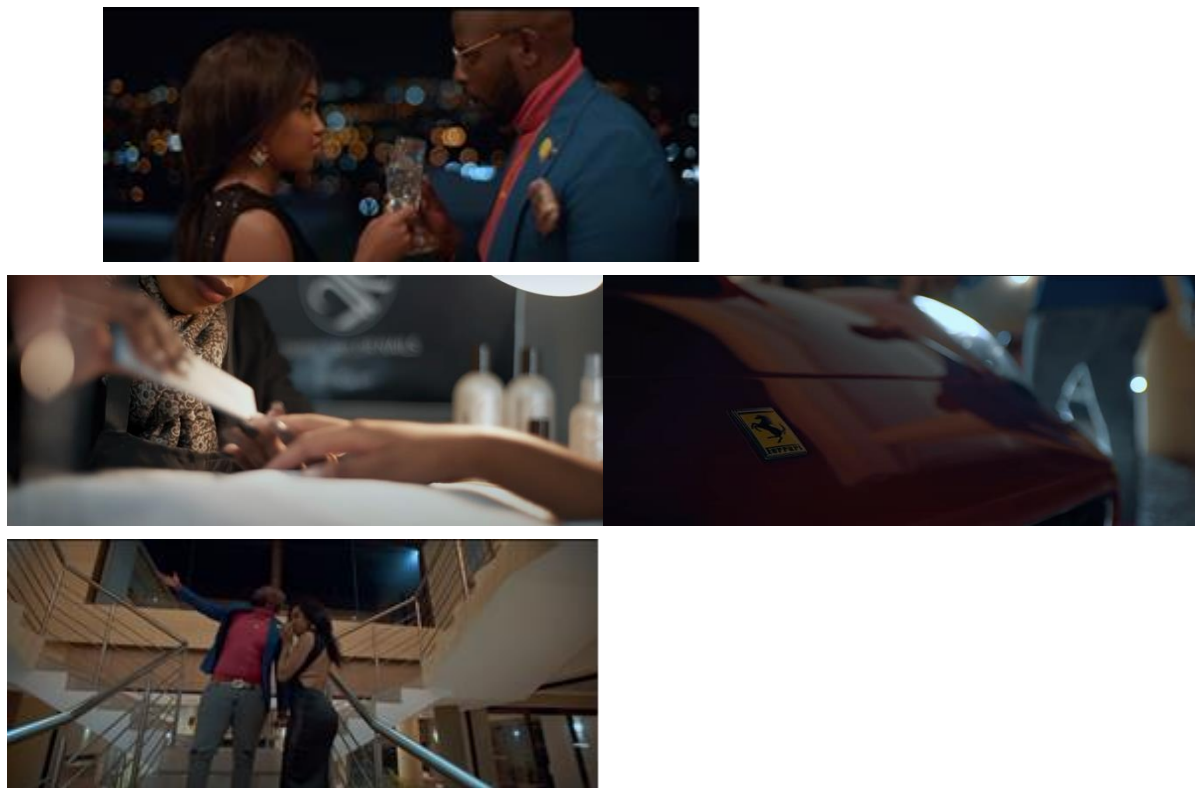
Figure 3.2, Still frames from *AmaBlesser*, Mlindo the Vocalist, 2018, music video.

The images featured above are still frames from the music video for Mlindo the Vocalist's hit single *AmaBlesser*. The music video tells the story of a high school girl who engages in a blesser relationship[4] with her boyfriend's wealthy uncle. The compilation in figure 3.2 depicts the lifestyle that the young woman's blesser provides for her – visits to an upmarket nail salon, expensive cars, a luxury house, glamourous dresses, and champagne dates in a wealthy neighbourhood. For many young women, romantic and sexual relationships with older men enable them to access material goods and a classed lifestyle otherwise unavailable to them; for many, gender and sexuality are profitable.

Writing about the sexual liberalisation characterising post-apartheid South Africa, Posel (2004:56) explains that "for large numbers of young women, sex is often the indispensable vehicle for consumption. In the midst of powerful hankerings for designer products, sex is often the condition of their acquisition". In MacEntee's (2015) participatory video research with high school youth in KwaZulu Natal, one group of participants made a cellphilm about blessers titled *Easy Comes, Easy Goes*. The cellphilm features a high school girl who wants a smartphone but cannot afford one. With some encouragement from her peers, the young woman finds a "sugar daddy" who takes her on a shopping spree and buys her the cell phone "of her dreams" (MacEntee, 2015:45). These example highlights a central aspect of blesser relationships – the performance of a middle-class, consumption-based femininity. For many young women who value and desire this version of femininity, transactional relationships represent a means of achieving it. To this end, blesser relationships may be interpreted as young women exercising their (hetero)sexual agency to meet their material wants.

Upon further consideration, however, it seems that blesser relationships are less about young women getting what they want, and more about getting what they need. In speaking to the young women in her focus groups about why they stay with boyfriends who cheat or are abusive, Firmin (2013) found that their reasoning was strongly motivated by financial need. She explains that "a host of economic vulnerabilities underlie the young women's inability to challenge the sexual status quo" (Firmin, 2013:51). The ending of the cellphilm referred to above confirm

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[4] The blesser phenomenon refers to the prevalence of transactional relationships between young women and significantly older men who provide material goods and experiences in exchange for a romantic and (typically) sexual relationship.

Firmin's assertion. While the character in the cellphilm created by MacEntee's (2015) participants willingly enters into a sugar daddy relationship, she does not think that she would be expected to have sex with her blesser. When she refuses, he rapes her. The main character finds out that she is HIV positive and the cellphilm ends with her friends attending her funeral. While there is some agency underlying young women's use of their (hetero)sexuality for material gain, the inability of these relationships to fundamentally challenge the gender inequality and violence that young women face in heterosexual relationships suggests that blesser relationships are a strategy to navigate rather than change the violently patriarchal context within which young women operate.

In keeping with Bhana's (2013) argument to look beyond the violence and inequality that young women experience to see the themes of intimacy and love that coexist, I turn to an excerpt from a poem written by an 18-year-old woman titled *You Were Supposed to Love Me* (Vilakhazi, 2011:86):

So why would a young girl be interested in an old man? . . .Why?
This young girl wanted to be loved . . .
This young girl wanted to be loved the way the
old man promised he would
This young girl wanted to be loved.

While Vilakhazi (2018:85) speaks of her blesser's "charm, flashy car and [his] expensive taste in clothing" that attracted her, she ultimately conceptualises her desire for him as a desire to be loved. Hlalele and Brexa (2015) conducted research with university and school-going young women in which they used digital storytelling to express their personal narratives. One participant speaks about her turbulent relationship with her mother who abandoned her, and how at 16 years of age she turned to "wrong misleading relationships", particularly with older men, to "shift [her] focus and subside [her] feelings" (Hlalela & Brexa, 2015:84). While economic wants and needs may certainly have played a role in these two young women's choice to engage in a transactional relationship, and violence may well have been a central feature of their experiences, there is also an emotional vulnerability and a longing to feel loved, supported and a sense of belonging that they experience, which is crucial to understanding how young women construct their identities. Part of the way that many young women construct 'successful' hetero-femininity then is being valued and desired by older men, and this construction comes to shape the way that young women conceptualise their identity.

Gender and sexuality are risky

Figure 3.3, Still frame from *Intersexions*, Curious Pictures and Ants Multimedia, 2010, television series.

The image above is taken from an episode in the South African television series, *Intersexions,* a mass media intervention commissioned to inform and educate the South African public about HIV/AIDS in a way that is relevant and relatable. In the scene shown here, Sylvia asks Tsholo if "he has ever asked [her] to do it without condoms". We later find out that the 'he' to which she is referring is their English teacher, Mr Molete, who engages in sexual relationships with both girls. Tsholo is shocked by the question and suggests that Sylvia is "mad" to consider having unprotected sex. Sylvia then reveals that her teacher has forced her to have sex with him without using a condom twice and that because of this, she hates him. While the episode never confirms whether Sylvia contracted HIV/AIDS, we do find out in the course of the series that Mr Molete is HIV-positive. Highlighted in this episode is the role that gender inequalities play in the spread of HIV/AIDS; gender and sexuality are risky, particularly for young women.

Epstein and Morrell (2012:474) assert that the high rates of HIV/AIDS in South Africa mean that "masculinities and femininities in contemporary South Africa are being produced in the unavoidable context of HIV and AIDS". The UNAIDS (2019) report on women and HIV brings attention to the fact that young women, aged 15-24, are most at risk and affected worldwide, and particularly in South Africa. We see in MacEntee's (2015) study, where participants made a cellphilm about a young woman engaging in a blesser relationship, how economic vulnerability, gender inequality and sexual violence all play a significant role in making the position of young women risky in terms of HIV/AIDS. The painful and profitable nature of what it means to be a

young woman in South Africa makes young women particularly vulnerable to contracting the virus. While the pressure on young men to perform idealised versions of masculinity and on women to be passive in heterosexual relationships often leads them to engage in unsafe sexual practices, despite the risks of contracting or transmitting HIV, this risky context also opens up new possibilities for the construction of alternative masculinities and femininities, a topic which is the explicit focus of many participatory arts-based research in South Africa.

Much of the participatory arts-based research conducted with young people and seeking to address HIV/AIDS in South Africa sets out to correct misinformation and, most prominently, to create spaces where young people can share their stories and strengthen their sense of agency. For example, De Lange's (2008) photovoice research with learners that set out to challenge the stigmas surrounding HIV and AIDS. De Lange asked groups of participants to take photographs that depict stigma as well as solutions to resisting that stigma. One group photographed a window with three young women looking out. Their caption explained that the young woman standing in the middle and looking sad was HIV-positive and "thought about killing herself", but that the support of her friends, represented by the young women standing on either side of her, helped her to overcome this – "her best friend said no, we are here to help you, we can fight against HIV and AIDS" (De Lange, 2008:183). We see a similar sense of collective agency in Mitchell's (2006) project titled *In my life* in which she collected experiences, stories and poems created by young people about HIV/AIDS. One young woman shared a story about a time when a friend disclosed her HIV-positive status to her at a girls' night that they had together. She writes that "it was then that I realised HIV is something real … We went to workshops together and got more information, and we have ended up being informed" (Mitchell, 2006:360). Here we see how young women take up the task of constructing new versions of gender and sexuality in the face of HIV and AIDS, versions of what it means to be a young woman that are informed and collectively agentic. While being a young woman is risky, this risk is not totalising and young women have shown, particularly in participatory arts-based research, their capacity and desire for resistance and agency.

Gender and sexuality are hidden

Figure 3.4, Katlego Mashiloane and Nosipho Lavuta III, Ext. 2, Lakeside, Johannesburg, Zanele Muholi, 2007, photograph.

This section has thus far dealt with constructions and experiences of being a woman relating largely to heterosexual young women. A question that remains, then, is how young queer women's experiences may overlap with or diverge from the accounts given so far. Is being a young woman painful, profitable or risky in the same ways for queer young women as it is for straight young women? And what insights into the construction of femininities can be generated by homing in on the experiences of young lesbian and bisexual women?

Much like heterosexual women, many young queer women in South Africa experience gender and sexuality as painful. Unlike heterosexual young women, however, the pain and fear that young queer women experience is not primarily related to intimate partner violence but rather to homophobic violence. In their photovoice research with young lesbian and bisexual women, Boonzaier and Zway (2015) asked participants what it is like to be a lesbian teenager in their community. It was the participants themselves who brought up issues of safety and violence, centring their narratives around the fear of being raped and murdered. Two participants took a

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photograph of a staged scenario in which a young man has pinned a young woman to the ground and raises a broken beer bottle as a weapon against her; the caption reads, "but still we're killed for who we are. It should stop. We are still the same as others" (Boonzaier & Zway, 2015:21). While these two participants, like others in the group, identified rape and violence as a significant threat to them as queer young women, others expressed feeling safe in their communities because they did not know of any lesbian women who had been raped or murdered on the basis of their sexual orientation. What emerged across the participants' narratives, however, was the use of rape and murder of lesbians as a standard for queer women's safety, highlighting the pervasiveness of 'corrective rape', violence and homophobia in the way that young women construct their experiences as queer.

The story of queer women as victims pervades the literature and media and is one which visual activist Zanele Muholi seeks to disrupt through her work. While engaged in a number of projects that bring awareness to the dangers facing queer women, and particularly poor black lesbians, Muholi also seeks to reflect the joys and beauties of queer life. Figure 3.4 shows a photograph of a lesbian couple in Johannesburg – a photograph that forms part of Muholi's *Being* series. In her *Being* series, Muholi (2010) sought to bring the often silenced and invisbilised experiences of queer women – experiences of love, intimacy, pleasure and desire – to the forefront. This theme of visibility and invisibility is one which features prominently in the literature about young queer women too. In Hoosain Khan's (2014) participatory visual art workshop with queer youth, lesbian participants drew and spoke about the dangers of being visible in a violently homophobic context. In the same vein, they expressed their concerns and frustrations with the negative portrayals of same-sex sexualities that their invisibility left unchallenged.

That love is hidden for many young queer women relates not only to strategies of invisibility to navigate homophobic spaces but also to initial personal constructions of lesbian and bisexual identity. In their piece about resisting bisexual erasure, Khuzwayo narrates her experiences to Morison about growing up as a middle-class, black, bisexual woman through memory work. In recalling her attraction to girls as a teenager, Khuzwayo explains that the negativity surrounding same-sex sexualities caused her to "suppress her feelings" of attraction towards girls, and that "to add to [her] confusion, [she] did not actually know any women who identified as bisexual" (Khuzwayo & Morison, 2017:26). Khuzwayo brings to light another

important outcome of work such as Muholi's (2010) *Being* series; when young women are able to actually see what lesbian and bisexual identity looks like through the lens of a queer woman, they may be better able to understand and conceptualise their own identity too. Visual representations of queer life are central to positive constructions of non-normative genders and sexualities by queer young women. This insight may be helpful in the context of young heterosexual women too. In the theme above, titled gender and sexuality are painful, a participant in Wood's (2012:354) study about gender-based violence explained that "most women who get abused have grown up in that situation, and they feel like there is no way out". When violence is all that a young woman witnesses and experiences in heterosexual relationships, this becomes normalised and limits her and other women's ability to exercise agency. Just as visual representations of the positivity of queer love are crucial to disrupting and challenging homophobic violence, so too are representations of equal power relations in heterosexual relationships crucial to challenging gender-based violence. My intention in making this argument is not to minimise the particularities that both queer and heterosexual young women's experiences in navigating their gender and sexuality identities. Rather, it highlights the grounding that both queer and heterosexual young women's experiences of love and sexuality have in systems of patriarchal power and binary notions of masculinity and femininity. There is a significant theoretical connection between these different identifications.

Gender and sexuality are performative

Figure 3.5, *Sophie-Ntombikayise,* Mary Sibande, 2009, Fiberglass Mannequin, tulle and cotton.

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The image above shows one of many artworks in a series by Mary Sibande where she features her alter-ego named Sophie. In these works, Sophie is always dressed in what resembles a domestic worker's uniform, but Sibande transforms this item of clothing into a more elaborate version. In her analysis of Sibande's merging of fashion and visual art, Dodd (2010:470) highlights how "stereotypical emblems (uniform: working-class maid/florid, dress: bourgeois madam) are fantastically stitched together around the idea of a single persona, disrupting the entrenched and highly politicised dichotomy that has tended to govern popular depictions of the maid and the madam". Sibande uses clothing, dress and the body as a way to imagine counter-hegemonic narratives about black femininities in South Africa. In doing so, she recognises clothing as a symbolic site of oppression and uses clothing as a site for its contestation; she brings attention to the role that dress and appearance play in the construction of femininities. We see here that gender and sexuality are performative.

While a number of studies explore the role of clothing and dress in the making of femininities (Moletsane, Mitchell & Smith, 2012), I would like to highlight one in particular, conducted by Zway and Boonzaier (2015), that utilised photovoice methods to explore the experiences of young queer women. In their photographs, participants highlighted 'masculine' clothing and activities as important precursors to and markers of the participants' lesbian identifications. Participants described their childhood selves as "tomboys" who were interested in boys' toys, wore boys' clothes and preferred boys as playmates (Zway and Boonzaier, 2015:101). In depicting their present selves, participants emphasised the importance of wearing pants as opposed to skirts to school, wearing masculine clothing more generally, and playing soccer (typically constructed as a 'boys' sport) as central to their expression of lesbian identification. In Francis and Reygan's (2016) study exploring LGB learners' understanding and experiences of relationships, love and intimacy, participants also demonstrated a correlation between gender non-conformity and non-normative sexualities. One participant explains that "it's [sexuality diversity] accepted around your peers but it's something that is not really talked about. You are just accepted as 'that guy' and 'that girl' who dresses funny" (Francis & Reygan, 2016:77). By dressing funny, the participant is referring to boys who dress more femininely, for example opting to wear a skirt rather than pants as part of their school uniform, and girls who dress in more masculine clothing. Here we see the performativity of identity and the intersections of gender non-conformity and sexuality diversity in the performance of queer genders and sexualities in particular.

Gender and sexuality are fun

Figure 3.6, *Lust Politics,* Lady Skollie, 2017, Ink, watercolour and crayon.

I introduce the sixth and final theme with an artwork featured in Lady Skollie's series titled *Lust Politics* in which she uses bananas and paw-paws to playfully represent male and female sexuality and desire. Her aim in creating these works is to acknowledge the violence and oppression that is inseparable from sexuality for so many women in South Africa, while still working on challenging the normativity or taken-for-granted status of these experiences. Her use of bright colours and fruit to express this is a way to bring attention to the fun, excitement and playfulness of sexuality and desire, positioning women as sexual agents. The final theme explores the ways that gender and sexuality are fun for young women.

Aligning with the aims of Lady Skollie's is an emerging body of literature that sets out to challenge dominant discourses about young women as passive and asexual by starting with research questions that explicitly position young women as sexual agents. I would like to pick up on one study in particular that achieves this. Carboni and Bhana (2019) conducted a mixed-methods study with high school learners at a private all-girls school. They used visual elicitation methods and focus group interviews to understand girls' interest in and seeking out of pornography and other sexually explicit material (SEM). When asked to write and draw on a poster in response to the question, who or what has been your biggest teacher about sex and sexuality and what have you learnt, one group included a range of drawings that demonstrated their familiarity and comfort with topics of sex and SEM. Participants included drawings of different genitalia, writing "penises

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everywhere" and "vaginas everywhere", to represent the pervasiveness of sex, sexuality and desire in the television programmes and SEM available to them. Carboni and Bhana (2019:378) note that their participants described the SEM depicted "as pleasurable and stimulating, and reported or hinted at it being a masturbatory aid". Shown here is the sexual agency of young women in South Africa, and their ability to negotiate and push back against dominant discourses of innocence and asexuality surrounding young femininities. For these young women, sex, sexuality, and desire was fun and pleasurable. It is important to note here, however, that these participants are still operating within a highly patriarchal context. While their engagement with sexually explicit materials is a means of exercising their sexual desire and agency, these materials are commonly oppressive to women, something that participants in Carboni and Bhana's (2019:382) study brought to light. These girls simultaneously spoke about the enjoyment and value that they get out of engaging with sexually explicit materials while critiquing the often misogynistic and degrading portrayal of women. Again, this highlights the complexity and multiplicity of gender and sexuality. Pleasure and pain co-exist in the ways that young women construct and experience their gender and sexuality identities.

3.3 Bringing the literature together

So what does this all mean for a study such as mine that sets out to engage young people about gender and sexuality using participatory arts-based methods? In the first section of this chapter, I showed how South African youth are faced with forcefully heteronormative, racialised and classed systems of power, particularly in their schooling context. In the second section, we saw how heteronormativity, gender inequality and compulsory heterosexuality materialise in the everyday experiences of young women. However, these systems of power are not deterministic, and it is here that the contradictions and contestations highlighted in the second section of this chapter become important. We saw how young women's constructions and experiences of gender and sexuality are painful, profitable, risky, hidden, performative and fun. These are not mutually exclusive versions of gender and sexuality; to be a young woman is to have a number of these experiences and more, simultaneously, over time or in different spaces and places. In selecting a handful of studies to present here, my aim was to demonstrate the interplay between the broader social structures shaping the construction of gender and sexuality and the acts of compliance,

complicity, agency and resistance that young women enact in navigating these. In going forward with this thesis, I aim to deepen and redirect this conversation between arts-based researchers about young genders and sexualities. A notable tendency of research employing arts-based methods is to select a particular experience or identity such as gender-based violence, queer identifications or HIV and AIDS to explore, as seen in the literature presented above. While this approach is undoubtedly important, I set out to rather use participatory arts-based methods to hand over control to my participants in determining what experiences and identities are important to them, thus opening up new possibilities for what can be researched. The reader will see later on when I present my findings and analysis, how largely under-researched topics, particularly in the South African context, emerged as a result. This chapter thus serves not so much as an entirely comprehensive and detailed foundation for my own findings to come, but rather a backdrop or point of reference for understanding the value and insights that arts-based research has generated into young genders and sexualities thus far, and how my research has worked to contribute to that.

CHAPTER 4

THE MEDIUM OF EXPRESSION: METHODOLOGY AS THE ART OF RESEARCH

The methodology and underlying epistemology chosen for this project are central to my intentions in embarking on this research and the findings and conclusions that I have been able to generate. In designing a participatory visual arts-based course in which my participants visually explore their ideas and experiences of gender and sexuality, I sought to centre young people's perspectives, create a space where both individual and collective agency is enabled, and prioritise visual ways of knowing and doing. This chapter consists of three sections and sets out to give the reader insight into how this art course was designed, changed and implemented. First, I introduce the participating school and my participants to the reader. Next, I discuss what it means to conduct educational research in the context of a global pandemic and national lockdown, laying out the various challenges and silver linings that this produced for me. Finally, I describe my methodology itself – the design of the art course, my chosen method of analysis and the necessary ethical considerations involved.

4.1 Some preliminary introductions

Introducing the school

Having already introduced myself in Chapter One, I now turn to introduce the reader to the participating school in my research project. In recruiting a school to participate, I contacted the principals of a range of schools in the KZN area – public and private, single-sex and co-educational. I received a number of positive responses from a variety of schools, but those that were notably missing were the all-boys schools that I approached, both public and private. Not only did no all-boys schools agree to participate, but it was also the principals of these schools who were the only ones to decline my request explicitly. While schools have the right to decline to participate, a right which I fully understand and respect, I do feel this pattern is worth commenting on. Given the current climate in South Africa, with high rates of gender-based violence and the continued public outcry in response to this, research such as mine that critically explores gender and sexuality is vital to conduct with young men. That all-boys schools are unwilling to participate is a concern, as it precludes the learners at these schools from being able

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to participate, but also because it prevents the cultures and practices at these schools from being researched. This is particularly the case with well-resourced schools, whether public or private. The overwhelming majority of gender and sexuality research conducted with young men takes place in African township schools with largely poor, working-class black youth (Msibi, 2012; Pattman, 2005). We see here the power that class privilege holds in rendering middle-class young men and their schooling cultures beyond reproach. Discussion and collaboration amongst researchers, teachers and school administrators are needed to address this barrier to accessing these schools.

Upon receiving some positive responses from the principals I contacted, I chose to collaborate with Greenville High School (GHS), a co-educational state school in a predominantly white, relatively privileged suburb. When first arriving at the school, I was greeted by the security guard at the entrance who directed me to the reception area. The visual arts teacher met me there and took me to the arts block consisting of a large drama studio and two sizable visual arts studios as well as some additional classroom spaces. The visual arts teacher also pointed out the site where an outside theatre was under construction. This indicated the value that GHS places in the arts as part of their curriculum and the extensive resources available to the school and its learners to do so.

Introducing my participants

My first introduction to my participants came when I presented my research to the grade 11s at a Head of Grade meeting. Here I explained the purpose of my research – to use participatory visual art to explore identification with a particular focus on gender and sexuality. I explained what would be required of learners if they agreed to participate, emphasising the voluntary nature of participation and the need for parental consent. I also stressed that participants need not have any experience in visual art or even consider themselves 'creative' – I explained that the purpose of the course was to collectively and individually explore different aspects of the self using visual mediums as a way to create new and interesting insights.

