Four Husbands for Ma Lindi: An exploration of the interaction between theatrical performance, gender, and sexuality in a South African urban context.

A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

Of

RHODES UNIVERSITY

By

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April 2016

Abstract:

The thesis investigates the possibilities and limitations of theatre-making in providing a space for young people to collectively create, share, and interrogate understandings about sex, sexuality and gender. I use as a case study a theatre-making process I facilitated with a group of first year drama students at the Market Theatre Laboratory, in which we created a play called *Four Husbands for Ma Lindi.* The research analyses how this process interacted with the identities-in-becoming of the individual creators, and their engagement with the world, through a methodology that views them as experts on their own lives.

There are three main arguments that I put forward in this thesis: the first is based on the experiences of healing, increased confidence and self-knowledge described by the participants as a result of sharing their personal stories in making the play. I argue that exploring autobiographical narratives through the aesthetic of theatre creates a group story that re-situates the narratives, the tellers and the witnesses in ways that can be productive for sexual and personal wellbeing, while also providing a counter-narrative that problematises the idea that sharing personal stories is always and necessarily a positive act. My second argument is that theatre-making, because it is an embodied performance pedagogy, is a constructive site in which to interrogate, deconstruct and subvert embedded gender norms and values, which are learnt and reiterated in the body. My third argument considers the relationship between theatre and change that is suggested by the findings of the research. In an analysis of the responses of the participants, I contend that theatre's potential for creating change in the socio-cultural domain lies in its ability to carve out spaces for improvisation, rather than to serve as a rehearsal for the real world. This is the position from which I then consider my ethics of practice and the role and responsibility of the facilitator in processes that view theatre-making as a critical performance pedagogy.

Acknowledgements

The financial assistance of the National Arts Council in the first year of my studies is hereby acknowledged. I wish to thank the Market Theatre Foundation on two grounds: firstly for the financial assistance extended in the second and third year of my studies, and secondly for allowing me to conduct my research at my workplace, the Market Theatre Laboratory.

I am grateful to my supervisor, Alexandra Sutherland, for her tremendous patience and the absolute trust I was able to place in her rigour and high standards; and to Alex Halligey for being such a supportive and thoughtful study partner.

Thank you Simon Ferreira for your unwavering support, patience and belief.

This study is dedicated to the Market Theatre Laboratory students who embarked on this journey with me with generosity, enthusiasm and insight. Thank you.

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Introduction

The thesis explores the creation of a play called *Four Husbands for Ma Lindi,* a process I facilitated with a group of first year drama students at the Market Theatre Laboratory in 2014. Collaborative theatre-making was a creative approach, a research method and a pedagogy that created a space for the participants, the theatre-makers, to construct, interrogate, perform and share understandings about sexuality, sex and gender. As a facilitator/theatre-maker, my intention was to provide ways for the participants to reflect on their lived experiences and generate new meanings. This was an attempt to move away from what I argue is an over-emphasis on problem solving, which is the typical conceptual framework within which theatre and sexual health have been approached.

The Market Theatre Laboratory is the education and development arm of the Market Theatre, based in Johannesburg, South Africa. I have been the Education Officer there since 2013, one of my duties being the management of a drama school offering a tertiary two-year full-time course in theatre and performance skills to young people who would not otherwise have access to arts education. I made *Four Husbands for Ma Lindi* with the entire first year class studying in this programme: eighteen students in total, eleven men and seven women. All of the participants were black South Africans between the ages of nineteen and thirty; I am a white South African woman in my thirties.

I chose to explore a theatre-making process as the subject of the thesis for creative and social reasons. Since graduating with an honours degree in drama in 2003, I have worked as a facilitator, lecturer, project manager, director, actor, theatre-maker and writer, predominantly (but not exclusively) in applied theatre spaces. As this suggests, I am strongly attracted to socially committed theatre work. This really took root at the first place I worked after graduating, Sibikwa Arts Centre: an arts NGO specialising in community theatre based in Benoni, where I was Education Officer for several years. I have come to view my time there as a second education at least as important as my degree. My experience at Sibikwa was formative in two key ways

that are relevant to the thesis: it removed me unceremoniously from the ivory tower that is being white in South Africa, and it introduced me to ways of creating theatre that were entirely different to that which I had been exposed to at university: at Sibikwa, theatre, performance and spirituality were approached as deeply connected, improvisation was valued over text, and there was a strong tradition of workshopping politically and socially connected theatre. When I first arrived, I felt completely unqualified to contribute meaningfully in this context, but in the space for experimentation and failure that Sibikwa provided, I discovered that I had strengths to offer in working collaboratively to make original theatre works: in particular, my applied theatre education gave me the skills and tools to allow everyone to participate in sharing stories and ideas, and I developed the ability to weave multiple theatrical expressions together in a coherent whole. While I have subsequently taught and directed in many other contexts, including Drama for Life, Wits Theatre, and Hillbrow Theatre, the collaborative processes and attitudes to creating theatre that I learnt at Sibikwa have provided the most profound artistic reward and enjoyment. It was natural then, to choose a collaborative theatre-making process as a method for exploring themes that I feel have created something of a state of emergency in South Africa.

My decision to explore the themes of sex, sexuality and gender arose from a feeling of helplessness, of being overwhelmed by the horrific injustice and violence against women that has become normalised in South Africa. I felt, as a woman, overpoweringly insulted and assaulted by the obvious and insidious ways that patriarchy operates – and also, that in the face of such systemic oppression, there was nothing I could do. I was further paralysed by my preliminary research, when I read a study that suggested that more than one in four men in the study sample admitted having sex with a woman against her will (Jewkes, Dunkle, Morrell & Sikweyiya, 2010). In the face of this, what might be a useful action for an individual to take? If so many men are rapists, what is to be done with them? Prison hardly seems like a useful solution. It seems evident that dominant social and cultural discourses about sexuality and gender play a stronger role in determining levels of sexual violence than individual men.

Despite this feeling of hopelessness, I felt compelled to do *something*. I proposed the idea of making a play about sex and gender to my first year students as a voluntary project. They were excited and enthusiastic about creating a play and talking about sex, in equal proportion. I saw this as a way to provide opportunities for a group of young people to speak about, perform and narrate their beliefs and values about gender and sexuality, with the hope that this would be a process of conscientisation and critical reflection which would enable them to make positive changes in their lives, if they chose.

We began workshopping the play in May 2014, a process that was in turns revelatory, frustrating, fun, frightening, rewarding and inspiring. The result was an hour-long play, titled *Four Husbands for Ma Lindi,* which was performed as part of Drama for Life's *Sex Actually* Festival, an annual platform for performances and workshops exploring aspects of sex and sexuality. The title refers to a scene we were then workshopping in rehearsals, in which traditional gender roles are reversed: a polygamous woman called Ma Lindi has three husbands, and is determined to marry a fourth. When her husbands express discontent, she declares, "This is my house. I am the head of the family and my word is final" (Four Husbands, 2014). This scene, which was adapted somewhat by the time of the performances but retained the theme of female polygamy, was received by the audience with shrieks of laughter and disbelief. This was the intention: to arrest, to interrupt expectations, and to make strange what we take for granted. Why shouldn't a woman have four husbands, if a man is allowed four wives? While talk about gender and sex is often asphyxiatingly serious (Low, in press), the play was playful and provocative, weaving together scenes, dances, songs, monologues and images; some based on flights of fancy, such as the scene about Ma Lindi, others drawn directly from the experiences of the participants. It was a jumble of styles mostly drawn from the cultural idioms of the participants, who represented a wide range of Southern African cultures and languages, coming from as far afield as the Eastern Cape, Lesotho, and Limpopo. Traditional dance, popular songs, township slang, contemporary dance, physical theatre, gesture and realist scenes jostled up against each other in the play, much as they do in Johannesburg. The play took the audience through a range of emotions

and experiences, from laughter to tragedy to joy. I will describe the play in more detail in the following chapters, in discussing how it was made, how the audience responded, and how the participants' lives interacted with its creation.

The thesis is structured in five chapters. The first two chapters serve to contextualise the study and establish the key theoretical and methodological foundations on which the research is based. The first chapter articulates my research approach: firstly, I situate the study in the fields of performance studies, applied theatre and feminist research, and show how these inform the principles that guide my research methodology. Secondly, I describe and locate the case study on which my research is based, and establish a framework that views theatre-making as a pedagogical, research and creative method in which the identity of the maker is central. In chapter two, I provide an overview of gender and sexualities research in South Africa. Informed by a research methodology in which I am co-creating knowledge in a participatory process with the participants, their lived experiences, as reflected, researched and represented in the theatre-making process, are woven into, supported by, and contrasted with the literature.

In chapters three, four, and five, I make substantive arguments about what it means to the makers to make theatre, through a discussion and analysis of the research findings. Chapter three explores the ways that the participants used their personal histories, stories, views and experiences to make the play, and how this changed and re-framed the stories, tellers and witnesses in a process that incorporated all the narratives into a collective 'our story'. I argue that the participants' experience of healing and personal growth that resulted from exploring their personal autobiographies is an explicitly political process because it places participants' own narratives at the centre of social emancipation: this is a necessary prerequisite for the capacity to participate actively in the socio-cultural domain (Govan et al, 2007). Chapter four engages with Pierre Bourdieu (1990) and Judith Butler's (1990; 1993) conceptions of gender identity and embodiment to examine the significance of those moments in the process and the play in which the participants challenged, subverted or played with gender constructs through performance. Informed by Norman Denzin (2009), I argue that theatre-making worked as a critical performance pedagogy, to

reveal and denaturalise *habitus* (Bourdieu, 1990) and give people the opportunity to perform their gender differently (Butler, 1993). In chapter five, I analyse how the process affected the participants' performances of themselves in their everyday lives. Both the men and women described what I see as alternate experiments in gender performativity – the women, re-scripting their bodies as signifiers of resistance and the men challenging the ways they are expected to perform masculinity. However, my argument throughout is counterweighted by scholars such as Neelands (2004) and Edmondson (2007), who critique 'hero' narratives that celebrate and exaggerate the empowering, transformative capacity of theatre and ignore its dangers – therefore, I have also drawn attention to the ambiguous moments, the mixed feelings, and the limitations of the process. In the conclusion of the thesis, I reflect on how these findings influence my understanding of the role of the facilitator in this context. I use the figure of the fool or clown, drawing on Salverson (2006), Prentki (2015) and Murray (2015), to propose an ethics of practise based on foolishness.

Chapter 1: Approach to the Research

I have divided this chapter into two sections to articulate my approach to the research. In the first, I set out the methodological underpinnings of my research and drama praxis. The second section is an extension and application of this foundation into a more specific discussion on collaborative theatre-making as both a creative and research methodology and a pedagogy. I will describe the process of making *Four Husbands for Ma Lindi*, and explore the possibilities it created for young people to engage with, interrogate and produce knowledges about gender and sexuality (Bennett & Pereira, 2013).

Section 1: Methodology

This research is situated in the field of performance studies. I conceive of performance studies as a methodological container that enables the interweaving of practice and research, art and analysis, and text and performance. In other words, performance studies research embraces different ways and means of knowing, a radical deviation from the traditional privileging of the written word (Conquergood, 2002). Thus, I aim to enact a methodology in which "theoretical endeavour, research activity and creative practice do not exist outside of each other but are part of practice" (Hughes, Kidd & McNamara, 2011, p. 194). The attraction of this, as Conquergood (2002) points out, is that I do not have to choose between being an artist or a critical thinker, a researcher or a practitioner. Rather, the challenge lies in investigating the knowledges in the spaces between and across these points.

Performance and performativity are key concepts, understood as embodied forms of knowledge, in the thesis. Informed by Schechner (2010), I regard theatre as one node of performance that interacts with other nodes, including play, ritual, and most crucially in this study, performance in everyday life. Theatrical performance, in the study, is both a thing that we made (a play called *Four Husbands for Ma Lindi)* and a medium through which we explored the participants' performances in everyday life; that is, how they embody and present the multiple identities and roles through which they enact their personal and social realities (Schechner, 2010). In this

everyday sense, I view the term 'performance' as a way of understanding and interpreting actions in the world in terms of what they *do*, rather than what they *are.* Similarly, performativity is the iteration of these everyday performances, understood in terms of the effect they have on the world. Particularly, according to Judith Butler, performative acts are the means by which norms are produced and maintained (Ruitenberg, 2007). These concepts of performance and performativity, which I will expand upon at relevant moments, frame my analysis of how theatre, performance, gender and sexuality interact.

I have approached my practice and research from a feminist perspective. In other words, the social construction of gender is central in my inquiry (Lather, 1991): this is a natural choice, since the themes explored in the theatre-making process were gender, sex and sexuality. Grady (2003) also points out that feminist issues are a part of everyday experience for all of us, and therefore are embedded in our drama work. I understand feminism as a way of seeing, a way of knowing, and a way of focusing on particular questions, with the intention of righting women's unequal social position (Lather, 1991). The way gender identity is constructed and analysed in the thesis is informed by Judith Butler (1990; 1993) and Pierre Bourdieu (1990). For both of these thinkers, gender is a stylisation of the body rather than an inherent reality. Bourdieu (1990) describes this as embodied belief: a process of social conditioning occurring below the level of consciousness, that is inscribed on the body and enacted through movement, gesture and posture. For Butler, gender is performative, an iteration of norms: one must repeatedly perform or embody the norm of 'girl' or 'boy' in order to be a legitimated subject. Embodiment, then, is central to both gender identity and performance. This suggests that theatre-making, which I argue is an embodied performance pedagogy, is a productive way to deconstruct and interrogate gender identities and values that are embedded in the body.

Both performance studies and feminism suggest a post-structural world view – that is, a concern with how power interacts with the construction of knowledge, the nature of truth, and the creation of identity (Grady, 2003). In light of this, a thread running through this chapter is a deconstruction of how historic and current

ideologies and political processes are embedded in research, and how this has shaped the fields in question and determined the kind of knowledge that has been created and disseminated. As Bennett (2011) points out, writing a literature review is a political act – the selection and framing of a body of research is not ideologically neutral or free of an agenda; similarly Lather argues, "knowledge production and legitimation is historically situated and structurally located" (1991, p. 3). My intention is to be as transparent as possible about the ideologies and political views which have informed my choices and interpretations.

In post-structural theoretical frameworks, the notion of continual 'becoming' replaces the more traditional notion of 'being' in relation to notions of identity and the self. While in traditional 'realist' frameworks, the self is viewed as a coherent, unified, stable entity that can be *discovered*, the social constructivist paradigm (of which post-structuralism is a part) shifts the focus from the self as an entity, to how it is *constructed* through discourse and relations of power (Crossley, 2000). Identity, then, is always changing and expanding, being erased and re-constructed; described by Gergen as a "free play of being" (Gergen, as quoted by Crossley, 2000, p. 27). In other words, the self is not a consistent being, but in a constant state of emergence. Informed by this, I conceive of the participants in the study as "human 'becomings' rather than human 'beings'" (Neelands, 2004, p. 53), and similarly my methodology as an emerging conceptual framework that guides my research praxis, but it is not conclusive, and has changed considerably in focus and practice since I began this study. I have not become a particular kind of researcher; I am becoming one, and always will be. This foregrounding of becoming, transition, impermanence, and provisionality is the conceptual vocabulary that ties together all the paradigms of thought I have found useful in attempting to probe the meaning and significance of my drama praxis, especially in understanding identity, transformation, gender, and performance.

To further articulate my methodological standpoint, I will draw together performance studies and feminist research to answer the following questions: What forms of knowledge are valued in the research? What is the intention of the research? What is my position in relation to the research and the research

subjects/participants? How do I intend to validate my claims? In answering these questions, I will describe the principles that guide my approach. I will reference various reflexive and critical research methods that I have engaged with in the research and creative process that sit comfortably within this conceptual framework. As will become evident, research methodologies and methods are not discrete, clearly boundaried procedures; they inform and leak into each other - as do the questions that I have used to structure this section (Hughes et al, 2011). I am not concerned with placing myself neatly into one category, but rather with drawing on complimentary research processes to define my own methodology.

Question One: What Ways of Knowing?

Conquergood argues that the "promiscuous traffic between different ways of knowing carries the most radical promise of performance studies research" (2002, p. 145). The dominant way of knowing in academic research is text-based critical analysis rooted in theory, legitimated by the appearance of distance and objectivity. Alternative ways of knowing have been subjugated and made invisible by the (Western) supremacy of the written word in making and sharing meaning. These alternative ways of knowing, the realm of subordinated peoples for whom texts have often been "instruments of control and displacement", are grounded in practice – embodied, local, implicit and *performed* (Conquergood, 2002, p. 147). Performance studies brings together these disparate and differently valued ways of knowing, "drawing together legitimated as well as subjugated modes of inquiry" (Conquergood, 2002, p. 151). Guided by this, my methodological approach is based on embracing theory and practice, text and performance, creation and reflection.

I view performance as an embodied knowledge paradigm that is an essential part of the study. I am discussing performance here in the most inclusive sense, across the spectrum or web suggested by Schechner (2010), from art making to rituals to the everyday, with an emphasis on the 'doing' of performance: it is practiced, it is action. I support Fleishman's argument (2009) that performance, which he defines as acts of storying, sounding, moving, feeling and relating, is a way of knowing particularly appropriate to Africa, where dance, song, storytelling and poetry have been and

continue to be ways of transmitting knowledge. Furthermore, finding alternative ways of knowing is relevant to the field of gender and sexuality in South Africa, a field in which knowledge has been "culture bound and perspectival" (Lather, 1991, p. 1).

In practice, this means that I have used theatre-making as a research method, and I regard the rehearsal process and the performance of *Four Husbands for Ma Lindi* as ways of constructing and sharing knowledge that interacted with and impacted on the everyday performances of the participants as they went about their lives; an entwining of ways of knowing that are tacit, ephemeral, extralinguistic, and experiential (Conquergood, 2002). For the purposes of this thesis, I will interpret this embodied, frequently non-textual knowledge into writing, in the understanding that such a task is impossible because language has its limits: the written record is not the thing itself, in the same way that reading a play it not the same thing as experiencing it in performance (Fleishman, 2009). Furthermore, as the selector and interpreter of moments of practice, I would also like to make explicit that I am offering my reading of the improvisations, images, stories, scenes and discoveries that took place.

I have described how practice is an important part of this research. I also want to emphasise the importance of reflecting on practice, and explain how my research method has incorporated reflective techniques. Lather (1991) highlights that self-reflexivity is a vital tool for researchers who are invested in producing social knowledge in more emancipatory ways. It is the skill that might help manage the tension between "how to maximize self as mediator between people's self understandings and the need for ideology critique and transformative social action without becoming impositional" (Lather, 1991, p. 64). In light of this, I have drawn on reflective practitioner research, in which "reflective practitioners interrogate the character of their own truths" (Taylor, 1996, p. 28). The intention of reflective practitioner research is not to test pre-conceived hypotheses, but rather to generate hypotheses in response to the data (Taylor, 1996). This provides a framework flexible enough to allow, and even demand, my research questions to change and my focus to shift in reaction to what really happens in moments of practice, and "honours the

intuitive and emergent processes that inform artistic meaning-making" (Taylor, 1996, p. 29). The decisions I have made about what questions to ask and what arguments to construct in compiling this thesis were not pre-planned, but are rather responses to what happened in practice.

I have investigated and reflected on my own practice as a researcher/educator/theatre maker through a reflective journal in which I attempted to make sense of my experiences, choices and dilemmas, and to link my practical experience to theoretical knowledge. The lived experience of the participants is central to this thesis, but so is the complexity of myself as a researcher and a human being with fears, assumptions and wishes that inform my relationship with the context and process. Self-reflexivity requires me to remain critically aware of the power structures in which the work is embedded, and to examine how I might have contributed to perpetuating dominance and hierarchies in my practice despite my emancipatory intentions (Lather, 1991). It enables me to become more aware of how my own values permeate my research, and how all research is value laden (Lather, 1991).

For the participants, reflection is necessary to acquire a deeper understanding of their situations, and therefore be empowered to change them should they choose to. Theatre-making itself is a reflective practice, in that it requires theatre-makers to select, represent, craft and interpret aspects of their lives, and throughout the thesis I will use examples of the various creative techniques we used to examine our lives more closely and more distantly, and through various lenses – in ways that allowed the participants to reflect on the complexity of their experiences. However, since the theatre-making process itself is the subject of this study, I have also needed the participants to reflect on how they experienced theatre-making. There were opportunities for this embedded in the workshops they participated in, through discussions after activities and performances and various writing tasks. With a fellow researcher, Katherine Low, I also conducted a group interview after the process and some weeks later, conducted further interviews on my own with groups divided by gender. In addition, I interviewed, separately, two teachers at the Market Lab, who participated in the process as choreographers/theatre-makers. Finally, I combined

art-making, performance and analysis through a reflective mapping activity in which I asked the participants to create an image of the journey of creating the play using various art materials. They had to select a large cloth as the basis of the image, arrange it in a way they felt reflected the process, and then choose from a variety of objects to illustrate aspects or moments of their personal journey in making the play. Each participant then presented their creation to the rest of the group, and explained as much or as little as they chose. These various reflections, collected and presented in different ways, have provided important insights and multiple perspectives on how individuals experienced and interpreted the work (Taylor, 1996).

At the risk of repetition, I will conclude this section by drawing together the research methods I have used to access and weave together various ways of knowing based in practice, performance and reflection:

1. Semi-structured Interviews:

- An interview conducted on 14 August 2014 with the whole group the day after the first performance of *Four Husbands for Ma Lindi*, in which the interviewers were researcher Katherine Low and I. Referenced as "Group Interview, 2014".
- An interview conducted on 10 October 2014 with all the women in the group, eight weeks after the process was completed, in which I was the interviewer. Referenced as "Women Interview, 2014".
- An interview conducted on 10 October 2014 with all the men in the group, eight weeks after the process, in which I was the interviewer. Referenced as "Men Interview, 2014".
- Interviews conducted with two teachers who contributed to the theatre-making process, Jaques Da Silva and Portia Mashigo, on the 21 October 2014 and 5 November 2014 respectively, referenced as "Jaques, 2014" and "Portia, 2014". Both teachers helped to craft scenes in the play, Portia by choreographing movement sequences and Jaques by using his mime and

physical theatre skills to heighten the visual impact and rhythm of several scenes.

2. Reflective mapping activity: this process happened on 29 October 2014, some weeks after the process. This was filmed by one of the participants on my cellphone, and is referenced as "Reflective Exercise, 2014".

3. *Four Husbands for Ma Lindi*, the performance that emerged from the theatre-making process. Appendix 3 is selected extracts from the script of the play[1]. Referenced as "*Four Husbands,* 2014*"*.

4. The rehearsal process: performative moments, choices, improvisations, creations and reflections that occurred while making *Four Husbands for Ma Lindi.* When quoting from events the rehearsal process, the reference will be "Rehearsal, 2014". Appendix 4 is a short video of a moment in the process in which we were workshopping one of the songs (see contents page for link and password).

5. My reflective journal: This is referenced as "Reflective Journal, 2014".

Question Two: What is the Intention of the Research?

This is research-as-praxis: it has a transparent transformative goal. In this, my research praxis mirrors my drama praxis, in that both are motivated by transformative and emancipatory intentions: my intention, in creating a play and reflecting on that process, was to help the participants gain insight into the ways that gender and sexuality shape their lives, and thus enable them, if they choose, to change their own situations (Lather, 1991). This intention falls very much within the realm of feminist research, which always aims to *do* something, to generate a discourse of emancipation with the intention of catalysing social change; to work towards a more just society by enabling people to change, through self-reflection

[1] Although I filmed a performance of the play, the resulting video is not of a high enough quality to do justice to the work. Therefore, I have chosen to include photographs in the text and extracts from the script to communicate the flavor and character of the play.

and a better understanding of their worlds (Lather, 1991). It is concerned with constructing knowledge in a more empowering way, with the awareness of the many ways that power permeates knowledge production and legitimation (Lather, 1991).

All performances strive to have an effect; performance studies thinkers in particular have constructed performance in terms of efficacy, as "an engagement of social norms, as an ensemble of activities with the potential to uphold societal arrangements or, alternatively, to change people and societies' (McKenzie, 2001, p. 30). They share this foregrounding of effect with the field of applied theatre, which is an umbrella term referring to performance practices with overt intentions for social, political or individual change (Balfour, 2009). Participation and transformation are key concepts to applied theatre's claim to efficacy (Balfour, 2009). This study falls into the category of applied theatre, concerned as it is with theatre and change. As such, I have found several applied theatre theorists useful in interpreting my practice, especially those such as Thompson (2004; 2012) and Schechner (2004; 2010), who traverse the boundary between performance studies and applied theatre, and those such as Nicholson (2005) and Perry (2011), who discuss the pedagogical potential of theatre-making. However, applied theatre is a contested term that holds an enormous variety of practices, including theatre in prisons, drama in education, theatre for development and community theatre (Balfour, 2009; Nicholson, 2005). In order to grapple with the specifics of my practice, I have located it more precisely within theatre-making as an applied theatre practice in the next section, with a discussion and critique of the methods that I engaged with, such as Boal's Theatre of the Oppressed (1992).

Evidently, ideas of 'transformation' and 'emancipation' are important in both my practice and research approach. However, scholars such as Neelands (2004), Nicholson (2005) and Balfour (2009) have problematized these terms, and I would like to pause here to define them more carefully, taking their critiques into account. As I stated earlier, post-colonial and post-structuralist perspectives deconstruct the coherent, stable, unified individual (Hearn, 2007). Identity is not fixed, but negotiated and demonstrated in social acts: performances that are representations

and interpretations of race, gender, and other ways of being (Gray, 2003). Identity then, is not what we are but what we do (or *perform)*, and it is not singular but multiple and embedded in context. Therefore, I view the research participants as people who actively construct their identities through everyday acts and interactions. As Pattman points out, "This way of conceptualizing identities has important implications for conducting research and what to focus on as findings" (2007, p. 28). It suggests that any transformation or emancipation that occurs is through the agency and decision-making capacity of the participants.

Neelands (2004), suggests that the ephemerality of drama, which Gallagher (2008) also draws attention to, offers a particular pedagogic space to embody the instability of identity and to offer the possibility of "rehistoricising, re-shaping, re-negotiating, re-translating personal and social identities in the margins of then and now, self and other" (Neelands, 2004, p. 52). Neelands (2004) also expands on the implications this view of identity has for how we view personal and social 'transformations' in socially committed drama pedagogy: he critiques the construction of "hero narratives" describing miracles of transformation in drama education (2004, p. 47), and argues instead that a pre-condition for transformational learning from a post-colonial perspective is a "refusal of certainty and completion" (2004, p. 52). Therefore, participants, if 'transformed' by the process of devising a play about gender and sexuality, are not moving from one fixed identity to another; rather, this 'transformation' is happening to people who are already in a process of continuous transforming, between who they are and who they are becoming (Neelands, 2004). This conceptualization of transformation further stresses the agency of the participants in shaping their present and future.

Nicholson (2005) goes even further, drawing on Schechner to suggest that transportation, rather than transformation, is a metaphor that better captures the social and personal change that might occur in theatre-making processes. While transformation implies change that is permanent and predetermined – a reliable input/output process that can be replicated the same way each time – transportation emphasizes something less fixed, and more unpredictable and temporary. Although transformation may result through a repeated and cumulative

series of transportations, it is an "act of self creation" (Nicholson, 2005, p. 12) rather than an immediate, predictable outcome.

Therefore, my investigation into the relationship between theatre and change is both enhanced and constrained by the post-structural emphasis I articulated in the introduction of this section, on provisionality, impermanence, transition and becoming. A study of theatre and change also raises important questions related to knowledge and power: who is changed? By whom? In whose interests does this change occur? What kind of change is regarded as 'good'? These questions have provided a problematizing counter-point to the claims of miracles and good news stories that Neelands (2004) criticises. They also highlight what Etherton and Prentki call a "faultline in applied theatre practice": that while many practitioners wish to facilitate a process for the participants to develop and empower themselves, they also wish to effect specific forms of change – which may not be the same as the wishes of the participants (2006, p. 141). The next section, concerned with my relationship with the research and the participants, expands on my methodological response to these troubling questions.

Question Three: How Am I Positioned in the Research?

As the intention of the research suggests, I am not an impartial, unbiased researcher. The positionality of the researcher in relation to knowledge and those who are being researched is fundamental to both feminist and performance studies research: there are no neutral observers, no authority with objective insights into a fixed reality (Lather, 1991). The 'expert' - an innocent, disinterested researcher immune to her/his socio-cultural environment - is a myth (Pereira, 2013). Objectivity is abandoned, and with it, the position of authority of the researcher as the one who knows (Gallagher, 2008). However, while I am drawn to an egalitarian way of researching, it is important to acknowledge the tension between this approach and the way a research degree process is structured so that you must show evidence of 'mastery' – which does necessarily position me as an expert. While there are gaps between the ideal and reality of constructs of power in this research process, which I will return to throughout the thesis, I do not claim to enter the research from an

objective viewpoint. My position is that, since research and researchers cannot be apolitical, it is the *pretence* of value-neutrality, rather than values themselves, that pose a real danger (Okech, 2013).

There are examples of this in discourses on sexuality and gender as well as drama as a pedagogy: Macleod (2013) describes how research into sexualities in South Africa has frequently been framed from an invisible white middle-class perspective, which creates a normalized, apparently neutral backdrop from which to construct and explore the 'other'. I will analyse in Chapter Two how this example is characteristic of positivistic and ostensibly objective research that pathologises African sexualities and helps maintain the values and privileges of dominant groups (Perreira, 2013). Neelands (2004) points out a similar mask of neutrality in discourses of drama education that frame drama itself as inherently progressive or powerful, eliding the fact that the outcomes of drama processes are shaped by the subjectivities of practitioners, rather than by the universal attributes of 'drama'. Since, "Drama can only be used to serve rather than determine human intentions" (Neelands, 2004, p. 48), it is ethically important to be clear about what those intentions are (who decides what change is 'good'?).

This description of research replaces the invisible, impartial researcher with one who is explicitly positioned in the research; who articulates and reflects on the values and intentions of her/his investigation (Lather, 1991; Mohlakoena Mosala, 2013). My position in this instance is that of a practitioner, examining my own work. Thus, what I have to offer is embodied, located, subjective and proximate knowledge (Conquergood, 2002). As a theatre-maker and teacher, I am involved and implicated in my research, a doer rather than an observer (Gallagher, 2008). In writing about and analysing my practice, my task is to build and enable a reciprocal relationship between practice and theory, the embodied and the abstract, analytical and artistic ways of knowing (Conquergood, 2002). This methodological framing suggests that, rather than trying to simplify practical experiences to fit into abstract frameworks, it is permissible to acknowledge the complexities and contradictions inherent to what Gallagher describes as "a series of moments, performances, creative encounters, and temporal relationships that can never be repeated" (2008, p. 67). Of particular

importance is the point of view that practice or performance as knowledge suggests – the body-subject, rather than the disembodied, authorative voice from above (Conquergood, 2002). In contrast to orthodox Western text-oriented research, which sets researchers apart from the objects of their research as observers rather than participants, performance is a form of knowledge that is not detached, objective and separate to the knower, but rather "in a constant state of emergence" (Fleishman, 2009, p. 123). Text is no longer the central or only way of knowing; rather, knowledge proceeds from the body, centred on the body-subject in the process of becoming (Fleishman, 2009). Thus, knowing through performance repositions the object and subject of research, allowing access to a "range of ideas that distant and dispassionate contemplation cannot" (Fleishman, 2009, p. 126).

This also has implications for the relationship between the researcher and the researched. I am guided by Tamale's suggestion (2011) that African feminists should shape their approaches around the lived experience of people on the continent: this evokes a participatory, context-specific method that is based on the premise that research participants have the knowledge, experience and wisdom to contribute actively to the research. The research relationship I envisaged was premised on a collaborative, reciprocal approach within which we could all learn and grow through the process (Lather, 1991). I am committed to re-imagining the traditional and socially constructed power relationship between the 'researcher' and the 'subject'. The 'subjects' are reconsidered as 'participants', and I have foregrounded their reflections, knowledge and insights in this thesis as a key part of a participatory process of knowledge production and theory construction (Frisby, Maguire & Reid, 2009). For example, a striking aspect of this research is that much of the value and interest that the participants found in making a play was outside of my intentions or expectations. I have incorporated this into the study in chapter three. To ignore it would have been to refute the idea that young people are experts on their lives, and that they have something to teach me about what theatre making means to theatre makers. In addition, I have shared drafts of the thesis with willing and interested

participants[2], and engaged them in discussions about my emerging analysis and conclusions. I argue that the more actively the participants are able to participate in the research, the less likely the research is to objectify those participating in it, which has been historically characteristic of the way sexualities in Africa have been theorized (Tamale, 2011).

The centrality of a multiplicity of participants' individual experiences and voices, which is also fundamental to reflective practitioner research (Taylor, 1996), challenges hegemonic and homogenous social categories and structures, and thus has the potential to allow counter narratives to emerge, that may previously have been silenced or made invisible (Okech, 2013). In particular, as a feminist researcher I am "alert to the erasure of women's experiences" (Okech, 2013, p. 97). However, I want to emphasise that my intention is not to write men *out* of the research; I recognise that involving men and men's experience and acknowledging that patriarchal systems are also oppressive to men is a key part of moving towards a more equal society, and the improvement of lives of men and women. Pattman (2007) argues that an apartheid legacy continues in the way that young, poor, black men have been problematized as violent and sexually irresponsible, and raises the question of how to address problematic masculine behaviours without perpetuating the construction of black masculinity as bad. He suggests, "this means treating them as intelligent, creative and caring people, and opening up spaces for them to critically reflect on the sorts of identity they routinely construct and inhabit" (2007, p. 35). I will argue in later chapters that one of the strengths of the theatre making process is that it was inclusive, and offered both women and men the opportunity to examine, share, and reimagine their experiences.

The question of positionality is particularly important to reflect on critically because of the contrast in the socio-cultural contexts of the research participants and myself. I am a white, middle-class, educated, feminist woman in my thirties with a house in the suburbs; the participants in the research are black working class men and

[2] I have not listed this as research data, because while the feedback from the participants was positive, it did not contain any corrections that required revisions or re-thinking.

women between the ages of 19 and 31, living either in flats in central Johannesburg or traveling long distances from surrounding townships. The gap between us does not become irrelevant or unimportant because we are making theatre together; the rehearsal room is not situated in a vacuum. The socio-economic contexts of the participants, and sometimes their struggle for the most basic of needs, were connected to their experience of the process. For example, in the reflective mapping exercise after the project was over, one of the participants, MLindos, created part of the road of his journey out of multi-coloured paper-clips: portraying himself (represented as an ornament of a small boy) bouncing over the road, he described this section as, "*I was a little bit happiness here cos I had an opportunity by that time to get what I needed, of which is food*" (MLindos [3], Reflective Activity, 2014). This is a sobering realisation: while my priority may have been the theatre making process, MLindos had the far more immediate concern of keeping body and soul together.

My relative social privilege makes the power relationship between the participants and I as researched and researcher even more prominent. Furthermore, I am the Education Officer of the Market Lab, and as such my relationship with this group, who were my students as well as research participants, had previously most often been as a representation of institutional authority, implementing disciplinary warnings, giving notes on performances and assessments, designing and scheduling their curriculum and disseminating information and reports. Mine is the office door that late students hurry past with their heads down, hoping they won't be summoned inside to account for their tardiness. Occasionally, this rather authoritarian role is re-framed as parental by the need of an individual student for a caregiver: my office is sometimes the refuge for students on the verge of break-down, in emotional or economic straits so dire that they can no longer perform the role of a dedicated drama student. In this setting, I have developed a professional persona to cope with what Preston describes as the "emotional labour" of providing

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[3] Each participant chose a pseudonym to be used in the research. Since the identity of the participants, and particularly the way they see themselves, is central to the study, Appendix 1 lists the pseudonym of each participant, and the words they chose to describe themselves.

both care and boundaries for vulnerable young people – a persona which often reflects something quite different to my internal emotional state (2013, p. 243). For example, I might perform care when I am too exhausted to feel it, or calmness when I am really very upset. Students, no doubt, also create personas at odds with their emotional state when interacting with authority figures such as myself. The effort of controlling and channelling emotional resources in this way is, as Preston (2013) points out, emotionally stressful. Furthermore, she argues that, "although professional personas are constructed primarily as self-protection and a means of control, they offer less opportunity for reciprocal relationships to be formed with pupils" (Preston, 2013, p. 235). The process of embarking on a creative journey was an opportunity to bring a different aspect of my identity into my relationship with the participants. From my perspective, this was a relief and very rewarding, because it felt more 'real': the theatre-making space (as opposed to my office) seemed a safe and validating space in which to feel, share and reflect more openly. While I think we built more reciprocal relationships as a result, this nonetheless raises compelling questions about participatory research in this context. Is it possible to bypass the power structure of being an older, white, authority figure working with younger students in a field already laden with landmines of moral judgement and a culture of silence? To what extent did the participants learn to agree with my feminist, liberal views about gender and sexuality? How successful was I in creating a space in which people could reflect on their own values, beliefs and behaviour, without feeling that I was looking for a 'right' answer? These questions, and the acknowledgement of the reality of the power relationship between the participants and I, are key considerations in my interpretation of data throughout the thesis, and particularly in considering descriptions of radical shifts in perspective or behaviour in the 'real' world, which I discuss in detail in chapter four.

Gallagher (2008) suggests that the particular value of approaching participatory research from a theatre perspective lies in the impermanence, the constant movement, the searching for but never remaining satisfied with new meanings, of the arts. Lather's argument that embracing "provisionality and undecidability, partisanship and overt politics" might be a more emancipatory approach to

knowledge building supports this claim for the value of a theatre based approach (1991, p. 10). Drawn together by our mutual investment in the same goal – to make a play we could be proud of - the participants and I had the opportunity to play many roles that had previously not been accessible in relation to each other. In contrast to the 'objective sciences', which use data to make claims of universal truths, and to construct knowledge as separate from experience (Gallagher, 2008, p. 69), the state of constant movement that the arts embraces allows us to 'unfix' our views of ourselves and our participants, and to enact a "context specific and embodied methodology" (Gallagher, 2008, p. 70). Thus our status relationship, which had seemed fixed and permanent, became more fluid and improvised, continually negotiated and re-negotiated. At different points, I was a school principal, a co-collaborator, a theatre director, a facilitator, an artist, a listener, a leader and a researcher; the research participants were students, experts, writers, actors, artists, theatre directors, leaders and researchers. As we performed these various roles, we were in a constant state of flux in re-discovering and redefining our relationships with each other, the knowledge we were exploring and the play we were creating. This allowed many more ways of relating than we had previously experienced with each other and revealed more of our layered and multiple identities: for example, we were able to be uncertain, not to know, to talk about our personal lives and histories, and to share the excitement of a fresh idea.

In contrast, in the few lessons that I had previously had with the class, I was in the role of a drama teacher. My aim was to teach or explain particular acting skills, and in this mode I tend to see students in light of their strengths, and more often their weaknesses. My attention was on students' attitudes in class, especially if they had problems with punctuality, focus and preparation. Part of what I aim to teach is professional behaviour, and personal problems are rarely tolerated or treated with empathy in the classroom. Embarking on the creative journey of making a play with the students fundamentally shifted our relationship and changed, radically, how I perceived them. The personal - their lives, thoughts, experiences and beliefs - were the focus of the process, visible, valued and examined. Students that I had previously seen as unfocused, uncommitted or lazy suddenly sprang into focus as whole human

beings. This humanising effect of the creative process was reciprocal - I think that I too became a whole human being in the participants' eyes. However, I will continue to question, throughout my thesis, how the power relations in the research process might have affected the knowledge we have produced. To what extent did I succeed in creating a relationship characterised by "a mutual negotiation of meaning and power" (Lather, 1991, p. 57)? Was the research mutually beneficial?

While the words 'participatory', 'emancipatory' and 'reciprocal' describe important guiding principles in my research methodology, it is equally important to acknowledge the challenges presented by the socio-cultural context in which the research is embedded, and the tension between this approach and the requirement for a Master's degree thesis to exhibit the expertise of the writer. In negotiating these contradictions and, perhaps, impossibilities, I find Salverson's proposal for the facilitator as a foolish witness (2006) useful in framing my role in witnessing and analysing the participants' theatre-making journey. Salverson (2006) suggests that the fool or clown is the perfect witness because he or she, when inevitably imperfect, finds the courage to continue to engage. In fact it is the knowledge that the task is impossible that allows the clown to fail – and to try again. Engagement is key, rather than success. From this perspective then, I am aware of the risks and tensions that accompany the pursuit of a reciprocal research relationship with the participants in this context, for this purpose, and I am available to that failure – and also, to what it might offer. I am willing, as Salverson (2006) proposes, to be destabilised. My argument, in conclusion, is that this sense of availability to the process, a feminist attention to counter narrative and silent voices, and the fluidity of drama methods, present an opportunity to re-examine and re-imagine what and who research is for, and how it might be done (Okech, 2013).

Question Four: How Will I Validate My Claims?

In a historical context in which the framing of issues and research subjects has served particular interests, Macleod (2013) argues that we must be cautious about the claims we make, and be rigorous in how we validate these claims. Writing about research on young women and abortion, Macleod (2013) argues that, in a field as

politically fraught as this, researchers must interrogate the ideological implications of their work. This is true in the entire field of sexuality and gender, concerned as it is with ethics, morality, silencing, respectability, race and power.

However, if researchers and research participants are, as Lather puts it, “constantly moving subjectivities”, (1991, p. xixi) and the notion of one objective truth is abandoned, how do we do rigorous research? What validates our claims? I argue that the two ways of knowing that are foregrounded earlier in the study, practiced, performed knowledge and reflective knowledge, combine together to create a rigorous research method. Firstly, Lather (1991) argues for using multiple data sources and methods to develop a systematic approach to triangulating data. The fluidity between and interweaving of theory and practise articulated by performance studies research achieves this: as I have described earlier I will be drawing on a variety of data: performance and other creative expressions viewed as ways of knowing, including creative writing and reflective art-making activities, as well as more traditional interview methods. As will become clear as the thesis unfolds, these sometimes stand in tension with each other – it is in these moments of contradiction or ambiguity that I believe the complexity of practice is revealed. Insight lies not in resolving the tension but in reflecting on and acknowledging multiple and layered meanings. Lather (1991) argues that an awareness of counter patterns and counter narratives are an accountable and important way to interrogate the credibility of our claims.

This highlights the importance of a reflective approach and returns us to the positionality of the researcher: Gallagher (2008) proposes that researchers need to interrogate their own conscious and unconscious interpretive lenses – revealed by moments of withdrawal and engagement, voices we don’t want to hear and voices we don’t know how to listen to. My reflective journal and more general reflective approach to developing the thesis, and the participatory ethos of the research methods, are ways of enabling me as a researcher to reflect on and interrogate the things I know and how I know them (Mohlakoena Mosala, 2013).

Conclusion

I have located the research under the umbrella of performance studies, and articulated how this informs my understanding of the relationship between practise and research; art and analysis; text and performance. I have explained how my post-structural, feminist perspective further defines my research methodology and informs my research methods. In doing so, I have laid out the following principles that underpin the study: it has transformative, emancipatory intentions (with a particular understanding of what these much-used terms imply), it is participatory and self-reflective, and it requires a critical and transparent awareness of the relationship of the researcher to the content and the research participants. Through this methodology, my objective is not to construct generalisable truths, but to propose open readings of context-embedded research data, upon which multiple interpretations could be overlaid (Gallagher, 2008).

In the following section, I will describe how the theatre-making process unfolded and locate it within a historical and theoretical context, highlighting the ways that collaboratively making a play is a creative, research and pedagogical process.

Section 2: Collaborative Theatre-Making Practices

The theatre-making practice for this project was focused on making theatre *with* rather than *for* the participants; a process that was simultaneously an act of creation, a method of research, and a critical, embodied pedagogy which provided opportunities for the participants to create and explore knowledge and identity "in the making" (Perry, 2011, p. 63). I argue that it is this interweaving of artistry, learning and research that make theatre-making a rich, complex, and potentially transformative site for exploring gender and sexuality. I will draw on theories of devised theatre, workshop theatre and performance as an epistemology to describe and analyse the creation of *Four Husbands for Ma Lindi.* I aim to enable the reader to imagine how the process unfolded and what the final play was like, focusing in particular on the ways in which theatre-making relates to the makers, and their engagement with the world (Fleishman, 2009). In drawing together the ways that

various scholars talk about what theatre-making can do, I am focused on exploring what the educative and transformative possibilities of the process might be – while this paints a very positive picture, I will also be exploring in later chapters how these ideals can and have been challenged and interrupted.

Devised theatre, as a term theorised within a Western theatrical framework, was coined in the early twentieth century to describe the creation of a collaboratively produced original performance with no prior performance text (Govan, Nicholson, & Normington, 2007). However, the notion of improvisation and co-creation in performance is embedded in much older African theatrical practices: oral forms of cultural expression, including performance forms such as the *izinganekwane* (Zulu folk tales), the Sotho *diboko* (clan praises), praise poetry, and Khoisan dance drama have a centuries-long tradition in South Africa (Fleishman, 1990). Heavily influenced by these oral traditions, workshop theatre is a form of collaborative theatre practice that emerged in South Africa in the 1970's, becoming the dominant way of making anti-apartheid plays (Fleishman, 1990). As terms that describe the process of a group of people *making* (rather than writing) a play, devised and workshop theatre are paradigms with overlapping characteristics. I have drawn on both fields of research in contextualizing my own theatre-making practice, as each offers insights into the transformative, research and creative spaces that the participants traversed in making *Four Husbands for Ma Lindi.* Both terms encompass bodies of work that are far from homogenous, thus making definitions and categorization unstable and evolving (Govan et al, 2007; Holloway, 1993). However, workshop and devised theatre are defined to a large extent by their participatory creative process, while the product might be infinitely varied (Govan et al, 2007; Fleishman, 1990). Strategies for collective theatre-making are continually evolving and being adapted to the contemporary needs and contexts of practitioners, characterized by "experimental ways of working that emphasise the creative freedom and spontaneity of both performers and spectators" (Govan et al, 2007, p. 8). Thus, there is no set of rules or consistent pattern defining how this process unfolds, but rather several strategies drawn from, among others, community theatre, performance art, poor theatre, political theatre and physical theatre, and in the case of workshop

theatre, traditional African performance forms and township theatre (Govan et al, 2007; Fleishman, 1990; Morris, 2007). These forms have also been influenced by each other. For example, Joan Littlewood's Theatre Workshop in London's East End had a profound influence on South African theatre-maker Barney Simon when he worked there in the late 1950's (Fuchs, 2002). Through this experience, he was exposed to a set of theatre values that saw theatre-making as a group effort, and the actor as a member of local society, enmeshed in the lives and issues of the people living next to the theatre (Fuchs, 2002). His later experience of working with mixed race, black and Puerto Rican theatre groups in New York further developed his ideas of what role theatre should play in society, and inspired him to make theatre based on the lived experience of the actors when he returned to South Africa (Fuchs, 2002).

Introducing the Market Theatre, and the Market Theatre Laboratory

It is workshop theatre that resonates strongly with the context and locality of this project: the Market Theatre is the "birthplace of numerous workshopped plays" (Holloway, 1993, p. 22). Co-founded by Barney Simon and Mannie Manim in 1976 in a building that was originally an Indian Fruit Market, the Market Theatre became world-famous as a non-discriminatory theatre that performed multi-racial plays to multi-racial audiences – the first integrated theatre in Johannesburg (Schwartz, 1988). With a focus on developing indigenous work that told South African stories about life during apartheid, it has produced iconic resistance plays including *Woza Albert!,* workshopped by Barney Simon, Percy Mtwa and Mbongeni Ngema in 1981, and *Born in the RSA*, workshopped in 1985 by Barney Simon and the Company, a group of then resident actors at the Market Theatre (Schwartz, 1988). In 1989, Barney Simon, by then the Artistic Director of the Market Theatre, co-founded the Market Theatre Laboratory with actor and playwright John Kani (Fuchs, 2002). It is at the Market Lab, as it is commonly called, with the students of the 2014/2015 class, that this study is located.