Seven girls and one boy volunteered to participate by handing in their consent forms to the visual arts teacher. I communicated with them via a WhatsApp group and arranged the first

meeting. Six participants, all girls, arrived for our introductory session in the visual arts studio. Significant to me was that these six girls were organised into close friendship pairs – each pair arrived together, sat next to each other, and chatted to each other with a familiarity that suggested they were good friends. Also noticeable was the lack of boys who volunteered and arrived. Many boys collected consent forms from me at the end of my presentation, but only one handed his in, and he withdrew from the project after missing the first session. I question whether these two observations are connected; was it necessary to have a close friend also interested in the art course to volunteer and attend with? And if so, was the reason that boys did not volunteer despite initial interest because they did not have a friend to participate with? I do not have answers to these questions, but there is a particular moment that I wrote about in my research journal from the day that I presented my research that I would like to pick out and reflect on here.

Upon arrival at the school, I was greeted by the head of grade 11 who is also a drama teacher at the school. While waiting in the drama studio for students to enter and sit down, I overheard an interaction between the drama teacher and a boy learner about the purpose of their grade get together. The following is a reconstruction of their conversation:

> Learner: Ma'am, why are we here?
> Teacher: There's a lady here to speak to you all
> Learner: What lady?
> Teacher: Over there [points to me]
> Learner: Oh [sounds confused and surprised]

In reflecting on this moment, I wrote the following in my research journal:

"What does it mean to be a lady? Looking in the mirror after my meeting with the grade 11s, I wonder what it is about me that makes me look like a lady. I am wearing men's sneakers, a men's t-shirt, dress pants and an oversized denim jacket. I have some cover up on my face, but otherwise, no make-up, and my hair is cut above my shoulders. The word 'lady' conjures up images of slender, elegant women with long blonde hair and elaborate dresses who perform a distinctly classed and respectable version of femininity. This is an image that I do not see looking back at me in the mirror, and yet this is the word that the drama teacher chose to use when describing me. I wonder if the learner, like me, noticed a disjuncture between her choice of word and my appearance".

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The word 'lady' is a powerfully heteronormative descriptor. The drama teacher used this word to describe me in the conversation above and in her introduction of me to the learners before I spoke. I cannot help but wonder how this speaks to the lack of involvement of young men in my study. How might young men relate to a visual arts course about gender and sexuality facilitated by a lady? My feeling is that the combination of the subject matter, the medium of expression and this impression of me as the facilitator work together to make the course appear distinctly feminine, thus alienating young men in some ways. What would it mean for the boy learners who collected a consent form to talk to their parents and their friends about the course, and to actually show up each week ready to participate? We see here how powerfully regulating ideas about gender work to reinforce heteronormativity and keep critical engagement about gender and sexuality just out of reach for young men.

Following our first face-to-face session, schools closed nationwide due to the COVID-19 pandemic, meaning that I needed to redesign the art course to take place entirely online. This is something that I will address later on in this chapter, but it is relevant here because of the impact that this context had on who participated in my research. Three of the learners who participated in the initial face-to-face session chose to continue participating online; their names are Reece, Frances and Sage. The other original participants withdrew because either they or their parents were concerned about their school workload in lieu of the extended school closures. I asked all of my participants, including those who withdrew, to speak to their friends about the project and whether they may be interested. One of Sage's friends volunteered but withdrew midway through the online course because she had not been able to create any of the artworks or participate in any of the discussions. A friend of a participant who withdrew also contacted me, expressing interest. Her name is Sandy and she was the fourth and final participant in our group. While the group of learners ended up being much smaller than I initially planned for, I accepted that I needed to work within the restraints of conducting research during a global pandemic, and was pleasantly surprised by the commitment of these four participants and the rapport that we as a small group developed over time.

While the reader will get to know each of my participants in the upcoming chapters, I feel it important to make an initial introduction here. First, we have Reece who is a white, asexual, young woman and a part-time tomboy. She is passionate about scuba diving and loves being in the

ocean – this is where she feels most at home. She also enjoys playing club hockey and values the close bonds that she has formed with her teammates of all ages. When asked what she thought the course would be like and why she volunteered to participate, Reece told us that "it's just about learning about yourself". Next up is Frances, a white, straight young woman who, like Reece, enjoys expressing a tomboy identity at times. Her and Reece are close friends who spend most weekends at each other's houses, and Frances identifies her friends as particularly important in her life. Frances loves playing sport – it is the activity outside of school that she spends the large majority of her time on. Frances volunteered to participate in the course because she "want[ed] to see where it goes and what it shows". Then we have Sage, a white, asexual young woman who describes herself as a princess diva. She spends most of her time reading and loves escaping into fantasy worlds through her books and writing her own stories too. Sage is an introverted person who enjoys spending time alone or with a handful of close friends. She joined the course because she has "always been interested in different genders and sexualities, so [she] thought it might be interesting to see other people's views on it". Last to join the group was Sandy, a straight black[5] young woman who typically wears men's clothing and hangs out with her "gents" (boy friends). Sandy describes herself as "an artistic human being" and loves to express herself through writing and performing music. Sandy also describes herself as an activist and is passionate about social justice issues. She finds a strong sense of identity in her hair and started a YouTube channel during lockdown, where she shares tips and tricks about natural black hair care. For Sandy, participating in the course was about "learning about [herself] and what [she's] actually supposed to be and who [she's] supposed to be".

4.2 Doing educational research in the midst of a global pandemic and national lockdown

Life interrupted by COVID-19

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[5] While researchers typically use the term African in keeping with apartheid race categories and acknowledging their continued significance in present-day South Africa, I use the term black because this is how Sandy identifies and describes herself.

By 12 March 2020, my research project was in full swing. I had obtained all the necessary approvals from gatekeepers and my university ethics department, I had presented my research to the grade 11s at GHS, I had confirmed and obtained informed consent from eight participants, and I had conducted the first of six sessions of my participatory art course.

On 26 March 2020, South Africa entered a national lockdown which imposed various restrictions on citizens' movement and inter-personal contact as a way to prevent and manage the spread of COVID-19. Included in the lockdown restrictions was the closure of all schools which has had numerous implications for young people. Understanding what the lockdown meant for young people and the schooling system in South Africa is crucial in contextualising my research, which took place while my participants were at home under various stages of lockdown. On an individual level, the lockdown meant a drastic reshaping of normality. Learners could no longer attend school, family members could not go to work unless considered essential workers, all social activities were prohibited, and a great sense of fear and uncertainty was felt. Throughout the artworks and discussions comprising my data, my participants spoke of the various people and spaces that form an important part of their sense of self and identity. These were people and spaces that were largely inaccessible to them during the lockdown. Confined to their homes and interactions with household members, my participants, like other young people in South Africa, experienced concern relating to their progress in school, anxiety about the exponential spread of COVID-19 nationally and globally, negative effects on their family income, and feelings of social isolation. My participants were particularly concerned about falling behind with their workload and being ill-prepared for their end-of-year examinations.

Sandy tells us that she feels the school's focus is on the grade 12 students because they are matriculating, but that "the grade 11s are being ignored". Speaking about the anxieties around COVID-19, Reece tells us that she has "been having nightmares of going places and forgetting [her] mask, which is so stupid 'cause you wake up in the middle of the night in a panic and you're like it's a dream". While Reece told us this story in a light-hearted way, laughing about her experience, it is certainly a story that demonstrates the pervasiveness of the pandemic in young people's everyday lives.

The national closure of schools has also highlighted and exacerbated existing inequalities in the South African schooling system. Digital inequalities such as access to devices and internet

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have meant that learners from under-resourced communities needed to attend school in order to learn, but the lack of water and sanitation, overcrowding and shortage of teachers at their schools further delayed their return. Learners from relatively privileged areas, particularly those attending former model-C and private schools, on the other hand, were able to learn remotely during school closures and then return to schools with the necessary infrastructure and resources to practice preventative measures such as hand-washing and social distancing effectively. The social, political and historical context of post-apartheid South Africa means that these different learners' experiences of lockdown are racialised and classed. Reece, Frances and Sandy all had unlimited internet access at home and personal computers to use for both their schoolwork and participation in the art course. While Sage was able to participate in the course using her smartphone and the data that I provided, she expressed frustration with missing out on important information and resources at school due to the lack of internet access. When GHS transitioned to a phased-in approach; two-day-on two-day-off system for the grade 10s and 11s, Sage needed to ensure that she downloaded everything she needed over her two days on campus using the school Wi-Fi in order to prepare for her two at-home days of school to follow. That GHS has unlimited internet access for all students and staff is an example of the class privilege associated with attending a model C school; however, we still see that within the learner body there are disparities in how easy or difficult it has been to keep up with the demands of school during the lockdown.

Figure 4.1. *Cover Up*, Ruramai Musekiwa, 2020, digital art.

Despite the various challenges facing learners during the COVID-19 pandemic and the national lockdown, the youth have also continued to show great resilience. Figure 4.1 above shows one of the artworks submitted in response to the United Nations Development Programme's (UNDP) call for young people in South Africa to use artistic mediums to communicate important public health messages in creative ways. The artist, Ruramai Museiwa, writes in their synopsis that the artwork is "inspired by the vibrant and resilient energy of South African youth; particularly those residing in rural/township areas [who] have learned to be innovative even under circumstances where the odds are stacked against them" (UNDP, 2020). The involvement of young people in awareness campaigns and their use of artistic mediums to express resilience points to the relevance of participatory arts-based projects such as my research, even and perhaps especially during a pandemic. In developing the countless adaptations of my project that conducting educational research during a pandemic necessitated, the question emerged as to whether it was ethical to ask young people to participate in my research at a time when they were faced with the various challenges that come with living under lockdown. While I was sure to practice heightened sensitivity to how the pandemic was affecting my participants throughout the research process, I was ultimately assured of the value that participatory arts-based research has for enabling and supporting the agency of young people. In reviewing the course in our follow-up interviews,

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Frances said that she "enjoyed taking time out to do the art pieces" and Reece explained that the artworks in particular have "been more of a relaxing thing like when you're stressed you can go do this artwork now". Sandy and Sage both express enjoying the artwork component of the course as well, highlighting the relevance and effectiveness of arts-based methods in engaging young people about gender and sexuality, especially but not limited to during a pandemic.

Research interrupted by COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic and associated lockdown restrictions not only interrupted the lives of my participants but my research project as well. My original research design became impossible to implement, necessitating that I adopt an emergent design approach instead. The redesigning of my participatory visual arts course required me to be responsive to the sudden and unpredictable changes in lockdown restrictions, to be flexible in adapting to new ethical guidelines and public health and safety protocols, and to be creative in developing novel ways of conducting research. The phrase 'I'll make another plan' was one that I found myself repeatedly using when speaking to my supervisor, to the members of my university ethics committee, to my participants, and to my friends and family members. A major shift in how I approached my research was required – my research design and data collection processes became concurrent in nature.

Traditionally, a researcher would design a project, obtain the necessary ethical and gatekeeper permission, and then implement the design almost exactly according to the plan they initially submitted – a process which I followed pre-COVID-19. The unpredictable and unprecedented nature of the COVID-19 pandemic and national lockdown in South Africa, however, meant that the relationship between research design and implementation could no longer be chronological but needed to be dialogical. Throughout this chapter, I will highlight moments when I needed to redesign certain aspects of my design in the middle of my data collection, either because of changes in lockdown restrictions or because my design was not meeting the needs and preferences of my participants. In the discussion that follows, I outline the three major changes I made to my research design that were crucial to being able to conduct participatory arts-based research with minors during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Firstly, and most significantly, the COVID-19 pandemic required that I redesign my study to take place entirely online. Not only did my university research ethics department prohibit any

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research involving physical contact or proximity with participants, but lockdown also entailed the national closure of schools. A unique aspect of educational research is a researcher's reliance on the school as a research site. Given that participants in educational research (with the exception of tertiary education) are largely minors, the accessibility of these participants depends on a researcher's access to the schools that learners attend. In keeping with this, my research was originally designed around my relationship with and access to a particular school.

The first step of my participant recruitment process was to obtain permission from a school from which to recruit individual participants. Contact with potential participants was arranged through the school's visual arts teacher, and the collection of consent forms was facilitated by that teacher too. My research design involved meeting weekly with participants after school in the visual art classroom on campus. My fieldwork was designed in a way that meant I was entirely reliant on the school as the mediator between me and my participants and as the space in which all interactions with my participants took place. The national closure of schools and prohibition of non-essential in-person interaction meant that I had to rethink all of these processes. I shifted from using the school as a site and mediator for my research to using online spaces and mediums instead.

Online methodologies are commonly used in research where participants are in 'hard-to-reach' places. This may include participants living in different countries and time zones or participants with schedules that make meeting face-to-face not possible. In my case, it was the COVID-19 pandemic and associated restrictions that rendered my participants hard to reach mid-data collection. In their book dedicated to the use of online methods, James and Busher (2009) write that "the process of doing research on the internet points to a potential change in the way in which everyday activities are performed". As I have highlighted previously, the coronavirus pandemic changed the way that we conduct our daily lives, making online methodologies the most contextually sensitive and appropriate choice in this particular 'moment'.

I will conceptualise the implications of using online spaces in conducting research at a later stage in this chapter. Here, however, my focus is on the ways in which the use of online methods enabled me to conduct research during the COVID-19 pandemic. I used WhatsApp to send messages to my participants personally and as a group about the online art course. While I had planned to use email to send and retrieve participant and parental consent forms, my participants were quick to inform me that WhatsApp was the more convenient mode of communication for

them and their parents. I sent each participant and parent a consent form personally with their name already filled out so that they could simply mark the relevant boxes with the built-in WhatsApp image editor and send it back to me. My participants and I used a shared Google Drive folder to share videos and images with each other during the course. While I initially planned to use a WhatsApp group for our focus group discussions, my participants requested that we use Zoom, a video conferencing application, instead. In my original design, it was the school and its teachers that connected me with my participants and provided me the space to conduct my participatory art course. The redesigning of my course in response to COVID-19 meant that a range of online platforms came to serve these functions instead.

One function that could not be replaced by online methods, and which constitutes the second key change in my research design, was the provision of art materials. In my original research design, I planned to provide participants with a range of art materials in the classroom to use in our weekly sessions. Shifting my participatory arts-based course online required that my participants have access to these materials at home. Achieving this was complicated by lockdown restrictions; while I had already purchased the necessary art materials, I was not permitted to distribute them to participants as this was classified as 'non-essential travel' under lockdown levels five, four and three. In researching what was newly permitted under lockdown level four, I found that stationery items were permitted to be bought and sold and that this meant a courier service could also transport these items. After getting the go-ahead from my university ethics department, I put together individual art kits for my participants and arranged for a courier service to collect and deliver them.

Figure 4.2. Photograph of the art kits delivered to participants.

The art kits, pictured above, contained a range of acrylic paints that I dispensed into plastic containers, a paint brush, a pair of scissors, glue, a pack of cardboard, and a set of crayons. In packing the art kits, I followed a number of strict hygiene procedures; I wore a mask and sanitised my hands frequently, I only included items that were pre-sealed in plastic or made entirely of easy-to-sanitise materials (such as plastic or metal), I sanitised all the items with 80% alcohol surface sanitiser, and I packed the materials into a plastic bag which was then sealed. I used a courier service that adhered to a no-contact delivery protocol and messaged my participants detailed instructions of what to do when receiving the art kits. Developing and implementing health and safety measures such as these is not typically a part of qualitative sociological research but became a necessity in conducting research in the midst of a public health crisis.

The third and final change to the design of my research relates to the duration of my data collection process. I originally designed an art course comprising six sessions to be conducted weekly. In redesigning my research, I realised that the many delays that I would experience because of additional ethics procedures, recruitment processes and consent forms meant that it would be more realistic to reduce the number of sessions that I asked participants to participate in. In conducting the online version of my course, I quickly realised that shortening the course in terms of sessions would not be the only change to the duration of my fieldwork. While conducting

a six-session course in six weeks is feasible when meeting face-to-face on an agreed upon weekday after school, conducting the three-session online version of my course in three weeks was not. Asking participants to watch a video of me introducing the session's theme, create an artwork in response, record and upload a video exploring the artwork, and then schedule and participate in an online discussion is a disjointed and lengthy process. Not only did splitting each session into these various parts require more time, but my participants were also facing various lockdown-related demands that proved to be time consuming. Frances, Reece and Sage all took more time than initially agreed upon to create their artworks because of an increased school workload since moving to online learning, and Frances was not able to create an artwork for Session 2 because of a death in her family. Being sensitive to the numerous demands that my participants were facing because of COVID-19 and altering my expectations of how quickly (or rather slowly) my fieldwork would be completed were essential to conducting research during a global pandemic.

The ethics of it all

Ethical procedures, such as the application and approval process facilitated by the Research Ethics Committee (REC) at Stellenbosch University, are in place to protect participants and researchers, ensuring that any research conducted is ethically responsible. This is particularly important for research with minors as they are classified as a vulnerable population. While ethics applications are often extensive and time consuming given the important role that they play and the limited resources available, the various lockdown restrictions imposed on my participants and I, coupled with the resultant need to adopt an emerging design approach, made for an especially complex, lengthy and at times frustrating ethics process. Conducting research in the midst of a public health crisis like the COVID-19 pandemic called for a great deal of collaboration between researchers and their ethics institutions.

Following President Ramaphosa's initial declaration of a state of national disaster and consequent school closures, and driven by the need to ensure the health and safety of my participants, I quickly started developing a 'back-up plan' for my data collection. A few days later, President Ramaphosa announced the national lockdown to come and Research Ethics Committee (REC) released a position statement announcing that all research involving physical contact or undue physical proximity needed to be postponed until national authorities eased social distancing

protocols. While the lockdown was initially scheduled to last only three weeks, there was growing (and in hindsight, correct) suspicion that it would be extended. It became increasingly clear that my research as originally designed and approved was no longer possible and that my alternative plan was no longer a back-up. I set up a telephonic meeting with the coordinator of the Social, Behavioural and Education (SBE) division of REC to discuss my plans for moving forward with my research under the new ethical guidelines. This was essential to speeding up the amendment application process – my first feedback letter did not require any changes as I had drawn on the coordinator's expertise to expand on and tweak my proposed amendments.

In putting together my amendment application, I needed permission from two gatekeepers – the principal of GHS and KwaZulu Natal (KZN) Department of Education (DoE). By this stage, I had developed a relationship with the visual arts teacher tasked with assisting me with the logistics of my research. I emailed both her and the principal about my proposed changes and she offered to follow up with the principal. I obtained permission from the school within two days. Knowing that a response from KZN DoE is difficult to obtain, I visited their office nearest to GHS just before the lockdown began. I was directed from office to office until someone was able to tell me that the only person working at the office with authority to approve my amendments was on leave. I decided to submit my amendment application to REC, asking for approval subject to KZN DoE permission. While waiting for feedback from REC, I tried to contact officials within KZN DoE about my amendments, but this was particularly difficult given that none of them were permitted to be in the office. My supervisor contacted past students of his that he knew had worked at KZN DoE. Many of them got back to him with a number of different contacts and eventually, one of those referrals reviewed, and approved my amendments. This process took a total of 18 days. I then submitted the KZN DoE permission to REC but needed to wait for a notice of final approval before commencing with my data collection, which took another 28 days.

These ethical checks and procedures are no doubt necessary and all the more important when conducting research during a pandemic such as COVID-19, but they also require an immense amount of collaboration. Without the cooperation and kindness of the coordinator of the SBE division of REC, the visual arts teacher at GHS, my supervisor and his past students, the process detailed here would have taken considerably longer and more changes to the design of my research may have been needed. My intention in shining a light on this is not only to recognise the actors

who were instrumental to this project moving forward, but also to highlight some of the barriers and gatekeeping involved in designing gender and sexuality participatory arts-based research for school attending youth. Outside of the context of a global pandemic, there are still a number of obstacles or unexpected events that will emerge in the field. While researchers may develop some creative and innovative solutions in response to this, the likelihood that they will implement these changes is low given the lengthy institutional procedures involved in making amendments to a research project. I think that there is an important lesson to be learnt here – the limited resources available to ethics committees which makes applying for ethical permission, and more importantly amendments to those applications, so lengthy limits the innovation, creativity and responsiveness that social science researchers are able to exercise. Addressing this is crucial to enabling researchers to produce better quality research outputs.

4.3 Me, Myself and I: Exploring identification through visual art

Finally, we come to the part of this chapter where I actually lay out the methods that I used and how my data collection unfolded. If the reader feels that it has been a long journey getting to this part, then I have been successful in conveying what it is like to conduct participatory research during COVID-19. For my methodology I chose to design a three-part online participatory visual arts course titled, *Me, Myself and I: Exploring identification through visual art*. In doing so, I sought to do three things. Firstly, I sought to create a space that placed gender and sexuality firmly on the agenda as topics that are important and relevant to young people, a space where young people could share their ideas and experiences relating to gender and sexuality in a way that validates them. Secondly, I wanted to prompt my participants to question and reflect on how they have come to construct their identities and attach particular meanings to gender and sexuality. In doing so I sought to challenge taken-for-granted and essentialised ideas about gender and sexuality. Lastly, I prioritised visual ways of knowing, being and doing in order to produce new and different insights into young genders and sexualities. The participatory and arts-based approach to my research was how I set out to achieve these three aims.

The general structure of my participatory visual arts course was as follows:

Theme One: Looking back, Remembering myself

Theme Two: Looking about, Locating myself

Theme Three: Looking forward, Envisioning myself

In the sections to follow I will explain, theorise and justify the design of each session. First, I discuss the multiplicity of meaning behind the focus on looking throughout my research design. Next, I unpack my understandings about identification that informed the foci of each session – where, who and what were my participants and I looking at, and why? I then move to a discussion of how the shift to online methods shaped my research and the value to be found in these methods beyond being feasible during COVID-19 times. Following this, I lay out the method of analysis that I used – how and why this is useful and relevant in making sense of my findings – and I wrap up by highlighting some key ethical considerations involved in this project.

A focus on 'looking'

The repetition of 'looking' in the design of my participatory visual arts course is multidimensional in meaning. The emphasis on 'looking' reflects my study's focus on the visual. Looking is an explorative activity; it implies searching but also examining. Looking requires perspective – who is looking and from what standpoint? Looking is not always driven by intention; it is often prompted by curiosity. Looking implies a process, a journey. It potentially involves finding something. This range of meanings that 'looking' invokes relates to the journey that participants embarked on in participating in my research programme; they made use of the visual to explore, to search, to examine, to find, to stimulate and satisfy their curiosity regarding gender and sexuality. The standpoint or perspective that they occupied when looking at gender and sexuality was an important part of their artworks and our discussion, and something that will be discussed further in my findings and discussion chapters to come. But the multiple meanings of 'looking' also relate to my own positionality.

In this thesis I am and have been 'looking' at young people's representations and experiences of gender and sexuality. I have been curious about what my participants have to show and tell; I have been searching for, finding and examining meaning in what they create. This thesis is a bringing together of all that I have looked at and seen throughout my research process, both in

my participants, their artworks and in myself. Now, you as the reader are looking at what I have found through a lens of my own creation.

Where, who and what were we looking at?

The art course comprised three themes, each of which was designed around a particular component of gender and sexuality. The details of each theme will be discussed later in this section, but first it is necessary to describe the method itself. To begin with, I would post a video of me on our shared Google Drive folder introducing the theme and posing questions to my participants, asking them to respond by creating an artwork at home in their own time. I always placed emphasis and focus on questions about gender and sexuality, but also encouraged my participants to include other aspects of their identities as they saw fit. Once they had completed their artworks, they would post a photo of it and an accompanying video of themselves explaining a bit about what they had created.

This portion of the course is classified as asynchronous communication and places a focus on having time and opportunity for reflection. Participants were able to respond to the given theme and create their artworks in their own time. This was suitable for the busy schedules that my participants as young people have, particularly during the pandemic, but it also allowed them to take the time they needed to think more deeply about what they wanted to create and the meanings they wanted to convey. When the reader reaches the findings portion of this thesis, I am certain they will agree the time and effort that my participants invested in their artworks is evident. The use of videos rather than text allowed myself and my participants to communicate with and relate to one another more personally, as is characteristic of qualitative research. Being able to see each other's artworks and how each participant interacted with their artwork helped my participants to convey meaning more clearly. With that said, some of my participants also opted, at times, to write out an explanation of their artworks or to not appear physically in their videos. While this meant that their explanations tended to be shorter than when they spoke directly to the camera, it was valuable to hand over this kind of creative control to my participants. For example, in Theme Two, one of my participants chose to create a montage depicting the process by which she made her artwork as a way to convey that the space that she was depicting, much like her artwork, has been constructed and shaped over time.

Once we had all had a chance to view the artworks and watch the videos that were uploaded for a given theme, I would arrange a group video discussion on Zoom to talk more about what my participants had created, what they found interesting or relatable in each other's artworks, and what might be missing in their representations of the theme. This portion of the process was very much participant-led. I started each discussion by giving participants an opportunity to comment or ask a question about somebody else's artwork, and then I asked further questions based on their artworks and what they shared as the discussion unfolded. That we used video calling instead of text communication was a decision made by my participants – they suggested that this would make the discussion feel more tangible and allow everyone to feel more present. While at times technical difficulties and uncertainties regarding who should speak when stunted the discussion, being able to see and hear one another definitely enabled a greater sense of participation and familiarity amongst us as a group. We see here how positioning young people as decision-makers and active participants in the way that research is conducted adds great value to the design of a project.

This two-part method was repeated for each theme – it was only the specific focus of the theme that changed. Theme One was titled, *Looking back: Remembering myself*, and focused on past memories and experiences of gender and sexuality. Connell (2009:99) argues that while the socialisation model is deeply flawed, it is correct in its assertion that childhood learning is central to the way that people construct and experience gender (and sexuality). Very early on in life we start learning how to 'do' gender, which necessarily invokes how to 'do' (hetero)sexuality.

Institutions such as the family, the school and the media play an important role in shaping how boys and girls perform gender and sexuality, and how they are rewarded or punished for certain ways of performing these identifications. With that being said, it is important to acknowledge the agency of children too. Connell (2009:96) highlights the pleasure that children experience in learning about and performing normative constructions of gender (and sexuality), as well as the many ways in which children may resist such normativity. What is important here is the central role that a person's childhood self and experiences play in shaping their gender and sexuality identifications.

Theme One asked participants to look back, to remember their childhood self and experiences. What memories do they have of learning how to be a girl? Who taught them these lessons? How did they feel when they took on these lessons for themselves? How may they have

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resisted the lessons that they were taught? How did they relate to other boys and girls? How may their thoughts and feelings about gender and sexuality have changed over time? This act of remembering and exploring lines of continuity and discontinuity in identification over time is an important component of exploring gender and sexuality.

Theme Two was titled, *Looking about: Locating myself*, and explored how gender and sexuality shape the spaces and places that my participants occupy. One of the core components of my conceptual framework is my acknowledgement of the importance of context, hence my use of Southern theory and literature. This acknowledgement filters through to my methodology as well. Just as it is crucial for me to position myself as a Southern scholar conducting research in South Africa, so too is it necessary that part of my methodology design recognise the location of my participants.

Theme Two asked participants to look about, to locate themselves in relation to their immediate and wider surroundings. What spaces do they occupy? How do they exist within these spaces? What places are important to their sense of self, and why? How do their identifications, specifically their gender and sexuality, affect the way that they move in and through these spaces and places? How might their access to certain spaces be shaped by their identifications? This focus on locationality helped ground our exploration of gender and sexuality in the material surroundings within which my participants operate. My inclusion of this theme reflects a recognition of the importance of context, not just for my research in general but in the everyday lives of my participants as well.

Finally, Theme Three was titled, *Looking forward: Envisioning myself*, and focused on future imaginings of the self and identification. In my conceptual framework I align myself with a Southern understanding of agency as collectivist and transformative. I position young people as agents of change, capable of transforming the ways we think about, talk about and experience gender and sexuality. Gender and sexuality are contestable and changing – a fact that is highlighted when a distinction is made between past and current experiences versus future imaginings. Changing the narrative style from past and present tense to future tense opens up greater possibilities for agency and transformation. Theme Three asked participants to look forward, to envision themselves and their lives in the future tense. How do participants picture themselves in the future? What do they look like? How do they feel? How do they see themselves changing or

staying the same? What spaces and places do they see themselves occupying? What relationships do they see themselves forming? What do gender and sexuality look like to them in the future? Shifting the focus of the course from how things are and have been, to how things could be, created greater scope for participants to exercise their agency, both individually and collectively.

The value of using online methodologies

Prior to the announcement of a lockdown in South Africa, online methodologies were a completely foreign terrain for me; I had not learnt about online methods in my undergraduate or postgraduate coursework, I had not used online methods in past research projects and I was unfamiliar with the existing literature drawing on research conducted online. The shift to online methods was marked by uncertainty and frustration. I reflected on how this felt in the research journal that I kept throughout my fieldwork process:

"Once the lockdown started and especially when it was extended, I quickly became used to the idea that my research would have to take place entirely online. The very possibility of this felt like a relief as it meant being able to continue with my research. As today drew near and I recorded my first video, however, it started to sink in just how sizable of a shift this is. Arranging participation and consent forms via WhatsApp felt like a very 'normal' use of online communication. Introducing an art course theme exploring childhood gender and sexuality, however, felt quite strange ... Posting this first video feels like speaking into an abyss and hoping someone responds. It allows much more time for worry and over-thinking, but also for reflection".

I also drew the picture below to depict how I felt a sense of disconnection from my participants because I was unable to engage with them face-to-face. This is the method of communication with which I am typically much more comfortable, both in my research and my everyday life.

Figure 4.3. *A new kind of connection*, Kylie Kuhl, 2020, pen.

As the art course unfolded, however, I came to conceptualise the use of online spaces as a research site quite differently. In the second theme of the course, I asked my participants to create an artwork depicting the spaces and places that they felt most comfortable. One of the spaces that Reece chose to represent was her bedroom; she told us that her bedroom was her own private space where she could do and be whatever she wanted. My other participants all agreed, emphasising how their bedrooms felt like a space that is truly and entirely theirs. That my participants have their own bedrooms is clearly a product of their class positions, but it also helped me realise that the use of Zoom calls for our group discussions did something quite significant – it allowed my participants to invite me and each other into their own private spaces. Rather than meeting in a school classroom, dressed in their school uniforms and seated at the desks provided, my participants sat on their beds in the clothes of their choice and we were able to connect with each other from our own spaces. In my findings I will show how my participants experience their school as a highly regulatory and uncomfortable space. In the art course I asked my participants to depict and discuss topics for which such a schooling environment would not have been conducive. This was an idea that Reece picked up on explicitly in our follow-up discussion when talking about what it was like to participate in this project during lockdown. She explained that "[she] feels like

now over the phone that people open up more, whereas if we were face-to-face people would feel more embarrassed to talk about it you know". There is a sense of privacy that comes with doing online research from home, even within a group context.

In saying this, however, I do not want to idealise the use of online methods. In speaking about what she would change about the course, Frances told me that "we can't really with coronavirus but I think if we were in the classroom it would be more fun you know". I also noted a difference in how actively Frances participated in our first face-to-face meeting before the lockdown versus the online version of the course. In the former Frances was very extroverted and spoke quite freely in our discussions; in the online course she did not enjoy making her videos, opting to write her explanations instead, and was often relatively quiet in our group discussions unless I asked for her take specifically. What I do want to show is the value that online methods can hold for engaging young people in research about gender and sexuality, not just in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic but beyond. The literature very clearly shows, as will my findings, that schools are highly heteronormative and heterosexist spaces. I believe that there is great value and potential to be found in meeting participants where they are, in the spaces that they feel most comfortable, and online methods are particularly useful in achieving this.

Method of analysis

My research involves the analysis of both the artworks that my participants produced and the discussion/interpretation of those artworks. Discourse analysis is a useful tool for understanding the connections between everyday practices and broader social structures in the field of young genders and sexualities in South Africa. For example, Francis (2019c) uses discourse analysis to connect the discursive construction of counter-normative sexualities in the Life Orientation classroom with broader societal attitudes towards sexuality diversity, demonstrating the dialogical relationship between the two. My chosen method of discourse analysis for this purpose is Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), as proposed by Fairclough (2013). Fairclough (2013:132) understands discourse as comprising of three components: (1) the language text, which in my study was the artworks produced by the participants and their discussion and interpretations of them; (2) discourse practice, which in my study involved looking at *how* the participants produced and interpreted the aforementioned language texts; and (3) sociocultural

practice, which in my study was GHS and my participants' wider community. This three-dimensional conception of discourse informs Fairclough's (2013:132) three-dimensional model of discourse analysis: (1) a linguistic description of the language text; (2) an interpretation of the relationship between the language text and discourse practice; and (3) an explanation of the relationship between the discourse practice and the sociocultural practice. In this way, CDA links the 'micro' – the artworks and the language my participants used to discuss/interpret their artworks – with the 'macro' – the broader institutional and societal structures that informed my participants' conceptualisations of gender and sexuality.

This connection between the micro and the macro is understood as being mediated by discourse practice. It is in this way that my analysis sought to understand the multi-levelled processes involved in the participants' constructions of gender and sexuality. CDA also has a distinct focus on power, more specifically on revealing often obfuscated power relations. Founded on principles of social justice, my research set out to uncover the construction of power and oppression implicated in my participants' representations and experiences of gender and sexuality. It is for this reason that the 'critical' component of CDA aligns with the critical aims of my research. In keeping with my intention to theoretically situate my research in the Global South, I draw on South African literature throughout my analysis process as well to connect my findings with that of other Southern scholars and to situate my analysis firmly within the context of the global South.

Ethical considerations

The issue of ownership is of crucial importance to a study such as mine, where participants were asked to create something (Leavy, 2015:175). I asked my participants to create their own artworks in response to each session, and to then take photographs of what they had made and post them on our shared Google Drive folder. The artworks remained in my participants' possession as they belong to their makers. Permission to disseminate their artworks was included in participant and parental consent forms and was explained in person to participants in my first introductory video. In this way, I am able to use the participants' artworks for the purposes of my research and its dissemination, while still acknowledging that ultimately ownership of the artworks lies with the participants.

During the course of my research, informed consent, confidentiality and anonymity were central ethical considerations. Electronic informed consent forms were sent to and returned by all participants and their parents before commencing with the online course. While keeping what participants share in a group research context confidential is an ethical issue in using both face-to-face and online methods, unique to using online methods is participants' continued access to the data generated. In addition to explaining the importance of confidentiality in my first introductory video, then, I instructed my participants to restrict the access on all photographs and videos that they uploaded to Google Drive so that other participants were able to view but not download or share their data. Once the course was concluded, all files were deleted. All other data was stored by me on a password protected file hosting service to which only I have access.

4.4 Bringing my methodological considerations together

In closing this chapter, I would like to reiterate the aims of my research and, by extension, my methodology. I set out to utilise participatory arts-based methods to generate visual insights into young genders and sexualities. To achieve this, I chose to design an art course in which young people could visually explore, examine, question and discuss their identities, ideas and experiences relating to gender and sexuality.

There are two elements of my research design presented here that make this study unique. First is the use of visual arts-based methods in an exploratory study. While I offered my participants some guidance in the thematic prompts provided, what was included in their artworks and our discussions was mostly in their control. I designed an art course to ask questions, not about a particular social issue or identity, but about the making of young genders and sexualities as understood and experienced by the young people who participated in my research.

Going forward in this thesis, I will highlight to the reader the generative effects that this approach had. The second novel component of my research design is bringing together participatory arts-based methods with online methods. While the COVID-19 pandemic necessitated this, the value of this combination extends beyond the context of a pandemic. As the reader will see in the chapters to come, GHS, like other South African schools, is a highly heteronormative and heterosexualised space. Connecting with students outside of this space

proved valuable in generating critical discussion about their schooling culture and experiences, particularly as they relate to gender, sexuality and race. I argue and will show the reader as this thesis unfolds that there are many lessons to be learnt from responding innovatively to novel situations such as the COVID-19 pandemic, lessons that can be applied to all kinds of research seeking to engage young people in research about gender and sexuality.

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CHAPTER 5

A PICTURE BOOK LOOK INTO THE MAKING OF YOUNG GENDERS AND SEXUALITIES: THE TEMPORALITY OF IDENTITY

In designing this research, I set out to centre young people's perspectives on gender and sexuality, and to prioritise the visual in how their experiences are expressed and understood. In keeping with this focus, I present my findings as a kind of picture book, tracking the various versions of gender and sexuality that my participants constructed throughout the course, using their artworks and explanatory videos as a guide in determining what is important. My findings are presented in two parts, each of which applies a different lens in exploring the versions of gender and sexuality depicted and constructed by my participants. This chapter looks at my participants' artworks and discussions in terms of time and temporality. The overall design of the course had a temporal focus – I asked participants to look back at the past, look about in the present, and look forward to the future. This prompted them to track the development of their identities over time, producing valuable insights into the continuities, changes and inconsistencies in their experiences and ideas relating to gender and sexuality. This chapter follows the narrative constructed by my participants, identifying significant moments in the making of young genders and sexualities. I ask the reader to pay particular attention to the intersections of gender and sexuality with age that emerge from applying a temporal lens as I do in this chapter.

5.1 Childhood femininities: A girly-girl/tomboy binary

We start with my participants' depictions of their past selves. In painting their childhood gender identities, my participants all created an image of normative or 'girly' femininity as their reference point. This is most clearly illustrated in Sage's artwork pictured below.

Figure 5.1. *Looking Back, Remembering Myself,* Sage, 2020, watercolour.

In her explanatory video, Sage describes the pinks and purples used as "classic girl colours", draws our attention to the central figure's "long hair" and "exaggerated lips and eyes", and tells us that the flowers represent "the delicate elegant side of femininity". This is echoed by the other participants who also use the colours pink and purple to represent a "princess" femininity. This image of normative girly femininity is then used as a starting point in relation to which my participants describe their own childhood gender identities and experiences. As Sandy points out in our Theme One discussion, "a lot of us, we had an element of 'I felt like I didn't fit into what a girl would normally fit into'".

In her video, Sage explains that the image of femininity shown in her artwork was imposed on her by her father, who insisted that she and her sister have long hair because they are girls. When Sage, her mother and sister left her father, Sage "had [her] hair cut very short and refused to wear anything feminine" as a way to become "the opposite of what is represented in this picture [Figure 5.1]". In her Theme One artwork, Sandy includes drawings of her childhood self, wearing

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boyish clothes – she tells us that if we had seen her as a child, we would think "that's a little boy". Sandy feels that her parents' choice to dress her in gender-neutral colours like beige, orange, yellow and red rather than pink and purple dresses allowed her to engage in activities typically associated with boys; she feels that her clothing as a child enabled her agency:

> Sandy: I've always been like I'm a girl 'kay fine, but I can do whatever I want, I can do what gents do, like if guys wanna climb trees, I'm up there with them, like I will be on top of them [laughs].

Reece expresses a similar feeling. She uses the colour yellow, with pink and blue stripes, to represent that her younger self "didn't really care about being a girl or a boy, [she] just wanted to have fun and do whatever". The pink in Reece's artwork represents girly activities, the blue represents boyish activities, and the yellow represents her experience of growing up as "a tomboy of note". Frances also represents her childhood tomboy identity through the use of colour in her artwork, using pink flowers to represent that she's "a female" and blue flowers to represent that she "wore boys' clothes and stuff". In our discussion, Frances elaborates on this, defining her tomboy identity as wearing boyish and baggy clothes because she "always used to jump in the mud, make mud pies and stuff like that".

Immediately noticeable from my participants' visual representations of their childhood selves is the symbolic power that colour holds in constructing gender. In using pinks and purples to depict normative girly femininity, my participants draw on a network of associations – flowers, dresses, princesses, what Sage describes as "pretty things". In using blue, a traditionally 'boy' colour, to depict a tomboy version of femininity, my participants invoke an existing and powerful binary, that typically set up between boys and girls, to create one of their own – the girly-girl/tomboy binary. By constructing tomboy femininity in relation to girly femininity in the same way that 'boy' is constructed in relation to 'girl', the relation between these two versions of femininity takes on the same oppositional character as that between normative masculinity and femininity. Colour is central in illustrating and in fact, creating this connection.

Also important to unpack here is my participants' rejection of the normative version of girlhood femininity. In defining what it means to be a girl, my participants do not begin with their own experiences of girlhood, but rather commonly held ideas of a girly version of femininity, which is constructed as oppositional in relation to boys. Boys are blue and girls are pink and purple; boys have short hair, girls have long hair; boys wear baggy, comfortable clothing, girls wear

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dresses; boys climb trees and play with mud, girls do not. While my participants repeatedly and explicitly state that they have always identified as 'girls', they also describe primarily wearing 'boy' clothes and doing 'boy' things as children. While their tomboy versions of femininity clearly deviated from the normative image of girly-girl femininity, this deviation was not conceptualised in a way that challenges normative ideas about gender. Rather than their experiences of gender non-conformity being proof of the falsity and irrelevance of the boy/girl binary in childhood, my participants conceptualise themselves as a different kind of girl – a tomboy. Rather than disrupting the oppositional relation between boys and girls, my participants construct a new binary – the tomboy/girly-girl binary. Identifying as a tomboy grants these girls access to more traditionally boyish forms of appearance and activities, while still allowing them to hold onto their identities as girls, and all of this without undermining the construction of boys and girls as fundamentally and naturally different. Underlying the tomboy identity, then, is compulsory cisnormativity; having been assigned female at birth, 'doing' boy does not qualify as 'being' boy. My participants' cisgender identities are consistently constructed as beyond reproach, with Reece explaining that while her gender expression has and may continue to change over time, her gender identity is something "that's very set in stone". The implicitly cisgender tomboy identity thus allows my participants' rejection of the girly-girl femininity as children to be incorporated into the gender binary so that it is ultimately reinforced, even by their seemingly non-normative experiences.

5.2 The sexualisation of femininities: A hetero/lesbian binary

In shifting focus to my participants' more recent selves, we see the multiplicity of femininities continue, although the ways in which my participants juggle these different versions of femininity changes.

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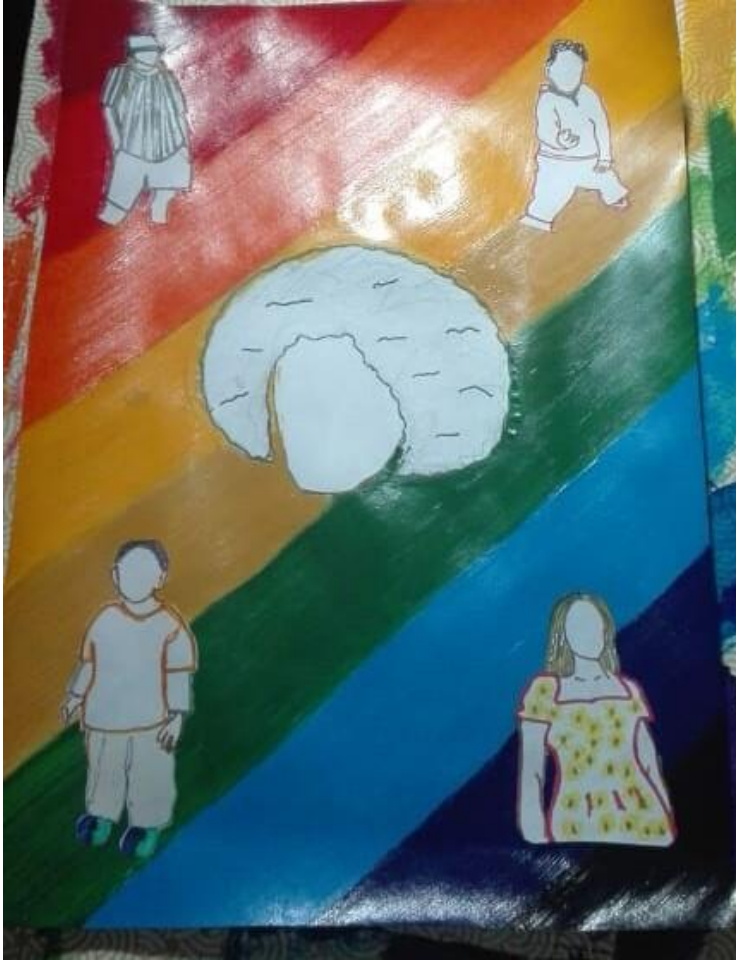
Figure 5.2, Looking Back, Remembering Myself, Sandy, 2020, acrylic and pen.

In explaining the image in the top left corner of her artwork (Figure 5.2), Sandy tells us how her boyish appearance as a child (pictured in the top right and bottom left drawings) has continued to be an important part of her current gender expression:

> Sandy: Fast forward to me now … I have a tendency of dressing up as a boy … Baggy men's top, shorts and sneakers, a bucket hat. And that's just me, which is a typical boy outfit, which is highly comfortable. But also it shows that for me I don't try to conform to what 'girl' should look like. I don't identify as a girly girl. Yeah I like make-up 'kay fine, but you know, I don't really wanna dress up, look pretty, I like to be in sweats, tops and just in my comfort zone.

In our discussion, Sandy goes on to tell us that when shopping for clothes, "the first place [she] go[es] is the men's section and [she'll] probably dawdle to the girl's side" because the former is "comforting". Frances and Reece repeatedly affirm the idea that men's clothing is

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"comfortable", both in the literal sense of being more loose-fitting and less restrictive and in the sense that it better reflects who they are.

While the tomboy aesthetic is prominent in the way that these three young women dress, it is not the sole version of femininity that they express. In speaking about the continuation of her tomboy identity from past to present, Reece explains that "some days you dress like a tomboy and other days you dress like the most girly girl thing ever". Similarly, Frances tells us that "one day I'm dressed as a ten-year-old boy and the next day I'm wearing a dress". Sandy, Reece and Frances continue to construct gender expression in terms of a girly-girl/tomboy binary as discussed previously. There is, however, a shift in that clothing comes to replace colour as the most prominent and powerful marker of gender. It is no longer an image of pink girly-girl and blue tomboy; instead, my participants construct an image of the girly-girl wearing make-up, dresses and looking pretty, and the tomboy wearing comfortable clothing, sneakers and a bucket hat. While positioned in oppositional relation, Frances, Reece and Sandy embody both femininities, at times even simultaneously – Sandy explains that if she's wearing a dress (girly-girl femininity), she's "in sneakers too" (tomboy femininity). Here we see how the multiplicity of femininities applies not only to groups of people but individuals too – an argument made by Francis (2014) in reference to masculinities. Sandy, Frances and Reece all switch between tomboy and girly versions of femininity, a transition which appears to occur seamlessly from one day to the next.

In probing further about this transition between different versions of femininity expressed through their appearance, my participants revealed that while at times this merely depends on their mood, there are also certain situations where they feel compelled to "dress like a girl". For Sandy, the girly version of herself (pictured in the bottom right corner of Figure 5.2) represents her conscious choice to purchase and wear dresses on occasion as a way to make friends with girls by trying to "look like them", as she "tends to struggle with girl relationships". The oppositional relation between tomboy and girly-girl femininities appears to make friendships across this binary difficult. For Reece, it is "family events and formal stuff" where she dresses in a more girly way because otherwise she would feel she doesn't "fit the part or look like [she] belongs there". For Frances performing girly-girl femininity is necessary when "going to a party" because otherwise "everyone will just look at you". There is an uncomfortable and unwanted hypervisibility that comes with embodying a tomboy femininity in contexts where girly-girl femininity is required.

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The question then emerges as to how these normative expectations are (re)produced; what is at stake if my participants choose not to conform?