The mandate of the Market Lab when it was founded was to provide a space for learning, experimentation and practice, particularly for black actors who had no

other access to arts education. It is striking that both of the founders of the Market Lab were key figures in the emergence of workshop theatre in the early 1970's: Barney Simon was a member of the Phoenix Players, and John Kani a member of the Serpent Players; both of these theatre groups used collaborative theatre-making techniques to explore and portray everyday experiences under the apartheid regime (Fleishman, 1990). While the Market Lab's mandate continues to be to give access to education and opportunities in the performing arts to aspiring actors and theatre-makers who are not able to afford university fees, this has become increasingly formalized post-apartheid, and part of the Market Lab is now a drama school offering a two year educational programme in Theatre and Performance Skills, training between thirty and thirty-five students a year. While the Market Lab is not accredited, it has a strong reputation based on the successes of its graduates. It is as Education Officer of this drama school that I facilitated this theatre-making process with the first year students.

I view workshopping *Four Husbands for Ma Lindi* in this particular location as a continuation of a rich legacy of communal theatre and knowledge making which is intended to "challenge the foundations of our society and point the way to justice and democracy" (Holloway, 1993, p. 17). Furthermore, informed by Morris (2007), I argue that workshop theatre is a particularly appropriate and relevant research and creative method to engage with Market Lab students, who are mostly from townships. Morris (2007) draws attention to the synchronicity between township life and collective theatre making: she argues that the cooperative creativity of the workshop process is supported by the cultural traditions of township life – song, dance, rituals and rhythm; and by the collective modality that township life engenders as a space in which life is often lived and experienced communally, with an emphasis on the group over the individual (Morris, 2007). Morris suggests that township "playing culture", because it is characterized by performance based practices such as singing, dancing, and storytelling, resources township youth with playmaking and performance skills (2014, p. 201). These embodied and performative aspects of playing culture are the repertoire by which culture and cultural knowledge is transmitted and preserved; "whereby we express ourselves, transmit knowledge,

perceptions, ideas and memories” (Morris, 2014, p. 203). To recall Fleishman (2009), repertoire is therefore an embodied, tacit way of knowing about the world, embedded in everyday usage. Unlike archival knowledge, which is composed of things – artefacts and records – that exist and endure independently of people, repertoire knowledge only exists through the performative acts of people, and is “in continual renewal and reformation and is therefore unstable” (Morris, 2014, p. 203). This is also true of theatre performance (Morris, 2014). Therefore, collective theatre making, because it accesses and uses the repertoire, is a rich and appropriate way of exploring perceptions, practices, beliefs and cultural mores about sexuality and gender with youth from townships. Furthermore, the possibility of change, which was the pedagogical and social hope for the theatre making process, is embedded in the idea of the repertoire, because it is communicated performatively by people in the immediate present, and is therefore revised, reimagined and always in a process of becoming (Morris, 2014).

Making Four Husbands for Ma Lindi

Fleishman (1990) divides the workshopping process into three phases – observation, improvisation and selection. This is a useful framework to describe the making of *Four Husbands for Ma Lindi,* which was also logistically separated into three distinct time blocks, because the play-making process was structured to fit into the rest of the first year curriculum. These roughly match Fleishman’s suggested phases in form and function – therefore, I will use them as headings to structure my discussion of the theatre-making process, although it is also important to note that aspects of observation, improvisation and selection could all be present in one single workshop.

While the students were participating in this project, they were also attending other classes. Workshops were interrupted by the group’s participation in another production, a theatrical adaptation of the children’s book, *The Gruffalo,* directed by two visiting Dutch theatre makers. Therefore, the shape of the process, including performances, is as follows:

1. Observation (5 May – 13 June 2014): I facilitated ten three-hour workshops over this period.
2. Break (14 June – 20 July 2014): work on *Four Husbands for Ma Lindi* was temporarily suspended, as the group were involved in the rehearsal and performance of *The Gruffalo,* and then took a mid-year holiday.
3. Improvisation (21 July – 3 August 2014): in the beginning of the third term, we embarked on two weeks of daily three-hour rehearsals.
4. Selection (4 – 18 August 2014): as the performance dates grew closer, rehearsals intensified to six hours a day in the final two weeks.
5. Performance (19 – 27 August 2014): we presented five performances at various venues around Johannesburg.

From each phase (except the break), I will select moments and activities that reflect key characteristics and reveal insights into the overall process. I will also explore the research, educative and creative potentials of these phases to build the argument that it is these multiple capacities that allow participants to explore and envision their own desire for social change (Govan et al, 2007).

My theatre-making method has been profoundly influenced by Boal and his Theatre of the Oppressed (1992), as evidenced by some of the games and activities I will describe using in making *Four Husbands for Ma Lindi.* In particular, I am attracted to the importance he places on the body, and the recognition, like Fleishman (2009), that image and embodiment can construct, express and interpret knowledge, which textual analysis - the act of putting into words, of understanding and creating knowledge via language - cannot access. However, I have a different view to Boal about the *purpose* of theatre: as Plastow (2009) points out, Boal is prone to making radical claims about the revolutionary capacity of theatre that I would suggest fall under the category of 'transformations' that I critiqued in the previous section. I have sometimes found it challenging to adapt his methods to align to my intentions because much of his work is predicated on exploring an oppression or problem. This is the very construct that I wanted to avoid – the view of sexuality and gender only in the negative, only as sites of oppression or problems. Therefore, I did not frame any processes as exploring situations of oppression. Furthermore, I find Boal's construct

of the function of theatre as a 'rehearsal' for real life limiting in practice – in the descriptions that follow, it is when theatre is not at all like real life, when the rules of real life are suspended, that I think there was the most potential for new insights. Because I find Boal's approach both inspiring and limiting, and because it has been so influential to me and the field of applied theatre generally (Friedman, 2010), I return to him throughout the thesis, both to draw on his views and methods, and to provide a critique of his practices and offer some alternative views.

Phase 1: Observation

> *"Me, neh? I was excited – I don't want to lie. Because sex? It's something like –we don't talk about it."*
>
> (Miss J, Group Interview, 2014)

The observation phase of workshopping a play can be understood as a research process: conducting interviews, reading, observing people in their everyday lives, and reflecting on and sharing personal experiences (Fleishman, 1990). The participants/creators of *Four Husbands for Ma Lindi* participated in all four of these research activities. The first task I gave the group is a good example of how the interconnectivity of research and creativity embedded in the devising process is a key part of its pedagogical power (Pammenter, 2013). I asked the participants to design a question starting with, 'Do you have a story about…?' Potential endings we discussed in the workshop included 'losing your virginity' and 'falling in love for the first time'. Outside of the rehearsal space, the participants had to ask someone this question, and return the following week to perform their answer to the group. While this was a research task, it was also a creative act, as are all accounts of experience: "always selective in their memories and forgetfulness" (Burn, Franks & Nicholson, 2010, p. 166). For some of the participants, this task became a personal narration, as they presented a story of their own rather that someone they had interviewed. The boundary between the lived experience of the self and others, and of truth and fiction, became central to the play: many of the activities we used to generate material for the play were constructed in such a way that people could choose whether or not to use their personal experiences; the intermingling of

autobiographical truth and fiction was left deliberately vague and uncertain. While performance is a re-creation, re-presentation, and re-production that is necessarily interpretive, Govan et al (2007) argue that all personal narratives are authentic because the way participants turn memory into theatre reflects how they understand and feel about their situations. As Mandisa describes, this allowed the participants to explore their own stories in a way that felt safe:

> See, if you're gonna come here and then say this is not my story, while you know it's your story….because we don't know, you're gonna do whatever you want to do with that story, do you understand? So even if you don't come out, but you know that's your story.
>
> (Mandisa, Women Interview, 2014)

What she also suggests here is that narratives can live in the realm between lived experience and the imagination – "*you're gonna do whatever you want to do with that story*"; rather than a stable fact, a story about the self can be re-framed and re-imagined to generate new meanings and insights. In this, performance challenges the idea that the world and its narratives are fixed realities that cannot be changed (Govan et al, 2007). This includes your personal history, and how you relate to it: through devising, people are able to "reassess their sense of self-worth from different perspectives" (Govan et al, 2007, p. 82). Fleishman (1990) makes a similar argument for workshop theatre and its impact on people who participate in the act of making it: that it engenders self-confidence, an affirmation that your story is important, and a sense of solidarity and community. Thus, the devising process and specifically, performed narratives, can enable participants to resituate autobiographical knowledge through the re-interpretative act of performance (Govan et al, 2007). In re-working your experiences and stories through theatre, you do not just live them passively, but have the chance to change them, and in this way, to connect life as it is with life as it could be (Fleishman, 2009).

Many, if not all, of the participants chose to use their personal experiences and stories as a source of material for the play. For example, Hollywood's monologue, *A Taste of the Cake,* is an autobiographical account that he presented in the activity I

have just described (although he originally presented it as someone else's story). In an interview after the process, Freddy explained why he made a similar shift:

> Because of, I felt like I didn't really know myself that much, when I was asking people these questions, I felt like maybe my experience might be similar to them. So I stopped asking people questions - I started asking myself questions to try and understand really, who am I?
>
> (Freddy, Group Interview, 2014)

Freddy's reasoning suggests that the observation phase was a catalyst for self-reflection that evoked a desire for self-knowledge and understanding. Thus, researching and creating a play was a pedagogical process; a "significant educational journey", all the more significant for being based on the personal histories of the participants (Pammenter, 2013, p. 87). It is the personal that is often not acknowledged in education systems – the identity of students - and yet, Pammenter suggests that "if we lose our owned sense of our histories we become dislocated from our collective identities" (2013, p. 86). Thus, sharing and valuing the personal is a way of connecting individual identities to others, constructing a sense of community and coming to a critical awareness of the social context in which personal stories take place (Govan et al, 2007). It is a process of conscientisation, reflection and analysis whereby individual narratives are understood in relation to each other, and in relation to larger social and cultural structures and powers (Pammenter, 2013; Govan et al, 2007). Linking the personal and individual with the social and political gives us fresh insights and understandings of our lived experiences, as Loti describes:

> I think more than anything the reason why these stories can somehow make you think about yourself is because…we basically have a common story – I think we – you can somewhat say we have the same story because we have the same codes of morality in society as a whole…
>
> (Loti, Group Interview, 2014)

At this stage, I wasn't focused on generating or crafting scenes for the play but rather on explorations and creative exercises that created a forum for examining the group's values, identifying common experiences and providing opportunities for self-reflection within the themes of sex, sexuality and gender (Pammenter, 2013). I used

a range of theatre-making techniques to facilitate this research by the group into themselves. A typical workshop would begin with a check-in, in which every participant would express their state of mind before we began, either through a movement, an image, a sound, a colour - and many others. We eased our way into a theatre-making, collaborative mood through songs and music, particularly through improvising songs and soundscapes that required everyone to listen and respond to each other in spontaneous ways (see appendix 4). When we had composed the songs we used in the play, we began every rehearsal by practising them, and adding layers of nuance and detail. After this gentle warm-up, I would facilitate games for building ensemble, trust, focus and energy. The next part of the workshop was usually a playful session of creating and exploring. Sometimes I shared some of the research material that I had collected, including journal articles and YouTube videos – Catherine Burns' Tedx talk on the history of sex (2012), and a French short film titled *The Oppressed Majority* (Pourriet, 2014) which I will discuss in depth later, were particularly useful starting points. After watching or reading these, I experimented with various ways for the participants to respond creatively, such as writing monologues, making and presenting short scenes, and structured improvisations. We played many games to engage with the themes in embodied, intuitive, playful ways. For example, in one workshop we made thematically relevant machines, to which every person contributed a 'cog', through gesture and sound: love machines, break up machines, seduction machines and heartbreak machines. Image theatre, as described by Boal (1992) was a useful way of exploring stereotypes and aspirations, and to suggest themes and stories. I also facilitated more 'talk' based activities, such as asking participants to stand on a spectrum from 'agree' to 'disagree' in response to particular statements, such as, 'I would stop a drunk friend from having sex at a party' and 'I am comfortable with my body'. These kinds of activities would then be expanded upon through performance – such as making an image, or a scene. Very often, a creative activity would take on a life of its own, and it would go on much longer than I had planned as I improvised the progression of the workshop depending on what the group offered. I structured moments of reflection into all the workshops – through writing on large pieces of paper and post-its, discussing activities in pairs and sharing with the whole group, and closing the

workshops with a response from each participant. I also continually encouraged the participants to offer ideas they had for the play – characters, scenarios, pieces of writing – what they would like to see and what they would like to perform. I asked them to observe their surroundings or choose people to interview, which they would present at the next workshop.

As this description illustrates, the intention in using theatre as a research medium was not to define or tackle a problem, but rather to collect and share knowledge (Thompson, 2012). What is also evident is that the identity of the creator is central to the devising process and performance: as there are no pre-determined characters or lines, the creators must use their own relationship with the subject, unmediated by a playwright – through discussion, research, creative play, improvisation, storytelling and other techniques – and from this develop an embodied performance (Perry, 2011; Burn et al, 2010).

At this time, we were workshopping with no performance date in mind. It was towards the end of this phase that my supervisor, Alex Sutherland, suggested I apply to present our work at DFL's *Sex Actually* Festival, which was to be held from the 19th to the 30th of August 2014.

Phase 2: Improvisation

> *"It was just a story, nothing so important. Just stories that we experience all the time. But by the time when we put it on stage, it becomes something different."*
>
> (Manyuza, Group Interview, 2014)

Fleishman terms the next phase of making a play "improvisation", which he describes as "recreating the life observed in the first phase of the process" (1990, p. 101). The first and second phases were separated, taking place in the second and third terms respectively. During the holiday between terms, I received our acceptance to the *Sex Actually* Festival, so when we returned, it was to a more outcomes-oriented, four-week rehearsal process. The beginning of this phase marked a gradual, organic shift in my relationship with the group from facilitator to

director, caused by an increasing tension I felt between the importance of the process and the product. Although I recognised the value of having a platform to present at and a deadline to work towards, I was ambivalent about the decision to present at the *Sex Actually* Festival. Before we started the improvisation phase of rehearsals, I wrote:

> *On Monday, I'm going to start 3-hour daily rehearsals with the group, working towards a performance in a mere four weeks' time. So how do I feel? Well, very apprehensive…One of the main tensions that is arising is about the performance, and the expectation of what that must be, i.e.: because it's a public performance, and it will be judged as a performance and received as a performance, it has to be a good performance….The pressure to create this impressive performance makes me want to make decisions now, without the group, without consultation, to assert some control over the process to assure a good outcome. Of course I'm aware that too little exploration, too much emphasis on the product, will produce less than we could have, something that isn't fully interrogated, that isn't nuanced and deep and truly from the group themselves. I suppose I'm facing a crisis of confidence about my (and the group's) ability to do both.*
>
> (Reflective Journal, 2014)

Despite the tensions and fears I articulated, I was determined to continue the process as democratically and consultatively as I could. In light of this, in our first rehearsal, I facilitated a collaborative poetry making exercise reflecting on what the participants felt the play should be about. The example below gives some insight into the fruits of the "observation" phase:

This production should be….

Informative to the audience of the emotions, thoughts and feelings individuals hide due to the fear of being judged!!

Bringing the best out of the real human being/Inner soul

Letting Your emotions/feelings Rule Your World.

The way people think women should be treated

Stepping into the unknown/Challenging the present/educational

For crying out loud! Fancy Expectations

How would the world be as the opposite sex

What would be the best word to describe the feeling when you being exposed about your real sexuality that's in the closet. How sure are you that you are straight

Advantages and disadvantages of sex

It happens, believe it or not

(Rehearsal, 2014)

Like the process, this poem encompasses the personal and the political, the individual and the social, issues and emotions. It also traverses a wide range of themes and potential stories, reflecting the scope of experience that we had already explored.

While improvisation was an important creative technique in interpreting and performing research material, we also incorporated numerous other methodologies, such as writing, image theatre, and song-making. The scope of methods for exploring the research material was greatly increased by the contributions of two of the Market Lab's teachers, who joined the process in this phase: Portia Mashigo, who teaches Movement, and Jaques Da Silva, who teaches Mime and Physical Theatre. Furthermore, just as improvisation was an aspect of the previous phase, research and observation were interwoven into this period. For example, in one workshop, Queshaah told a story about an incident he had observed while on the train, in which two girls were harassed by a large group of men. We discussed the story, and then embodied it through improvisation, at first as a simple re-enactment of what he had described, and then using multiple techniques to push and pull the narrative in various aesthetic and contextual directions. We used song, rhythm, thought-tracking, physical stylization, and finally we swapped the genders of the characters, so that a group of girls were harassing two men. Re-organising the story in various ways revealed the social and cultural values that allowed the original incident to take place – the ownership that the men felt of the space and the ways that they affirmed their masculinity to each other, the pressure on all the men to participate, their objectification of the women, and the expectation that the women would be passive

and unresponsive. Therefore, it gave the participants the opportunity to question and disturb dominant scripts of masculinity and femininity from several perspectives. In other words, recreating life through performance is an act of interpretation and imagination that provides opportunities for insight and deeper understanding. Participating in making and shaping a story in this way, the participants were experimenting with "knowledge in the making": Perry argues this is a pedagogical process, that "through collaboration in performance and performance creation, participants are at once learning through doing, comparing and contemplating each other's input (critique) and at the same time troubling and unravelling knowledge, experience and subjectivity" (2011, p. 68). Pammenter (2013) points out that making theatre demands experimentation and analysis, it requires you to listen, take risks, explore the unknown, change your position, and perhaps most importantly, use your imagination. Furthermore he suggests that,

> If we are allowed to participate in the story process, as we do in participatory theatre, we might want to offer different perspectives, suggest ways forward or solutions to the problems, but to do so we first need to understand them, and we have to recognize that the 'other' participants might have different views from ours.
>
> (Pammenter, 2013, p. 91)

This highlights two key arguments: firstly, that theatre 'changes' things, because stories can be experimented with through performance, and secondly that making theatre enables participants to share and experience multiple perspectives.

Phase 3: Selection

> *"There's been days when I'm like why are we doing this, why are we still adding things a week before performance, are we gonna – are we gonna even remember this thing on the performance day?"*
>
> (Lee, Group Interview, 2014)

The selection phase of making the play – choosing and combining scenes, sections and pieces into a performance (Fleishman, 1990) - is also a method of research: the processes of rehearsal that are required - repetition, crafting, refining and probing –

present new insights into the hidden dynamics of scenes, the intentions and motivations of characters and the narratives of power within the stories that we choose to tell (Pammenter, 2013).

While all of the decisions about how to organise and craft the material were discussed and negotiated, I played a strong directorial role, and I continued to struggle to reconcile my desire to facilitate an authentically democratic process with the pressure I felt to ensure that we had a good product. On the one hand, workshop theatre makes a political statement: in opposition to the oppressive politics at the time of its emergence, it is based on a democratic process of consensus and shared decision-making (Fleishman, 1990). Collective creativity was a way of bringing people in a deeply divided and unjust society together as equals, to share life experiences that were vastly different, although they all lived in the same country (Jamal, 2003). It is also oppositional to traditional theatre and educational structures, which have clear hierarchies of teachers and directors over students and actors. However, on the other hand, I felt that as the most experienced theatre-maker in the room, I had to be in control of the shape of the process, to make sure that we were well prepared by the date of the first performance. I felt that this was only possible with a director, especially because of the size of the group. I was also aware that we were working in an educational context, and I was responsible for teaching the participants performance and theatre-making skills. Salverson (2006) argues that artists and educators need to find ways to "walk the delicate balance between honouring the stories of the group members while not withholding the political, theatrical, and pedagogical expertise that brought them to the workshop in the first place" (2006, p. 148). This accurately reflects the dilemma I felt about what my role was and should be. Therefore, my relationship with the participants and with the material constantly shifted as we negotiated choices about the aesthetic of the play. I explained that I would begin working increasingly as an 'outside eye', but also continued to share thoughts and ideas about the shape of the play. Wearing the hat of a 'director', it was a new and rewarding experience to consult the group about questions around the play that I would usually grapple with on my own: I realised that if I was stuck it was likely that someone else had the answer. The participants

responded positively to the invitation to think, not only of their own role and performance, but also of the production as a whole. I grew increasingly to trust the group with the process, and to realize that I didn't need to have all the answers and ideas. However, in hindsight, I wonder what might have happened if I had risked failure and 'not knowing' by giving the group more control over how the raw material was transformed into a play. Would this have changed what the play 'said'? My contribution (and the contributions of the other teachers) was not 'only' aesthetic, because in many ways aesthetic choices are a way of commenting on the content – and are thus value-laden. I will consider specific examples of this in chapter three.

The final play has the episodic, non-linear structure and multiple perspectives typical of workshopped theatre: it is a series of short scenes, dances, songs and monologues that cover a wide range of themes: questions about sex, losing your virginity, HIV testing, broken hearts, sugar daddies (relatively rich older men who give younger women gifts or money in return for sex or company), sexual abuse, learning to be a man, and wishes for the future. The cast remains on stage for the whole play, witnessing and commenting on the action through images, songs and sound. The play ends in a celebratory song in a typically African form: actors step into the centre of a semi-circle to perform individual monologues, praise poems and verses about themselves between the recurring refrain of:

I'm something that you've never seen before

Yes I am, take me as I am

I'm something that you've never seen before

And I'll be so forever more

(Four Husbands, 2014)

Throughout the play, the participants shift between playing various characters, and playing themselves, deconstructing the identity of the actor in theatre (Perry, 2011). The scenes and the links between them are often drawn from the "local performatic

repertoire" of township playing culture: traditional and popular songs and dances, games and street talk (Morris, 2014).

The choice we made, of telling many different stories from several perspectives, represents narratives as multiple, subjective and unstable. This has been a central principle of devised theatre (Govan et al, 2007), and suggests that different experiences are "equally valid and important" (Low, in press, p. 8). Like the messiness of research that refuses to reach neat, simplifying conclusions, it allows a polyvocal, multimodal engagement with co-creators, audiences, texts and stories that allows the depiction of a messy world of conflicting subjective experiences, relationships and voices (Perry, 2011). As no one identity or voice is privileged to define an authorial line (despite my sometimes directorial role), devising or workshopping theatre does not result in a unified vision. Perhaps then, while knowledge is produced through devising, that knowledge is particularly contextual, unstable and provisional, even potentially contradictory, valuing multiple perspectives over the linear narrative of a more traditional play. Thus, knowledge is not only made, but disturbed and troubled, which in itself is pedagogical (Perry, 2011): "recognising that there are different stories and that stories have multiple interpretations involves identifying the limits of one's own horizons and an interest in seeing alternative perspectives" (Fleishman, 2009, p. 125).

Perry (2011) points out that this resistance to or deconstruction of the traditional linear well-made play resonates with the way that critical pedagogy deconstructs grand narratives and dominant discourses. Critical pedagogy "works to resist oppressive power relations by creating spaces of equality in which students can engage in a participatory democracy and co-create knowledge in ethical encounters with others and self" (Adams, 2013, p. 291). This emphasis on equality was also a key feature of workshop theatre as a democratic space in a divided and unequal society (Jamal, 2003). Norman Denzin uses these ideas to propose a critical performance pedagogy, suggesting a "performative praxis that inspires and empowers persons to act on their utopian impulses" (2009, p. 257) and stating that, "performance texts provide the grounds for liberation practice" (2009, p. 267). While these principles resonate strongly with my own motivations for embarking on this project, they do

generate a grand narrative of their own. Indeed, critical pedagogy theorists have been critiqued from a feminist perspective for returning to meta-narratives of enlightenment and liberation (Grady, 2003). There doesn't seem to be much space to consider the ways that performance can be oppressive as well as empowering, to acknowledge that theatre-making is not *necessarily* progressive or oriented towards social justice (Snyder-Young, 2011). Therefore, I also turn to what Grady terms a post-critical pedagogy to better understand the way theatre-making works, which she defines as: "a radical pedagogy that is comfortable under postmodern conditions: that no longer legitimizes itself by appealing to a meta-narrative of liberation: and....accepts its own effects as potentially both productive and repressive" (2003, p. 79). This more nuanced theoretical lens problematizes a utopian view of the capacity of performance to be empowering and liberating, and draws attention to moments where it might be the opposite. Therefore, while I am informed by Denzin's view of performance as a means of investigation, activism and critique (2009), I think that performance can also work in problematic ways. For example, as I will explore in more depth in chapter three, while most of the group described the experience in unequivocally positive terms, an examination of more ambiguous or layered aspects of the data draws attention to the ways in which performance might also have functioned as a coercive or exclusionary space.