In asking my participants why they feel the need to dress in a girly way in the abovementioned situations, they all refer to what people would think or say, implying that it would be negative. When pushed for a more specific idea of what these thoughts or words might be, my participants are persistently vague in their responses. Reece says that "people [would] think otherwise of you like oh no she's this type of person or that" and Frances explains that "[people will] just assume basically what you are, like try guess oh that person's this and just try and say different things that just isn't you". Both participants are expressing that they would feel misrepresented and misjudged, but what that representation or judgement would be remains unclear. It was only in asking once more for a specific answer in my individual follow-up interviews that Reece, Frances and Sandy each explicate that it had to do with impressions of their sexuality. Frances tells me that people would "pick your sexuality or try and assume, guess you as a person" while Reece is more specific in explaining that people would think "she might be a lesbian". Sandy expresses having experienced this personally:

> Sandy: I've been mistaken to be lesbian a few times because of the way I dress, which kind of bothered me 'cause I was like I can't rock some baggy pants and sneakers and look good like that?

Here Sandy expresses disappointment and frustration with the heteronormative logic that a young woman wearing masculine clothing is perceived as necessarily same-sex attracted. While she challenges the heteronormative relationship between gender and sexuality, she also reproduces a heterosexist construction of same-sex attraction as deviant and undesirable. We see how the stakes of conforming to normative femininity, particularly in certain contexts, have been raised as tomboy femininity becomes lesbian femininity and, in turn, girly-girl femininity becomes hetero-femininity. While as young girls, tomboy femininity enabled my participants access to 'boy' things without compromising their identity as girls, the negative framing of lesbian femininity, and the lengths to which my participants go to avoid being perceived as such, indicates that the force of normative femininity has changed. Tomboy femininity previously enabled my participants to "do whatever [they] want"; lesbian femininity is now a tool used to police my participants' performance of femininity, enforcing heterosexuality as the only acceptable version – a regulatory force that is not only imposed on but internalised by my participants. The girly-girl/tomboy binary

becomes sexualised to produce a hetero/lesbian construction of femininities. What continues across these two binaries is the implicit and unacknowledged reproduction of cisnormativity. My participants continue to assume that a person's sex and thus, gender can be easily and obviously ascertained by looking at them. Their concern in dressing masculinely is not that they will be mistaken as boys or young men, but as lesbian young women. We see how my participants consistently construct themselves and others as necessarily cisgender and thus understand themselves to always be performing a version of femininity, however masculine.

5.3 Declaring hetero-femininity: The compulsory performance of heterosexuality

Finding that there was a shift from a girly-girl/tomboy binary to a hetero/lesbian binary of femininities over time prompted my participants and I to look back once more and explore how and why this heterosexualisation takes place. While my participants have not explicitly included sexuality in the artworks depicting their childhood selves, in talking about their present selves we found that compulsory heterosexuality has always featured in their experiences. Reece explains that growing up, she thought that "everyone was pre-programmed straight". Similarly, Sandy says she has "always had the notion that we're preset straight", and Sage feels that "the default is always straight, like you're straight until proven otherwise". When asked to consider why this is, Sage naturalises compulsory heterosexuality by conceptualising it as the original or default sexuality:

> Sage: I think it's just because like way back in the past it was always man and woman, it was never anything else and that just carried on. And while we are more open-minded these days, we still have a long way to go.

Both Sandy and Reece attribute their sense of compulsory heterosexuality growing up to the dominance of the heterosexual nuclear family in their families and communities. Sandy recalls feeling that if "you're a girl you must like a boy" and vice versa, explaining that while this was never explicitly taught, "all [she'd] known is mom and dad, mom likes dad, dad likes mom". Similarly, Reece tells us that in "the area [she] grew up in you always just see mom and dad, you didn't necessarily see mom and mom or dad and dad". As children, my participants were surrounded exclusively by models of the heterosexual family which worked to normalise heterosexuality.

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The question then emerges, if heterosexuality has always been normative, at what point does the performance of heterosexuality, as seen in the need to dress 'girly', become compulsory? In applying a temporal lens to my participants' depictions and experiences of gender and sexuality, we find a series of key moments that, taken together, show how age intersects with gender and sexuality to more forcefully prescribe the performance of hetero-femininity. The first moment identified by my participants in which they felt compelled to perform their already-assumed heterosexuality came in approximately grade 4. Reece talks about a time when "everyone used to come up to [her] and say who do you like?", creating the expectation that "when you're that age you have to like someone". Sandy explains the extent of the pressure to have a boyfriend or a crush at this stage:

> Sandy: I think in grade 4, I think that's when it becomes big, like you have a boyfriend and whatever, and you get into it … even if you don't have a crush on anyone, even if you don't know what a crush is, you would find a way to learn what a crush was and you will have one and you'll be like okay I have a crush now.

The declaration of a crush is an important performative act. Not only does this declaration prove one's heterosexuality, but it also acts as a ritual by which friendships are solidified. Sage tells us that with "every [friendship] group that [she's] been in, one of the main topics is talking about your crush". Frances shares that she had a boyfriend for three years in primary school and that their friends would "sing that song of kissing in the tree" which everyone found "really funny". Declaring and sharing one's crush solidifies friendship bonds, while failing to do so generates feelings of distrust. Reece, who now identifies as asexual, tells us that when she told her friends she didn't have a crush on anyone, "they used to think [she] was lying", telling her, "you don't wanna tell us, you don't trust us". Significant to note here is that while Sage also identifies as asexual, she had a different experience to Reece. Sage was an active participant in the performance of heterosexual crushes and tells us that she "never realised what a proper crush was until a few weeks ago". Rather than an experience of romantic and sexual attraction towards someone, Sage says she "always thought you just choose someone and be like oh I have a crush on them now". This highlights that while talking about one's crush with friends is a central component of the heterosexual crush performance, discussing the intricacies of what it means to "like" someone was not. It was only once Sage started to identify as asexual this year and followed LGBTQ pages on

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Reddit, that she connected with other asexual people's experiences of realising their understanding of a crush was different to that of people who experienced sexual attraction.

Peer relationships were not the only incentive for declaring a crush; homophobia was also used as a mechanism by which compulsory heterosexuality was enforced. Sandy tells us that "if you didn't have a crush on someone they would think you're a lesbian … you were labelled". This appears to be the first point at which femininities become sexualised and the hetero/lesbian binary is introduced. Sandy recalls that the accusation of same-sex attraction caused such embarrassment that "you would conjure up some person that you like, you'd be like no I have a boyfriend from another school, you guys [her friends] don't know him". This conjuring up of a fictitious boyfriend is something that Reece did too. Not only does the hetero/lesbian binary reinforce compulsory heterosexuality by framing same-sex attraction negatively, but it also reproduces the experience of sexual attraction as normative and compulsory, thereby delegitimising asexuality. My participants' experiences show how age intersects with gender and sexuality to make the performance of sexuality a compulsory component of performing femininity. Heterosexuality was preferable, same-sex attraction was embarrassing, and asexuality was an impossibility.

The crush declaration marked a starting point for a series of (hetero)sexual performative acts, all of which correlated with specific ages. Reece explains that starting high school brought with it an expectation to have her first kiss:

Reece: I didn't have my first [kiss] for a long, like late, I was late compared to everyone else. And for me that was definitely a pressure like I need to do this, it doesn't matter if you wanted it to be special or something, but you just needed to get it done.

The first kiss represents the next performative act of heterosexuality, one which was also made compulsory by friends. Reece tells us that her friends would talk about their first kisses, making her feel "not in the loop". That Reece talks about needing to "get it done" points to the performativity of heterosexuality. The first kiss is constructed as a milestone on a heterosexual checklist. This links back to what Sage expressed about being "straight until proven otherwise". Failure to meet certain expectations timeously – a first crush, dressing in a girly way, a first kiss – constitutes proof of non-heterosexuality.

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The pressure to perform heterosexuality has continued into my participants' experiences at present, although their capacity to resist these expectations appears to have grown. Sage shares that since breaking up with her long-term boyfriend, "everyone's been asking [her] when [she's] getting into a relationship". Reece tells us that "especially when it comes to dating and that type of stuff, when you're our age it's expected that you're supposed to have done this or know this", otherwise you risk being seen as "different" or "weird". Similarly, Frances says that her friends who are in relationships often talk about their boyfriends, recounting a scenario when a friend tells her, "'I've been dating this guy for one year and we've done this and this' and I'm [Frances] like *ah no* [awkward tone] and they expect you to know what's going on". In Sandy's words, "people our age are having sex", and talking about their (hetero)sexual knowledge and experiences amongst friends is normalised. It may seem that a sexual relationship is the next item on the heterosexual checklist, but my participants exhibit agency in resisting these pressures.

For Sage and Reece, finding out about and claiming asexuality as their sexual identities has helped them to make sense of their experiences and feel more comfortable with not meeting heterosexual expectations. Now, when asked who she likes and when she's getting into a relationship, Sage tells friends she "doesn't want anyone". Reece is hesitant to claim an asexual identity too definitively because she feels she will "have to live up to that expectation of being that label", an idea that is reminiscent of the sense of expectation and performativity created by compulsory heterosexuality. Reece says that she "tell[s] people [she's] asexual, 'cause that's just how [she] feels at the moment"; asexuality becomes a tool for naming and explaining her experiences and for making sense of her non-conformance to compulsory heterosexuality. Sandy tells us about "the pressure that people put themselves under these days with this whole relationship thing", but that for her "it's whatever". Similarly, while a heterosexual relationship is important to Frances, who identifies "finding true love" as a "huge milestone" in her future, she feels that "it doesn't really matter what everyone else is doing around [her]" because she "just go[es] with [her] own flow". Both Sandy and Frances identify as heterosexual, but have, since getting older, resisted the compulsion to perform this heterosexuality in the ways that are expected or normalised.

5.4 Future imaginings of gender and sexuality

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We have seen thus far how age intersects with gender and sexuality to reinforce compulsory heterosexuality as my participants get older. We also get some indication, however, that my participants have, more recently, developed a criticality regarding gendered and heterosexualised expectations. This leads us to the looking forward portion of my participants' narratives – how do compulsory heterosexuality as well as resistance and agency feature in my participants' depictions of their future selves?

In her Theme Three artwork about her future self, Reece uses a cloud metaphor to depict different aspects of her identity and how she sees them changing or staying the same over time:

Figure 5.3. *Looking Forward, Envisioning Myself,* Reece, 2020, crayon and watercolour pencils.

In her video, she explains that "the blue cloud, represents me, who I am, my gender … And that parts of me are always gonna be set in stone … So you know like a heavy cloud, a heavy cloud doesn't break up". Sage echoes this, telling us that "with my gender, that's very set in stone, I am female". There is a permanence in the way that my participants speak about and conceptualise their gender identities; being cisgender young women is something they have always known and

which will remain constant over time. This stands in stark contrast to Reece's conceptualisation of her gender expression, which she represents with the green cloud. Reece explains that "[her] appearance is this green mess that's not very clear, which is how I feel my appearance would be, it's always gonna be changing, it doesn't have a set uniform shape". Sage agrees with Reece, highlighting the green cloud as the part of Reece's artwork that she resonated with the most. Sage tells us that "[she] liked the way [Reece] said with the cloud that represents her appearance and how it's like not a permanent thing, like how it shifts and stuff". Keeping in mind the significance of clothing in the construction of sexualised genders, we see a sense of freedom coming through in my participants' imaginings of their future selves. The conversation shifts from how and why my participants feel compelled to conform to a particular version and performance of femininity in certain contexts, to a more optimistic conceptualisation of gender expression in which my participants are once again free to 'do whatever they want'. While age had previously intersected with gender and sexuality to reinforce and compound heteronormativity, in my participants' future depictions of themselves getting older is framed in terms of freedom and agency.

This sense of freedom from heteronormativity is also reflected in my participants' conceptualisations of their future sexuality identities and experiences. In Figure 5.3, Reece uses the red/yellow cloud to depict her future sexuality:

> Reece: [The red cloud represents] sexuality because, it's also like all coloured and fluid 'cause you know I think sexuality is fluid, especially mine, so at the current I am who I am, but it will change or won't change you know depending on the situation or how the wind blows, you know to reveal new parts or new aspects that are in this cloud of me.

This conceptualisation of sexuality as fluid and shifting is reflected in both Reece and Sandy's intentional rejection of sexuality identifiers. Reece explains that while she tells people that she is asexual, she is cautious in using this term too definitively because "if you put a label on yourself like oh I'm bi or I'm this or I'm that then you're always gonna have to live up to that expectation". Similarly, Sandy tells us "I don't like labels", explaining that while she is "probably a cis straight woman" she also has "tendencies to be like ooh hi hey girl what's up?". Sage echoes this, telling us that "at the moment [asexuality] is something that describes me and like at the moment I don't think it will change, but I'm not ruling it out for the future". For Reece, Sandy and Sage, sexuality identifiers serve a utilitarian purpose – they use these terms to explain to others the attractions they tend to have but do not feel that they are determining or innate. There is a certain

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freedom and agency that Reece, Sandy and Sage find in not holding on too tightly to sexuality identifiers. While growing up they felt a need to declare and perform heterosexuality, they are beginning to resist the compulsion to "live up to [the] expectation" of a particular sexuality identity, a resistance which they see continuing into their future.

In our discussions about sexuality, it becomes clear that my participants' understanding of sexuality as fluid is not only about freedom and agency but also confusion. Sandy tells us repeatedly that "I'm a very cis straight woman" and that "guys are my thing", but also qualifies this by telling us that she has "tendencies" towards girls, explaining that "it's a really confusing thing". Sandy tells us that she wonders a lot about how other young people find certainty in their sexuality identities, saying, "I see a lot of people coming out as like oh I'm bisexual, or stuff like that, and I'm lesbian, and I think about it, I'm like what goes on to know that you're that? I really wanna know what clicks". Reece has a similar feeling about the certainty of sexuality identities. In speaking about Sex Education[5], the only television series in which she recalls seeing an asexual character, Reece tells us that she does not connect with the character's experiences, explaining that "they made it seem like a definite thing that you know but really it isn't". Instead, Reece would like to see an asexual character "going through and wondering about their sexuality, not being like oh okay I am this". Both participants find discomfort with the idea of claiming a sexuality identity definitively, not simply because they conceptualise sexuality as fluid per se, but because they are uncertain of their own sexuality identity.

In comparing my participants' conceptualisations of gender and of sexuality, we see that gender identity is understood as a constant and inherent part of the self, while sexuality identity is constructed as fluid and shifting, a component of identity that is marked by both freedom and uncertainty. What emerges from this is the sense that gender identity is intrapersonal and therefore something one can know with certainty, while sexuality identity is interpersonal, found in relations with others and therefore something to be created or discovered; gender identity is conceptualised as a kind of 'being' while sexuality identity is conceptualised as a 'doing'. This is most clear in my participants' talk about sexuality being primarily a future and 'adult' experience; not having engaged in sexual relationships is understood as a limited engagement with sexuality more generally. While our discussions showed that sexuality has featured significantly in their childhood and more recent experiences, my participants tended to define sexuality as romantic love and

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sexual relationships, conceptualising these experiences as largely unavailable to teenagers. In our first discussion, Sandy asks Reece and Frances if their parents' divorce "altered [their] image of who they would one day fall in love with". Here Sandy frames romantic love as a future event, suggesting that falling in love is not something that Frances and Reece could have experienced already as school-attending young women. Sandy reiterates this notion later on in the course when she tells us that she thinks people her age should refrain from engaging in sexual relationships "at least until we're old enough to actually handle having sex", by which she means being more emotionally mature and financially independent. Sage echoes this construction of sexuality when she describes her mental space as an asexual person, explaining that "there's no sexual things, no alcohol, no drugs, nothing adult-ish". There are heteronormative gender undertones in my participants' constructions of themselves as asexual, whether temporarily because of their age or more permanently because of their gender identities. Existing literature shows the significant investment that young women have in presenting themselves as 'respectful' or 'virginal' - there is a heteronormative and patriarchal capital that comes with such a presentation. By framing sexuality as a kind of 'doing' rather than 'being', and conceptualising that doing as a primarily future experience, my participants resist notions of themselves as sexual agents.

5.5 Bringing my findings together

To recap, this chapter has employed a temporal lens in looking at my participants' multiple constructions, performances and experiences of gender and sexuality. In tracking the development of my participants' identities, we see how age intersects with gender and sexuality to produce temporally specific versions of femininity. First were the girly-girl and tomboy versions of femininity – both implicitly cisgender and 'asexually' heterosexual, by which I mean these identities were assumed to be heterosexual, but a performance of that sexuality was not required. Next, were the hetero and lesbian versions of femininity; as my participants got older, they were increasingly expected to act upon and prove their heterosexuality, while asexuality became an impossibility. Lastly, we see a future version of femininity, one that positions my participants' future selves as sexual agents, unattached to sexual identifiers and free in their gender expression. What we can take from this is the central role that age plays in the making of femininities; in seeking to understand young genders and sexualities, it is important to pay attention to how

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constructions of childhood, teenagerhood and adulthood intersect with gender and sexuality to produce, enable and constrain particular versions of gender and sexuality identities at particular moments in time.

CHAPTER 6

A PICTURE BOOK LOOK INTO THE MAKING OF YOUNG GENDERS AND SEXUALITIES: THE SPATIALITY OF IDENTITY

The previous chapter explored the making of young genders and sexualities from a temporal perspective. This chapter applies a spatial lens, asking how the shifting between institutional, social and physical spaces shape the way my participants embody gender and sexuality. As with the previous lens, the focus on the spatiality of identity was built into the design of the art course. Theme Two asked participants to look about and locate themselves in the spaces and places that they feel gives them a sense of belonging. What emerged throughout the course and across the themes, however, were the spaces and places that forcefully impose normative understandings of gender and sexuality onto my participants and constrain the versions of gender and sexuality that they enact and with which they identify. This chapter begins by exploring the key spaces that police and regulate my participants' identity expression, namely the nuclear family, the school and public areas. We then move to the spaces and places that open up greater possibilities in terms of the versions of gender and sexuality available to my participants, exploring how such spaces enable my participants' agency in expressing themselves and their identities.

6.1 Spaces that constrain: The nuclear family unit

The first space that my participants identify as important in the making of their identities is the home and their families. In speaking about their childhood selves, my participants were quick to establish the nuclear family unit as normative. Frances and Reece were the first to place the family structure on the agenda by depicting their parents' divorce as a significant event in their childhoods, an event which Frances says "definitely shaped who [she] is a lot".

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Figure 6.1. *Looking Back, Remembering Myself,* Frances, 2020, acrylic and charcoal.

Frances' artwork revolves almost entirely around her parents' divorce, depicted by the central figure with two faces (Figure 6.1). Frances explains that "the girl's face that's screaming, it's just like there were always fights … before my mom and dad got divorced. And then this is like calm 'cause there were calm moments and then there were just like burst outs". In our discussion, she tells us that her parents' divorce has made her feel that "you never know what's going to happen [in life]", creating a sense of unpredictability and instability. The intense emotion depicted in Frances' artwork is echoed in that of Reece's:

Figure 6.2. *Looking Back, Remembering Myself,* Reece, 2020, acrylic and pencil.

Reece uses the metaphor of hands moulding a piece of clay to represent the things that have shaped her sense of self growing up. Her childhood is first depicted by the yellow area with pink and blue stripes, which represents a time when she was a tomboy and could "do whatever [she] wants". She then tells us that "the black line shows that the care-free fun stuff it like *kkggg"* – a guttural sound accompanied by a hand gesture going across her throat to indicate that the care-free nature of her childhood ended. This ending was caused by her parents' divorce, a time marked by anger and sadness for Reece which is represented by the small bits of red and blue respectively in the dark area of the piece of clay. In our discussion, Reece explains that she felt "angry that [she] wouldn't have a normal family anymore" and "sad because … your family's gonna be different". The construction of a divorced family as different, abnormal and unstable relationally constructs the nuclear family unit as normative and secure, a construction which serves to reinstate and legitimise the latter.

My participants not only connect their parents' divorce with feelings of sadness and anger, but also with the way that they conceptualise love. When Sandy asks Reece and Frances whether "the whole divorce thing altered your image of who you would one day fall in love with", they both answer a very definite yes. Both participants feel that trusting people is difficult, but Frances also explains that "you don't know what love really is". Reece agrees, telling us that "when you see love you don't think it's real" and that she feels that "what people call love is just that you're attracted to the person's physique or it's lust, it's not necessarily real love". The concept of "real love" and the construction of divorce as the absence of such love works to uphold the legitimacy of the nuclear family unit; divorce is conceptualised as an individual failure to differentiate between real and fake love, rather than the imposition of a particular family structure. We see here how the nuclear family unit as an institutional space works not only to pathologise experiences of divorce, but also to reinstate the desirability of the nuclear family structure as a future aspiration.

Divorce is not the only instance in which the concept of a nuclear family emerged. When talking about how they grew up thinking that "everybody was pre-programmed straight", Sandy tells us that this comes from never "see[ing] mom and mom or dad and dad" in their homes or wider communities. Even when talking about the non-heterosexuality that they did not see growing up, my participants still frame sexuality in terms of two people who are presumably married and have children. This is also reflected in the way that my participants conceptualise their future relationships. Frances and Sandy both envision themselves "getting married and having kids". Similarly, Sage, while identifying as asexual, sees herself living with a partner who is a best friend and adopting children together. All three of these participants frame their future in terms of the nuclear family unit, although Sage does challenge the heterosexuality of that family structure. Reece on the other hand, tells us that she sees herself living alone. She describes a future in which she is "the breadwinner for [her]self and [she's] gonna take care of [her]self". Interesting here is the way that Reece takes the traditional family unit – the husband who provides, the wife who nurtures, and the child who is provided for and nurtured – and positions herself as all three simultaneously. Reece draws on both her asexual identity and her parents' divorce in explaining why she imagines her future in this way. It is both because she does not desire a sexual partner and because she fears the consequences of falling in love (i.e. divorce and heartbreak) that the nuclear family becomes both unavailable and undesirable to Reece.

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6.2 Spaces that constrain: The school

Another institutional space central to the making or rather constraining of my participants' identities is their school. As school-attending youth, the large majority of my participants' time is spent at GHS and so the schooling culture and norms play a significant role in determining what versions of gender and sexuality are available to them. Rather than being a space where normative understandings of gender and sexuality are challenged and reworked, my participants describe a distinctly heteronormative and racialised culture at GHS. When asked what spaces they would never include in their Theme Two artworks, my participants unanimously answered "school". Frances tells us that "[she doesn't] think [school] does anything for [her] identity" because "it tries to put you in a box". In unpacking this, my participants identify the school uniform policy as being the main culprit in enforcing and disciplining a particular normative version of femininity.

First, is the gendered nature of the uniform policy. Sandy explains that as girls, "[they're] not allowed to wear pants which is the most annoying thing on earth because one, winter is really cold and it's just way more comfortable to wear pants than a skirt". Reece agrees, explaining that "for [her], [she] never really liked wearing skirts and they've always felt different". Frances would also prefer to wear pants, but has resigned herself to the policy, explaining that "[they've] tried so many times to get girls pants and stuff but it just hasn't worked so it's something that [she] knows [they] can't change". Important to take into account is the symbolic power that clothing has in constructing and signifying a girly-girl/tomboy and hetero/lesbian binary of femininities; by requiring that girls wear pants, then, GHS reproduces and institutionalises girly-girl, hetero-femininity as normative and compulsory. The school uniform policy is a powerful mechanism for disciplining learners into binary and heterosexist versions of gender.

Second, are the hair rules contained within the school uniform policy at GHS. Sandy was the first to place hair on the agenda, expressing frustration with the disallowance of an afro as an acceptable school hairstyle. Sage and Reece express feeling constrained by the rules regarding hair colour – they are not able to dye their hair red or purple, which is something that they both feel restricts them in expressing their identity. Sage explains that teachers and school management

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"always say like you're a teenager you need to express yourself, but they don't really give us room to express ourselves". When asked why they think these rules exist, Reece tells us that school management "want [their] school to have a better reputation, so they're trying to make everyone look neat and formal". Sage recounts a conversation about the uniform rules in which her mom told her "it teaches discipline" – a reason that Sage finds unreasonable, explaining that she feels "sitting in class and not talking and respecting teachers is discipline enough". Both Sage and Reece conceptualise the school uniform rules as the imposition of an ideal onto learners to construct an overall image of what it means to be a GHS learner, but it is Sandy who points to the racialised character of that ideal.

Sandy tells us that these rules are what come with attending a "model C school" which is always "predominantly Caucasian", also described by Sandy as "a good school" while making inverted comma hand gestures. While Sage and Reece are not able to dye their hair red or purple, Sandy is not allowed to wear her hair as it grows naturally, that is, "not down" but "out". She explains that young black women at GHS "have to spend so much money on getting [their] hair braided" or "relaxing [their] hair" in order to adhere to the uniform policy. While Reece and Sage have to refrain from making certain changes to their hair, Sandy has to spend time and money to mould her hair into the requirements stipulated by the school. Sandy also highlights how the rules are differentially imposed, recalling a recent incident in which "a white girl came to school with braids on". Sandy describes feeling shocked and angry, conceptualising this as an act of cultural appropriation. More than this, however, Sandy tells us that "she didn't have the right colour which made [her and her friends] even more angry 'cause we were like, okay if you're gonna get braids at least follow the rules that are put in place for *us*, constricting *us* [emphasis expressed in tone of voice]"**.** Sandy tells us that her and her friends have gotten into trouble numerous times for having braids that are a different colour to their natural hair, while "other girls" (read white girls) are allowed to have blonde highlights and the girl in this story was not reprimanded for having the wrong colour braids. The connection that Sandy makes between her experiences of the hair policies and the broader context of GHS being a predominantly white model C school points to the racialised character of the schooling culture at GHS. The uniform policy which makes girly-girl, hetero-femininity compulsory intersects with hair policies that work to normalise and enforce white femininity as well.

Sandy explains that the uniform and hair policies at GHS are something that she, as a part of the Youth Advocacy Council (YAC), has tried to change, although unsuccessfully. The YAC is an extra-mural in which members meet after school to discuss "controversial topics that are never spoken about at school" such as "hair and uniform", "the LGBTQ community" and "institutionalised racism". The topics that Sandy identifies as controversial, and which are not discussed within the dominant school space, relate directly to the binary, heterosexualised and racialised versions of gender and sexuality sanctioned and enforced by the school as shown above. That learners need an external group, one which meets outside of school hours and is not integrated into any of the formal decision-making structures of the school, highlights how entrenched and institutionalised the silence surrounding topics of race, gender and sexuality is. Sandy explains that while the YAC are very selective with the changes that they bring forward, purposely "spac[ing] it out so as to prioritise a handful of issues, they are not often successful in achieving transformation. Despite there being "a lot of noise from students" about issues such as the uniform policy, Sandy tells us that "change is very limited". Frances feels that "when [the principal] is gone it'll change", to which Reece adds "he's very old school". Sandy agrees, explaining that "change will only come if adults are willing to change", but that the principal, who is the main decision-maker and most authoritative adult at the school, "is very old school which annoys us [the YAC] so much because there are so many things that would change for the better if he were to be open-minded about it". The learners at GHS are frustrated with the school's gendered, heterosexualised and racialised culture, but are extremely limited in their capacity to create change, even when they organise as a collective such as the YAC. It is important to note that during the lockdown, when my participants did not physically attend school but participated in online school, they were not constrained by school uniform policies – they could wear pants, Reece dyed her hair red, and Sandy wore her hair in an afro hairstyle. This highlights how the uniform policy has less to do with discipline and enabling learning, but rather with the way in which GHS learners are presented to the public. Outside of the physical space of school, school management is no longer able or as invested in regulating learners' bodies.

6.3 Spaces that constrain: Public places

In Chapter Five we saw how expressing a tomboy version of femininity in certain spaces created an uncomfortable kind of hypervisibility that my participants actively avoided by wearing girly-girl clothing in these contexts. In a discussion I had with Reece and Sandy, however, we found that the performance of hetero-femininity is not unconditionally rewarded. Instead, my participants shared experiences of public places such as the beach, church and shopping malls as spaces where their bodies and expression of femininities are highly regulated.

In a discussion about their future selves, I ask Reece and Sandy whether "there [are] any things that you want to change, not so much with yourself, but maybe with the world or your environment", which prompts a discussion about the patriarchal regulation of women and their bodies. Sandy shares that the recent increase in visibility of the anti-gender-based violence movement has made her feel "not confident in the fact that [she's] a woman" and that she's "actually uncomfortable in [her] own skin". Sandy uses the example of wearing hetero-feminine items of clothing, like a crop top, a skirt or a bikini, as something that she wants to do but is not always comfortable doing because of the unwanted male attention that she receives. Both participants talk about how they sometimes dress in oversized boyish clothes, not as an expression of their identity, but as a way of covering up their bodies. Sandy tells us that she's often felt "so self-conscious about how [her] body would look" so she finds "comfort in just being covered". Reece explains that as she's gotten older, she's felt "scared that she's not being modest enough", that she's "more aware of how her body looks like and wouldn't want people looking at her". There are certain spaces, namely public places, where my participants feel highly uncomfortable with the way that their bodies are (hetero)sexualised.

Both Reece and Sandy share specific instances of when they felt vulnerable and uncomfortable in their bodies as young women. I present them here in full, giving their words priority and power in the way that these stories are told[6]:

> Sandy: One time at church, I wore this skirt, that was my first time wearing a skirt ever … So I wore that skirt to church, it was cute, it wasn't too short, it was amazing, I was like okay I like this. So I was setting up the sound at church as I would normally do and after church, my older brother came up to me and was like yo one of the band mates was like he felt so uncomfortable with your skirt. And ja he was like if he was your father he wouldn't have let you leave the

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[6] While these exerts are from the same discussion, they did not follow on from one another directly

house in that skirt. And oh my goodness that crushed my soul 'cause I was like I have never worn, I've always been wearing pants, I never wore dresses, and finally I was like you know what this skirt is cute I really like it I really wanna wear it, it's not too short so I don't think it's gonna be revealing … And yeah so ever since that day I never wore that skirt

Reece: And like I once went to the beach with my mom and we were lying like this side of the pier, and there were guys on top of the pier catcalling me, watching me, the whole time I was trying to tan. And I just felt so uncomfortable, I couldn't do it anymore, like I literally went and sat down, wrapped myself in a towel and asked my mom to leave. 'Cause you know you feel so uncomfortable just wearing certain clothes, and we shouldn't. It's not our fault that other people think that's nice, it's not for them to say or to tell us that they think we are

The material restrictions that catcalling and the regulation of women's clothing by men have on these young women's lives is clear; Reece no longer goes to the beach unless a man is with her and Sandy does not feel comfortable wearing a bikini at all. Sandy explains how she's caught between feeling "mad" and "angry" at the idea that a young women's clothes can be seen as her "asking for it", or rather consent to sexual attention and advances, but also the reality that "if [she's] wearing a skirt [she'll] probably get hit on five times in a matter of ten minutes", which she describes as "the scariest thing on earth". She explains that "every time [she's] in something that [she] feels snatched [7]in, it just turns", and that the fear of gender-based violence "actually rings in [her] head, like if [she's] wearing this it would be easy for [her] to be taken and raped". In a patriarchal context such as South Africa, public places are seen to be dangerous and uncomfortable for young women to occupy. This highlights an important insight into the construction of femininities. My participants' accounts of the pervasive regulation and policing of women's bodies reminds us that femininities are not only constructed in relation to each other, but to masculinities too, and are therefore necessarily subordinate in patriarchal contexts. To express normative hetero-femininity is not to experience power but rather vulnerability, and it is in public spaces such as the beach where this vulnerability is felt most.

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[7] A term popularised by the American gay and drag community meaning to look good

6.4 Spaces that both constrain and enable: The friendship group and friend relationships

A space that my participants all identify as being particularly important to them and their sense of self is their friendship group and friend relationships. All four of my participants describe their friends as an important source of support and enjoyment, and one which they missed, particularly during the lockdown and the associated social isolation. Sage explains that even when seeing one of her best friends at school for the first time since school closures, "[they] couldn't hug or anything so [she's] definitely missed that". For Reece, sitting with her friends and sharing food at breaks was an important part of her day that she has missed. In her Theme Three artwork, Frances highlights her friends as being one of the three most important things to her and her identity, both present and future:

Figure 6.3. Looking Forward, Envisioning Myself, Frances, 2020, crayon.

Our discussions about friendship, gender and sexuality revealed that friend relationships play both a regulatory and enabling role in the making of my participants' identities. In the previous chapter, we saw how friend groups were central to the reproduction of compulsory

heterosexuality through the declaration and discussion of (heterosexual) crushes. In speaking about who their friends are, my participants expressed having girls and boys as friends but also identified gender as a significant fissure within their friendship groups. Sage tells us that in her friendship group, while "there's a good mix of guys and girls, [she does] find that sometimes the girls just have their own conversation at break and the guys have theirs". Something that frequently comes up in conversation amongst Sage and her friends regardless of gender, however, is "shipping[3] people together and just saying oh they would look cute as a couple". Frances and Reece describe a similar gender split in the two groups of friends that they are both part of. They have an all-girls group with whom they talk about "personal things", feel comfortable to "dress as a slob", and spend a lot of time at each other's houses. Frances and Reece construct this group as significantly different to their friendships with boys – friends with whom they "go out" and "go to parties". Reece describes a typical night out with their guy friends as follows:

> Reece: we just, dancing and going out, some girls are usually trying to get with a boy, and then near the end of the night it's looking after the one or two ones that had a little bit too much, and you know things like that

My participants' experiences suggest that gender is a significant determining factor in the nature of friendships – what one talks about or does with a particular friend depends on whether they are a girl or a boy. Boys and girls are constructed as fundamentally different in their interests, but what brings them together are activities or topics of discussion that are distinctly heterosexualised.

Binary understandings of gender and compulsory heterosexuality continue to be normalised within my participants' friendship groups, but they also describe particular friendships which serve to challenge normativity and affirm their identities. Sandy explains that when she was younger, she "fell into those pressures with people around [her] who were like, oh like we're dating so you should do it too". While she used to "try so hard to be part of the crowd", she says she has now "learnt to create [her] own crowd". Sandy tells us that she has "found some gold", in that she has made friends who have similar beliefs to her and share her passion for activism and social justice. Sandy says her "favourite thing" is that they are diverse – she is Xhosa, one friend is Sotho, a few friends are Zulu and then "one white friend in the mix". For Sandy, this diversity leads to interesting and constructive conversations about topics such as gender and sexuality. She recalls a

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conversation in which the girls in her group asked the boys, "how do you actually feel about gay people?". This question alone marks a significant divergence from the silence surrounding sexuality diversity described by my other participants. The following is a reconstructed conversation between Sandy and her friends based on what she shared with us:

Boys: We're not gonna be mad if a person's gay but we don't want them to be gay towards us.

Girls: But you're not gay?

Boys: No we're not gay

Girls: Why would you feel offended? It's the same as if a girl hits on you and you don't like her, you're just gonna tell her no right?

Boys: Ja I guess so

Girls: It's the same concept. You just tell a gay guy no I don't like you that way. You don't have to be like 'oh my god you're gay leave me alone!'.

Sandy tells us that "those kind of conversations" are commonplace within her friendship group, and that they have learnt how to communicate with each other freely and openly about important issues like sexuality diversity. She says that they often talk about the posts they see on social media about gender-based violence and how it makes them feel, and last year they attended the anti-GBV protest in their area together. For Sandy, her friendship group is a space where normativity is questioned and explicitly discussed. As a self-proclaimed activist, an ethnically diverse group of friends passionate about social justice is the crowd that she has created and which enables her to be herself.

Also important to my participants are the individual friendships that they have. These relationships appear to be less shaped by the heteronormative group norms within their friendship groups. While sexuality diversity is not something that Sage speaks about with her friendship group, saying that "a lot of [her] friends are Christian" and they believe that "straight is the only way", Sage has made one friend who is pansexual. It was in speaking to this friend about pansexuality that Sage expressed never having understood "the whole sexual attraction thing" and this friend suggested she read up about asexuality. Following that conversation, Sage spent a lot of time in online LGBTQ spaces, such as queer Reddit pages and blogs, and has since identified as asexual. For Sage, forming a friendship with a pansexual person created a space in which

heterosexuality is neither normative nor compulsory, thereby opening up the possibility for Sage to explore her own sexuality. Sandy also expresses having an important friendship with a young gay man. She tells us that it has been "the best experience for [her], actually talking to someone who's gay, who actually goes out on dates and actually does stuff with guys". Forming a friendship with an openly gay person has made sexuality diversity less abstract or foreign to Sandy. She adds that "actually seeing the happiness, seeing the joy, you're just like how could I hate that?". Both Sage and Sandy's experiences demonstrate the value and importance of cross-sexuality friendships, both for challenging normative and compulsory heterosexuality within friendship spaces, and for deepening the acceptance of sexuality diversity.

6.5 Spaces that enable: The relationship between space, action and identity

Thus far, we have looked at two institutional spaces that limit and discipline the versions of gender and sexuality available to my participants, the public spaces where women's bodies are patriarchally policed, and friendship relationships as a social space that both constrains and enables counter-normative ways of being. We now turn to the spaces that my participants centred in their Theme Two artworks, spaces where they feel they most belong. What emerges is an important connection between space and action; my participants depicted spaces in which they are able to *do* certain activities that they conceptualise as central to their identity.

Figure 6.4. *Looking About, Locating Myself,* Sandy, 2020, acrylic and pen.

Sandy's artwork centres around a drawing of her performing on stage in Johannesburg last year. This was a significant moment for Sandy because she "actually got to perform [her] original music in front of people that actually heard [her]". The two large circles below this image are coloured black and green to represent Sandy's all-black outfit and the green lighting on stage. The production value of her performance was important to Sandy. In speaking about the lighting and stage set-up, she tells us that "it popped for [her]" because "[her] vision of who Sandy is came out that night". Sandy explains in her video that for her, this image answers the question of "what place makes your identity". Being on stage and performing her songs allows her to be "the Sandy that [she] sees in the future, that [she] wants to manifest into life"; the stage becomes an enabling space for embodying a part of her identity that is not always available as a young person attending school.

Sandy also tells us that performing on stage "brings out who [she] is as a woman". She highlights African-American soul artist Erykah Badu as a symbol and model of the kind of musician she envisions herself to be:

> Sandy: She [Erykah Badu] doesn't look like anyone else; she doesn't talk like anyone else, she doesn't sing like anyone else. And I'm like okay, I wanna be my own, I don't wanna talk like anyone else, I don't wanna sing like anyone else, I don't wanna dress like anyone else, I want my art to be my art and my form and not another person's form. And just the feeling of solely being herself, even though the world puts her down and says these things, she is who she is.

Sandy relates particularly to the idea of "the world putting her down". In speaking about her music, Sandy tells us about one of her original songs that she wrote recently called Afro. She tells us that she wrote the song in response to "people [who] put me down just for my hair", and that "when the system is against me, I need something to uplift me". That something is her music; Sandy uses song writing and performance to claim her identity within a context where she is policed and oppressed as a young black woman. The intersections of race and gender are unmissable in the way that Sandy speaks about her identity. In this case, music is a medium for self-expression, and an intricate part of that self that Sandy is expressing is not only femininity but black femininity.

Figure 6.14. *Looking About, Locating Myself,* Sage, 2020, watercolour.

In her second artwork, Sage chose to depict her mental space as one that is important to her sense of self. In her accompanying video, Sage created a montage of how she made her artwork

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as a way to "symbolise how we don't just appear in a certain space", that each space is created in the same way as an artwork is. Sage tells us that the fantasy genre has played a central role in the making of her mental space. From "the stories [her] mom used to tell [her]" growing up, to the books she reads and movies she watches now, Sage says "[her] life has always revolved a lot around fantasy". In her artwork, Sage makes a connection between her love of the fantasy genre and her asexual identity. She explains that the butterflies in each corner, made from pages of a book and splattered with the symbolically gendered colours of blue and pink, and placed on a background of the asexuality flag, represent how "both male and female feature in [her] mental space but not romantically or sexually". The way that Sage conceptualises book characters in her mental space is a product and reflection of her asexuality. She adds that the "mythical appearance" of the central figure is intended to create a fantastical quality to her artwork, and "the youthful appearance of the character also plays into the innocence and purity of this space", that is, her mental space. It is in this space that Sage is able to explore and claim her asexual identity.

Figure 6.5. *Looking About, Locating Myself,* Reece, 2020, pen and crayon.

Reece depicted a number of spaces in her second artwork, but the one which is most prominent, and around which the other drawings are organised, is the ocean, represented by her drawing of a mask and snorkel. Reece tells us that she has "always felt a connection to the ocean", that it is her "passion" and that she "feels like [she] belongs in there a hundred percent". Scuba diving is her favourite way to explore and connect with the ocean, an activity that her dad introduced her to and which they often enjoy together. While Reece feels that she "definitely" belongs in the ocean when diving, she struggles with the commonly held perception that she, as a young woman, does not belong. Reece explains that "as a girl, the boys, the males always bring your cylinders to you 'cause you know they're heavy but I can bring my own cylinder". Reece says that she has done the necessary coursework and is "perfectly capable of doing it", making it "really frustrating" when the boys and men in her group insist. Similarly, Reece tells us that when she and her sister are a dive pair, which is unusual because usually there is at least one man in a pair, "the instructors and dive masters are more looking after [them] 'cause [they're] just the two girls". Reece explains that diving in the ocean is dangerous, and the "special treatment" that she receives as a young woman creates a false sense of security. While Reece speaks to the gendered and heteronormative nature of scuba diving, she also clearly demarcates the ocean as her space, a space for a young woman. She constructs herself as a highly capable diver who has the strength and expertise to navigate this traditionally masculine space and, in doing so, challenges normative and binary ideas about gender.

At first glance, it may seem that these artworks deal merely with the hobbies that occupy my participants' time. Upon closer examination, however, an important link is uncovered between the activity that they love, the space that enables it, and their identities. Sandy uses music to express her identity as a young black woman, and her song writing to work through important experiences of regulation and oppression. The stage as a space enables her to embody a particular version of black femininity that she finds empowering, and to share her experiences as a young black woman with others by performing her original music. Sage uses fantasy books and movies to fill her mental space with all things mystical and fun; a space in which her asexual identity is reflected and expressed. Reece uses diving as a way to deepen her connection with the ocean, and the ocean as a space enables her to embody a strong version of femininity, challenging the gender binary and heteronormativity. My participants' experiences reveal how crucial it is for young people to have spaces in which particular expressions of identity are enabled. It is the three spaces described in

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this section where my participants are most able to explore who they are and express their identities – a process of self-work which allows these young women to establish a strong sense of self and to experience acceptance.

6.6 Bringing my findings together

To review, this chapter has applied a spatial lens in looking at the ways that my participants depict, perform and identify with different versions of gender and sexuality. We saw the constraining and enabling role that spaces and places play in shaping identity construction. Family and school are both seen to be highly constraining institutional spaces. The normalisation of the nuclear family unit works to reify heteronormative and heterosexualised versions of gender and sexuality – (heterosexual) love leads to marriage leads to children leads to happiness and personal success, even when personal experience appears to prove otherwise. The school, on the other hand, is seen to powerfully impose binary, heteronormative, heterosexualised and racialised versions of gender and sexuality onto its learners and their bodies, especially through the enforcement of hair and uniform policies. While occupying the physical school space, girly-girl and hetero versions of femininity are prescribed for the four young women in this study. Public places such as the beach and shopping malls are seen to be spaces where young women's bodies are patriarchally policed through acts of catcalling and other unwanted (hetero)sexual advances, restricting young women's freedom of movement and clothing choices.

Friendship groups and friend relationships are seen to be important social spaces for my participants, and thus play a powerful role in both constraining and enabling different versions of gender and sexuality. While mixed-gender friendship groups are seen to be distinctly binary and heterosexualised in the way that boys and girls relate to and interact with one another, friendships are also seen to be important resources for challenging compulsory heterosexuality and homophobia.

Finally, we see the role that spaces and places have in connecting a sense of doing with being. Spaces, where my participants are able and enabled to enact versions of gender and sexuality that they conceptualise as central to their sense of self, are seen to be of great value to them. The different roles that certain spaces and places play in shaping which versions of gender and sexuality

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my participants perform further demonstrate the multiplicity of young genders and sexualities; identity and constructions thereof are neither determined nor determining. Instead, the four young women represented here are shown to move and shift between different spaces and the regulating norms that characterise them.

CHAPTER 7

A CRITICAL INTERPRETATION OF MEANINGS: DEEPENING AND REDIRECTING THE CONVERSATION ABOUT YOUNG GENDERS AND SEXUALITIES

In Chapters Five and Six I set out to take the reader on a picture-guided journey, one through a temporal lens and the other through a spatial lens, showing the reader what the art course was like, the actual visual depictions that the participants created, and the overall themes that emerged in describing the artworks and discussions. This constituted the first level of Critical Discourse Analysis – the linguistic description of text. We found the multiplicity of young genders and sexualities to be significant, with the participants switching between various versions of femininity in different temporal and spatial contexts, as well as the role of intersectionality in producing that multiplicity. We also saw the power that normativity within a particular space, be it social, physical or institutional, holds in enabling and constraining particular expressions of identity. These findings go a considerable way in answering my main research question, which asks how young people visually represent gender and sexuality. This section seeks to further answer this question by turning to the next two levels of analysis – interpreting the relationship between the text and discourse and explaining the relationship between discourse and broader systems of power. The first section explores how genders are sexualised, looking at the progressive sexualisation of young women's bodies over time and across spaces, and focusing on how the way that bodies are looked at and perceived works to reproduce and undermine systems of heteronormative and patriarchal power. The second section explores how sexualities are gendered, homing in on how constructions of divorce and asexuality disrupt and potentially transform the hegemonic gender order. Finally, the third section explores how genders and sexualities are racialised, highlighting hair as a powerful symbol for the ways in which racialised and racist systems of power are reproduced and resisted in post-apartheid South Africa.

7.1 Sexualised Genders: The relationship between the self, the body and identity

When, how and why are femininities sexualised?

In reviewing the ways in which the four young women in this study depicted themselves, their gender and their sexuality, an important relationship between the self, the body and identity emerges. Much of the artworks and the discussions centre around expressing who one is through how one looks or presents one's body. For example, to be a tomboy is to clothe one's body in a particular way and to do certain activities with that body. This finding aligns with the literature reviewed earlier in this thesis where, for example, participants in Zway and Boonzaier's (2015) study defined their tomboy identities in terms of masculine clothing and activities traditionally associated with boys. Initially, the participants in my study drew entirely on what Shefer, Ratele and Clowes (2017) call an "individualised discourse of clothes in the construction of the self" - clothing and appearance are conceptualised as a means of expressing an innate sense of self and identity. As time progressed, both in terms of the art course itself and the temporal context of the participants' artworks, a second discourse emerged as significant, one which is interpersonal and frames appearance as a signifier of shared meanings. Rather than clothing choices being motivated by what feels most reflective of an inner, individualised sense of self, the participants began choosing clothing and engaging in activities as a way of communicating normative identifications to other people. The way in which the participants conceptualised the relationship between the self, the body and identity shifted from I like to dress in boys' clothes and I am a girl; thus I am a tomboy, to I am a girl and I am not a lesbian, thus I dress in girly clothes. Which of these two discourses the participants prioritised was seen to be shaped by both their temporal and spatial context.

In probing these two contrasting ways of conceptualising and performing identity further, I noticed that each relates to a particular way in which the participants' bodies are looked at. In the case of an individualised discourse where clothing reflects an innate sense of self, the participants are looking inward at themselves, asking the question of who am I? In the second discourse, where clothing is used to communicate shared meanings about identity to others, the participants turn their attention to a more external kind of looking, asking the question of who do people perceive me to be? It is here that Butler's (1990) concept of the heterosexual matrix becomes useful. Remembering that the heterosexual matrix refers to a particular kind of logic which asserts that in order for bodies to be intelligible, the relationship between sex, gender and desire must be stable and heteronormative, I argue that the second discourse is produced by the gaze of the heterosexual matrix. Over time and in particular spaces, the participants' bodies are read through the lens of the

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heterosexual matrix. To use Reece's example, at a party, a young woman's body dressed in a masculine way is read as necessarily same-sex attracted. This is not the case in the participants' accounts of childhood where young girls who are dressed in a masculine way are read as tomboys. In the findings, we see how over time and in particular spaces, the gaze of the heterosexual matrix becomes increasingly powerful in shaping and regulating young women's bodies.