Phase 4: Performance

> *"The feeling of Tuesday – ja - the feeling of Tuesday...it was a great performance...when I was – when I was going home – on my way to home on a taxi I was still thinking of this character and the play. I was still imagining myself on stage and all that."*
>
> (MLindos, Group Interview, 2014).

Our first performance of *Four Husbands for Ma Lindi* was at the Downstairs Theatre at the Wits Theatre Complex on 19 August 2014 to an audience of Wits first year drama students – in fact, it was the opening performance of the festival. We performed four more times: once again in the Downstairs Theatre, followed by the Lab's own Ramolao Makhene Theatre; at Constitution Hill; and at the Hillbrow

Theatre. Each performance was followed by a question and answer session facilitated by a Drama for Life scholar. While this study is focused on the significance of the *process* of making theatre, performing for an audience is a key part of theatre-making, and its collaborative creative process suggests a particular relationship between the spectators and performers: Perry (2011) suggests that the hybridity, polyvocality and nonlinearity of devised theatre allow different spectators to experience different meanings – rather than advocating a particular social action, devised theatre presents a diversity of evocative, authentic stories that ask the spectators to draw their own conclusions.

While devised theatre can sometimes become "elite entertainment" (Perry, 2011, p. 72) – so experimental and containing so many discourses that it is inaccessible to the audience – workshop theatre has been described in opposite terms – as "a form which has made theatre in South Africa truly of the people" (Fleishman, 1990, p. 110), because of the centrality of actual experience, and the everyday lives of ordinary people (Holloway, 1993). This resonates strongly with the majority of performances of *Four Husbands for Ma Lindi,* where there was a strong sense of recognition from the audience of aspects of their own lives, as young urban black South Africans. Researcher Katherine Low observed some of the performances, which she discusses in a book currently in press about theatre and sexual health education. She describes the audience response to the play as vocal and engaged, "from shrieks of disbelief to loud endorsement" (Low, in press, p. 9).

Typical of devised theatre, the narratives in *Four Husbands for Ma Lindi* are partial or open-ended, which, according to Perry (2011), discomforts the security of identity of the spectator – and perhaps also, I would suggest, of the performer. It is impossible for either participant to hold one perspective during the play, as there are several shifts of character context and point of view. For example, a performer in *Four Husbands for Ma Lindi* might embody, in the space of 50 minutes, a hyper-masculine man, a submissive married women and a ten-year old child – and audiences too, would engage with these various perspectives. Thus, the structure of the performance made emotional escapism, or the cathartic experience more typical in traditional theatre, impossible. Rather, "the spectator can participate by putting

themselves in relation to it" (Perry, 2011, p. 70). This is how audience members participated, especially those who were of a similar demographic to the performers – their vocal and generous recognition of stories and characters, and the affirming effect this has on the participants, was an unexpected positive aspect of the project.

Low (in press) argues that the play was successful because it gave the audience space to breathe and be playful in a context where talk is often asphyxiating and serious. She proposes that the audience were engaging their "thinking bodies" – a term she borrows from Machon (Low, in press, p. 2): there is an interesting resonance in her foregrounding of the embodied experience of the audience with what I will later argue was the crucially embodied experience of the actors. She identifies three factors that invited the audience to participate in this way: the honesty of the content, the playfulness of form and the humour of many of the scenes (Low, in press). One of the key characteristics of the play that she draws attention to is that it acknowledges that the audience members may choose to have sex, and that this is a valid choice, and not viewed in a negative light (Low, in press).

Conclusion: Considering the Possibilities

Fleishman (2009) suggests that participating in performance-based projects develops the agency and capacity to participate in other aspects of life, and thus that performance has the power to create voice in marginalized communities with people who are facing disempowering circumstances. Pammenter describes this as "the amplification of voices" (2013, p. 84), which corresponds with the intention of feminist scholarship to find the counter narrative, the voices and stories that have been erased (Okech, 2013). This is also an important aspect of workshop theatre, which can be made by anyone, regardless of education, literacy, or ability in English – in contrast to the more text-centric, Western traditional theatre forms that previously dominated South African theatre and thus excluded certain voices and experiences (Fleishman, 1990). In this context, I argue that creating a play was and is a way of making visible and amplifying the voices, perspectives and stories of a group of people have historically been marginalised, as Africans, as young people, and as women. It is a collective act of self-representation that presented the

participants "the opportunity to represent themselves in theatre, to speak about themselves for themselves" (Nelson, 2011, p. 169), an act of particular significance because "the dominated are the least capable of controlling their own representation" (Bourdieu, 1993, p. 50) and "they are spoken of more than they speak" (Bourdieu, 1993, p. 51).

While describing the creative process of making theatre, I have drawn attention to the research and pedagogical possibilities that are embedded in it. I have argued that it is the combination of these possibilities that provides opportunities for participants to gain increased self-understanding, and to re-situate themselves in relation to their histories, communities and socio-cultural contexts. This takes place through sharing, debating and creating within a community of theatre-makers in a process which values all voices equally. As I have suggested in the ways that participants used their personal narratives, theatre is not only a representation but also a creative re-imagining: "narrative inhabits a space between how life is usually constructed and perceived, and how it might be reconstructed and re-imagined for the future" (Govan et al, 2007, p. 75). However, Edmondson points out that "as a discipline, we have perfected the imaginative leap" between the world as it is and the warmer, more equal world that we envision in the future, perhaps with excessive optimism about the transformative capacity of theatre (2007, p. 7). Less well documented are the nuances, complexities and ambiguities of theatre-making processes. An awareness of this must inform how I construct narratives about the participants' experiences, which is why I find the concept of a post-critical pedagogy useful for capturing the complexity of practice: rather than gravitating towards a happy ending, it suggests a lens that views theatre-making as both a productive and repressive activity.

In the next chapter, I select moments, images, stories and conversations that arose in the theatre-making process that are "ways of knowing" about the socio-cultural context in which the project took place (Fleishman, 2009, p. 116), and frame this research data within the extensive body of research on gender and sexualities in South Africa, particularly in relation to urban youth. Informed by researchers such as Burns (2012) and Bennett and Pereira (2013), I argue that it is important to locate

these topics in a historical context in order to better understand the contemporary landscape. To conclude chapter two, I provide an analysis of how the fields of sexuality and gender and theatre and performance have intersected in South Africa, and explain the gaps I believe my own research project might speak to by moving away from the discourse of danger and allowing for explorations of sex and sexuality that are playful, positive and affirming.

Chapter 2: Gender and Sexualities Research in South Africa

South Africa's constitution uniquely and specifically gives its citizens the right to sexual expression and freedom from sexual discrimination (RSA Constitution, 1996). However, Catherine Burns, a historian, interrogates what this means to the lived experience of South Africans: "How do we have and exercise this right, with knowledge and imagination, in a time of HIV?" (Burns, 2012). This question has numerous possible endings that are equally compelling, for South Africans find themselves living in a time not only of HIV, but also of corrective rape, chronic sexual violence, normalised coercive sexual relationships, entrenched gender inequality and the perception internationally of being the "rape capital of the world".[4] In fact, as Burns (2012) puts it, "In the last 50 or 60 years, South Africa has faced an extreme calamity around sex. Sex has become pathological." While South Africa's democratic years have seen ground-breaking legal reforms, for example entrenching gender equality, legalizing same-sex unions and recognizing traditional marriages, a huge gulf lurks between the liberal South African constitution and the lived reality of men and women (Bennett, 2011). Massive gender inequality fuels high rates of sexual violence, including against young children and babies. Furthermore, being publicly gay or lesbian continues to be a dangerous prospect in certain areas, and HIV/Aids is a prominent health concern (Bennett, 2011).

However, in writing the above paragraph, I am aware that research has persistently focused on African sexualities as a problem, with a Western gaze bent almost obsessively on disease, reproduction and violence (Bennett & Pereira, 2013). Research in this context risks becoming an othering process in which African sexualities are pathologised and problematized in contrast to the normalized measure of Western behaviours (Arnfred, 2004). Therefore, the ways that the long history of research rehearses gender and sexuality in South Africa, and particularly

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[4] In 2012, Interpol named South Africa the world's rape capital. That year, the South African police documented over 64 000 reported rapes, estimating that only 1 in 36 rapes are actually reported (Dewey, 2013).

black youth as sexual beings, demand careful analysis. There is an easy trap in reciting common knowledge and even published and respected research about the experiences of young South Africans with regards to gender and sexuality without asking how we come to know what we think we know. It is therefore necessary to deconstruct the colonial and patriarchal lens that has defined how much of this research has been framed and interpreted. In doing so, I am drawing particularly on the research of African feminist researchers including Desiree Lewis (2009), Bibi Bakare-Yusef (2011), Sylvia Tamale (2011), Charmaine Pereira (2013) and Jane Bennett (2011).

Many researchers, including Tamale (2011), Bennett & Pereira (2013) and Macleod (2013) have highlighted that in sexualities research, methodology itself is a political process. For example, the way I have framed my research as a participatory process with transformative and emancipatory intentions is a political choice because it aims to change the power relations between the participants and I, and the participants and the social structures they are a part of: my political desire for a more equal and just society are embedded in these choices (Etherton & Prentki, 2006). Bennett (2011) emphasizes that it is important to consider the methodological choices of many of the studies that create the massive body of research on HIV/AIDS, and to question the extent to which they have been framed by Western notions of sexuality and sexual practices. This requires me to be careful and rigorous in the way I locate and interpret the large body of research that exists on gender and sexuality in Africa, with an awareness that the nature of past studies determines what kind of knowledge is widely available, and how themes within gender and sexualities are constructed (Bennett & Pereira, 2013). This situates my investigation within a relatively recent movement in research on sexualities in Africa that is informed by African perspectives, voices and discourses, and recognizes the influence of historical contexts, colonial values and religious beliefs (Tamale, 2011). These, as I will argue further when examining drama interventions in sexuality and gender, have left a vocabulary that continues to shape the conceptual landscape within which donors, researchers, and facilitators of drama projects work (Arnfred, 2004; Tamale, 2011).

Post 1994, researchers, practitioners and policy-makers in the fields of gender and sexuality in South Africa have tended to focus on women and girls (Shefer, Ratele, Strebel, Shabalala & Buikema, 2007). This "endless, interrogative gaze on girls and women" (Shefer et al, 2007, p. 6) reproduces the socio-cultural domain in which the research is located, which appropriates the female body as a cause of social and family concern, and a focus of community control (Mohlakoena-Mosala, 2013). This has had some unintended but problematic consequences: women carry the responsibility and blame for the spread of HIV/Aids, and it is their burden to stop it (Shefer, et al, 2007). Furthermore, as Shefer et al point out, "Researchers have not been immune to the slippery slide into problematic discourses that reproduce and legitimize the very power inequalities and traditional assumptions that they seek to challenge" (2007, p. 2). Specifically, much research into sexuality in South Africa, particularly in HIV/Aids, draws an essentialist picture of heterosexual masculinity and femininity by constructing women as passive, submissive, inevitable victims, and men as in control over women: dominant, and perpetrators of violence: the stereotype of a poor, uneducated, abused and helpless black woman is as familiar as the promiscuous, irresponsible black male migrant worker (Bennett & Pereira, 2013).

While it is important to examine the power dynamics and inequalities that determine how relationships between men and women are commonly negotiated, this homogenising discourse makes invisible the strength of men and women, their resistance to dominant gender relations, and the existence of alternative gender identities (Shefer et al, 2007). It ignores the fluidity of gendered and sexual identities – that our roles and power in different relationships changes across contexts - and thus creates a view of the world in which gender is a static and unchanging way of being that cannot be challenged or changed, in which women are victims and men are dangerous. However, there has been a shift in the study of sexuality and gender to its political and economic dimensions, and to an understanding of sexuality and gender as socially constructed (Parker, 2009). This has implications for the conception of gender as an aspect of identity: neither masculinity nor femininity are inherent or natural attributes of men and women: rather they are created, and sometimes fought for, through performances (Shefer et al, 2007). Gender is both

individual identities and "structures of relations within institutions" (Hearn, 2007, p. 15). As such, individual behaviour takes place within a context of social interactions for which there are different sexual 'scripts' (Parker, 2009). For example, a common performance of masculinity is (active) men 'proposing love' to (passive) women, a script that is seldom performed the other way around (Pattman, 2007). The post-structuralist conception of gender presented here has the potential for transformation embedded in its language: scripts can be rewritten, and performances re-imagined.

Nonetheless, it is important to analyse what the dominant scripts are. While women are not any one particular thing, and the same can be said for men, 'women' and 'men' are social categories which have strict boundaries inside of which to be 'normal' and idealized constructions to which men and women are expected to aspire (Hearn, 2007). In reality, while there may exist idealized versions of manhood and womanhood in particular cultures, individual men and women stand in various relations to this ideal. However, both men and women's conformity to these constructs is policed in various ways – and yet, conforming can also come at a high cost: for example, the dominant constructs of femininity and masculinity reflected in research promote behaviour that increases the risk of HIV infection, especially for young women – HIV prevalence leaps from 4% among 15-16 year old women to over 25% among women in their early twenties (Pettifor, Anderson, MacPhail, Maman, 2013). Furthermore, "most men who rape do so for the first time as teenagers and almost all men who ever rape do so by their mid-20s" (Jewkes, Dunkle, Morrell, Sikweyiya, 2010, p. 26). Yet, these constructs can be so normalised that problematic behaviour often goes unnoticed: for example, there was a controversy in December 2015 because a popular South African television show, *Our Perfect Wedding,* showcased a couple who met when the groom was 28 and the bride 14 (Quintal, 2015). Despite the fact that the groom described customarily sleeping with schoolgirls, the relationship was depicted as romantic, with no mention of the fact that having sex with someone who is underage is rape (Quintal, 2015). Thus, popular culture can reflect, maintain and justify 'rape culture' – although in this case it also

sparked a popular debate about sexuality and hetero-normative relationships (Quintal, 2015).

Tamale argues that, "it is crucial that the strategies employed by African feminists be informed by the lived experience of women and men on the continent" (2011, p. 4). In this chapter, I offer examples in which the participants both conformed to and resisted the constructs and behaviours that dominate the wider literature on sex, gender and education both specifically to South Africa and globally. I regard moments, scenes and images created during the theatre-making process as a way of knowing that the participants constructed and shared about their context and experiences in relation to the gender and sexuality, by excavating, interviewing, representing and storytelling around the themes. Thompson describes how a project such as this, which used theatre as a research method, "co-generates knowledge through the research process rather than imposing it on the community or leaving it to be assumed by the researchers" (2012, p. 124). Rather than attempting to encompass the enormous field of gender and sexuality studies, I will focus my discussion on the themes and patterns that emerged in the theatre-making process. What the participants chose to explore and how they related to it is a useful lens to help us understand the experience of South African urban youth and how they negotiate their gender and sexuality. Who better than the participants – the people living and experiencing their own context, to know it? Furthermore, while they are individuals leading distinct and unique sexual lives, they are also a microcosm in which many broader themes and relationships are enacted. As Boal argues, "the smallest cells of social organisations (...) and equally the smallest incidents of our social life (...) contain all the moral and political values of society, all its structures of domination and power, all its mechanisms of oppression" (1995, p. 40).

Being a Man is a Serious Business

> *"For you to be a man maybe you need to drink beer, you need to smoke, the way you talk – you have to speak in a voice that commands, with maybe a baritone. If you have like a soft voice, you not a real man."*
>
> (Freddy, Men Interview, 2014)

I facilitated an image gallery exercise, taken from Boal's *Games for Actors and Non-Actors* (1992), in which the participants line up in two rows, standing opposite one another. They take turns to sculpt their partner's body into an image based on a prompt: in this example, 'your experience of men in relationships'. Standing in a long row, the images, sculpted by both men and women, were hyper-masculine, serious, and sometimes grim. They stood in commanding postures suggesting control and power – legs widespread and chins raised. A particularly striking picture was a man clutching his crotch in one hand and beckoning commandingly to his girlfriend with the other. Sexuality is a key area in which masculinity is constructed (Allen, 2006), and performances of manhood that are admired and validated include sexual activity with multiple partners, and the use of sexual and physical violence as a means of control (Pettifor et al, 2013).[5] In such contexts, when sex happens, how, and whether contraceptives are used, is determined by men. Women are thus unable to negotiate the terms or boundaries of their sexual relationships. In the image gallery, there was only one image expressing affection. When I asked the half of the group who were 'sculptors' to put the images in relation to each other, the affectionate image was separated from and rejected by the others, who were all in a close group. This is an embodiment of the way that rigid conceptions about what it means to be a man are policed through acts of rejection and inclusion. Yet, in the next stage of the activity, I asked the sculptors to create, not the world as it is, but the world-in-becoming: specifically, 'the qualities you would like a man to have in a relationship, or the kind of man you'd like to be'. Now, with one exception, both the men and women sculpted images that were smiling. This suggests that dominant gender identities might be as oppressive and restrictive for men as for women.

South Africa's history of colonialism, apartheid, and anti-apartheid struggle has shaped masculinities in South Africa, and the way gender intersects with race. Bennett (2011) argues that apartheid attempted to govern the most intimate lives of its subjects, including sexuality, and left legacies of institutionalized violence as a

[5] Research on men as gendered beings is a growing field, and represents an important shift in the study of gender, which has focused mainly on girls and women (Shefer et al, 2007).

legitimate means of control. In doing so, it framed human identities and sexualities in a particular way – migrant labour separated men from their families and increased the commodification of sex. While apartheid had an impact, so did resistance to apartheid, which separated activists from their families and, Bennett points out "influenced constructions of masculinity, womanhood, and notions of what constituted appropriate and liberating relationships to sexual experiences" (2011, p. 82). Thus, 'struggle' masculinities are often defined by an overt and visible heterosexuality.

Research suggests that, although there have been some shifts of the cultural ideals of gender identity in recent years, this has not yet changed the lived experience of gendered power in intimate relationships between men and women (Pettifor et al, 2013). Perhaps this is at least in part because of how embedded and normalized these roles have become. For example, during an animated discussion in a rehearsal about why girls like guys who don't treat them right, Palesa commented, "*it's true – they beat you, you come back, they beat you, they beat you….*" (Rehearsal, 2014). From her perspective then, violence is a commonplace and inevitable part of relationships. Ngonyama, presenting interviews she had done in her neighbourhood, performed a man she interviewed who told her he loves his wife but also says "*if you are a man, you have needs. I beat my wife*" (Rehearsal, 2014).

However, one person's relationship with constructions of gender might be complex and multi-faceted, conforming in some ways and challenging in others. As a critical, self-reflexive pedagogy, theatre-making is ideally placed to create a space that can hold the ambiguities of identity, gender and sexuality – concepts that are often experienced and lived in contradictory ways. I would like to explore an example of this complexity through one of the participants, Manyuza. In one of Manyuza's performances in the play, he played a character based on a friend of his who he had witnessed boasting to a group of men about raping a girl. It was a scene about the homosocial performance of masculinity (that is, about the social relationships between men), and how men who are sexually dominant and control their partners are viewed as high status by other men. Manyuza also described routinely whistling at women, another way in which men affirm their masculinity to each other.

However, Manyuza has also challenged what being a young black man means in his community: he started an ‘underground library’ to help young people learn to read after the local library was burnt down in service delivery protests. As I write this, he has over 10 000 books in his house. This is an act of caring, taking responsibility, leading, and sharing – if identity is constituted of social acts, then Manyuza is certainly not following the normalized script, which limits him to being violent, angry and unemployed.

The open platform of theatre-making, and the multiple opportunities it presents to participate in different ways is a useful method to move beyond the simplistic representation of young, poor black men that Pattman (2007) problematizes. For example, images and stories of male vulnerability and innocence emerged repeatedly: Mtshepang told a story of being a love-struck, shy boy in Grade Nine, so broken hearted when the girl he was in love with rejected him that he didn’t have another relationship in high school; Jomo created a scene in which a man is on the verge of losing his virginity and he’s shaking, not knowing what to do; Gift described his own experiences of street harassment, as a man who dyes his hair and wears jewellery. The group also particularly enjoyed stories where characters made choices that contradicted stereotypes. For example, in one rehearsal a group made a scene in which a man refused to be seduced by his secretary because he is married. This was a popular scene, and when I asked why, Mtshepang commented, “*you never see that, we always think men can’t resist, so that was nice*” (Rehearsal, 2014). In contrast, Qheshaah had said controversially, in an earlier rehearsal, that men are “*born to cheat*” (Rehearsal, 2014) reflecting the normalized double standard of men having multiple partners but controlling every aspect of their “main” girlfriend’s interactions with other men (Jewkes et al, 2010). I will build an argument throughout the thesis that the fluidity of theatre-making as a methodology allowed the group to unfix essentialist constructions of masculine and feminine natures that dominate popular discourses by valuing personal experiences and allowing consideration not just of the world as it is, but of a world in becoming (Gallagher, 2008).

Gender Inequality and Sexual Violence

During rehearsals, I emphasized to the group that everyone was welcome to suggest stories, scenes, monologues and characters. It was noticeable that the men were far more vociferous in doing this, and I was growing concerned that the play would become dominated by male voices. Well into the process, six of the women in the group came to me outside the rehearsal space with a scene they had been working on independently. In the scene, which was reworked and performed in *Four Husbands for Ma Lindi*, four women describe being raped: the youngest at the age of nine, and the oldest at the age of eighteen. Each victim had a different relationship with the rapist – a father, a stranger, a boyfriend, and a neighbour. The scene was emotional and painful, but most of all, it was angry. It felt like a demand on the part of the women for their experience of violence to be witnessed. I think it was significant that the women didn't offer this scene in the public, mixed gender space of the rehearsal, that they developed the scene before suggesting it, and that they offered it as a group rather than the idea of one individual. There were layers of gender inequality operating both in the scene itself (in the obvious form of sexual violence) and in the different ways that men and women felt empowered to contribute to the creative process.

This is just one example of the way that gender inequality emerged as a theme that affected the participants in numerous and insidious ways. A great deal of research has been conducted around the way sex and relationships are sites in which unequal power relations between men and women are enacted, suggesting the male violence and coercion is widespread within the sexual relationships of young people (Wood & Jewkes, 1997; Macleod, 2013). In another scene in *Four Husbands for Ma Lindi*, the whole cast step forward and open up a crumpled piece of paper on which was written a number: the age that they lost their virginity. They could write the truth or fiction, and we never discussed who told which. The youngest number was eight, and the next was ten years old. Whether these are personal truths or not, they speak to a disturbing reality – that in certain sectors of South Africa, young people will experience or witness sexual violence from childhood. It is not surprising that Magadla (2014) describes young women's introduction to desire as coming, not from

a place of love, but a place of fear. The stories performed by the participants suggest that not much has changed since 1997, when Wood and Jewkes found that many women experience sex for the first time in a coercive context, several not knowing what sex is until it is forced upon them.

However, the participants also represented aspects of being a woman that are often invisible in research: for example, some participants created a scene during rehearsals, which depicted the strategies women use to negotiate their intimate relationships in these contexts. In the scene, a woman is doing housework and singing energetically to music. The moment her partner arrives home, her demeanour transforms – she seems exhausted. The more he tries to initiate sex, the more inventive she becomes – she's tired, she has a headache, she just remembered she's on her period. While of course the situation of being unable to directly refuse sex is problematic, women are not necessarily passive in these contexts, but creatively strategise ways to assert their agency.

Wood and Jewkes found that young people are troubled by "a lack of specific vocabulary with which to discuss sexual experience and desires" (Wood & Jewkes, 1997, p. 45). It was apparent during the theatre-making process that communication about vastly differing expectations and motivations had never happened between the participants before, especially between men and women, and that this is a contributing factor to non-consensual sex. In a rehearsal reflection, one of the participants wrote, "it's so amazing how guys think that if a girl visits a guy they expect sex, while ladies want the opposite" (Rehearsal, 2014). This was a response to a passionate debate about what was called "the grey area" between yes and no, which began when one of the men, Queshaah, asked the question, "*if a girl gets into bed with you naked and then says no, what kind of a no is that?*" (Rehearsal, 2014). Many of the men stated emphatically that, in this scenario, sex is going to happen, no matter what. At this point, the girl *can't* say no. While the class was polarized on the issue, sides of the debate weren't defined by gender: some women agreed that sex was inevitable, and some men disagreed. Palesa pointed out that Queshaah's scenario might disguise a common strategy that men use: to invite a girl round, specifically reassuring her that nothing is going to happen, and then start undressing

her and initiating sex. 'Ideal' constructions of men and women informed the responses to this situation; for example, some women said it's "*not sexy*" for a man to ask for sex, he should rather "*take charge of the moment*" (Rehearsal, 2014). There is a tension then, between various models of femininity – wanting men to "*take charge*", but also wanting to feel empowered to make sexual choices (Rehearsal, 2014). This discomfort about talking directly about sex with a partner is also a reflection of the moral discomfort around sexuality, which I will discuss in the next section.

Traditionally, gender relations are seen as a women's issue, and in this process it became clear that the men in the class had not been involved or included in discourse about rape and gendered violence. A striking example of this was when the group shared stories of sexual harassment. Sexual harassment is perhaps the most everyday way that the sexual disempowerment of women in many contexts in South Africa affects the female participants' lives: Palesa was harassed on the street by a man who told her she was ugly, Queshaah sat in a train carriage watching thirteen men harass two girls, Pebble was followed down the street by a man shouting obscenities, Loti listened to a preacher in a train telling everyone that women are evil, Miss J was chased by a man down the street so she couldn't come to school. Miss J was still deeply affected by this experience, and recounting it to the group moved her to tears. The men were profoundly moved by the realization of how painfully the women were affected by the way they are treated in public spaces – they had never heard women talk about how they experience harassment before. In reflection, Queshaah commented, "*It's made me think about the girls I've hurt…because Miss J, this might have happened yesterday, but she is crying today*" (Rehearsal, 2014).

It was also noticeable that the men went silent when the women presented scenes of rape and sexual violence – in fact, in the rape scene that the women had collaborated to make, they had not invited any men to play any roles, or if they had the men had not agreed. Is this because rape is seen as a woman's story, a woman's problem? The men seemed to feel a dis-ease, a bemusement, a discomfort with expressing an opinion, and perhaps some defensiveness about the portrayal of men

in these scenes. In one workshop, I asked the men how they felt about what the women were depicting. There was a thoughtful, awkward silence, followed by a gradually more confident discussion about whether rapists were sick and separate from society, or members of the community that everyone knows. This ultimately led to the scene in the play in which a man describes his rape of a women to his friends, which I described earlier.

Religion and the Absence of Desire

Mandisa: Guys! Guys!

Everyone: What?

Mandisa: Have you seen my virginity?

Everyone: What?

Mandisa: I've lost it.

Pebble: Tjonna wee[6]! I've lost mine and I'm still looking for it.

Palesa: I lost mine to my cousin.

Freddy: I've lost mine and the rest of the world can go to hell.

Lee: I lost mine and I found L.O.V.E

Jomo: I lost mine when I got married.

Loti: Lost? I gave mine away.

Yellow: I lost mine and my pastor says I'm no longer a Christian.

(Four Husbands, 2014)

Christianity and the missionizing period of the Victorian era had a profound effect on South African sexualities. As Arnfred (2004) points out, Christianity determined the

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[6] Expression of dismay.

way Africans were perceived from the outside, and now, internalized, influences how people see themselves, so deeply embedded are conceptions around family, the sexual body, the perversion of homosexuality and 'correct' heterosexuality (Bennett, 2011). The gender identities that were introduced by missionaries in the early twentieth century are now seen as 'traditional African'. Under this moral regime, men with multiple sexual partners are normalized and even glorified. Jacob Zuma, the current president of South Africa, is the epitome of this 'traditional' construct of masculinity, known for being polygamous, heterosexist, and patriarchal (Morrell, Jewkes & Lindegger, 2012). In contrast, women are constructed as ideally chaste – in order to be respected, women must be sexually 'respectable' (Arnfred, 2004). Yellow's line, "…and my pastor says I'm no longer a Christian", is a message specific to woman – men are not required or expected to protect their virginity in the same way.

In the image gallery I described earlier, Miss J, sculpting 'the woman you want to be', created a very sexy and sexually free woman, full of attitude and confidence - an expression of desire for what Magadla argues women in particular are robbed of: "the opportunity to explore sex-positive lives" (2014, p. 1), in part because men and women are socialised differently about desire, sex and its consequences. Arnfred (2004) argues that this too is a legacy of colonial, Christian gender identities: the denial of female sexual desire or pleasure, in favour of a passive and passionless feminine ideal. Indeed, until fairly recently, lust, desire or sexual pleasure were seldom subjects of research (Bennett, 2011). A striking and controversial example of this double standard that Magadla (2014) describes took place when it emerged in August 2014 that 12 female students in KwaZulu-Natal who were traveling to India for pharmaceutical and ultrasonography training were to be injected with contraceptive implants that would prevent pregnancy for up to three years. Burns describes how this paternalistic approach to fertility and female sexuality resonates through South Africa's history, and is characterized by "silence around men: their sexuality, fertility, social responsibilities, morality and behaviour" (2014, p. 1). Indeed, Dr Sibongiseni Dhlomo the Health MEC, KZN, in explaining why none of the males going on the same trip had been engaged around sexual behaviour and risks,

said, "boys do not have the problem of falling pregnant" (Dhlomo quoted in Magadla, 2014, p. 1). Burns (2014) argues that this kind of sexual double standard has been normalized in much the same way that racism was normalized during apartheid, and Arnfred (2004), gives it as another example of Christian influence. The different ways that men and women are socialised was also reflected in an exercise in which the participants explored their aspirations in relation to their gender roles: all of the women wanted to be a wife and a mother, none of the men wanted to be a husband or a father. Instead, almost all of them opted for the image of driving a car: a symbolic juxtaposition of permanence and home; freedom and mobility. Morrell, Jewkes & Lindegger argue that "a new youth masculinity" is emerging, driven by leaders such as Julius Malema, which celebrates the acquisition of power and wealth (2012, p.18).

It is apparent both from broader research and the stories and reflections of the participants that, for many young people in South Africa, the journey of exploring and negotiating the meaning of becoming a sexual being takes place within a landscape of risk and danger which allows little space for playful experimentation or reciprocal desire (Ponzetti, Adams, Esmail, Munro and Selman, 2009). As Burns (2012) observes, "It's very hard for us to talk about desire and pleasure - there is a lot of pain in the world of sex. And yet young people are coming into life all the time, and needing to touch, explore, and be their sexual selves – that's part of our human right."

Where Do We Learn?

While the school system might seem an appropriate place to help young people navigate their sexual identity and decision-making (Wood & Jewkes, 1997), the South African sex education curriculum is problematic. Typical of traditional approaches to sex education around the world, sex education in the school system focuses on the biological facts of hetero-sex, and its associated risks (and particularly risks to women) (Carmody & Ovenden, 2013; Fergusom, 2013). Sexuality is positioned as an impediment to learning, a danger that must be denied or controlled, rather than a positive aspect of youthful identity (Allen, 2006). The 'right'

behaviour is prescribed, and the measurement of success of the education is how many students behave 'correctly'. Furthermore, in its hetero-normative approach and its failure to acknowledge other sexualities or the many ways of being male and female, it is constrained by and perpetuates dominant gender roles and stereotypes (Fergusom, 2013). International studies have shown that this type of education is inadequate in providing the skills, knowledge and critical thinking necessary to nurture positive sexualities (Carmody and Ovenden, 2013). Research exploring young people's suggestions for improving sexuality education suggests that youth need to be acknowledged as legitimate sexual beings with sexual agency, capable of experiencing desire and pleasure (Allen, 2006).

Jewkes et al (2010) critique sexual education interventions for focusing only on women. They suggest that it is imperative that interventions also "seek to change the way in which boys are socialised into men (Jewkes et al, 2010, p. 30). In addition, they identify the need for "interventions based on participatory techniques such as workshops, theatre, and games to enable communities to develop awareness and skills in this area" (Wood & Jewkes, 1997, p. 45). This is supported by Allen's research (2006), in which students suggested that sexuality education would be more effective if it was more participatory and interactive. Francis (2010) points out that such an approach must be open-ended, without pre-conceived measures of behaviour change. As I have drawn attention to throughout this section, theatre-making is a research methodology that fulfils these suggestions. It presents a space in which to deconstruct stereotypes, explore personal stories, and communicate openly across genders, without judgement, in ways that are unfamiliar. As I suggested in the previous chapter, it opens up a multiplicity of views and ideas about sexual and gender dynamics, rather than creating a homogenising discourse. Theatre-making involves a dance between fiction and non-fiction that legitimises us to explore and question rather than fixate on what we think is 'right'. However, as I will now argue, theatre and performance does not *necessarily* interact with sexual education interventions in this way, and in South Africa the relationship between theatre and sexuality has been defined and constrained to a large extent by the HIV/Aids pandemic.

Theatre-making, Applied Theatre and Sexual Health Education in South Africa

Sexual health education through drama and theatre is a well-established field in South Africa[7]: the urgency of the HIV/Aids epidemic in the 1990s and early 2000s ensured that it was a growth area, due to both the needs of communities and the increased available funding (Baxter, 2013). To go further, the expansion of Theatre for Development (theatre used in the service of achieving development goals, usually by development agencies and NGOs), and other applied theatre practices such as Forum Theatre and participatory drama workshops in South Africa is to a large extent the direct result of the HIV/Aids pandemic (Low, 2010). I argue that this has limited the potential of theatre-making in relation to gender and sexuality in two ways: firstly, the entry-point of HIV reproduces the construction and representation of South African sexualities only in terms of problematic behaviour and trauma, and secondly (and relatedly), a donor-led agenda has defined what is spoken about and with whom (Balfour, 2009). I will extend my argument by briefly discussing five theatre organisations who engage with gender and sexuality: Themba HIV/AIDS Organisation, DramAidE (Drama Approach to AIDS Education), Arepp: Theatre for Life, Clowns Without Borders South Africa and Drama for Life. My intention is not to critique or evaluate their work; rather, it is to draw attention to the complexity of their practices in a context in which they must continually position themselves and theatre as a relevant, functional, and impactful intervention. In examining the context, I will identify the gap that my research aims to address.

[7] This is true in Africa generally (Kerr, 2009); however, I have chosen to focus on South Africa, because of the specificity of its history and politics, which have created a unique sexual and gendered landscape that has in turn shaped the focus and intention of theatre activities: for example the country has the highest number of people living with HIV, predominantly African women, partly as a consequence of high levels of rape and violence (Morrell, Jewkes & Lindegger, 2012).

Arepp: Theatre for Life is the oldest of the five organisations, founded in 1987 by Maishe Maponya, Oupa Mthimkulu, Ann Wanless and Gary Friedman[8]. Working with theatre and puppetry, their first play was created to raise HIV/Aids awareness (Arepp: Theatre for Life homepage, 2016). Nowadays, Arepp tours performances and workshops to schools around the country dealing with themes including adolescent sexuality, gender roles, and homosexuality. These plays have deliberately open-ended, non-judgemental narratives designed to facilitate discussion rather than transmit a particular message. According to Baxter (2013), the central theme is to depict ordinary young people navigating the process of growing up, and to promote the idea that a healthy self-esteem is the best guide in making the healthiest choices. DramAidE (Drama Approach to AIDS Education), started by Lynn Dalrymple in Zululand, has been creating and touring participatory performances and workshops since 1992 (Baxter, 2013). Now associated with the Universities of Zululand and KwaZulu-Natal, this outreach programme focuses on sexual health in relation to HIV, Aids and TB (Dalrymple, 2006). Themba Interactive is also a participatory theatre company, working in and around Johannesburg, primarily with schools, but also with companies, corporates, prisons, and community-based organisations (Low, 2010). They tour with a repertoire of plays, with which they integrate interactive drama techniques, drawing from forum theatre, improvisation and drama therapy models (Hope, 2005). A partner of Themba Interactive, Drama for Life (DFL) is based at the University of the Witwatersrand in Johannesburg. It was established in 2008 by Warren Nebe (Drama for Life homepage, 2016). Like Arepp, DFL began with a mandate for HIV/Aids awareness, but has since become a research, academic and training organisation that aims to "educate 'best practice' practitioners in the field of applied drama: theatre in education, communities and social contexts, drama therapy, and drama in education" (Drama for Life homepage, 2016). Its focus has shifted considerably to encompass issues of social justice and human rights more broadly. DFL hosts two major events annually: The DFL Africa Research Conference

[8] Maishe Maponya, as a key figure in the anti-apartheid theatre movement of the 1970's and 80's, highlights how theatre about HIV/AIDS can be seen as a continuation of a South African legacy of using theatre as a form of protest and activism.

and the *Sex Actually* Festival, where *Four Husbands for Ma Lindi* was presented in 2014. The *Sex Actually* Festival is "a multi-disciplinary public festival that engages and promotes dialogues around sex, relationships and HIV/AIDS" (Drama for Life homepage, 2016), which I will discuss in more detail shortly. Clowns Without Borders South Africa was founded by Jamie McClaren in Durban in 2007 (McClaren, 2010). Its flagship project, the Njabulo HIV/AIDS Residency Programme, has been implemented in South Africa, Swaziland and Lesotho, aiming to "address the psychosocial needs of orphans and vulnerable children, guardians and community caregivers affected by the HIV/AIDS crisis in Southern Africa" (McClaren, 2010, p. 67). Although their work does not explore gender or sexuality directly, I have included them here because the purpose and value they ascribe to arts interventions in relation to crisis and to HIV/AIDS differs from the others, and aspects of their methodology and ethos have informed my own approach.

It is striking that all five of the organisations in question began as HIV/Aids interventions, although they have since expanded in scope. This shared evolution established a particular perception about the relationship between theatre and change. For example, Themba Interactive began "in response to an invitation from Archbishop Thabo Makgoba to use theatre to promote behavioural changes in young people at risk of contracting HIV/Aids" (Themba Interactive homepage, n.d.). The linking of theatre and behaviour change contains a transformative promise: theatre is the tool and behaviour change is the outcome. After engaging in theatre activities, it is suggested, more young people will behave 'better': they will use condoms/abstain from sex/get tested. DramAide links the arts and behaviour change even more explicitly, claiming that it uses the arts to "reduce HIV infections" (University of Zululand, n.d.). These rather grand claims for the efficacy of theatre are problematic in two ways: firstly because of the ethical questions that arise about who is setting the agenda: who decides which people should change their behaviour, and in what ways (Dalrymple, 2006)? I will return to this in discussing donor-led agendas. Secondly the difficulty in assessing 'real' impact in terms of how drama processes may change attitudes and behaviour in the long term. Etherton & Prentki (2006) point out that effective mechanisms for monitoring and evaluating drama

processes over a sustainable period have not been adequately developed. While DramAide has conducted extensive evaluations that indicate that young people appreciate the opportunities for self-expression that drama offers, and that young people may be more aware and informed on topics related to HIV/AIDS, Dalrymple acknowledges that “none were able to show that these projects had definitely contributed to a reduction of infection with HIV” (2006, p. 210). Indeed, it is difficult to imagine how this might be shown. Certainly HIV infection rates escalated as theatre interventions around the topic were proliferating (Dalrymple, 2006). As Kerr (2009) points out, the ‘obvious’ causes of the spread of HIV are linked to much more complex systems of politics, class, economics and ideology that are seldom acknowledged in message driven theatre interventions, which tend to focus on superficial causes (such as using or not using a condom), rather than the context in which this occurs.

Despite these problems of proving impact, a utilitarian framing of theatre permeates the rationale of many applied theatre organisations. This is not because applied theatre necessarily only pathologises sex, or can only be used as a problem-solving device, it is a consequence of a funding reality: NGOs such as Themba Interactive and DramAide are economically reliant on external donors, and as such are under pressure to both prove the social efficacy of theatre and comply with the priorities of donors and agencies. Consequently, theatre can and has been appropriated for message transmission by organisations with outcomes-led agendas (Pammenter, 2013). This has resulted in a great deal of didactic theatre in South Africa echoing the messages of other HIV prevention campaigns, such as the World Health Organisation’s ABC model: abstain, be faithful, use a condom (Johansson, 2011). One of DramAide’s aims, for example, it to “promote voluntary medical male circumcision” (University of Zululand, n.d.) As Francis (2010) points out, this could in Freirean terms be described as a ‘banking’ system, which transfers pre-determined knowledge from ‘experts’ to spectators or participants. Typically of sexual health interventions globally, these kinds of theatre projects tend to focus on physical wellbeing and safety, with little attention for emotional or psychological health (Low, 2010).

Clowns Without Borders South Africa is an exception to this pattern: rather than focusing on HIV education and prevention, it is concerned with relieving the psychosocial trauma associated with HIV/AIDS through laughter and play, and focuses on the *experiences* of being affected by the virus, such as stigma, poverty and the loss of a loved one, in an anti-didactic way (McClaren, 2010). Furthermore, they have partnered with local organisations to provide on-going support within the communities they work with, in an effort to ensure the sustainability of the programme – which, Etherton & Prentki argue (2006), is connected to long-term impact. To a greater or lesser extent, all of the organisations I am discussing here have evolved beyond direct didacticism and one-off interventions. For example, while some of their aims still promote specific behaviour changes, the development of DramAidE has been away from a preventative, message-driven approach towards an increasing understanding of the importance of engaging in dialogue and debate with participants to explore the gender dynamics, beliefs and attitudes that drive the spread of HIV (Baxter, 2013). However, this shift to a focus of beliefs and attitudes raises a more subtle concern: Balfour draws attention to "the tension between the donor agenda and the politics of intention" (2009, p. 347): what kinds of issues are foregrounded? What kinds of theatre projects occur, with whom? Who decides which beliefs are problematic, and what behaviour change is desirable? In circumstances in which theatre is used to try to create particular types of social change, it risks becoming a set of ideological values rather than an artistic practice (Balfour, 2009). Rather than being radical or subversive, theatre is co-opted within the normative: pre-approved, predictable change after a boundaried creative intervention (Balfour, 2009). With this in mind, it is noticeable that Themba Interactive explores that same themes in its theatre interventions that Bennett (2011) and others have pointed out are defined by the Western gaze and donor interests: three out of the five topics listed on their website are domestic violence; sexual reproduction, health and wellness; and HIV/Aids: prevention and treatment (Themba Interactive homepage, n.d.). While these may be topical concerns, they construct sexuality and gender as pathologies with little room to explore those areas that have been ignored in research and practice generally, such as agency, pleasure, and desire. While Low (2010) writes that Themba Interactive's work often

emphasizes multiple narratives and perspectives and encourages audience members to share different opinions, these topics suggest a particular framing and social agenda. This is not to say that the organisation does not do good work – but theatre-making and applied theatre are not value-neutral propositions, and it is important to interrogate unspoken ideologies that define priorities an determine the direction of 'change' (Balfour, 2009). As a practitioner who has worked in NGOs, I am familiar with the scramble to write funding proposals that use the right language and deal with the right issues for particular funders: if the funder is interested in 'education' you might barely mention drama; if this year they are interested in violence, you will immediately re-orient your project to tackle that theme. Prisons? Immigrants? Young women? You have something for everyone. NGOs are often so precariously situated that this kind of flexibility is necessary for survival. There is seldom time to reflect on the ideological implications of this.

Furthermore, Balfour argues that "the donor agenda", can subsume the aesthetic imperative of theatre beneath the demand for social efficacy and very particular types of "transformation" (2009, p. 351): "the problem with applied theatre as an adjunct to social policy is that it can and does lead to aesthetic engagement being eroded in the service of pragmatism" (Balfour, 2009 p. 350). Despite its name, DramAide describes itself as a "public health communication agency", a title that (perhaps deliberately) makes the 'drama' of DramAide as understated as possible (University of Zululand, n.d.). Arepp's website suggests that it has taken a stance against this erosion by negotiating a balance between efficacy and aesthetic, emphasising that its aims are both "to increase and develop the self-efficacy and resilience of South African school-going youth in relation to social lifestyle issues" *and "*to increase the number of youth in South Africa who are exposed to and have an appreciation of theatre as a cultural art form" (Arepp: Theatre for Life homepage, 2016). Under pressure to write reports, make the case for further funding, and conduct impact assessments, it can be difficult for practitioners to pay attention to the artistry and aesthetic dimension of their practice. Perhaps also the need for multiple kinds of support in certain communities puts pressure on organisations to play many roles. For example, in describing the development of the Njabulo

Programme, McClaren writes, “Time after time we needed to remind ourselves that we were not psychotherapists or social workers, but rather artists” (2010, p. 73). However, Balfour (2009) argues that a re-orientation towards aesthetics may open up new propositions for the ways that theatre might work.

It is evident from an examination of the histories and objectives of these organisations that the imperatives of HIV interventions have largely defined the way that theatre has intersected with gender and sexuality in South Africa. I am struck by how the framing of priorities gives the impression, which I get in engaging with many South African sexual health interventions, that gender inequality is important and relevant *because* of HIV. Is this because HIV is more likely to get funded than gender inequality? Similarly, much of the literature about theatre and sexual health in the South African context is also framed and defined by HIV – frequently as the justification or measure of success of a project, and also as a definition of what sexual health means. If not specifically HIV, it is clear that theatre is under pressure to be ‘issue based’ in order to be valid or important.

This begins to define the gap I wanted to investigate in the research: while there are plenty of educational interventions and theatre programmes relating to sexuality and gender issues in South Africa, there is a lack of engagement with young people around questions of healthy, positive sex and sexuality. Informed by Carmody & Ovenden’s claim that “central to developing alternative models is the need to move away from the moral-panic approach that fears and seeks to control the sexual lives of young women and men” (2013, p. 794), I was interested in what it would mean to facilitate a theatre process that was not trying to solve any problems. Instead I wanted to explore what Low describes as the “exhilarating link between theatre and sex: intimacy, possibility and playfulness” (in press, p. 2). This, she argues, might allow people to engage with themes around sexuality and gender through theatre in a way that transcends discourses about problems and solutions, but rather accesses human experience (Low, in press). This playfulness is connected to an emphasis on the aesthetic – on the artistry, experimentation and fun that making a play can involve. This resonates with Salverson’s comparison of the facilitator to a clown that I described in the previous chapter (2006), and also with Clowns Without Borders

South Africa, for whom the art of the clown is the heart of their work. The clown, according to McClaren (2010), is vulnerable and spontaneous, embodying the spirit of humour and play.

The *Sex Actually* festival's rationale resonated with my own reasons for making a play, and it thus felt like the appropriate platform on which to share our work. In 2014, the themes for the festival, then in its seventh year, were human connection, love and intimacy: it is evident from this that, while the festival remains focused on HIV/Aids, it is our relationship to the disease and each other that was foregrounded in this instance (Drama for Life homepage, 2016). In other words, the festival was located in the awareness that any intervention around HIV/Aids needs to be contextualized in the wider landscape of sexuality and relationships. Sub-titled "Heart to Heart", the festival was conceptually focused on ideas of health rather than sickness, and human experience rather than message transmission (Drama for Life homepage, 2016). It aimed to create "an opportunity for open discussion which is not censored, prescriptive or didactic", which articulates exactly what I hoped our theatre-making process would evoke. (Drama for Life homepage, 2016). As this description might suggest, DFL seems least constrained, of the organisations I have discussed, by donor-led priorities and pressure to prove efficacy. Perhaps its position as an academic department within a university both provides a measure of stability and enables it to critically engage, through its conference and festivals, with contemporary debates and dialogues on research and practice.