This brings us to an important question of why; why is the gaze of the heterosexual matrix less potent in childhood? I argue that this has to do with how the intersection of age shapes the ways that gender is sexualised. In constructing their childhood selves, the participants prioritise gender and implicitly construct themselves as necessarily asexual. Their artworks and discussions centre around a binary construction of boys and girls, and how they position their childhood selves as tomboys in relation to this. Absent is any discussion of desire or sexuality. There is an extensive body of literature documenting the discursive construction of children as asexual, a construction which adults often reproduce in relation to teenagers as well (Bhana, 2017; Prinsloo & Moletsane, 2013; Bastien, Kajula & Muhwezi, 2011). In this case, it is the participants themselves who reproduce ideas of childhood asexuality by framing love and romantic or sexual relationships as something that was inaccessible or unthinkable as young girls. This asexualisation of children, this denial of any kind of desire, makes the heterosexual matrix less applicable to the bodies of young girls and thus lessens the potency of compulsory heterosexuality. The heterosexual matrix tells us that there is a necessary relationship between sex, gender and desire, but when desire is denied this logic becomes less relevant and more possibilities in terms of gender expression are opened up. An individualised discourse of clothing as an expression of an innate sense of self appears more freely available to the participants because the relationship between gender expression and sexuality is rendered relatively null and void by their age. This should not, however, be understood as a performance that is entirely unrestricted. While the participants' expression of gender is less susceptible to a heteronormative gaze, their conceptualisation and performance of gender are still distinctly cisnormative. That my participants' childhood selves align with everything that they construct as 'boy' but do not constitute proof that the gender binary is false, points to an implicit conceptualisation of the relationship between sex and gender identity as necessarily fixed; they are drawing on and reproducing a discourse of the cisgendered body. While the asexualisation of childhood gender expression lessens the potency of heteronormativity, the participants' childhood

artworks and experiences both reflect and reproduce a cisnormative relationship between sex and gender identity.

As the participants shift to later temporal contexts as well as particular spatial contexts, the gaze of the heterosexual matrix becomes increasingly powerful. Other research has shown and explored the ways that heterosexuality, and normative understandings thereof, shape the ways that young women construct and experience their gender and sexuality identities (Shefer, 2016; Bhana & Anderson, 2013; Wood, 2012; Reddy & Dunne, 2007). The findings presented in this thesis deepen the conversation by exploring the process of how young women's identity construction develops, changes and remains constant over time and space. The temporal lens used in Chapter Five allows us to track how age intersects with gender and sexuality to produce (hetero) sexualised femininities, and the spatial lens in Chapter Six allows us to identify in which spaces a more interpersonal discourse of clothing as a signifier of shared meanings is prioritised. While the participants read their bodies cisnormatively from childhood, and continue to do so in other time periods, their bodies only start to be read heteronormatively as desire is introduced as relevant and applicable to them. As expectations to perform heterosexuality through declaring a crush or having a first kiss are created and enforced, so the participants' bodies are perceived through and regulated by the heterosexual matrix. We see, then, how the temporality and spatiality of femininities produce consistently cisnormative yet differently sexualised genders.

What does the sexualisation of femininities do (and not do)?

This brings us to the question of what the gaze of the heterosexual matrix does and does not do in the lives of the four young women in this study. From Butler's (1990) perspective, we see the inconsistencies that the participants' experiences and identities expose. Sandy identifies as a heterosexual young woman and predominantly performs a tomboy version of femininity; Sage identifies as an asexual young woman and predominantly performs a girly-girl version of femininity; both contradict heteronormative logic and disrupt essentialist ideas about identity. The participants also demonstrate the instability and non-fixity of gender expression and sexuality in the way that they conceptualise these identifications over time and space, juggling not one but multiple versions of femininity. At various stages in their identity formation and experiences of being young women, the participants expose the incoherency and inconsistencies of the gaze of

the heterosexual matrix. While the illegitimacy of heteronormative logic is clear, this does not mean that it is ineffectual. Rather, both Chapters Five and Six show the very material impact that the gaze of the heterosexual matrix has in the lives of these four young women. It is here that I turn to Connell and her insights into the positionality of femininities within a patriarchal gender order.

In applying her theory of masculinities to the subject of femininities, Connell (1995) argues that unlike masculinities, no version of femininity can be classified as hegemonic within a patriarchal gender order because such an order necessarily implies the overall subordination of women by men. To conform to or comply with a patriarchal gender order as a woman is then to be vulnerable. This idea is confirmed in Chapter Six, where we see how Reece and Sandy experience hetero-femininity as a lose-lose situation. Failure to embody hetero-femininity in particular contexts leads to loaded accusations of homosexuality while embodying this version of femininity 'too much' (and by that I refer to clothing read as immodest) means young women are held responsible for any and all sexual harassment by men. This tightrope of hetero-femininity that young women walk, balancing heterosexual desirability and respectability, is imperative to the reification of a patriarchal gender order. Within a patriarchal system, a fundamental difference between men and women must be naturalised. In her theorisation of masculinities, Connell (1995) shows how bodies and human reproduction are central in the making of this distinction. Bodies must be cisgender, heterosexual and heteronormative in order for the gender binary, and thus the dominant gender order, to be legitimised. The requirement that young women's bodies be desirable reinforces the heterosexual relation between men and women, and the requirement that women's bodies be respectable reifies their vulnerability in relation to men. We see here how the gaze of the heterosexual matrix, the sexualisation of gender as described earlier in this section, is imperative to the reproduction of cisnormativity and heteronormativity, and the reification of patriarchal systems of power more broadly. While Sandy's preference for masculine clothing as a heterosexual young woman, and Reece and Sage's rejection of heterosexual desire altogether are powerful examples of how the gaze of the heterosexual matrix fails to be totalising, this does not mean that heteronormativity is powerless. The application of Connell's theory, which highlights the relational subordination of women underlying a patriarchal gender order, enables the recognition of the participants' non-conformity to the gaze of the heterosexual matrix while still

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acknowledging the vulnerability, subordination and oppression that runs through their experiences as young women.

With that said, I would like to end this section by acknowledging not only where the gaze of the heterosexual matrix is or is not effective, but where it is entirely subverted and a different gaze created or prioritised. While the gaze of the heterosexual matrix has very material and restrictive effects on young women, it is not wholly successful or totalising, and it is here where we can begin to understand how the participants navigate the patriarchal systems of power pushing down on them. For example, when Sandy talks about singing on stage, the lighting and other visual components are central to her retelling of the event. Absent is the kind of uncomfortable hypervisibility experienced at her church or in public spaces; instead, Sandy finds the stage to be a space of belonging where people get to see the 'real' her. This kind of gaze ties connects with the individualised discourse of clothes in the construction of the self. Sage's friendship with a pansexual person also produces a different kind of gaze. Within that friendship space, Sage's girly-girl femininity is not read as necessarily heterosexual; instead, sexuality identity is conceptualised as diverse which enables conversations that affirm and accept Sage's counter-normative experiences of sexual and romantic attraction. For Reece, the ocean is a space where she is able to demonstrate physical strength and courage by engaging in an activity that can be dangerous. While other divers and instructors do at times project a construction of femininity as vulnerable onto Reece because she is a young woman, this gaze is subverted and replaced by Reece's view of herself as capable and at home in the ocean. There are a number of spaces in which my participants' expressions of gender and sexuality are strictly policed, but we see here that they also agentically create and step into spaces where other discourses are prioritised and a different kind of gaze is achieved. While the kind of individualised discourses of the self that are prioritised in these other spaces are not entirely unproblematic – the idea that clothing, for example, is read as an expression of identity is a distinctly classed idea – they do appear to offer my participants more freedom in terms of which versions of gender and sexuality are acceptable and accepted.

7.2 Gendered Sexualities: Where patriarchy and heteronormativity collide

The reproduction of the nuclear family unit

In Chapter Six, we saw how the home and family unit were important spaces in the making of young genders and sexualities. Divorce featured prominently in Reece and Frances' artworks and was further emphasised in discussion. A review of the existing literature about young people's experiences of divorce in South Africa, however, reveals a gap in the way that these experiences are researched and theorised. There is a distinctly individualised and intrapersonal approach to these studies; typically, the starting point is that parental divorce is a harmful life event, and from there researchers explore how young people cope with this adversity and what enables or constrains resilience (Du Plooy & Van Rensburg, 2015; Mashego & Taruvinga, 2014; Theron & Dunn, 2010). What the literature fails to account for is how divorce is discursively constructed and what systems of power these constructions reproduce. In this section, I will be employing CDA to investigate what my participants' depictions of divorce imply about love, marriage and family, and how these ideas reify broader patriarchal and heterosexist social structures. In doing so, I am not seeking to minimise or undermine the negative experiences that the participants shared in speaking about divorce; rather, I am applying a particular lens in analysing their experiences, one which is critical in nature and focused on how this life event connects with particular discourses and forms of power.

In their artworks and discussions, the participants framed divorce as abnormal, deviant, a crisis. Redirecting the literary precedent to conceptualise divorce as an individualised life event, I turn here to Connell (2009:84) and her concept of "crisis tendencies":

> "The concept of crisis tendencies needs to be distinguished from the colloquial sense in which people speak of a 'crisis in masculinity'. As a theoretical term, 'crisis' presupposes a coherent system of some kind which is destroyed or restored by the outcome of the crisis. Masculinity ... is not a system in that sense. It is, rather, a configuration of practice *within* a system of gender relations. We cannot logically speak of a crisis of a configuration; rather we might speak of its disruption or transformation. We can, however, logically speak of the crisis of a gender order as a whole, and of its tendency towards crisis".

I would like to draw a comparison between the discursive construction of counter-normative masculinities as a crisis in masculinity that Connell refers to above, and the discursive construction of divorce as a crisis in marriage and family expressed by the participants. Much like masculinity, the nuclear family is not a coherent system. While the participants construct the nuclear family unit as normative and desirable, their experiences of divorce and the anger and sadness that they attach to that experience contradicts this construction, highlighting the

incoherence of the nuclear family model. Instead, this model is a configuration of practice which works to authorise and institutionalise particular gender relations, and it is here that we see the way in which the relational construction of the nuclear family unit as normative and divorce as a crisis works to reproduce intersecting gendered and (hetero) sexualised systems of power.

Important to discuss at this point in the analysis is the close association between marriage, family and heterosexuality. Marriage has historically been a strictly heterosexual social practice and one which has worked powerfully to legally, socially and culturally institutionalise heterosexuality (Reddy, 2009). In the South African context specifically, same-sex marriage was legalised in 2006 following the abolition of apartheid. Even with this significant transformation in the legal definition of marriage, the close association between marriage and heterosexuality means that the social and cultural definition remains largely heterosexualised and heteronormative (Reddy, 2009). According to the Progressive Prudes Report – a large-scale quantitative research project investigating attitudes towards gender and sexuality diversity in South Africa – 46% of South Africans disagreed or strongly disagreed with the allowance of same-sex marriage (HSRC, 2016:54). In her study exploring the meanings and significance of same-sex marriage with LGBTQ people in long-term relationships, Van Zyl (2011:355) found that while the Constitution and the Civil Union Act are a powerful discursive resource in asserting LGBTQ rights, her participants "have a sense of not having the same freedom as their heteronormative counterparts in similar social locations, and consequently less acceptance and belonging as citizens". That the legalisation of same-sex marriage is still a question that produces divergent opinions and the experiences of same-sex partners in South Africa are still characterised by lack of acceptance, shows just how closely interlinked marriage and heterosexuality are. This is seen in data of this study as well; it is Frances and Sandy, the two heterosexual-identifying participants, who centre marriage and the nuclear family unit most clearly in their future imaginings of the self. In the series of performative acts that constitute the heterosexual checklist discussed in Chapter Five, marriage and children become the ultimate end point.

This interconnectedness of the nuclear family unit and heterosexuality is not simply about reproducing heterosexist systems of power. As this section's title suggests, the normalisation of heterosexuality through the nuclear family unit also normalises particular gender relations, relations between men and women and between masculinities and femininities. The traditionally

patriarchal structure of the nuclear family unit means that this configuration of practice works to reproduce and institutionalise an oppositional, hierarchical relation between men and women, thus legitimising the subordination of women by men. As I have noted earlier in this chapter, the gender binary and heteronormativity are central pillars upholding a patriarchal gender order. The heterosexual nuclear family model is thus a configuration of practice which yields social authority to those who conform or comply.

This brings us back to the question of how to conceptualise the participants' discursive construction of divorce as a crisis. Recalling Connell's assertion that we cannot speak of crises in configurations of practice, only disruptions and transformations, to what extent do the participants' experiences and conceptualisations of divorce disrupt and/or transform the nuclear family model? I argue that divorce is a disruption in the discursive construction of the nuclear family unit as desirable, a disruption which pushes the patriarchal gender order towards crisis. This is a particularly powerful push because of the direct link of marriage and family to the reproductive arena. Connell (2009:71) writes that "in gender processes, the everyday conduct of life is organised in relation to a reproductive area, defined by the bodily structures and processes of human reproduction". The nuclear family unit is a configuration of practice which is authorised as the hegemonic and legitimate version of a family, and which thus works to regulate the relations between gender and human reproduction. We see above how this model reifies patriarchal and heterosexual gender relations. While divorce is a considerable threat to the hegemony of the nuclear family model, it is not transformative. The participants are able to reconcile their real-life experiences of divorce with the normativity and dominance of the nuclear family unit by drawing on a discourse of divorce as proof of false love. In doing so, they work to reify the nuclear family unit as a legitimate configuration of practice. The participants' constructions of divorce thus expose the inconsistencies and incoherence of the nuclear family unit but do not transform or undermine the dominance thereof.

The very straight asexual

The reader will notice that, in talking about the nuclear family model, I have not made mention of Sage and Reece's counter-normative visions of their future in terms of family. This is because I reserve this point of difference for the section at hand in which I unpack and explore

how Reece and Sage's asexual identities are constituted and experienced, as well as the extent to which asexuality may contradict or delegitimise compulsory heterosexuality and systems of heteronormative power.

In reviewing the existing literature about asexuality in South Africa, I note a glaring lacuna. The use of the term 'asexuality' is used predominantly in research looking at intersections of disability and sexuality (Chappell, 2014; Hanass-Hancock, 2009), and research which explores adult constructions of children and young women as asexual (Pattman & Bhana, 2017; Shefer, 2016). Here, asexuality is framed as a lacking of sexuality or engagement in sexual activity. While challenging the asexualisation of disabled persons, children, and young women has been important in acknowledging young people's sexual agency, it defines asexuality exclusively as a discursive construction, neglecting to acknowledge its meanings as a sexuality identity. Literature which explores the latter is markedly absent in South African and Southern literature. Given this lack of literary precedent, I will be using Connell's work on what she calls 'the very straight gay' to guide my analysis of my participants' asexual identities and experiences. Structuring my analysis in this way helps me to position asexuality firmly within the domain of sexuality identities and diversity.

In conceptualising how her interviewees constitute and develop their identifications as gay men, Connell argues that "'coming out' actually means coming *in* to an already-constituted gay milieu". For Reece and Sage, their coming in to an already-constituted asexual milieu was marked by their entrance into LGBTQ online spaces. What constitutes asexuality to them is almost exclusively determined by the representations on Reddit and TikTok created by asexual-identifying people. This means that the already-existing asexual milieu that these young women experience coming into is entirely online and largely consisting of American-based content and perspectives; it is one which is severely limited in terms of the range of information and perspectives represented, and in terms of accessibility. In this highly heteronormative environment, where sexuality diversity is not discussed at school, at home, and seldom amongst friends, Sage and Reece's rejection of heterosexuality and identification with asexuality marks a significant act of resistance against heteronormative and heterosexist systems of power. This agency should not, however, be uncritically and unconditionally stated. In looking closely at the ways that Reece and Sage depict, talk about and experience their asexual identifications, we see that they simultaneously reproduce and undermine heteronormative ideas about gender and

sexuality. By constructing their asexuality as fluid and utilitarian, and resisting too strong or absolute an identification with the identity label 'asexual', the participants draw on two competing and contradictory ideas about asexuality.

On one hand, the hesitance to commit or identify fully with asexuality can be read as a form of complicity with heteronormativity. Much like bisexuality, asexuality contradicts and undermines the legitimacy of compulsory heterosexuality, which rests firmly on a binary construction of heterosexuality versus homosexuality. While bisexuality represents identification with both ends of the binary, asexuality represents identification with neither, and both position individuals outside of the (not-so) neatly formulated binary. The existing literature exploring young bisexual people's experiences highlights a common construction of bisexuality by others, particularly teachers and parents, as a phase or as temporary (Francis, 2017a; 2017b). Attraction to multiple genders does not fit with heteronormative logic, which asserts that one is either heterosexual and normative or same-sex-attracted and deviant. The construction of bisexuality as a temporary stop on the pathway to either heterosexuality or same-sex attraction is thus a discursive mechanism which serves to rework the existence of bisexual people back into the heteronormative binary. Reece and Sage's construction of asexuality as fluid works to some extent in the same way. In lieu of the common construction of young women as lacking sexual desire (Saville Young, Moodley & Macleod, 2019; Shefer, 2016), this fluid construction of asexuality enables Reece and Sage to keep open the possibility that they are normative 'respectable' young women who are yet to develop their (hetero)sexuality. It is the intersection of age, gender and sexuality, the gendering of young sexuality, that enables this discursive position for these two asexual young women.

On the other hand, the construction of sexuality as fluid also works to undermine the assumption of stability and surety of sexuality identity that is implicit in heteronormativity. To refuse a definitive label, and instead view sexuality as something which is made not given, is to denaturalise the idea that sexuality, and therefore heterosexuality, is an essentialised state of being. In his study exploring how queer youth construct and navigate their sexuality identities, Francis (2019b:6) warns against the essentialisation of sexuality identity. In making this argument, he draws on a participant's explanation of his sexuality identification:

"I would say mostly gay … [T]he reason I say 'mostly' I'm more attracted to men. I would more likely go into a relationship with a man. But if, magically, some woman sweeps me off my feet, I think maybe I'll kiss … So that's why I say I identify as gay and bi. The easiest way to say it".

There is an alignment between this young man and the two young women in my study – both conceptualise their identities in a way that resists homogenous and essentialist ideas about sexuality. By constructing sexuality identities not as boxes that they tick or fit into, but as helpful terminology that works for them as and how they choose, Reece and Sage shift the conversation from 'I am' to 'I identify as', thus asserting the nuanced and individualised nature of their experiences.

Drawing on Msibi's (2013) assertion that conformity and agency are not mutually exclusive, I posit that Sage and Reece's positionality as the very straight asexual works to both enable and obfuscate the transformative power of their counter-normative sexuality identities. The transformational power is particularly noticeable in the participants' depictions of their future, and it is here that we come full circle to the image of 'the family'. Reece envisions a future in which she is her own breadwinner and her own caretaker – a one-person family – and Sage imagines having an asexual, aromantic partner with whom she adopts children. Both of these images push back against the construction of the heterosexual nuclear family as compulsory, normative and desirable, and it is Sage and Reece's asexual identifications which enable these counter-normative possibilities. I close this section with another comparison between mine and Connell's participants. Connell (2009:161-2) argues that while the very straight gay positioning is ineffective in substantially transforming the dominant gender order, it does constitute "a contradiction for a [patriarchal] gender order" and thus "open[s] up possibilities of change". I argue that the same is true for the very straight asexual, as represented by Sage and Reece. While their claiming of asexuality may not be radically changing the heteronormative contexts that they occupy, they are exercising a more individualised version of agency which enables possibilities for living a more counter-normative life, which is ultimately a form of resistance against compulsory heterosexuality and patriarchal systems of power.

7.3 Racialised genders and sexualities: The inescapable intersections

In beginning this section of my analysis, I would like to remind the reader of how I contextualised gender and sexuality in my literature review chapter – I cited Steyn and Van Zyl (2015:10) who argue that "the profoundly racialised construction of sexuality in South Africa needs to be recognised as one of the particularities of 'our politics of location'", and I add that the same should be said of the construction of gender. In stepping back and looking at Sandy's three artworks as a collection – hearing the way she seldom spoke about being a girl or a woman, but rather a black girl or a black woman – we see this politics of location come to life. The inescapability of race in a participatory art course about gender and sexuality shines a light on the continued and overwhelming power that racial discourses and systems of racilaised power hold in post-apartheid South Africa. It is Sandy's depiction of the boundedness of gender, sexuality and race that leads me to dedicate a section of my analysis chapter to exploring these intersections.

A particularly powerful visual symbol of black femininity depicted in Sandy's artworks is the recurring and centralised image of a young black woman with an afro. Sandy repeatedly brings attention to her hair as a site of regulation and oppression, but also as a site of contestation. The existing body of literature exploring the relationship between black South African women, hair and identity is substantial and is framed by the racist and violent histories relating to black hair that persist in the post-colonial, post-apartheid context (Oyedemi, 2016; Nyamnjoh & Fuh, 2014). Alubafi, Ramphalile and Rankoana (2018) explore the shifting and contested meanings of black South African women's hair in Tswane, Pretoria following learner-led protests against racist hair policies at a local school. In speaking to the political significance of these protests, and of black women's hair more broadly, Alubafi et al. (2018:2) make the following argument:

> "Above all, the protest points to the complex image of black hair and why it has historically always been fraught with an interplay of meanings and associations that have cast it as being simultaneously emblematic of black people's inferiority (savage, unpleasant, unkempt, unclean), exotic (elaborate, labyrinthine, curiosity arousing, stylising), and a dominant exemplar of self-affirming re-appropriations of blackness and/or Africanness (afros, dreadlocks, black is beautiful, Rastafarianism)".

This categorisation of meanings is useful in identifying what discourses about black hair are reproduced and reflected in my findings and by whom. The first discursive construction of black hair as unkempt is powerfully reproduced and institutionalised by GHS through their hair policy. Much like Pretoria School for Girls, the school's uniform policy is racialised and racist, enforcing the notion that what is natural for young black learners with regards to their hair is

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abnormal and thus prohibited. In speaking about why school rules pertaining to hair and uniform exist and are so strictly enforced, Reece tells us that it is about improving and maintaining the school's reputation, and Sage recounts her mom's explanation that these rules teach discipline. The idea that natural black hairstyles such as an afro are prohibited at school suggests, then, that natural black hair is untidy, creates a negative reputation and reflects a lack of discipline, all of which ultimately reproduces a discourse of black inferiority and, by implication, white supremacy.

The second set of meanings and associations surrounding black hair, according to Alubafi et al. (2018) is a discourse of black hair as exotic and curiosity arousing. This discourse is reflected in Sandy's experiences of the uncomfortable hypervisibility directed at her hair. While the attention that teachers pay to Sandy's hair is policing in nature and thus informed by a discourse of black hair as unkempt, the attention that Sandy receives from peers is a kind of fetishisation. We saw this in Chapter Six where Frances and Reece's talk about afros worked to construct natural black hair as an anomaly, a spectacle, as outside of what is normative. While such a discourse does not directly pathologise natural black hair in the way that the first discourse does, we see that this discursive construction still works to authorise that which is normative – white hair – versus that which is not – natural black hair. This brings us to another related racialised discourse that Frances, Reece and Sage implicitly reproduce during the course of this research project, that is, a discourse of colour blindness. In the findings, we see how all three of the white participants neglect to consider the role that race plays in shaping their experiences and sense of self, despite Sandy consistently placing race on the agenda. In her article analysing stories about race and identity as told by undergraduate students in a political sociology class, Vincent (2008) picks up on this avoidance of race by white young people too. She asserts that "the privileges of whiteness are particularly difficult for white people to recognise partly because white people seldom think of themselves as raced" (Vincent, 2008:1439). Together, discourses of black hair as exotic and whiteness as irrelevant work to reify the relational construction of whiteness as normative and beyond reproach, and blackness as deviant.