I have argued that interactions between theatre and performance, and gender and sexuality in South Arica have often been driven by donor-defined imperatives and limited by a problematic construct of the relationship between theatre and change. This is not an inherent limitation of applied theatre practises, but rather a result of the context in which much of the work has taken place. In response to this, I have explained the intentions of my own theatre-making practice: to facilitate a creative process that does not problematize or pathologise sex, but rather creates spaces to explore sex and sexuality in an open, positive, playful way that emphasises the lived experiences of the participants. In the following chapter, I will elaborate on how the participants experienced this approach.

Chapter 3: Theatre-Making, Community and 'Telling My Story'

"It no longer became just the story that you were telling us, it became our story now."

(Manyuza, Group Interview, 2014)

The participants described the theatre-making process as an opportunity to 'tell my story', and many experienced this as healing or therapeutic (Group Interview, 2014). Lee was one of several members of the group who described the journey of making a play as leading towards self-knowledge: *"it's like you discover yourself, within the process of like finding information from other people. You find out who you really are"* (Lee, Group Interview, 2014). These were not the outcomes that I had originally intended, expected or been interested in, but clearly emerged in both the interviews and the reflexive mapping exercise as being deeply meaningful to the participants. The research methodologies I am informed by emphasize the centrality of the participants in contributing to knowledge making, and the importance of research that is able to respond to the unexpected (Taylor 1996). In addition, the capacity of this process to perform this role for the participants has caused me to re-think what I understand of the potential of theatre-making in relation to sexual health and wellbeing. Therefore, in response to what the group valued about the process, and the questions this has raised for me, this chapter is a study of "the construction or transformation of selfhood" through the opportunity to explore personal stories about gender and sexuality that the playmaking process provided (Burn et al, 2010, p. 162). While the role of theatre-making in the personal and social development of youth has been well documented,[9] I have found myself confused and intrigued by three areas of enquiry the participants' responses raise about what it means to 'tell my story' in a theatre-making process: what is it about theatre-making that gives it the capacity to heal? What does it mean to tell my story? How does this relate to the

[9] For example, see Hughes & Wilson, 2004, and Dalrymple, 2007.

themes of sex, sexuality and gender? I will use individual participants' experiences to explore these questions in depth.

While I draw mainly on the interviews, and particularly the group interview conducted on the 14 August 2014, to access the participants' experiences, I am aware of the limitations of this: firstly, the group interview took place the day after the first performance, which had gone very well, so there was a general feeling of achievement and excitement: the participants had just experienced the 'reward' of the process – the very affirming experience of performing the play to a receptive audience. This may have coloured their view of the whole process, and encouraged them to focus on its positive aspects. Secondly, although Katharine Low was the primary interviewer in this interview, I was present – it is possible that the participants were, to an extent, saying what they thought I, or both of us, wanted to hear. In hindsight, I wonder if I should have recused myself from this interview. There is a certain homogeneity to the participants' responses – many echoed similar feelings and insights about the process. While this reflects the nature of a shared experience, it could also suggest that some of the participants were reinforcing those answers that were received with pleasure and approval from Katharine Low and myself. However, much of the interview material is echoed in the research data that I collected throughout the process and after it, including in data that was given anonymously. Despite this, it would have been useful to include other research methods to triangulate the interview content to ensure that the requirements of validity and reliability were met.

Performance, Community and Healing

This wasn't designed or intended as a therapeutic process, and yet many participants described it as 'healing'. In fact, as I have argued, I had wanted to move away from a pathological perspective on sex and sexuality that focuses on trauma and suffering, and instead open spaces for the participants to explore the positive aspects of sex that are acknowledged less frequently, such as pleasure and desire. Yet there was always a tension between this intention of mine and the fact that many of the participants' actual experience of sex was traumatic – as I have outlined in the

previous chapter, South Africans face many problems when it comes to sex and gender, and this group was no exception. Many participants raised themes that reflected the pain and trauma that can be found in the world of sex – for example, a group of women created a scene about sexual violence in which each character told the story of her rape. However, there were also many stories that were not traumatic but rather, *"Just a story that happened, like these things they happen in everyday life"* (Manyuza, Group Interview, 2014). In making a play, we tend to believe that the more 'dramatic' a story, the better the play will be, so we select the unusual and exciting over the ordinariness of the everyday. Yet, telling these everyday stories, as we did in *Four Husbands for Ma Lindi,* also seemed to be a healing experience, which suggests that it would be limiting to view the notion of healing only from the perspective of trauma. What is it in the everyday that people need to heal from? What is it about a theatre-making space that offers the potential for healing?

Perhaps, at least in part, it is simply that it *is* a space, which doesn't exist otherwise, in which to consider – to give meaning to - everyday, seemingly unimportant experiences (Denzin, 2009). Given that there is a culture of silence around sex, and that the cultural landscape is dominated by particular normative narratives that enforce what we think we *should* experience or do, this sharing and valuing of personal stories and truths is *not* an everyday act, particularly in groups of mixed gender. Jaques, one of my creative collaborators on this project, reflects, in considering what the theatre-making process offered that everyday life does not from the perspective of a young adult, *"I am scared and I am insecure and I don't know how to deal with this. I have hormones and emotions and feelings that I can't describe – how does that come up in a conversation?"* (Jaques, 2014). What he suggests here is that there is a great deal of the everyday that is *not* a part of everyday conversations – many of our daily interactions, feelings, and experiences are never spoken about or acknowledged. These stories, that have nothing special or unusual about them, but are just things that often happen to people, become extraordinary because they are told in the theatre space. As Thompson points out, "the act of telling or listening to a story is not only research into problems that are

revealed but an affirmation that the story is important" (2012, p. 143). Part of what theatre *does* to stories is to give them value; performance is a way of saying, look, this thing that happened to you has worth. Pebble articulates how this connects to the experience of healing:

> For us we didn't know that sharing our story, that it could be a healing process for some people because they never thought that it was important – in fact it could be a healing process at the same time an educational process cos like they didn't know that it was – their stories were worth sharing to start with.
>
> (Pebble, Group Interview, 2014)

Pebble's choice of the words, "worth *sharing"* points to the importance of the other – of being witnessed in telling the story, and of witnessing others. Thus, it is through the other that you can know yourself better. While many of the participants described experiencing personal and individual growth, this always took place within and because of the group. Informed by this, I want to explore how theatre-making and performance interact with ideas of community, personal narratives and healing in relation to the themes of sexuality and gender.

I argue that the theatre-making process was a cultural practice that created, if temporarily, a sense of community, informed by Govan et al's claim that "communities are built on reciprocity, common struggles and shared activities, however fluid, contingent and visceral they may be" (2007, p. 81) – an apt description for the process of making theatre. However, Govan et al also problematize "straightforward narratives of community based on the ideal of homogenous local identities, shared histories and ideological unity", pointing out that community can be a means of exclusion as much as inclusion, and that communities are always provisional, multiple and imaginary - symbolic constructs rather than concrete facts (2007, p. 74). Similarly, theatre doesn't inherently work against pain and towards healing, and stories can enforce and normalize values and behaviours that propel situations of oppression and inequality as much as they can be emancipatory (Thompson, 2012). Within this complexity, the participants experienced 'telling my story' through theatre, in a theatre-making community, in different ways.

Govan et al argue that "by physically acting out each other's stories, and embodying each other's experiences, autobiographical narratives becomes integrated into the group" (2007, p. 79). This was embodied in *Four Husbands for Ma Lindi* in the fact that every participant was on stage for the entire performance of the play – listening to, commenting on, responsible for and implicated in each story. Insights into how this worked in process can be gained from the example of Miss J, who told a story during a workshop of how she had been harassed on the way to school. Although this is an everyday story, it is seldom told, and it had a profound effect on the group, triggering multiple stories from men and women who had experienced sexual harassment. This revealed, as I referenced in the previous chapter, how pervasive sexual harassment is – thus, through the reflections of the group, they gained insight into the social context of this isolated incident. This was a moment not only of developing community, but also of raising the political consciousness of the group about something that they had previously perceived as normal. Furthermore, the women in particular expressed and shared their pain and fear: hearing how women experience sexual harassment had a sobering impact on the men, many of whom were harassers themselves. This episode was a key 'community building' moment that resonated through the process and long after it, in ways that I will return to later in the thesis. Miss J's story was told in *Four Husbands for Ma Lindi* in a scene called "Walking to School"– but, as was often the case when personal stories were used in the play, the original teller didn't play herself. In *Four Husbands for Ma Lindi,* the whole group, working as an ensemble, dramatise Miss J's story. It is narrated in the first person by Mtshepang, a man, who interviewed Miss J and collaborated with her to write the monologue. The rest of the cast portray the story in a highly stylised form: Ngonyama is in Miss J's shoes, Miss J plays a community member who watches and does nothing, and others play the men who follow her and the people who witness. Thus, through the workshopping, rehearsal and dramatization of the scene, everyone became invested in the telling of the story – often from a different perspective to their 'real' life: *"when times keeps on going, at the end, you end up actually being part of that story; it ends up being part of you"* (Freddy, Group Interview, 2014).

Figure 1: The community watches, in the scene, "Walking to School"(Copyright 2014, Patrick Selemani)

This process, in which individual's experiences are interpreted into an ensemble performance by the whole group, generates a "collective cultural consciousness"(Govan et al, 2007, p. 74), an 'our story' that reflects and represents the shared world that the participants live in. As Freddy puts it, "*our stories - it was like us, telling people who we really are, exposing society to the kind of lifestyle that we go through each and every day*" (Freddy, Group Interview, 2014). While several participants spoke about the positive or healing effect of telling their story, and understanding themselves better, many of the people who said this didn't literally tell their story in the autobiographical sense either in the process or the play. Therefore, when participants spoke about telling 'my story', I don't think they were always necessarily referring to an individual, autobiographical story, but rather to the play itself, in which they were reflected in the stories and themes, every decision they made, which characters they chose to play, and how they chose to represent themselves.

MLindos suggests that the process of sharing and integrating stories in a group is healing:

> When I'm telling my story, specially when I'm telling my story in a group like this one, uh, I find it, I find the group as, uh it's a group whereby these people are going to help me heal – the pain. If the story it's a story – it's bringing

> pain to me, it makes me to feel sad all the time, even my self-esteem it's low now because of the story that I'm holding within me, when I'm telling the story I get to open up and I get to be free and then I get to get new ideas from other people and I get to see what people think of the thing that I'm facing then how do they turn it into the other page – even though the story it's still there I can smile.
>
> (MLindos, 2014)

For MLindos, while telling the story does not magically change his lived reality, it changes his capacity to cope with it, and even to smile. He emphasises that this is possible in *"a group like this one"* – I would suggest that the particular quality of this group is that it is, however provisionally, a supportive community.

In the next section, I will explore the capacity of performance to 'unfix' stories, which, like identities, are not static and unchanging – rather, they can be re-situated and re-imagined, understood in different ways from different perspectives. In other words, exploring stories through theatre changes the stories themselves (Denzin, 2009).

Re-situating the Narrative

The process of re-framing an individual's story as the group's story also enables individuals to re-frame their relationship to their story (Govan et al, 2007). For Yellow, her changing sense of her story's worth enabled her to re-situate an important part of her personal history as being constructive and meaningful, where before it had been shameful and secret. While I used Miss J as an example of the community taking ownership of an individual story, this is an example of community support allowing an individual to take ownership of their own story.

Yellow wrote and performed the following monologue in *Four Husbands for Ma Lindi*:

BREADWINNER

Yellow: *She is on her cellphone.* Hello? Hey, baby I've been trying to get hold of you. *Call drops. Looks at audience, rolls eyes*. Cell C. That was my boyfriend. Mampara. I met him at Taboo. He's so

> hot and sexy I couldn't keep my eyes off him. Hey, mathata! So me growing up as a *kasi*[10] girl, I didn't think he would notice me. When he approached me, I went all crazy. He asked for my numbers, I gave him. Oh snap! I forgot to ask him his name. I started receiving text messages from him, phonecalls: "Morning *mababeza, smatsatsa ngwana wa go tlhapa ka lebese*. How about lunch sometime? From Mampara. I've been seeing him for a month now. He does everything for me. *Mampara steps forward on the other side of the stage, holding a loaf of bread.* I told him I'm running out of grocery – within an hour, he bought the grocery. He bought Naledi her school shoes! My mother just lost her job. She can't afford to pay for my school fees. He's going to pay for them! I thought I was going to be excluded. I love him so much! But last night…we went to his house. It's so big and beautiful. He started kissing me and pulled down my pants. I love him so much but… "no, wait. Mampara I can't do this. I'm not ready." He started looking at me like I'm some sick prostitute and he said, "after everything I've done for you." And he walked away. *Pulls up her pants.* Why didn't I do it? Why *ke sa mo fa kuku*? *Picks up the phone and calls again.* Hello? Hi, baby can you hear me? Hi, hello? Baby?
>
> (Four Husbands, 2014)

While Yellow didn't articulate her own relationship to the story until after the performances, this monologue encapsulates the experience of many young South African women: research suggests that equality and independence are increasingly important to young women in romantic or sexual relationships, but lack of structural transformation and continued economic disempowerment ensure that situations

[10] Township

such as this are not unusual (Pettifor et al, 2012). In Yellow's words, *"girls are forever desperate"* (Yellow, Group Interview, 2014). The truth of this was evident during the first performance of *Four Husbands for Ma Lindi*, in which the audience of first year Wits drama students responded with vocal recognition and sympathy to Yellow's performance of her monologue. This performative moment evoked an experience shared by both the actors and the audience, and in doing so created a provisional community in which Yellow's story met with empathy and affirmation. During the interview held after the first performance she revealed that, *"Ok um guys…um, there was once a Mampara in my life."* (Yellow, Group Interview, 2014). As the following excerpt of the interview shows, Yellow was able to 'own' her story, because of the experience of performing it in front of an audience:

Yellow: Performing at Wits, in front of the students, like most of the girls, uh when they – when-when they were laughing at the things I was saying,

Female voice: Responding-

Yellow: -when they were responding, I feel like ok, now I'm not alone in this, I know there are a lot of girls here who went through the same thing

Voices: Yeah….Definitely *(lots of agreement)*

Yellow: So I felt like ok, telling this story then it can show them that you know what you don't need a man

Female voice: Indeed, indeed.

Yellow: -and his money to be happy…So guys like we really should take care of ourselves…So I - I'm even happy that I – I shared this thing – I didn't tell Clara that it once happened to me

Laughter

Yellow: That's why I chose it – I chose it…so that I can write – like add little bit of things that were going through – but I – I like guys –

it's a lifetime experience so I'm very happy that I had to share it- I'm very very happy that I had to share it

More clicking, more "snap, snap"[11]

Male voice: Cool.

Yellow: and then I - I feel like I inspire – I inspired a lot of girls,

Female voice: Yes.

Yellow: I inspired a lot – a lot of girls.

(Group Interview, 2014)

For Yellow, sharing her story with an audience – and importantly, an audience of a similar demographic who could relate to her experience – inspired and energized her with the idea that telling her story might help other girls in the same situation, a realization that was powerful and empowering. It motivated her to take up the role of actor-teacher, or peer educator (Pammenter, 2013): at a subsequent performance in which the women in the audience reacted in a similar way, Yellow addressed the audience directly in the question and answer session, reiterating what she had said in the interview: that the story in the play had really happened to her, and that "*we, as girls*" (another invocation of community) should be independent, and refuse to rely on men. This is a somewhat idealised message of empowerment, that might not be realistic given the structural oppressions and imbalances that make transactional sex an everyday reality. There is a dissonance between 'ideal' empowering messages such as this produced in public spaces, and the everyday realities that many young women find themselves in. While the audience responded with vocal approval and agreement, there was perhaps a lost opportunity to connect this story to the social inequality in which it is embedded by exploring whether some women really can, honestly, refuse to rely on men. However, although Yellow's proposed solution can

[11] The group used the convention common at poetry slams and music events of clicking their fingers rather than clapping as a less disruptive way of applauding or agreeing with a specific point. Saying "snap" is also an expression of agreement or empathy.

be critically interrogated, the fact that she offered one, with confidence and pride in the value of her story, is important. Yellow's increasing ownership of her story correlates with her increasing self-confidence: first within the group of participants, with whom she had built a reciprocal trusting relationship, and then to the audience, with whom she shared a more momentary connection. A story that she had been too ashamed to admit was her own became a story of worth, an educational tool. Yellow was able to re-position herself, not as a victim, but as an expert, with something constructive to share to women in similar positions. Therefore, Yellow's story *became* constructive because of the opportunity that the theatre-making process offered to share it.

I do not have data from the audience about the meaning they found in watching the play. My research focus was the participants in the theatre-making process rather than the viewers of the final product. Govan et al suggest that, "By seeing their own situations reflected on stage, there is the potential for audience members to recognize that it is possible to effect change in situations" (2007, p. 80). In this case, I think that Yellow, in seeing her own situation reflected in the responses of the audience, also realized that she could be a powerful agent of change. Therefore, while I can't comment in depth on the effect of the play on the audience, the presence of the audience, and their integration into a temporary community of young people with shared experiences, certainly had an effect on Yellow: in connecting her autobiographical narrative to the narratives of the audience, she was able to re-frame her story as a useful experience that gives her wisdom and insight, and in doing so, she was able to re-assess her own sense of self-worth (Govan et al, 2007). Furthermore, in owning her story, she gave audience members permission to own theirs. While on one level, we do 'know' that experiences such as this happen to many others, our personal lived experience of it can be lonely and isolating, tainted with feelings of guilt and shame. Theatre and performance, in contrast, creates communal experiences between performers and audience; experiences that are viscerally represented and communicated. Enacting and embodying this shared story in a public space is a hand held out to breach the isolation of experiencing it alone. According to Pebble, this is another aspect of the healing capacity of theatre:

> In terms of healing they thought that this is my thing, it happened to me I'm gonna keep it, nobody has to know about it, but now they're like starting to realize that actually like I'm not different from any other person.
>
> (Pebble, Group Interview, 2014)

After revealing that her monologue was based on her own experience, Yellow gave an unvarnished account of what her 'real' story had been. She had made several small changes that distanced the story onstage from what actually happened. It was important for her be able to fictionalize her monologue, so that the interplay of aesthetic distance that theatre offers could protect her. On one level, the public nature of theatre might seem an immensely risky, exposing forum in which to engage with themes like sexuality and gender, topics that are often clouded by silence and shame, but the troublesome nature of authenticity and truth in the theatre space also suggests it is a very safe one. Nicholson describes how applied theatre deliberately blurs reality and fiction to allow participants to "transform experiences into dramatic metaphor or to find points of connection that are presented theatrically" (2005, p. 66). There were several moments in the process and the play that were opportunities for participants to engage with or explore their own personal histories in the safe space that the blurring of truth and fiction in theatre provides: the play lives on the boundary between lived experience and fictional interpretation (Burn et al, 2010), working in the tension between me/not me, real/not real all the time, aestheticised and fictionalized and connected with other stories.

While Yellow found this space productive for her personal growth, Hollywood experienced it in a more ambiguous way, which problematizes the assumption that exploring personal stories through theatre is *necessarily* a healthy or positive act.

Not All Stories Should Be Shared

Like Yellow, Hollywood contributed a story that he later revealed was autobiographical. Originally presented as a story someone had told him, Hollywood performed a monologue in the play called "A Taste of the Cake". I saw this

monologue as an important inclusion in the play, because it described a boy's desire to lose his virginity – to get the cake – but when he finally does so, he feels empty and used: a challenge to the normative assumption that having sex is always a victory for a man. Only after performing the monologue did Hollywood admit that the story was his own. Like Yellow, in the group interview he seemed to have grown in confidence, and changed his relationship to his personal history in a positive way:

> Through this process, I believe next time I will just come with my story and say this is my story, I will not try to say, to defend it – the process it kind of builded me to - if I have something that is my own I will just come and say this is my thing.
>
> (Hollywood, Group Interview, 2014)

However, in 2015, when I told the group, now in their second year, that I would be working with them again to make a play (we workshopped a play called *Noord!* about a woman taxi driver, which we presented at the National Arts Student Festival), Hollywood came to me privately and asked not to be involved as an actor in the creative process. I felt surprised, even a little betrayed, because of how positively he had described the process in the interviews immediately after performance. Had he been lying, I wondered? Did this cast doubt on *all* of the positive feedback given by the group? When I inquired further, it was clear that, in hindsight, he had found the process discomforting, although he found it impossible, or was unwilling, to articulate exactly why. I got the feeling that he felt he had revealed too much, exposed himself in a way that he regretted. Thompson problematizes the claim that telling our stories is necessarily a healthy or beneficial act. He points out that, "the performance of stories, the act of asking people to perform, and the listening and the retelling are caught up in a matrix of difficult and perhaps dangerous value assumptions and judgments" (2004, p. 150). For example, my assumptions about what would be risky for Hollywood to perform were incorrect: while Hollywood was never absolutely direct about when and why he had become uncomfortable, he implied later, much to my surprise, that it was not the monologue he regretted, but a praise song he performed at the very end of the play, during the closing song, "I Am Me" (Four Husbands, 2014). As far as I was concerned, this song was glorious, and it never occurred to me that any aspect of it might be

problematic. However, Hollywood eventually told me that what he performed was a family praise song that he had learnt in Limpopo that is supposed to be kept secret – he strayed into taboo when he performed it publicly. The wrongness of my assumptions about what was and was not problematic to Hollywood made me very aware of the "huge gap between my life and those of the participants", and how deeply my own values and culture are embedded in my practice (Nicholson, 2005, p. 69). It also illustrates the way that personal stories are connected to their context; and in this case, the cultural narrative in which the personal is situated (Thompson, 2004). As the facilitator and witness to these stories, I must ask myself questions about the ethics of this practice: Hollywood's complex and seemingly contradictory reaction forces us to move away from the universalizing assumption that it is always positive for a community to perform its stories (Thompson, 2004). This is true even though, in this case, Hollywood had total agency over what he chose to share: he simply stepped forward and performed when I offered people the chance to present solo performances in the song. I don't speak SePedi, which was the language he spoke, so while I could hear that he was praising, I didn't know what he was saying. We never had a completely open conversation about it, but I imagine he was beguiled by the intimacy and generosity of the moment into participating in a way that he later felt was inappropriate - that made him uncomfortable enough to want to avoid repeating the process.

This section is important to include in the chapter because it confirms Thompson's suggestion that "the practice of social theatre[12] in any situation therefore needs to avoid reifying the process of storytelling and develop a critical attitude toward the practice" (2004, p. 152). There was a complexity to participation and storytelling that I simply wasn't aware of at the time. Furthermore, Hollywood's agency over what he chose to tell did not mean that it was necessarily a positive act. 'Agency' is not an

[12] Thompson and Schechner proposed the term "Social Theatre" to describe applied theatre - "theatre in times/places of crisis" - understood from a performance studies perspective (2004, p. 15).

automatic vaccine against ambiguous or disturbing effects. Similarly ambiguous, as I explore in the next section, is the role of aesthetics in constructing meaning and ideology.

Aesthetic Choices and Making Meaning

> *"It's like, like how do you put it? It's like your story – you find out that your story is actually something that you didn't really know."*
>
> (Lee, Group Interview, 2014)

The participants' repeated references to 'my story' indicate a strong sense of ownership of, and pride in, the play. Indeed, as the facilitator of the process I didn't contribute a single word. However, as I described in chapter one, I played a strong role, helped in particular by Jaques, in selecting, organising and crafting the material. As Nicholson (2005) points out, narrative structure and aesthetic are never innocent. Theatre, Thompson (2004) reminds us, is not a mirror held up to life. The aesthetic choices of its creators provide an interpretation, an imagining of the world. As the opening quote suggests, the aesthetic choices required to make theatre out the raw material of stories offers opportunities for new insights and meanings into your own experiences (Burn et al, 2010). Through repeating actions, interrogating motivations, experiencing different perspectives and heightening moments, you might find out indeed that "*your story is actually something that you didn't really know*" (Lee, Group Interview, 2014). However, the fact that aesthetic choices are inherently value-laden returns me to an interrogation of what my role or contribution really was, especially in the role of director. If many of the aesthetic choices were mine, whose values were represented in the play?