Finally, we see that through her artworks, in particular, Sandy herself draws on and powerfully reproduces the discourse of natural black hair as an "exemplar of self-affirming re-appropriations of blackness" (Alubafi et al., 2018:2). Sandy discursively constructs her hair as a means through which she connects with her sense of self and expresses a proudly black femininity.

The process of hair-care is constructed as a process of self-care and self-work, highlighting the intricate boundedness of black hair and black identity. Sandy frames her choice to cut her hair as an intentional letting go of normative expectations of what her hair should look like – long and straight – and an embracing of what her hair naturally looks like – it falls out, not down. How long straight hair comes to be constituted and reified as normative marks an intersection not only of race and gender, but sexuality too. In their study exploring how black South African schoolgirls respond to racial inequalities in a majority-Indian school, Pattman and Bhana (2009:25) found that "the black girls' opposition to racism was mainly directed at Indian girls [not boys], and this seemed to be fuelled by anxieties about being constructed as less sexually attractive than them", noting the centrality of long straight hair in defining attractiveness. We see the role that heterosexuality plays in shaping beauty standards in Reece's account of her own hair journey. Dying her hair blonde was a choice motivated by her guy friends' enthusiastic suggestion that blonde is better – an idea which was confirmed by Reece's experience of feeling more heterosexually attractive with blonde hair. It is with this in mind that we can come to understand Sandy's choice to cut her hair and embrace its natural form as resistance against a triad of intersecting systems of power – she is resisting normative ideas of what it means to be a young woman, a black young woman, and a heterosexual young woman. Sandy is all three of these things, but the way she embodies these identities is an agentic form of self-expression. This agency is not a simple act – Sandy tells us how she is continually researching and critically engaging with racist histories in South Africa and internationally, seeking to understand how these shape her everyday experiences and using this knowledge to enable her resistance. It is this process of denaturalising racism and racialised systems of power, informed by a number of interconnected counter-normative discourses about blackness and black femininity, that empowers Sandy to re-appropriate black femininity in a way that is self-affirming.

Remembering the distinction that Connell (2011) makes between agency as the individual capacity to negotiate larger social structures, and agency as a collectivist transformation of those structures, the question emerges as to how we can conceptualise Sandy's sense of agency laid out here. While the institutionalisation of whiteness and hetero-femininity at GHS may seem deterministic and thus suggest that Sandy's expression of self-affirming black femininity on stage and in her artworks is an individualised act of agency within these broader systems of power, I argue that the understanding of agency as collective prompts us to zoom out and situate Sandy's

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acts within a broader network of events. In recent years, South Africa has seen a number of events which mark both the deep-rootedness of racist systems of power in post-apartheid South Africa and the power of young black women in agentically resisting and transforming these systems. In 2016, we saw a group of girl high school learners protest against the racist hair policies at their school (Pather, 2016); in 2019 we saw Zozibini Tunzi become the first black woman to win both Miss South Africa and Miss Universe with a short, afro-textured hairstyle (Konstantinides, 2020); and in 2020 we saw public outrage calling out a Clicks advertisement for hair products that labelled images of black women's hair as "frizzy and dull" and "dry and damaged", while white women's hair was labelled "normal" (Zuzile, 2020). I highlight these events because they, like Sandy's artworks and experiences, speak to the highly political nature of black women's hair in South Africa. Each of these events when considered individually can, much like Sandy's embodiment of a self-affirming black femininity, be considered limited in their transformational power. When taken together, however, we can begin to conceptualise these events, as well as Sandy's personal hair journey, as part of an emerging movement that resists the normalisation and imposition of white colonial beauty standards and celebrates self-affirming versions of black femininity – a movement that is working to dismantle powerful systems of white supremacy and patriarchy. In framing these agentic acts in this way, I do not seek to overstate their transformational power. Rather, I argue that it is in viewing these moments of agency through a Southern theoretical lens that we begin to see them as collectivist transformation in progress.

7.4 Bringing my analysis together

In reviewing this chapter, we see a key thread running through the sections presented – intersectionality is central to the making and understanding of young genders and sexualities. First, we saw how young genders are sexualised. While children are typically constructed as asexual and are thus less susceptible to the gaze of the heterosexual matrix, young women's bodies increasingly become the targets of this gaze, policing them into heteronormative and heterosexualised ways of being, doing and looking. While many of the young women's identities and experiences contradict heteronormative logic, the gaze of the heterosexual matrix nonetheless has material implications for them and the versions of gender and sexuality that they perform and with which they identify. The four young women in this study show conformity, complicity, agency and resistance in the

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way that they relate to heteronormative expectations to perform hetero-femininity. Next, in this chapter, we saw how sexualities are gendered. We saw how the construction of divorce as deviant in turn positioned the nuclear family as normative, and that this construction of family structures works not only to reproduce heterosexuality as natural, but also to reify patriarchal relations between men and women, between masculinities and femininities. We also saw how the intersection of sexuality with gender and age enables asexual young women to simultaneously undermine and comply with systems of heteronormative power. While asexual identification is clearly an act of resistance against compulsory heterosexuality, the framing of this identification as temporary also enables young women to still be complicit with normative constructions of respectable femininity. In both cases of gendered sexualities, we find disruption to heteronormative systems of power, however, neither can be categorised as transformational. Rather, divorce is seen to be a disruption to the nuclear family unit as a dominant configuration of practice and the participants' asexual identifications are seen to be individualised forms of agency. Finally, we saw how genders and sexualities are inescapably racialised. We saw how black women's hair comes to represent the multiple discourses that give meaning to blackness and race. In looking at one black participants' artworks and experiences in particular, we see the transformational power that self-affirming versions of black femininity can hold. In the same vein, we see the stark contrast in how race features in black and white young people's constructions of the self and identity. The normalisation of whiteness is seen to persist in the culture of South African schools like GHS, in the way that young white people talk (or avoid talking) about race, and at times in the art course that I facilitated. This is a powerful reminder of the racialised context within which young people are making gender and sexuality in post-apartheid South Africa.

CHAPTER 8
WHERE THEORY MEETS PRACTICE: APPLYING MY ANALYTICAL INSIGHTS TO THE CASE OF MY ART COURSE

Thus far I have addressed all the conventional aspects of a thesis – introducing the field of research, outlining a conceptual framework, reviewing the existing literature, describing the method employed, presenting the data generated, and analysing those findings. It is at this point that a scholar would typically move to a conclusion chapter. However, before doing so, I would like to bring together my analysis and method, theory and practice. Throughout this thesis, I have paid attention to the spatiality of identity. In explaining my methodology, I told the reader about my intention for the art course to be an affirming space where young people would be able to share their ideas and experiences of gender and sexuality, but also be challenged to reflect and reconsider taken-for-granted assumptions about these identities. The art course that I facilitated was by no means a neutral research site where data was merely collected. While it should be questioned whether any research site could be described as neutral, mine especially was designed to be a space where particular ideas about gender and sexuality were prioritised and was thus a space where particular versions of identity were enabled. In this chapter, I will be taking the analytical insights into young genders and sexualities generated in Chapter Seven and applying them to the case of my art course as a social space, asking the question, what was and was not made visible by my methodology?

8.1 A critically feminist, introspective, learner-centred gaze

The art course design centres around the act of looking; looking at gender and sexuality, looking at one's self, looking at one another. In Chapter Seven, we saw how particular gazes are discursively produced in certain spaces. It thus becomes important, before considering what was and was not made visible in the course, to ask what gaze was created in the art course space. Throughout the course, I asked the participants to look back, about and forward at different versions of themselves, and to depict and discuss their sense of self in relation to gender and sexuality. By asking participants to reflect on their ideas and experiences of gender and sexuality, I discursively positioned gender and sexuality as socially constructed. To ask 'how' and 'why' questions about gender and sexuality quickly became a norm within our group. It was this critical

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feminist discourse practice that produced a particular kind of gaze, one which was introspective and from the perspective of young women. In their research exploring solutions to challenges faced by a rural community relating to poverty and HIV, Moletsane, Mitchell, de Lange, Stuart, Buthelezi and Taylor (2009) use participatory video-making methods with women community members and, in doing so, sought to "[turn] the 'male' gaze' into the 'female gaze'" on issues that largely affect women and children. I argue that my art course worked similarly, shifting the gaze to be introspective and learner-centred. The participants looked at themselves and each other through visual art, questioning how and why particular constructions of gender and sexuality came to be important to them and their experiences. On an individual level, this enabled a kind of self-reflection and self-work, similar to Sandy's description of her hair journey. Taking time to explore their identities created a space where participants could actively and intentionally express their sense of self. In a more collectivist sense, the art course also created a space where participants could engage with each other about issues and experiences that mattered to them.

The introspective, learner-centred nature of the gaze created was further reinforced by the course's visual focus and the online methods used to connect with one another. In beginning each theme by asking participants to create an artwork individually, the course carved out time and space for participants to thoroughly consider their own perspective and put this on paper before sharing and discussing with the group. That participants were in control of when, where and for how long they made their artworks was a product of shifting the course online. The more fragmented and drawn-out structure of the online course facilitated self-reflection and a more inward gaze. This emphasis on self-reflection was then followed by collective discussion, also rooted in the visual. The questions and discussion points were formulated in response to the particular artworks that the participants presented. The content, direction and focus of each discussion was thus entirely grounded in the perspectives of the participants. Also important to consider here is that the discussions we had were mediated by computer and smartphone screens. Remembering the significance that online spaces had in Reece and Sage's coming into an already-existing asexual milieu, I argue that the locality of the course online created some necessary distance from the spaces and places that the participants identified as constraining. It was in this online space, where each participant connected from the privacy and comfort of their own bedrooms that an alternative and more critical gaze was enabled.

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8.2 What was made visible?

Having established that the gaze created within the art course space was critically feminist, introspective and learner-centred, we now move to the question of what this gaze made visible. The artworks and discussions presented in previous chapters suggest that the criticality of the gaze led participants to question not only what their experiences of gender and sexuality are, but also how and why these came to be. For example, in speaking about the sense of compulsory heterosexuality that the participants experienced growing up, our discussion moved from stating that it felt as if everyone was pre-programmed straight, to exploring how the lack of sexuality diversity in the participants' communities normalised and naturalised heterosexuality as well as the nuclear family model. The task set within the art course – to question, examine and unpack gender and sexuality – also worked to make visible the participants' experiences of sexuality diversity. While the participants spoke about how topics of sexuality diversity are silenced at school, at home and with friends, Reece and Sage shared openly about their asexual identifications in their artworks, and our discussions and Sandy told us on multiple occasions about experiencing what she termed 'lesbian tendencies'. The critically feminist nature of the gaze created within the art course enabled the participants agency in this sense, enabled them to claim space and discussion time for counter-normative experiences of sexuality.

The learner-centred nature of the gaze created also made visible a number of topics and discussion points that are relatively absent in the existing research. Asexual identifications are not only silenced in the participants' communities but in the body of literature about young genders and sexualities in South Africa as well. Similarly, topics of divorce and the nuclear family model rarely feature in research focused on exploring youth, gender and sexuality. The learner-centred and visual arts-based gaze created in the course thus worked to prioritise the participants' perspectives and experiences, making the content of our discussions relevant and personal to the specific group of young people involved. It was in focusing on the particularities of the participants' experiences, and in using a uniquely designed visual arts-based methodology, that novel and exciting insight into young genders and sexualities were generated.

Lastly, we see how the critically feminist, introspective, learner-centred gaze, combined with the temporal focus of each theme, worked to create a space in which young people's agency was acknowledged and enabled. It was in looking forward, asking participants to reflect on future

imaginings of the self, that possibilities for change and transformation were made visible to the participants themselves, to me as the researcher, and to the readers of this research. By focusing not only on what has been or what is, but rather what could be, Theme Three prompted participants to explore beyond their heteronormative, patriarchal and racialised contexts. We see this clearly in Reece and Sage's visions of their future family. While their past and present depictions of themselves were marked by a strong sense of compulsory heterosexuality, there was a freedom or rather lack of heteronormative restriction that Reece and Sage found in expressing their asexuality in the future tense. We also see this with Sandy, who imagines her future self with huge afro hair – an image which symbolises being free to fully express a self-affirming version of black femininity. We see, then, how the design of the art course and the critical, introspective gaze created made visible alternate versions of the participants' selves. We gained insight into how young people imagine their identities and experiences beyond their regulative circumstances.

8.3 What was left blurry and out of sight?

While a significant number of insights were made visible by the design of the art course and the gaze created within that space, there were also some things that remained somewhat blurry or out of sight. In Chapter Seven we saw that while encouraging the participants to include identities other than gender and sexuality in their artworks as they saw fit created space for Sandy to depict and embody a self-affirming version of black femininity, the discussions lacked criticality in that Reece, Sage and Frances did not engage in this questioning of their racial identities at all. It is here that an argument made by Hamilton, Armstrong, Seeley & Armstrong (2019) about Connell's conceptualisation of intersectionality becomes important. Hamilton et al (2019) compare Connell, who centres the subordination of women by men in her gender theory, with Collins, who focuses on the power and privilege that groups of women hold because of other social identities and positionings such as race. For Connell, race intersects with gender to produce marginalised masculinities and femininities, but femininities, even when intersecting with whiteness, cannot be hegemonic within a patriarchal gender order. Hamilton et al. (2019:320) take issue with this position, arguing that "theorising a raceless masculinity [or femininity], even just for analytical purposes, risks participating in the normalisation of whiteness". We see this risk materialise to some extent in my research; by centring gender and sexuality as the foci of my

research and leaving it solely to the participants to introduce other social locations, Reece, Frances and Sage were not sufficiently challenged to examine their racial positioning critically, thus allowing whiteness to be normalised and implicitly constructed as beyond reproach even when Sandy continually and consistently places race on the agenda. Unfortunately, given the scope of my research, particularly following COVID-19-related delays and restrictions, I was unable to create the space for intersections of gender, sexuality, and race to be sufficiently explored. However, I argue that Connell's centring of gender and sexuality in her analysis of masculinities and femininities provides an important and valuable theoretical resource for researchers like me. When faced with limited time and resources, selecting fewer points of focus to explore in-depth is necessary for qualitative research. In limiting the scope of my research, I have been able to explore more fully the multiple meanings that four young women attach to gender and sexuality. Had I followed Hamilton et al's argument and included not only race but, by extension of their argument, class, ability, religion, and numerous other social positions, I would have produced data that was less helpful in generating new insights into young people's identifications and experiences. It is here that other research, different in focus or larger in scope, becomes important to consider in conjunction with my findings. Without this, the intersections of race with gender and sexuality, particularly with regards to whiteness, remain blurry.

Also left out of sight in the art course were the cisnormative underpinnings of the participants' constructions of gender. In previous chapters where I have presented my findings and analysis, the reader will remember that I highlighted the cisnormativity implicit in the versions of gender that the participants depicted and discussed. The participants framed the relationship between sex and gender identity as strictly heteronormative, although this discourse of the sexed body was never explicated or directly acknowledged. With regards to race, we saw how for the three white young women participating, whiteness was left unquestioned. It was only Sandy, a black young woman, who put race, racism and racialised systems of power on the agenda. We see something similar occurring in the case of gender identity. Much like whiteness, the participants positioned cisnormativity as beyond reproach, as natural, as given. Without a gender non-conforming participant to place gender identity and cisnormativity on the agenda like Sandy did with race, the cisnormative understandings of gender present throughout the participants' artworks and discussions went completely unacknowledged.

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In saying this, I am not suggesting that it should be the responsibility of those with subordinate or counter-normative identifications to educate those in dominant social positions. Rather, I would like to highlight a particular limitation in my design of the art course. While the gaze created was critically feminist, introspective and learner-centred, in reflecting on my facilitation, I found that I prioritised the two latter foci at the cost of criticality. While I asked 'how' and 'why' questions and challenged the participants to think critically about their experiences and ideas about gender and sexuality, I found myself retreating when participants were particularly hesitant to explain further. In focusing on being affirming of the participants' views, knowledge and experiences, I missed certain opportunities to question their ideas, like how race shapes the way that Reece, Frances and Sage experience gender and sexuality, when and how the participants knew that they identified as cisgender girls, why they are so fearful of being perceived as same-sex attracted, and why this was something that they were reluctant to share.

As I reflect on my reasons for choosing this approach, I realise that it was partly because of my eagerness or at times slight desperation to keep the participants participating. I feared that if I questioned too much, pushed too hard, that I might lose even more participants – a risk that I did not want to take given that I only had four participants in total and was conducting research in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic and lockdown. While I believe I was successful in creating a space where the four young women felt seen and listened to, enabling them to share a great deal about themselves, I was also unsuccessful at times in making visible certain insights about the production of young genders and sexualities, particularly regarding how identifications were performed within the art course space specifically.

We see this dilemma that critical researchers face in other gender and sexuality research with young people. For example, in using Forum Theatre (FT) to challenge heterosexism and heteronormativity with a group of high school learners in the Free State, Francis (2013) found that while at times his methodology was successful in its criticality, at other times he was unable to prompt critical reflection amongst participants and risked reinforcing heteronormativity instead. In reflecting on this, Francis (2013: 10) writes how he "learned from this experience that, while there is the tendency to feel compelled to challenge such heterosexist attitudes by the participants, I also need to accept that the participants are agents and that the decision to let go of such attitudes belongs to them". There is a tightrope that critical researchers engaging young people about gender

and sexuality walk, seeking to find a balance between affirming their participants' perspectives and experiences, and challenging them to delve deeper into how and why these ideas are reproduced. Francis (2013) suggests that given more time and the opportunity to develop an appropriate vocabulary with his participants, they may have been better equipped to think critically about their heteronormative ideas about gender and sexuality. Similarly, I suggest that with more time and resources, I may have been able to expand the scope of my research, extending beyond the affirmation and rapport-building phase, to a point where the participants and I are more able to challenge one another without jeopardising the feeling of safety and affirmation within the art course space.

8.4 Bringing my methodological review together

To review, the participatory visual arts-based course that I have designed created a critically feminist, introspective, learner-centred gaze. The generative effects of this gaze were great; we saw four young women challenged to consider the how and why of their experiences of gender and sexuality, we saw them claim space to visually explore and discuss their experiences of sexuality diversity, we gained insights into under-researched topics like asexuality and divorce, and we saw what happens when young people are asked to explore their identities beyond their regulative circumstances imaginatively. While these are significant contributions to the field of young genders and sexualities in South Africa, the art course also had its limitations. My focus on introspection and affirmation of young people's views and experiences at times jeopardised the criticality of the course, leaving the workings of racialised and cisnormative systems of power blurry and out of sight. I have demonstrated the value of using participatory visual arts-based methods to gain insights into the ideas, feelings and experiences that young people have about gender and sexuality. I have begun to show how such methods can prompt and facilitate critical engagement and discussion and have highlighted when and how the limited scope of this study has stunted this endeavour. Ultimately, my methodology has answered the question of what happens when you give four young people a paintbrush and ask them to take time and space to consider, explore, examine and question gender and sexuality in their lives.

CHAPTER 9

PUTTING DOWN THE PAINTBRUSH (FOR NOW): TOWARDS A CONCLUSION

Having picked up the paintbrush at the beginning of this thesis, seeking to explore the power of participatory visual arts-based methods in generating new and exciting insights into the making of young genders and sexualities, we now come to the point where I must put the paintbrush down to make some concluding remarks. In this chapter, I highlight my key analytical findings, reminding the reader of what we have seen along the way. I then move to the primary focus of the chapter – discussing the significance of my study. I discuss the implications that this study holds for the formal sexuality education curriculum in South Africa and for gender, sexuality, and schooling more broadly, as well as the resources required to implement necessary change in these areas. I then discuss what my study tells us about navigating research ethics protocols during the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond. Finally, I highlight the areas where further research is needed and conclude this chapter and this thesis with one last drawing representing the contribution that I argue my thesis has made.

9.1 What have we seen?

In the literal sense, we have seen a number of fascinating artworks created by four young women in response to prompts to explore, examine and reflect on their ideas and experiences about gender and sexuality:

Figure 9.1, *Collection of participants' artworks*, 2020, acrylic, watercolour, crayon and pencil.

In this thesis, I have used CDA to connect these artworks with some of the broader systems of power that shape the lives of their creators. I have applied a temporal lens and then a spatial lens to unpack the multiple and intersecting ways that young genders and sexualities are produced in the context of the patriarchal, heteronormative and racialised society that is South Africa. First, we saw how gender, or more specifically femininities, are sexualised over time. There is an intersection of gender with sexuality and age that renders young women's bodies increasingly subject to the gaze of the heterosexual matrix. We saw that this gaze is both imposed on and internalised by young women. While heteronormativity and compulsory heterosexuality were seen to become increasingly potent over time and in different spaces, we saw that the versions of gender

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and sexuality that the young women constructed and with which they identified throughout the course were consistently cisnormative. In drawing on Butler's understanding of identity categories as flawed and illegitimate, we saw how the way that the young women thought about and depicted their own identities exposed the essentialist and inconsistent nature of genders and sexualities. On the other hand, Connell's insights into the patriarchal relations between masculinities and femininities made visible the very material restrictions and experiences of subordination that these four young women have.

Next, we saw what happens when engaging young women in participatory arts-based methods without focusing on a particular issue or identity – the topics of discussion were opened up, and we had the opportunity to gain insight into their experiences of divorce and asexuality – two under-researched topics in South African literature. In both cases, sexualities were found to be gendered. We saw how constructions of the nuclear family unit as normative and divorce as deviant work to naturalise patriarchal and heterosexualised relations between men and women, between masculinities and femininities. We also saw how constructions of asexuality as fluid and impermanent work to both undermine and conform to ideas about normative femininity. In terms of agency, we saw how divorce constituted a disruption but not a transformation to the nuclear family unit as a gendered and heterosexualised configuration of practice, while two young women's identification with asexuality served as a powerful act of individualised resistance against compulsory heterosexuality and heteronormativity.

We then moved to a discussion about the important intersections of race with gender and sexuality, for which hair was shown to be a powerful symbol. Again, the art course's open-ended design created space for one young woman to put race on the agenda. While this focus on race did not extend beyond one participant's artworks and discussion to the others, it did reveal some important insights into the workings of race in post-apartheid South Africa. The silence and avoidance of race talk by white youth works to leave the normalisation of whiteness unexamined and unchallenged. Within the course itself, we saw how discourses of black hair, and thus blackness, as inferior, as exotic, and as self-affirming were identified and at times reproduced. We also saw how situating one participant's self-affirming constructions of black femininity within a broader network of events related to race, gender and agency in South Africa made visible the transformative and collective nature of her seemingly individualised acts of agency.

We then shifted from the analytical insights generated by my research to the methodological findings. We saw how the design of my methodology created a critical, introspective, learner-centred gaze within the art course space, rendering particular insights into the making of young genders and sexualities visible. We saw how this approach prompted critical engagement with topics of gender, sexuality and identity and worked to break the silences surrounding sexuality diversity that the participants expressed experiencing in other spaces. We saw that handing a significant amount of control over to participants to determine what topics and aspects of gender and sexuality were most important to them proved to be a highly generative move and one which opened up my research to topics otherwise rarely included in the existing literature. With that said, the temporal focus of my methodological design was found to be an important guiding force in uncovering the multiplicity and inconsistencies in participants' depictions and constructions of gender and sexuality. We saw that the focus on the future was particularly powerful in acknowledging and enabling participants' agency; to depict and explore not only what is and what has been, but what could be, opened our discussions up to how young people can be agents of change in their own lives and communities. Finally, we saw that in making these ideas and experiences visible, others were left out of sight. The limited scope of my study and my consequent prioritisation of the introspective and learner-centred aspects of the course meant that depictions and explorations of the intersections of race with gender and sexuality and of the power of cisnormativity were left somewhat wanting. Ultimately, however, we saw the power and value of using participatory visual arts-based methods to engage young people in a critical exploration of gender and sexuality.

9.2 Implications for the formal sexuality education curriculum

This study is founded on the premise that young people should have space and opportunity to critically explore gender and sexuality as it relates to themselves and their own identifications as well as their broader social contexts. This applies to the four young women who participated in the study and the pedagogical implications that this research holds for informing the formal sexuality education curriculum in South Africa. In reviewing the course in our follow-up interview, Sandy told me that she would change the course by making it "a consistent course ... every year, termly, we did different aspects" to be included in the LO curriculum. This is precisely the kind of

pedagogical implication that I argue my research carries. The art course as a space and as a method was not perfect nor exhaustive, but I believe it provides a model of how participatory visual arts-based methods can be used to engage young people about gender and sexuality in the formal sexuality education curriculum.

In an article that I co-author, Francis and Kuhl (2020) imagine what a sexuality education curriculum that goes beyond compulsory heterosexuality might look like. We argue that such a curriculum would need to be informed by sociological understandings of gender and sexuality, acknowledge and include the intersectionality of learners' identities and contexts, and make use of participatory pedagogies that acknowledge the sexual agency of young people. I argue that my study affirms these arguments and provides a model for how participatory visual arts-based methods can be effectively utilised in putting them into practice. My art course design was informed by a critical feminist understanding of gender and sexuality as socially constructed, prompting participants to ask 'how' and 'why' questions about their identities and experiences. We saw in Chapter Eight how this epistemological approach prompted participants to connect their personal experiences with broader systems of power and to break the silences surrounding sexuality diversity in their communities. This study also affirmed Francis and Kuhl's (2020) argument that a sexuality education curriculum that challenges compulsory heterosexuality must necessarily include intersectional considerations. In the findings and analysis presented here we saw the inescapability of race in understanding the ideas and experiences that young people have relating to gender and sexuality. We saw that the introspective, learner-centred gaze produced by my participatory visual arts-based approach successfully provided space for young people to include the intersecting identifications that they deem significant in conceptualising gender and sexuality. With that said, the scope of the study would need to be expanded to include additional themes that focus specifically on other social identities such as race so that those in dominant social positionings are also prompted to consider these intersections. Finally, while the design of the course provided participants with a starting point for each artwork, the particular ideas and experiences included were largely determined by what was important to the participants as reflected in their artworks and explanatory videos. That divorce and asexuality were so prominent in our discussions – topics that are relatively absent in existing literature on youth, gender and sexuality in South Africa – demonstrates how a participatory visual arts-based approach produces a pedagogical project that is tailor-made for the young people involved. We saw that young people

have important insights into the topics and issues that they need to explore and discuss in unpacking the making of young genders and sexualities.

More than aligning with the arguments made by Francis and Kuhl (2020) and demonstrating the value of participatory visual arts-based methods in achieving these, this study also highlights an important additional consideration for developing a sexuality education curriculum that goes beyond compulsory heterosexuality. In conceptually orienting this study, I incorporated Connell's argument regarding the value of a Southern conceptualisation of agency as collectivist and transformative. We saw the latter component of this conceptualisation materialise in Theme Three of the art course; in asking participants to look forward and imagine versions of themselves beyond their regulative circumstances, the art course enabled participants to explore greater possibilities for change. This kind of activity, where young people are prompted to not only think about what is and has been but rather what could be is essential to a sexuality education curriculum that goes beyond compulsory heterosexuality, cisnormativity and heteronormativity. Combining the third theme of my art course design with activities and discussion topics that focus on the collectivist component of agency, asking what learners can do together to transform their social contexts, would be a valuable addition.

9.3 Implications for gender, sexuality and schooling

The existing literature shows that school is an influential space for gender and sexuality learning. We see in this thesis how the participating school, like other schools in South Africa, reproduces cisnormative, heteronormative, heterosexualised and racialised ideas about gender and sexuality. If school is such a powerful mechanism for the reproduction and institutionalisation of these systems of power, the question then emerges as to the effectiveness of the school space for a sexuality education that challenges compulsory heterosexuality and cisnormativity. This is a question that Francis (2010) addresses in his desk review of sexuality education literature in South Africa. He argues that while schooling spaces are by no means unproblematic, they are the best available option for effective teaching and learning about gender and sexuality, and that their limitations can be overcome. I argue that this study's use of online methods represents an important resource in thinking about overcoming the regulative nature of schooling spaces in South Africa.

We saw in the findings and analysis presented here that conducting the art course online allowed participants to connect with each other and me from their homes rather than in a classroom, creating some necessary distance from the regulative school spaces and practices that were under discussion. While my decision to use online methods was necessitated by the COVID-19 pandemic and associated lockdown restrictions, the value of this shift extends beyond being able to conduct research in such a context. The use of online methods demonstrates how sexuality education can be organised through the school while still allowing for the necessary distance from the school space to critically engage with topics of gender and sexuality. I argue that integrating online methods – using video calling and sharing of photographs and videos as in my study as well as including social media content – is a valuable strategy for connecting with young people in a way that is relevant to their lives and which draws the formal sexuality education curriculum out of the normative schooling context to some extent. Important to note here, however, is the limitation of online methods in the South African context. Given that the education system is marked by significant and racialised inequalities, access to internet and online devices is not available to all learners, teachers and schools. This solution is thus limited and largely relevant to model C and private schools who have the material class privilege needed to make use of online methods.

9.4 The resources needed to implement change in sexuality education

While this study provides important contributions to the conversation about developing and implementing a sexuality education curriculum that challenges compulsory heterosexuality, a number of logistical factors must be acknowledged in considering the potential of these findings. Throughout the literature exploring what should be changed in the formal sexuality education curriculum in South Africa, scholars highlight the lack of clear policy guidelines and teacher training as significant obstacles (Francis & Kuhl, 2020; Ngabaza & Shefer, 2019; Francis & De Palma, 2014). The changes and contributions that I have proposed are not exempt from these obstacles. Without explicit and compulsory policy guidelines regarding the content and implementation of sexuality education, teachers are left with little support to effectively facilitate learning about gender and sexuality diversity, particularly given the largely cisheteronormative and heterosexualised contexts in which teachers and learners operate. In 2019, the Department of

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Basic Education (DoBE) released a number of scripted Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE) lesson plans for both learners and teachers. The lesson plans include a more detailed description of the content to be included for each grade, as well as a range of activities and discussion topics to be used in class. This is an important resource for advancing a formal sexuality education curriculum that breaks the silences around gender and sexuality and begins to challenge compulsory heterosexuality. With that said, however, the outcry from conservative parents and teacher organisations in response to the release of these lesson plans is an important indicator of the kind of challenges that schools, teachers and learners face in utilising these materials. While I argue that my methodology would be a valuable addition to the existing CSE lesson plans in South Africa, the implementation thereof would require that these lesson plans be made compulsory for all schools to implement.

Also necessary for the effective inclusion of online and participatory visual arts-based methods in the formal sexuality education curriculum is teacher education. Earlier in the chapter, we saw how my methodology utilises insights from the sociology of gender and sexuality, recognises the importance of intersectionality, adopts a participatory and learner-centred approach, and enables transformative versions of agency. To require that sexuality education educators do the same, considerable training is crucial to equip them with the necessary knowledge and skills. I argue that a participatory visual arts-based course such as mine would not only be a valuable addition to the formal sexuality education curriculum for learners but also to education curriculum for for pre-service teachers. Participation in a visual arts-based course about gender and sexuality, based on a sociological understanding of gender, sexuality, intersectionality, youth, and agency, would equip future teachers with the practical knowledge and experience needed to implement these methods themselves and allow them to see first-hand the value that such an approach to teaching about gender and sexuality holds. These methods would also need to be included in compulsory workshops made available to in-service teachers to ensure consistency across classes and schools.

9.5 Implications for navigating research ethics protocols during COVID-19 and beyond

This study set out to explore the value that participatory visual arts-based methods hold in engaging young people about gender and sexuality. Along the research journey, however, an additional research question emerged; what does it mean to conduct participatory visual arts-based research with young people during a global pandemic and a national lockdown? This is an important question given that researchers continue to be confronted by the ethical dilemma of wanting and needing to conduct research during the COVID-19 pandemic while still ensuring that participants' safety and well-being are protected. This study demonstrates the importance of finding creative and innovative ways to continue conducting research with young people during this time. The need for space and opportunity to explore their sense of self and to engage in topics that are relevant in their lives does not disappear because of COVID-19; if anything, this need is exacerbated. We saw how the four young women in this study embraced the art course as a way to escape the pressures of online school and social isolation.

This study also demonstrated the effectiveness of online methods in designing safe and viable research during COVID-19. The use of asynchronous and synchronous online communication enabled self-reflection and collective discussion, allowing a wider range of ways for participants to express themselves and connect with one another. While the data collection process was more dragged out than it would have been using more traditional face-to-face methods, we saw that there was value in handing control over time management to the participants who were able to fit the art course into their own schedules. Furthermore, my use of online methods proved to be an effective strategy for creating a necessary distance between the research space and the regulatory school space. With this said, online methodologies are limited in accessibility and thus require further funding for researchers to equip themselves and their participants with the necessary access to the internet and online communication devices. In addition to this, the inclusion of online methodologies in the formal curriculum for postgraduate researchers, those in the field of young genders and sexualities like myself but also beyond, is necessary. While these methods have recently been unconventional and niche, they are becoming a necessity, and providing researchers with knowledge and training regarding online methodologies would enable and strengthen their ability to implement and innovate in this methodological field.

9.6 Implications for further research

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Lastly, this study carries implications for further research. Firstly, I argue that research that utilises my methodology on a larger scale would be a valuable undertaking. Implementing an art course like mine over a more extended time period would allow for additional themes to be included and for the facilitator to move on from prioritising the affirmation of participants and community building to focusing more on engaging participants in critical thought and discussion. Having a larger number of participants in a group would also be important for demonstrating and assessing the practicality of implementing my methodology in the sexuality education classroom, where class sizes are far greater than my sample. Increasing the sample size would also mean including a broader range of gender and sexuality identities represented by participants. Given the introspective and learner-centred nature of the art course, greater diversity in who participates would mean greater diversity in perspectives depicted and discussed.

Secondly, I argue that the value of my methodology is not exclusive to the field of young genders and sexualities. The principals, structure and general design of my participatory visual arts-based course can be applied to research exploring other social identities such as race, class, (dis)ability, and religion with young people. This would extend the pedagogical implications of my methodology beyond the sexuality education curriculum to the Life Orientation curriculum more broadly, where these various identities and social justice topics are included. Furthermore, my methodology is not solely applicable to learners but can be applied to other target populations as well. For example, as discussed previously in this chapter, the application of my participatory visual arts-based course to the education curriculum at university level would provide teachers in training with important knowledge and experience necessary to be inclusive of gender and sexuality diversity in the sexuality education classroom and beyond. Research that explores this area, as well as with teachers already in the field, is crucial in building connections between research that explores what works when seeking to engage young people about gender and sexuality, and research that explores how best to train teachers and other school personnel to implement those findings.

Finally, for the implications of my research to be more far-reaching, my methodology needs to be applied to research with learners from a broad range of schooling contexts. Remembering the difficulties that I experienced in accessing well-resourced all-boys schools, finding ways to gain access to these institutions, in particular, is an important task for gender and

sexuality scholars. Without this research, the cultures and practices of these schools and the experiences of their learners remain unrepresented and beyond reproach. Also remembering the initial interest but lack of participation from young men at GHS in my study, further research that focuses specifically on ways to engage young men in participatory arts-based research is necessary. Especially given the high rates of gender-based violence in South Africa, research that engages young men in discussions that unpack, critically examine and challenge normative ideas about gender and sexuality is imperative.

9.7 Bringing my thesis together

In thinking of how to conclude this chapter and my thesis more broadly, I felt that a drawing would be most appropriate. In keeping with my focus on visual ways of knowing, doing and being, I chose to visually depict the contribution I believe this project has made:

Figure 9.2. *A final picture,* Kylie Kuhl, 2021, pencil.

As a small-scale, exploratory study, my research is a building block within the field of young genders and sexualities. Pictured above is how I imagine climbing up a flight of stairs made up of the work and insights of other scholars. With thesis in hand, I ascend, seeking to contribute one component to the overall construction. My building block represents the new insights my research has generated and the new points of interests I have flagged. In adding my contribution to the broader collection, I am building on what has come before and passing on the baton, so to speak, for other research projects and researchers to carry forward. The task is to create spaces for young people to explore, question and feel accepted in their sense of identity, specifically as this pertains to gender and sexuality and particularly within the schooling context. I have shown in the thesis presented here and in the present chapter especially how my research has successfully furthered this endeavour. I have also highlighted the many building blocks still needed.

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APPENDIX A
Participant Consent Form

Participatory arts-based research with young people about gender and sexuality

You volunteered to take part in a study conducted by Kylie Kuhl, from the Department of Sociology and Social Anthropology at Stellenbosch University, the results of which will contribute to a Masters thesis. After participating in the first of six sessions, the research had to be put on hold due to school closures. In light of COVID-19, the consequent closure of schools, and the recommendation to practice social distancing, I (the researcher) have decided that it would be unethical to continue with face-to-face interactions. Your safety is paramount, and it is for this reason that I have changed the course to be entirely online. Please take some time to read how the project will change and tick the relevant boxes should you still consent to participating.

1. PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of my research project is to use online participatory visual arts-based methods and online communication methods to explore themes of gender and sexuality in the everyday lives of learners at a coeducational school in KwaZulu Natal.

2. WHAT WILL BE ASKED OF ME?

If you consent to taking part in this study, and your parent/guardian gives their consent as well, you will be asked to participate in a three-week online visual arts course. With your parent/guardian's permission, I will deliver an art kit to you directly. The art kits will contain paper, paint, paintbrushes, glue and scissors, all of which I will personally sanitise before placing in a sealed plastic bag, using a sanitizer with a 60% alcohol content (recommended for protecting against the coronavirus). To deliver the art kits, I will follow the 'no contact delivery' protocol designed by the company Woolworths. If you have chosen to completely self-isolate and are not comfortable with me delivering the art supplies to your home, I will discuss with you what materials you have available to you to still participate without the kit that I provide.

You will then be asked to join a WhatsApp group with me and other participants, and to join a shared Google Drive folder with me and other participants. I will post a weekly video introducing one of the following themes:

Online Session 1: Looking back, remembering myself	Participants will be asked to use collage, drawing and painting to explore their childhood memories and experiences of identity, gender and sexuality.
Online Session 2:	Participants will be asked to use collage, drawing and painting to explore the various spaces and places that they occupy.

Looking about, locating myself	
Online Session 3: Looking forward, envisioning myself	Participants will be asked to use collage, drawing and painting to explore the ways that they imagine themselves being and feeling in the future.

You will be asked to use the art kit provided to you to create an artwork that responds to the theme, and to then record a video using your phone showing us (the researcher and fellow participants) your artwork and explaining a bit about the ideas, experiences and meanings that it represents. Participants will post their videos on the shared Google Drive folder (restricting access so videos cannot be downloaded or shared) so that we can see each other's creations. We will then schedule a focus group discussion to take place on a WhatsApp group (where messages are end-to-end encrypted) to discuss yours and other participants' artworks and the meanings and experiences they represent.

3. POSSIBLE RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS

There will be no foreseeable risks for the participant in this study. Should you experience any discomfort during the course of this study, or should you wish to discuss the themes of this study further, you can phone the Childline toll free helpline (08 000 55 555).

4. POSSIBLE BENEFITS TO PARTICIPANTS AND/OR TO THE SOCIETY

My hope is that the process of learning in the sessions will be reciprocal. I want to find out about and understand your opinions and experiences, but I'd also like for the discussion to be an opportunity for you to explore your own understandings of gender and sexuality in new ways. Furthermore, this study will contribute to the existing body of knowledge about participatory arts-based research and the relationship between gender and sexuality amongst learners in South Africa.

5. PAYMENT FOR PARTICIPATION

The participant will not receive any payment for participating in this study.

6. PROTECTION OF YOUR INFORMATION, CONFIDENTIALITY AND IDENTITY

With your permission, I will transcribe all videos posted and will save the messages sent during our focus group discussions on WhatsApp for the sake of accuracy. You will also be asked to send me a photo of each of your artworks for me to use in the writing up of my thesis (the artworks themselves will belong to you). All electronic data (transcriptions, personal information, photographs of your artworks, online consent forms) will be stored on the researcher's personal password-protected computer and backed up on the researcher's personal password-protected Dropbox account. Only the researcher and supervisor will have access to them. Confidentiality

will be maintained through the use of pseudonyms for all participants as well as for the school. By restricting sharing options when uploading videos to Google Drive, myself and other participants are unable to download or share your videos. All WhatsApp messages are end-to-end encrypted, meaning that everything you share is secure. Given that you will not be sharing your artworks, ideas and experiences with the researcher individually, but rather with other participants as well, confidentiality cannot be guaranteed by the researcher alone. The importance of confidentiality will however be explained and stressed to all participants at the outset of the research. While it is unlikely, should anything be revealed during our discussions that I have a legal obligation to report, I will do so.

7. PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL

You are free to choose whether to be in this study or not. If you agree to take part in this study, you may withdraw at any time without any consequence. If you do choose to withdraw, you can request that your artworks be excluded from this research and, where possible, your contributions to discussions as well. You may also refuse to answer any questions you don't want to answer and still remain in the study. The data generated in this study will be kept for potential use in future or secondary research, conferences or for teaching purposes as part of a lesson with students.

8. RESEARCHERS' CONTACT INFORMATION

If you have any questions or concerns about this study, please feel free to contact Kylie Kuhl (principal researcher) at 18952216@sun.ac.za or 0733878278, and/or Prof. Dennis Francis (supervisor) at dafrancis@sun.ac.za

9.   RIGHTS OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

You may withdraw your consent at any time and discontinue participation without penalty. You are not waiving any legal claims, rights or remedies because of your participation in this research study. If you have questions regarding your rights as a research participant, contact Ms Maléne Fouché [mfouche@sun.ac.za; 021 808 4622] at the Division for Research Development.

DECLARATION OF CONSENT BY THE PARTICIPANT

Please mark the following boxes with a 'X' to indicate your understanding and consent and fill out your name below. As the participant I confirm that:

☐ I have read the above information and it is written in a language that I am comfortable with.

☐ I have had a chance to ask questions and these questions were answered to my satisfaction.

☐ I agree to take part in this research study as conducted by Kylie Kuhl.

Name of participant:_____

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APPENDIX B
Parental Consent Form

Participatory arts-based research with young people about gender and sexuality

Your child volunteered to take part in a study conducted by Kylie Kuhl, from the Department of Sociology and Social Anthropology at Stellenbosch University, the results of which will contribute to a Masters thesis. With your consent, your child attended the first session of a six-week visual arts course. In light of COVID-19, the consequent closure of schools, and the recommendation to practice social distancing, I (the researcher) have decided that it would be unethical to continue with face-to-face interactions. The safety of your child is paramount, and it is for this reason that I have changed the course to be entirely online. Please take some time to read how the project will change and tick the relevant boxes should you still permit your child to participate.

1. PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of my research project is to use participatory visual arts-based methods and online communication methods to explore themes of gender and sexuality in the everyday lives of learners at a coeducational school in KwaZulu Natal.

2. WHAT WILL BE ASKED OF MY CHILD?

If you consent to your child taking part in this study, and your child gives their consent as well, they will be asked to participate in a three-week online visual arts course. With your permission, I will deliver an art kit to your child directly. The art kits will contain paper, paint, paintbrushes, scissors and glue, all of which I will personally sanitise before placing in a sealed plastic bag, using a sanitizer with a 60% alcohol content (recommended for protecting against the coronavirus). To deliver the art kits, I will follow the 'no contact delivery' protocol designed by the company Woolworths. If you have chosen to completely self-isolate and are not comfortable with me delivering the art supplies to your home, I will discuss with your child what materials they have available to them to still participate without the kit that I provide.

Your child will then be asked to join a WhatsApp group with me and other participants, and to join a shared Google Drive folder with me and other participants. I will post a weekly video introducing one of the following themes:

Online Session 1: Looking back, remembering myself	Participants will be asked to use collage, drawing and painting to explore their childhood memories and experiences of identity, gender and sexuality.
Online Session 2:	Participants will be asked to use collage, drawing and painting to explore the various spaces and places that they occupy.

Looking about, locating myself	
Online Session 3: Looking forward, envisioning myself	Participants will be asked to use collage, drawing and painting to explore the ways that they imagine themselves being and feeling in the future.

Your child will be asked to use the art kit provided to them to create an artwork that responds to the theme, and to then record a video using their phone showing us (the researcher and fellow participants) their artwork and explaining a bit about the ideas, experiences and meanings that it represents. Participants will post their videos on the shared Google Drive folder (restricting access so videos cannot be downloaded or shared) so that we can see each other's creations. We will then schedule a focus group discussion to take place on a WhatsApp group (where messages are end-to-end encrypted) to discuss the participants' artworks and the meanings and experiences they represent.

3. POSSIBLE RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS

There will be no foreseeable risks for the participant in this study. Should your child experience any discomfort during the course of this study, or should they wish to discuss the themes of this study further, the researcher will refer your child to the Childline toll free helpline (08 000 55 555).

4. POSSIBLE BENEFITS TO THE CHILD OR TO THE SOCIETY

My hope is that the process of learning in the sessions will be reciprocal. I want to find out about and understand your child's opinions and experiences, but I'd also like for the discussion to be an opportunity for your child to explore their own understandings of gender and sexuality in new ways. Furthermore, this study will contribute to the existing body of knowledge about participatory arts-based research and the relationship between gender and sexuality amongst learners in South Africa.

5. PAYMENT FOR PARTICIPATION

The participant will not receive any payment for participating in this study.

6. PROTECTION OF YOUR AND YOUR CHILD'S INFORMATION, CONFIDENTIALITY AND IDENTITY

With yours and your child's permission, I will transcribe all videos posted and will save the messages sent during our focus group discussions on WhatsApp for the sake of accuracy. Your child will also be asked to send me a photo of each of their artworks for me to use in the writing up of my thesis (the artworks themselves will belong to your child). All electronic data (transcriptions, personal information, photographs of your child's artworks, online consent forms) will be stored on the researcher's personal password-protected computer and backed up on the

researcher's personal password-protected Dropbox account. Only the researcher and supervisor will have access to them. Confidentiality will be maintained through the use of pseudonyms for all participants as well as for the school. By restricting sharing options when uploading videos to Google Drive, myself and participants are unable to download or share your child's videos. All WhatsApp messages are end-to-end encrypted, meaning that everything your child shares is secure. Given that your child will not be sharing their artworks, ideas and experiences with the researcher individually, but rather with other participants as well, confidentiality cannot be guaranteed by the researcher alone. The importance of confidentiality will however be explained and stressed to all participants at the outset of the research. While it is unlikely, should anything be revealed during our discussions that I have a legal obligation to report, I will do so.

7. PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL

You and your child can choose whether to be part of this study or not. If you consent to your child taking part in the study, please note that your child may choose to withdraw or decline participation at any time without any consequence. If your child does choose to withdraw, they can request that their artworks be excluded from this research and, where possible, their contributions to discussions as well. Your child may also refuse to answer any questions they don't want to answer and still remain in the study. The data generated in this study will be kept for potential use in future or secondary research, conferences or for teaching purposes as part of a lesson with students.

8. RESEARCHERS' CONTACT INFORMATION

If you have any questions or concerns about this study, please feel free to contact Kylie Kuhl (principal researcher) at 18952216@sun.ac.za or 0733878278, and/or Prof. Dennis Francis (supervisor) at dafrancis@sun.ac.za

9. RIGHTS OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

Your child may withdraw their consent at any time and discontinue participation without penalty. Neither you nor your child are waiving any legal claims, rights or remedies because of your participation in this research study. If you have questions regarding your or your child's rights as a research participant, contact Ms Maléne Fouché [mfouche@sun.ac.za; 021 808 4622] at the Division for Research Development.

DECLARATION OF CONSENT BY THE PARENT/ LEGAL GUARDIAN OF THE CHILD- PARTICIPANT

Please mark the following boxes with a 'X' to indicate your understanding and consent and fill out your name below. As the parent/legal guardian of the child I confirm that:

☐ I have read the above information and it is written in a language that I am comfortable with.

☐ I have had a chance to ask questions and these questions were answered to my satisfaction.

☐ I agree that my child may take part in this research study (subject to their consent) as conducted by Kylie Kuhl.

Name of parent/guardian: _____