Manyuza and Jomo both shared experiences that were presented in the play, and consequently felt differently about their stories. Manyuza's story was about a man he knows who described raping a girl to his admiring friends. In the play, Manyuza played not himself but the character of the man telling the story, and in doing so, his opinion of the man changed:

> Ja, even my story the story I told about that guy from my hood. Ja now, when I look at him, it's so disgusting like in a way, like he's a rapist now, like I believe it like, too much like it's not the same – before, the first time he told us it was fine, it was *tjo, tjo, tjo*! But now it's…*ai*, this guy, *ai ai.*[13] *Uwabo*, I think ja – and even him I think he notices the change, like no this guy now is different, or something like that.
>
> (Manyuza, Group Interview, 2014)

His choice of words here is significant, when he says, "he's a rapist *now*" – it implies that when Manyuza first heard the story, he *didn't* think it was rape – perhaps because the girl is question is known for being flirtatious and sexually active. It was only in unpacking the story as a performance, in embodying the role himself, and in the group's witnessing and processing of the story, that Manyuza realized what this character had actually done – but where exactly does this realisation come from? Manyuza suggests:

> You will know that the outside people are going to see this mini-dialogue of ours so it becomes….as a human being you become aware of both sides *gore* now it's no longer just the four of us in the corner and then it's going to end here *uwabo*, it's going to be important - people are gonna see it.
>
> (Manyuza, Group Interview, 2014)

Part of his shift seems to lie in the imagined prospect of an audience – not just that he has experienced *being* the character, but that he is imagining what someone *else* will think when they see the conversation – and perhaps particularly, what they will think of him when he is playing that role. In anticipating being judged by an outsider, he pre-emptively judges himself. This regulatory role is a powerful part of community: the community's reflection is not necessarily affirming. I wonder, also, what my regulatory role was, as the director of the play – for example, I placed the scene directly after the scenes depicting girls and women experiencing sexual violence – the link between the scenes is that the story of the last girl to speak is interrupted and obliterated by the catcalls of the group of men who proceed to have this conversation. Morris argues that "in theatrical performance storytelling invests the teller(s) with the right to select what shall be told, when and how; and to

[13] "Tjo" in this context is an expression of surprise and approval; "ai" means "no".

arrange the material in ways that reveal deeper meanings" (2014, p. 208). Who was the true teller of this story? This question raises another: was Manyuza's insight that the man he played was a rapist because of the drama process itself, or was it something that he learnt from my aesthetic choices? While the answer is probably both, a complex mediation of these two spheres, I want to draw attention to the fact that the drama process was not a neutral space in which participants could come to their own conclusions, but rather a complex and multi-layered meeting place of various values and opinions, some more overtly expressed than others.

The "cultural politics of narrative" (Nicholson, 2005, p. 70) are even more visible in Jomo's response to telling his story. Jomo wrote and performed his own story of losing his virginity to a sex worker:

> Jomo: As I was starting to feel very comfortable, Sibusiso hooked me up with one of the prostitutes. Because I was drunk, I went on with the flow and went upstairs with the prostitute. When we got into bed I didn't know what to do. I was shaking.
>
> (Four Husbands, 2014)

Jomo's values shifted through staging and performing his story, in a way I found discomforting:

> Jomo: Ja it impacted a lot cos I actually realised that my story is not a good story to tell as in being proud about it, cos you know, when you told me to tell the story I was like, what is Clara asking me to do, cos you know this story – and now, ja – I see that you know, ja…I'd always look at Diplomat[14] when I pass and say shit…so it made me conscious in a way.
>
> Loti: Ja ja ja.

[14] Diplomat Hotel is the bar/brothel where Jomo described losing his virginity.

Jomo:	Ja.
Clara:	Conscious…conscious of what?
Jomo:	What I did, man. It's just so bad. That's what I feel now. And I felt good before.
Clara:	Why do you feel bad now?
Jomo:	I can't tell you I don't know. But something just…I just realised for me…

(Men Interview, 2014).

While this might be a result of new insights that he has gained about the story, I wonder how Jaques' and my response to the story, and the way it was framed in the play, made Jomo feel that what he has done was 'bad'. Were deeper meanings revealed, or did Jaques and I, in our arranging, impose "ways of knowing" that highlighted, contrasted with or subtly narrowed the meaning of the text? Jomo determined *what* was told by writing his own monologue, which was performed unedited: he controlled the text. However, the staging and embodiment of the scene was highly crafted and carefully directed, with other characters in the story interpreted and performed by other participants. In particular, Jaques and I encouraged an embodied performance that emphasised the role of Jomo's friends in determining when and how he lost his virginity: as he stands opposite the sex worker, his male friends stand behind him pushing at his back and chanting his name: "Jomo, Jomo, Jomo, JOMO!" as his erection grows. We also highlighted the disinterest and detachment of the sex worker. While this was suggested in Jomo's text (she says, "take off your pants and stop wasting my time"), I wonder how it felt for him to listen to me directing the actress playing the sex worker accordingly? I wonder if we forgot, as we discussed the scene, that Jomo was not playing a character when he told this story.

On the other hand, it is possible that Jomo's self-examination of the story, through the process of writing it, repeatedly telling it, crafting it and performing for an audience, revealed the choices he made and the perspectives of the other characters

in the story, in ways that he hadn't previously realised. While I believe that a combination of these possibilities was occurring, it foregrounds how crafting and directing a story, even if you do not contribute a single word, is not a value neutral process – aesthetic choices have moral and emotional underpinnings. Sometimes there is a perception that as the director or facilitator in situations such as this, you are merely neatening, or making more pleasing to the eye, *crafting* but in no way affecting the content of the story. However, the natural conclusion of Fleishman's argument that performance is an embodied, located way of knowing (2009) is that the choices a director makes about the bodies and location of the performers is creating and sharing knowledge – not text-based knowledge, but knowledge that is being absorbed and interpreted by both performers and audience members. Therefore, as a director, I was claiming co-ownership of that story and, for better or worse, contributing my viewpoint. I wouldn't have described what happened in the story as 'bad', but I don't think it was positive either. While I might be too experienced a facilitator to express an overt opinion, I wonder what meaning Jomo made of my artistic choices. Does Jomo now have (or state) a negative view of his actions because he thinks I think that what he did was bad? Is his statement that what he did was 'bad' the result of increased insight or subordination to another moral system?

As Thompson asks, "how can we acknowledge the values inherent in a process that professes not to impose values?" (2004, p. 144).

The Story Not Told

> *"I'm not gay. These gay guys always hit on me. Sometimes I think maybe I'm gay. Gonna be hard for me to come out."*
>
> (Zulu-kid, Rehearsal, 2014)

Homosexuality came up as a common topic from the first day of workshops, with many participants expressing both fascination and repulsion. The group was openly and committedly homophobic (individuals, less so), stereotyping and othering gayness with statements such as, "gays always dress like that, gays like straight men, lesbians try to act like guys." It is interesting however, that while the conversations

were homophobic, the group made images that were often sympathetic – although they were also invariably tragic, which is part of the stereotyping and trope that reduces gay experience. One image I remember in particular is a man holding hands with a woman, but looking longingly into the eyes of a man some distance away. These images, and occasional comments made in the safety of a character, such as the quote above, hinted that some narratives were being excluded from our community.

When we started discussing what scenes and monologues would go into the play, I pointed out we didn't have anything from a gay perspective, and there was general agreement that there should be - the group understood the issue of exclusion very readily. While the participants were willing to include this perspective, we just couldn't come up with anything that 'worked'. I suspect that it was too risky for someone to offer a story about being gay that felt 'true' – while in many ways, we created a safe space, it had its limits. While this is speculative, because it is based on something that *didn't* happen, my observation of the group suggests that with regards to this theme, 'community' was operating as an instrument of exclusion: for example, being or acting 'gay' was used as an insult. I do not think that someone with a story about being gay would have experienced healing; rather, they would have risked being ejected from the 'safe' space that a sense of community creates; a space that does, after all, have walls.

Conclusion: Good Intentions in an Unpredictable Context

In the South African context, men and women are often constructed as the oppressor and the oppressed, and this process was an opportunity to move beyond this simplifying discourse. Personal stories about sexuality and gender are often rooted in the everyday; however, they are aspects of the everyday that are private and intimate, seldom spoken about – especially in a group of mixed gender. I have shown that much of the richness and depth of the theatre-making process was because it created a community of men *and* women, sharing, constructing and re-interpreting knowledge together. The success of the play was that it was an act of self-representation by the emerging community who made it, imagining and re-

imagining itself through the process of experimentation and engagement that is theatre-making (Govan et al, 2007). However, I have also drawn attention to more troubling responses that illuminate the complexity and unpredictability of the relationship between personal narratives, community and theatre-making, and highlighted questions of aesthetic and ethics, particularly in relation to the facilitator. In considering this complexity, I relate to Preston's description of "the dilemmatic space" (2013, p. 230): working within complex social, cultural and political contexts, as a facilitator, I must make choices that are risky, ambiguous and bewildering – there is no clear right answer or correct practice.

These 'messy' conclusions – provisional, nuanced and unresolved – are nonetheless foundational for the arguments I will develop later in the thesis about the relationship between theatre and change: firstly, that experiences of personal growth and increased self-confidence are connected to political agency, for the capacity to participate actively and impactfully in the socio-cultural domain. Thus, 'self-development' is an explicitly political process because it places participants' own narratives at the centre of social emancipation (Govan et al, 2007). In this way, the personal and the social, and the personal and the political, should not be regarded as separate, but intertwined. Secondly, that there is a relationship between community and action: according to Govan et al, devised theatre has "often been regarded as an effective and flexible way to move from the individualism of autobiographical narratives to more collective forms of community participation and social identification" (2007, p. 73), and I will explore this in relation to the process in chapter five (Govan et al, 2007, p. 76). Finally, I want to emphasise the agency of the participants in choosing how to use the space that theatre-making offered to reflect on personal experiences of sexuality and gender. Perhaps that agency is why Pebble commented, *"we healed ourselves"* (Pebble, Group Interview, 2014). This raises questions around the facilitator's role and responsibility, and places the participants centrally in determining the outcomes of drama processes.

In the next chapter, I am concerned with embodiment as an essential aspect of performance, and particularly the embodiment of the other. I will weave together

these two strands – personal narratives and embodiment – in the fifth chapter, to examine how theatrical performance, gender and sexuality interact towards change.

Chapter 4: Gender Identity and Embodiment

What are the possibilities for theatre-making as an embodied performance pedagogy to interrogate gender identities and values that are embedded in the body? In this section I would like to consider moments in the process and play when the participants, rather than telling or performing their own stories, engaged with, and embodied radically different narratives and experiences to their own. This was most evident in the scenes of the play where gender roles were reversed; where men performed the roles in the narrative that would usually be played by women, and vice-versa. I support Nicholson's hypothesis that a process of identification with different narratives allows participants to cross the border from self to other (2005), and I wish to draw attention to the role embodiment plays in this process. There is a paradox in attempting to describe embodied experience in words, and I am aware that my account of the discourses of the body will necessarily be partial, but I hope it will also be fruitful. I will engage with Judith Butler's theory of performativity (1990) and Pierre Bourdieu's description of embodied beliefs (1990) as ways of understanding gender identity, and explore how Norman Denzin's manifesto for a critical performance pedagogy (2009) might link these concepts to theatre-making. I will argue that, as both gender and theatre-making are embodied, performative acts, theatre is a constructive site to interrogate, deconstruct and challenge normative gender identities. In doing so, I want to make clear that I am not conflating the ideas of these theorists, nor suggesting that they are entirely complementary. However, in comparing and contrasting some of their ideas around embodiment, gender and identity, I believe that useful insights emerge about how making performances can subvert gender norms, and how this might be extended to performative acts of resistance in the participants' everyday lives. While Bourdieu and Butler have different conceptions of how gender relations are organized and therefore potentially transformed, both frameworks make compelling suggestions about how theatre-making might work as a critical performative pedagogy in relation to gender (Perry & Medina, 2011). I have found Portia Mashigo's insights from her perspective as a contributing choreographer on *Four Husbands for Ma Lindi* of particular use in

this chapter, which is perhaps not surprising as her language as a choreographer is very much situated in the body.

Introducing Butler and Bourdieu

The experiment of exploring a world in which men are in the position of women and vice versa was one of the richest and most fascinating threads in the theatre-making process, and one I stumbled upon without realizing how central it would become. In a rehearsal, I showed the group a series of videos, including the Tedx talk by Catherine Burns I have referenced in this thesis, and a short French film titled *The Oppressed Majority.* In this film, a man goes through a day as a woman. This is not a drag performance, he is still quite clearly a man in a man's body – it is simply that he exists in a looking glass world in which the social constructs of male and female have been reversed: he is the primary care-giver of a small child, as he goes out for a walk a bare-chested woman jogs past him (the way men often jog, shirtless), a group of aggressive and entitled women harass and physically assault him in an alleyway, he reports this incident to an unsympathetic and disbelieving female police officer, and finally his partner fetches him from the police station, and blames him for the incident because of what he is wearing. This film is striking because the strangeness of role reversal, of watching a male body experience the treatment, surveillance and judgement that is usually reserved for women, draws attention to the gendered nature of public space, to how men and women are treated and perceived differently, and to the subtle ways that patriarchy operates.

I argue that what the film makes visible is what Bourdieu (1990) refers to as *habitus*: the structured and structuring systems and principles though which we see the world. Since *habitus* is the lens through which we view the world, it seems both necessary and natural – so deeply rooted that we aren't aware of it. The process of social conditioning that provides identity and labels to an individual such as man/woman, black/white, has the power to "transform instituted difference into natural distinction" (Bourdieu, 1990, p. 58). In *The Oppressed Majority,* the peculiarity of seeing a man in situations that we associate with women denaturalizes what we usually take for granted.

Having watched this film, I asked the group to make scenes in a South African context in which gender norms were reversed: not gender bending precisely, but depicting a world in which the usual order had been transposed, so woman acted like men and vice versa. The contrasting responses of the participants to watching the film and creating and performing scenes is suggestive of the possibilities for understanding and insight through the physical, experiential reality of performance (Perry & Medina, 2011): many people were struck by the film, but a significant proportion were also rather dismissive and defensive – for example, one man said he thought the film was depicting what women would do to men if they could. The female police officer's cynicism was explained away by many people in the group, both men and women, who claimed that girls often *do* lie in rape reports (although this view was hotly contested by other group members). Freddy observed that sometimes men are defensive because they don't want to admit the truth. However, this defensiveness evaporated when the participants started working on a creative and embodied task, and the four scenarios performed by the group offer some important insights into their observations and experience of gender relations and sexual dynamics in South Africa: in the first scene, a woman brings a fourth husband into her polygamous household, and in the second, a house-husband cleans the house and his friends come round to watch *Generations* (a popular South African soap opera), until that is, his wife comes home (I will discuss this scene in greater detail later in the chapter). In the third scene, two girls come across two boys bathing in the river, and steal their clothes. The girls demand to see the boys' penises, and tell them to dance for them if they want their clothes back. The final scene was set at the beach – three boys were constantly interrupted in their sunbathing by girls playing football. The girls start to harass and even touch the boys until the boys are forced to leave, followed to the last by the girls asking for phone numbers.

For Bourdieu, gender difference is embodied and enacted through the body, in posture, gesture and movement, "inscribed in body and in belief" (1990, p. 58). He argues that practical belief – belief that is lived and enacted – is not a state of mind but a state of body. Belief is *made* body through an "implicit pedagogy" that is

learned from early childhood, lessons such as 'sit up straight', 'chew with your mouth closed', 'close your legs', that inscribe on the body the content of a culture and its values (Bourdieu, 1990, p. 69). This social conditioning occurs below the level of consciousness, embedded so deeply that it seems natural, "beyond the reach of consciousness and explicit statement" (Bourdieu, 1990, p. 69).

This speaks profoundly to identity: "what is 'learned by body' is not something that one has, like knowledge that can be brandished, but something that one is" (Bourdieu, 1990, p. 73). The body is intertwined with the knowledge it produces; or rather, the body *is* knowledge. And yet, for both Bourdieu and Butler, gender is not a reality inherent to the body, but rather a *stylization* of the body. For Butler, gender is performative: "a regularized and constrained repetition of norms" (1993, p. 60). 'Man' or 'woman' are compulsory performances that we don't choose, but must negotiate. Being pronounced a girl at birth, you undergo a 'girling' process, and must perform or embody that norm in order to be a legitimated subject: "Femininity is thus not the product of a choice, but the forcible citation of a norm, one whose complex historicity is indissociable from relations of discipline, regulation, punishment " (Butler, 1993, p. 177). One does not just perform the norms of gender, but one is enabled to *be* through the performances – performativity, a normative force, has the "power to establish what qualifies as 'being'" (Butler, 1993, p. 140). However, it is never totally determining or complete: "never quite carried out according to expectation, whose addressee never quite inhabits the ideal s/he is compelled to approximate" (Butler, 1993, p. 176). Performing the norm also generates the shaming taboo for "those who resist or oppose that social form as well as those who occupy it without hegemonic social sanction" (Butler, 1993, p. 172). Thus, constraint as well as repetition are the conditions of performativity, which operates through both iterative performances and the exclusion of those who do not 'perform' correctly, or who perform outside of their expected role.

Butler's concept of the performativity of gender identity offers the latent potential for resistance, perhaps more so than Bourdieu, whose conception of *habitus* as your embodiment of social structures has been criticized for being deterministic, for emphasizing the power of social structures over individual choice (Nenwich, Ozbilgin

& Tatli, 2015). The concept of performativity avoids the extremes of structural determinism and voluntarism – rather, it describes identity as "a reflexive process between the individual and social practice" (McKinlay, 2010, p. 234). In other words, it is a process informed both by social structure and individual agency.

This conception of gender as a reiterative performance provides a useful theoretical frame for understanding the play-making process as an opportunity to perform the gendered body differently (Butler, 1990). Butler's description of gender as being continually re-performed and re-constituted rather that fixed and static – rather like the repertoire that Morris (2014) describes[15] - allows for the possibility that people can create new performances, and thus new ways of being a woman or a man (Aalten, 1997). However, I am also interested in exploring the potential of performance as an embodied form of knowledge to challenge or change *habitus,* which is learned through socialization and embedded in the body. Through performativity, Butler suggests the possibility for alternative gender identities, Bourdieu's theories highlight the difficulty of this: while his understanding of belief as a state of body suggests the power of an embodied pedagogy like theatre-making to shift beliefs, it also suggests its limits because it draws attention to the degree to which values and beliefs are embedded in us, and how deeply unconscious we are of what we have learnt, how it lives in us, and how we enact it. What are the possibilities for theatre-making to dig up and reveal *habitus*, and even potentially change it? How do performative acts either entrench or push the boundaries of *habitus*?

Augusto Boal is a useful theorist to link ideas of embodied belief and performativity to theatre and performance. Boal (1992) suggests that it is the work of the actor to become aware of her social conditioning, which he refers to as "a series of mechanisations" - the repetitive acts of eating breakfast, going to work, greeting a friend - performances that we repeat over and over again, executing the same movements, repeating the same lines (Boal, 1992, p. xxv). Theatre, which is "the act

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[15] The embodied and performative ways that cultural knowledge is preserved and communicated, particularly, in this context, through township 'playing culture'.

of looking at ourselves" (Boal, 1992, p. xxx) demands that the actor becomes aware of this mechanization of her body, of how her movements have become automated through repetition, and the body's natural inclination to efficiency. In order to take on the new mechanisations of a character, the actor must become aware of her own, in order to remove them. Therefore, "Boal's games specifically aim to refigure the body so that the people become aware of how their bodies are socialized, how they have become atrophied and hypertrophied by the world in which they act" (Thompson, 2012, p. 142). Thus drama provides a reflexive distance that makes *habitus* visible in how the body has been constructed. So if, according to Boal the actor must become aware of her own body – its habits, its comforts, its limits – as a physical reflection of herself, it is a body which, as Bourdieu says, has been socialized to be highly gendered. In playing another gender, what are the implications for the de-mechanisation of the body? Boal emphasizes that the body and mind are unified – "A bodily movement 'is' a thought and a thought expresses itself in corporeal form" (1992, p. 61): when you work to transform your body into another character, does this open new paths of thought, perception and experience? If removing your own social mask involves re-learning to perceive emotions and sensations, what knowledge might emerge?

Performance, in working through the body, is a way of exploring this embodied knowledge. As a space in which risk-taking and experimentation is encouraged and valued, perhaps it is a supportive space for men and women to experiment outside the norm (Ramsay, 2014). Collaborative theatre-making seems a particularly rich space for this, since it values and encourages innovation, and traditionally operates outside the norm of mainstream theatre. It is a space in which the transgression of norms, whether of theatre or identity, is permitted.

Performing through the Looking Glass

In order to expand on these questions and suggestions, I will now analyse four 'through the looking glass' performances which were a part of the process. I use the metaphor of 'through the looking glass' to describe theatrical moments that were generated by examining the familiar world through the lens that served to reverse or

suspend the rules of gender, making the world seem strange – inside out or upside down, much like mirrors reflect the world but also distort it. Stepping *through* the looking glass was an experiential process: not merely looking *at* (as when we watched *The Oppressed Majority),* but being *in* a world made strange in the different ways it temporarily troubled normative conceptions of gender. The first performance I will investigate was an improvisation during rehearsals – a playful, experimental activity which was immediate, visceral, and intoxicating to the participants. The next performance was a realist scene in the play, *House Husband* (realist except that gender roles were reversed) – in contrast to the improvisation, this was a highly crafted scene that required the participants to research, observe, practice and physically embody a character of a different gender in as realistic a manner as possible. The remaining two performances are both movement based: *A Nice Cup of Tea* explores the everyday act of making and enjoying a cup of tea through a heightened, feminine movement vocabulary and *A Zulu Dance* accesses culturally ritualized constructions of gender through a traditional dance that contains strongly contrasting gender roles. Thus, each of these performances interrogates a different aspect of the way gender is constructed, perceived and performed, and in doing so they provided opportunities for both men and women to make "unruly experiments with the body" (Ramsay, 2014, p. 373).

An Improvised Revenge

Queshaah told a story that he had watched unfold on the train ride home: two beautiful women stepped onto a coach which contained thirteen men, who proceeded to talk loudly about the girls, describing all the things they'd like to do to them in crude and graphic terms – "*I'll fuck her til she forgets her name*", "*I'll spin her like a coin*" (Rehearsal, 2014). Gardener (1989) analyses this tactic, and describes how talking about, but not to, the target of sexual harassment excludes her from the masculine conversation, and forces her to remain silent, practically the only option available to her being to pretend she has not heard. The sheer number of men must have made the situation particularly threatening and ominous for the girls. Queshaah said that the girls looked "*so small*" (Rehearsal, 2014) – he realized what

was happening was actually abuse, and that what the men were describing so loudly was a fantasy of rape.

I asked the group to improvise the scene on the train that Queshaah had described, but with reversed genders: a group of women on the train start commenting loudly about a pair of men. What began as an improvisation to potentially develop a performance became a process-orientated improvisation led by the women: they were not concerned with creating a scene for an audience, but rather they were determined that every man in the room should experience what it is like to be sexually harassed. As the first pair of intensely uncomfortable male actors left the stage, the women, jumping around the space in excitement, yelled, "*next two*!" Trying to retain some balance, I asked if there were other men who wanted to experience what it felt like. Several of the men were eager to participate in the improvisation at first, but looked self-conscious and uneasy in the middle of it, and relieved when it was over. Others decided not to participate, and withdrew physically to chairs further back in the auditorium.

The women's enactment of the male roles in this scene evoked in them a visceral anger and savage pleasure. Their performance of men was exaggerated, parodic, cartoonish and crude, escalating almost immediately to lewd suggestion, naked aggression, and groping. They seemed intoxicated by the power they were experiencing, literally leaping around the stage, taking complete vocal and physical ownership of the space. They were thrilled to be on the other side of a situation they experience every day, in the position of power, and they were insistent that all the men should go through their gauntlet of aggressive and entitled sexual harassment. Manyuza described the gauntlet as follows: "*I feel like they were doing it in some kind of a revengeful way, like ja! This is how it feels, this is how you must feel, you must see it, it's like this*" (Manyuza, Men Interview, 2014). The element of revenge, but also enjoyment was confirmed by Mandisa: "*So for me to do that on stage it was more fun because I wanted them to feel what we go through when they do it on the streets*" (Mandisa, Women Interview, 2014).

Fleishman (1990) suggests that workshop theatre offers the opportunity to enact desires that might be dangerous in real life and for the women, the 'safe space' of drama was a chance to express their anger in a legitimized way, with no real-life consequences. While anger might be a risky response in a real-life context of sexual harassment and abuse, the improvisation was an opportunity for the women to perform their pain and fury about a daily reality of their lives, something that is so normalized that it is rarely spoken of. It allowed them to question, transcend and subvert gender codes, particularly the code of passive femininity (Ramsay, 2014). In public spaces, as young women they are expected to conform to the "patriarchal feminine ideal" by being a passive, desirable object; in the drama space they were allowed, even expected, to be the exact opposite – loud, assertive, aggressive, entitled and overtly sexual subjects (Ramsay, 2014, p. 376). Their enthusiasm for this role suggested an experience of liberation and an expression of anger, but their reflections also emphasized that they were motivated by more than revenge – they wanted the men to know and understand how it feels: "*especially seeing the guys being on the other side on stage when we practised…I loved what I – what they learnt out of that you know*" (Pebble, Women Interview, 2014).

Ramsay (2014) has pointed out that the presence of men can inhibit the dramatic expression of women, because of the 'male gaze'; that is, in this context, the masculine (and patriarchal) lens through which women's appearance and behaviour is objectified, evaluated and regulated – for example, men ridiculing a woman for being unfeminine, or feeling entitled to comment on how she looks. However, in this instance, the presence of the men was a vital part of the experience. The male gaze did not inhibit the women because they were too busy doing the gazing, and the men became the object on whom the traditionally male gaze was returned. Constrained by performing a female role, the men could not proffer a male gaze, as their role in the improvisation was to be passive, accepting, and helpless. For the men, this experience was one of a series of 'transportations' that resulted in a shift of appraisal about sexual harassment, as Thabo describes: "*I think it's quite embarrassing and uncomfortable for a guy to be approached by women. Uh, I end up feeling for women, like to face that each and every day*" (Thabo, Men Interview,

2014). While they were put in a highly uncomfortable situation - Loti describes the awkwardness of the encounter as a "*hide your face laugh*" (Loti, Men Interview, 2014) - the fact that it was just drama also helped them feel safe. Many of the men expressed a tension between enjoying the novel experience of being objects of desire and feeling embarrassed and uncomfortable, perhaps because there were no codes of behaviour to guide what they were supposed to do.

This incident highlights the experiential nature of performance: insights were gained for both the men and women by performing their bodies differently in relation to other bodies, physically stepping into unknown territory and unfamiliar actions and temporarily suspending what they have learnt implicitly all their lives about what their bodies mean in space; bodies that are usually objects of desire became instruments of aggression, bodies that usually feel safe became vulnerable.

House Husband

> *A man is busy mopping the floor of his home. He notices that there is a make-up bag dropped carelessly next to the coffee table, and puts down his mop, exasperated.*
>
> Austin: Fatima!
>
> *He puts all the make-up back in the bag, and puts the bag in its right place.*

(Four Husbands, 2014)

Figure 2: The house husband complains about his untidy wife (Copyright 2014, Patrick Selemani)

House-husband is a scene in the play depicting the relationship between a man and his wife in everyday domestic life – except that gender roles have been inverted, and so the husband performs the norms usually associated with women and vice versa.

For Bourdieu (1990), the contrasting male and female body suggests two different ways of relating to the world: strength, power and directness on the one hand, and flexibility, fluidity and reserve on the other. These words for bodily postures also evoke states of mind, suggesting two oppositional value systems - values translated into action (Bourdieu, 1990). While these acts seem to be based in reality, they are rather *producing* reality, creating a system that reinforces itself. Queshaah, who played the role of Austin, has, like any other man, undergone this process of social conditioning that has embedded gendered values in his body. What does it mean then, for him to perform a female role in a theatrical performance? Firstly, it required him to become aware of how he usually inhabits his body in order to be able to transform in performance. Secondly, he had to observe and practice new actions and ways of using his body: he tidies up after his wife, he cleans her house, he hugs his friends in greeting, he makes tea for his friends, he sits close to them to drink tea and watch a soapie, he serves his wife food, he apologises to her, he massages her shoulders, he acquiesces somewhat reluctantly to her demand for sex. Ngonyama, on the other hand, who played the role of Austin's wife, Fatima, performed the following actions: she drinks a beer, she turns off the television, she

takes the remote, she berates her husband for having his friends round drinking her tea and sugar, she drops her earrings on the floor, she rejects the food he serves her, she demands meat, she lets him massage her shoulders, she feels desire, she decides that it's time to have sex. These are all everyday acts. Yet, even one of those acts, Queshaah hugging his friend for example, is an unfamiliar activity, a way of being in the world and relating to others that is different to the way he usually performs his identity.

In the performative moment, what is the relationship between the role performed and the roles already owned (Perry & Medina, 2011)?

Thompson argues that,

> The use of any muscle, however slight, changes that muscle. This includes the 'muscles' of the brain. Systematic use of certain movements by (for example) body builders, directly marks their bodies with new forms of muscle shape and curve. However small, any physical/mental engagement in a theatre process will have developed phrases and traces that will be interventions in the embodied lives of participants.
>
> (2012, p. 142).

In rehearsing and perfecting new actions and conventions – a new movement vocabulary - Queshaah and Ngonyama were consciously learning and repeating a different form of embodied belief to what they were inscribed with from childhood. Queshaah had to work on taking up less space, relating to other bodies differently, and navigating space in a different way. Ngonyama had to practice physical aggression, untidiness, an objectifying gaze. Nicholson suggests that "physical embodiment of the narratives of others can be a particularly powerful way to 'become' another temporarily or to 'inhabit' another's story" (2005, p. 72). Following Nicholson's argument that "identification with a dominant 'self' has, historically, created a marginalized and objectified 'other'", I suggest that the embodiment or inhabitation of a narrative other than your own might transform the erstwhile object into a subject (2005, p. 73). For example, Jomo's reflection on his participation in the scene as Austin's friend was,

> I felt abuse - abused in that scene and I asked myself if….is it abuse if this happens to a woman, like the way it happens? Cos I felt very abused and…I felt like if women were doing that it would have seemed normal, ja.
>
> (Men Interview, 2014)

The use of the first person and the verb "felt" are significant in Jomo's description of the experience of playing a woman, and places a particular emphasis on how experiences are located in the body. Experiencing his body differently has given him fresh insight into a common domestic scene: what he had previously taken as normal, he now sees as abusive. Denzin argues that, "As pedagogical practices, performances make sites of oppression visible" (2009, p. 262) – this is a good explanation for how this scene functions, in that it exposes what seems normal to be a profoundly unequal partnership. Jomo is also drawing attention to how theatrical performance denaturalizes the performativity of gender, which was echoed by Manyuza:

> Like especially the Austin scene ja daai[16]–you can tell if it was visa versa you gonna see that it was right for a male to do that but if it's like that [swapped round] you can see that it's so sad and…so so sad in a way, so you get to learn…
>
> (Manyuza, Men Interview, 2014).

Thus, norms of gender performance and the socially established order that they continually construct, have, through performance, been made unfamiliar and strange, revealed as constructions, temporarily suspended or subverted. This denaturalization occurred repeatedly in the play: in the scene in which Ma Lindi decides to take another husband, her husbands start to argue, and she calmly states, "my word is final". As Freddy put it, *"you hear things when it's a girl that you take as normal when it's a man, and then you wonder why men can say these things"* (Rehearsal, 2014). Is it possible that what Freddy is doing here, questioning assumptions that he has previously taken for granted, might begin to change old practices and create space for change (Nentwich et al, 2015)?

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[16] Yes, there

These scenes function in the same way as certain drag performances and acts of activism, described by Butler (1993) as performances that reveal the mechanisms of performativity by hyperbolizing the performance of gender. She also points out that drag can expose the naturalization of heterosexual norms without necessarily problematizing them (Butler, 1993). However, in this case, the denaturalization that occurred discomforted the men's view of their own normative behaviour: "*we noticed that we treat women in a bad way, in a way…like I don't know, we don't treat women right*" (Manyuza, Men Interview, 2014). I was struck by their identification with women, and their lack of defensiveness about their *own* bad treatment of women, because they now know what it *feels* like. While empathy can be seen as an essentially passive response (Nicholson, 2005), it is interesting in this context that the conversation moved on quite swiftly to whether the play attacks men in general, and many of the men expressed the belief that it doesn't attack men *enough.* This indicates not only a passive 'feeling sorry', but a desire to use the medium of theatre to educate others, a desire for social action: "*I think that was not an attack, I think that was just a highlight of normal situations like women go through*" (Manyuza, 2014).

A Nice Cup of Tea

Women: We Ma Dlamini *(Hey Mrs Dlamini)*

Liphi itiye? *(Where's the tea?)*

Men: Likhona! *(It's here!)*

(Four Husbands, 2014)

This song is an adaptation of a much more traditional version, in which the men ask the women, "*Liphi Umkhombothi?*" – where is the African beer? It was the introduction to a scene in *Four Husbands for Ma Lindi,* conceived and choreographed by Portia, in which the men perform a highly stylized movement sequence that evokes the satisfaction of having a nice cup of tea. In unison, the men delicately perform feminized gestures, stirring the tea, tasting it, offering it to the audience. Portia's inspiration for the piece was a workshop she had attended years ago, in

which, when she was asked when she felt most free, she remembers replying, "*um, maybe in a field somewhere with a teacup with the sun shining on your back…*" (Portia, 2014).

Most of the audience members that I spoke to after the play said that this was their favourite scene. I was surprised, because it was so short and simple: unlike the 'House Husband' scene, which was quite a pointed commentary on domestic power, it didn't overtly 'say' anything – it was a just a playful, cheeky moment of gently subverting stereotypes. Yet, I think its very playfulness and interpretive ambiguity is what can be read as emancipatory. This was not foregrounding gender inequality, it was allowing the men "to perform the body differently" with no particular agenda beyond that fact (Ramsay, 2014, p. 376). I am suggesting that there is something liberating in simply moving in your body in a different way, that would usually not be allowed by the regulatory norms of gender – in this case, delicately, sensuously, gracefully. Certainly, the men enjoyed performing in this way: *"I think that's why the audience loved it because we just had fun, you know, enjoying being women"* (Thabo, Men Interview, 2014). Butler and Bourdieu both make the point that the performance of gender is not a choice, but something that is inscribed on us – this theatrical performance of gender suggested that there is enormous pleasure to be had in experimenting at the border of these constraints – just to show that it can be done.

Figure 3: A Nice Cup of Tea (Copyright 2014, Patrick Selemani)

A Zulu Dance

The Zulu dance, like the teacup dance, was Portia's suggestion; and yet, even as she suggested that she choreograph a traditional Zulu dance, but with the women performing the male movements and vice versa, Portia covered her mouth with her hand, seemingly appalled at her own idea. For her, the wrongness of it is "*in your fibre*" (Portia, 2014), a phrase that recalls Bourdieu's implicit pedagogy (1990), embedded so deeply it is experienced as natural. She's still not sure why she did it. "*It's not done. It's not Zulu - as in, culturally*" (Portia, 2014). She was also concerned about how the performance would be received by the audience: "*if anyone who is very cultural or tribalistic, it could be…a big debate*" (Portia, 2014). More than this imaginary audience, which never materialised, it seemed to be challenging her own internal sense of what was appropriate, or what she was willing to be accountable for: "*it was threatening my own…I didn't know whether I would be able to explain – after*" (Portia, 2014). The disapproving response that she imagined before the dance was even created is perhaps part of the regulatory framework that enables gender norms to be reinforced (Ramsay, 2014).

Traditional Zulu dance is both a performance and performative of particular gender norms. It is highly gendered, with men and women taking the stage at different times, performing separately, different movements to different rhythms. The intentions of the male and female dances are different: the men perform a war dance, suggesting power, virility, fearsomeness, aggression, while the women present a more seductive performance, smiling, with more relaxed, swaying bodies and gentler movements. Portia points out that in Zulu dance women's legs are choreographed not to go up like a man, in order to preserve the modesty (and implied chastity) of the female performer – the same reason that the women's hands go down to cover the pubic area as they kick. She contrasts this to the men, who sometimes wear G-strings, which they show to the audience by flipping up their skirts, without "*suggesting anything*" (Portia, 2014). I suggest that traditional Zulu dance presents a norm of femininity that invites objectification – drawing attention to the hips and breasts, it presents women as desirable, coy, graceful, alluring but not assertive, the performers are smiling, happy, and on display. The male dance, in

contrast, is a hyperbolized performance of masculinity, with an emphasis on physically demonstrative action, spectacle, and intimidation.

It is clear then, that in performing the male part of the dance, the women needed to inhabit a different kind of body. Despite the fact that it was Portia's vision, she could not teach the women how to do so - *"I can't show them how to do a guy kick"* was one reason, and *"I couldn't find it, I dunno why"* was another (Portia, 2014). This was where her anxiety was located – in the women acting like men, not in the men acting like women. She had none of the same anxieties about choreographing for the men that she had for the women. She pointed out that society gives men more permission to experiment than women: *"it was easier to teach the boys because I think society wise it's always like ok, boys can be…and we laugh"* (Portia, 2014). As a Zulu woman herself, perhaps the cultural inscriptions of appropriate feminine behaviour on her own body were strong enough that she couldn't demonstrate the male part, even in the safety of rehearsal. I wonder if there was a generational experience at work here, as Ngonyama, one of the participants, choreographed the dance with enthusiasm and little sense of taboo breaking. In fact, all of the women embraced the dance, and performed it with palpable enjoyment and enthusiasm. In doing so, they undermined the patriarchal ideal of women as passive and gentle. Rather than being looked at, once again they were doing the looking – and it was an interrogative gaze. When I asked which one they prefer, Miss J explained why she prefers the male rather than female role in the dance: *"When they do they always exaggerate. Unlike us – us girls – we just…do like normal, don't exaggerate – and it's so fun - they shout and do everything, it's crazy – so it's nice, ja"* (Miss J, Women Interview, 2014). This statement sheds some light on what the women might have enjoyed in a performance where they could legitimately act with the exuberance and 'exaggeration' that is permissible in men. Drama, in this moment, was a space of fantasy, possibility and safety, where different ways of being were not just imagined but embodied.

Interestingly, Zulu-kid, a male participant, also described performing a reversed role in the dance in terms of exaggeration: *"at first, especially the dance, it was, uncomfortable, but when time goes on, I found myself enjoying it so much that I even*

overdid it - like I was enjoying it, you know" (Zulu-kid, Men Interview, 2014). This reflects my own observations: what the men exaggerated with such enjoyment was the sexual invitation of the dance, licking their lips and pouting at the audience in a way that women don't usually do. I wonder why they liked doing this so much. Did they enjoy being an object of desire, as they had somewhat enjoyed being harassed?

The Zulu dance, performed in this way, dismantled the idealised imagery of men and women, and revealed, through the 'making strange' of the gender reversal, subtle meanings in the movements. For example, because the men have no breasts, it was odd to see them shake and display their torsos, which draws attention to the intention of the action. Despite Portia's fears, no audience members expressed offense – I think here again, as in the teacup sequence, the playfulness of theatre and the joy of the performers made it permissible for boundaries to be transgressed.

Figure 4: Rehearsal for A Zulu Dance (Copyright 2014, Evans Mathibe)

Conclusion

Returning to Morris' reflections on collective theatre-making (2014), these moments of theatrical performance were adaptations and subversions of, and improvisations on, repertoire – playing culture. I will conclude the chapter by reflecting on particular aspects of embodiment and theatrical performance that these moments suggest.

The characteristic that runs through all four events is 'making strange' – in reversing gender roles, features of daily life that seem 'normal' are defamiliarised. Perhaps this is what connects theatrical performance strongly with *habitus*, as it draws out our embedded beliefs about the way the world 'naturally' is – and gives us room to wonder whether it has to be that way. Embodying the 'other' can provoke visceral responses: the transfer of power that this entailed has a heady effect on the women, and an exposing effect on the men. Theatrical performance provides an opportunity for participants to express emotions and behave in ways that would not be sanctioned anywhere else – it is a space that gives participants permission to play, where regulatory norms of ways of being become more elastic. This was often hugely pleasurable for both the participants and the audience. The quality that draws these observations together is *fluidity:* through theatrical performance, the participants revised, reimagined, reinterpreted the repertoire, which, existing always in the present, is susceptible to change (Morris, 2014). Embodying a different gender through theatrical performance foregrounds that gender roles in everyday life can also be understood as performances – and if you are able to change the way you are on stage, why not in life?

This question leads to the subject of the next chapter, which explores the wider significance of these transient moments in which normative ways of being are temporarily suspended. However, before moving on, it is important to state the importance of the 'performative', and not only the 'futuritive' (Thompson, 2012) – in other words, the moments I have described are important for their own sake, not only for what they might suggest about future activities. Thompson suggests that performative moments should not be trivialised, because they "create affective traces and memories that must be acknowledged", and that might be empowering in themselves (2012, p. 143). Therefore, these performances, whether they are connected to particular future actions or not, whether they had an impact outside the theatre space or not, have value in and of themselves; they were transformative in the moment: bodies interacted differently, participants engaged with their bodies in unfamiliar ways, and space and power operated according to different rules. These experiences, Thompson (2012) argues, are an 'effect' in themselves: they

create something that wasn’t there before, whether it is the memory of an unfamiliar and empowering action, new ties between members of a group, or a story never heard before, now known.

Figure 5: An unfamiliar pose. (Copyright 2014, Patrick Selemani)

Chapter 5: The Interaction of Theatre, Gender, Sexuality and Performance Towards Change

In this chapter, I want to further excavate the relationship between the everyday, and theatrical performance: the first, an unconscious, embedded set of habits and performative acts, and the second, a deliberate, aesthetically crafted interpretation of the first. While I have shown that *habitus* was disrupted in the safety of the workshop space, this is not so easy to do in the participants' lives, where normative behaviour is tightly policed and regulated.

Butler makes a clear distinction between performativity and theatrical performance: while performance is both a bounded act and an act of will, performativity is a forcible repetition of normalised actions enacted in everyday life; forcible because unlike theatrical performance, it is not a choice, but a highly regulated and controlled mechanism for legitimating subjects (McKinlay, 2010). What is the link then, between the two? What does it mean when a woman performs masculinity and a man femininity, not through habit or normativity, but deliberately, consciously, and artistically, in a performance space? If, as Denzin proposes, we engage a performance paradigm that sees performance "as intervention, interruption and resistance" (Denzin, 2009, p. 257) – how might this chip away at *habitus*, and customary performative acts?

I argue that Butler's conception of gender performativity allows for a space in which Bourdieu's *habitus* can be disrupted through the process in theatre by which our bodies are de-mechanised (Nentwich et al, 2015, p. 248). The claim I am making is that, in the moments I have explored above, the seemingly concrete realities of gender roles were unfixed, given fluidity and playfulness through performance. Denzin argues, "Performance texts provide the grounds for liberation practice by opening up concrete situations which are being transformed through acts of resistance" (2009, p. 267). The 'real life' situations on which the moments of performance I have described are based appear exceptionally concrete, and are based on endless iterations of gendered acts. However, the notion of performativity carries two radical promises: the first is a rejection of the essentialist view that

gender is a bodily fact, and the second is the *fragility* of hegemonic identities, not just their resilience – identity is always provisional, and agency is possible (McKinlay, 2010). However, I acknowledge that agency is much more difficult to achieve outside a workshop space in which the 'rules' have been suspended. Returning to Denzin's argument (2009), I would like to examine what the participants' performances were the "grounds" for, by returning to one of the key questions I raised in the beginning of the fourth chapter: what are the possibilities for theatrical performance to affect habitus and performativity in the socio-cultural domain?

Skirts and Swans

For Portia, the play made its presence felt in her movement classes after the performances were finished, in the bodies of the participants. About the play, she said, "*it's alive, even in how some of them are moving, but some of them have found this delicateness – the boys are like swans*" (Portia, 2014). This image evokes an emancipatory practice at work: it suggests that the men found some way of being in their bodies that they had not previously had access too, and that they enjoyed enough to retain when they no longer had to. Two of the women on the other hand, working on a dance based on the visual imagery of swishing skirts, told Portia "*my body feels like it doesn't know movement*". Given their enthusiasm for the energy and 'exaggeration' of the men's role in the Zulu dance, I wonder if this was a small act of resistance on returning to a quintessential performance of the feminine, if it would have been more accurate to say "*my body feels like it doesn't know* **this** *movement*".

Speaking to the women several weeks after the process, I felt that they had transcended the dramatic boundaries of the workshop, and were experimenting with ways that codes and expectations of gender they find stifling can be challenged, particularly in the public spaces they traversed between home and the Market Lab. They described performing several acts of resistance during and after the theatre-making process in their everyday lives, which I see as alternate experiments in gender performativity. I will show how in these experiments, the women re-scripted their bodies as signifiers of resistance (Lewis, 2009). In changing their everyday

public performance of themselves, they interrogated and contested the normative constructs of power and gender that usually define their experience in public space. They challenged and subverted the codes for the African black female body in ways that were experimental, improvised and sometimes risky.

Public Spaces: What's Normal?

Figure 6: Rehearsal for a scene about sexual harassment, "Walking to School" (Copyright 2014, Evans Mathibe)

Before describing these alternative gender performances, I will provide a brief context of the world in which they were performed: public spaces in South Africa are sites in which sexual harassment is normalized, and my interviews with the women made it evident that it was a daily and expected aspect of their lives: "*It's something that we go through like every day*" (Ngonyama, Women Interview, 2014). Gardener (1989) argues that an analysis of public places through a feminist lens is imperative to accurately describe and understand what happens within them, for the

experience of public space is a deeply gendered one. Walking to a taxi rank or riding in a train, as the play-making process made explicit for the group, are very different activities if you are a man or a woman. Public places, particularly urban spaces, are masculine spaces, where men "belong", and women are "out of role" (Gardener, 1989, p. 48). Thus, they tend to be places where male power and privilege are exercised, into which women intrude, as outsiders. This is especially true in Johannesburg, to which men flocked as migrant labour while women were left behind in rural areas – illegitimate in the city. This history, which deliberately separated black men and women, continues to inform our spaces and our daily experiences. For example, the administrator of the Market Lab was approached by one of the security guards who works in the building in which we are housed, the Bus Factory. He had a complaint: the female students at the Lab were dressing like prostitutes, and it made him uncomfortable. He commented that people looking through the window thought that the Market Lab was a brothel – a patently ridiculous claim on many grounds, including the fact that there are no windows that passers-by have access to. This seems to me to be an attempt to shame the administrator (who was also a young woman), with the insinuation that she works in a house of ill repute, and thus to motivate her to control the clothing choices of the women at the Lab. These women usually wear leggings or tracksuit pants, clothes that they can move in. Some women enjoy wearing revealing clothes, although nothing more daring or dramatic than the mix of outfits you might commonly see in the street. Thus, even in entering the building in which we devised the play (a supposedly 'safe space'), the women in the group are evaluated and policed, ironically, but not unusually, by a male *security* guard whose function is (or should be) to protect the people in the building from harassment and crime.

In public spaces, men and women give performances of masculinity and femininity that, unconsciously, enact gendered power relations (Aalten, 1997). While these public performances of the self are part of everyday identity construction, they also generate political meanings about gender and power (Lewis, 2009). As an everyday, public act, sexual harassment confirms and reproduces a steeply hierarchical social order that defines women's bodies as objects that can be scripted with various

meanings (Lewis, 2009). Women become a site for men to affirm their masculinity, and their sexual and social superiority.

The surveillance and policing of women's bodies through evaluative commentary, whistling, staring, mocking, insulting and reprimanding is a control mechanism that regulates how women dress, behave and respond in public. One of the participants, Lee described how this restrains and limits girls:

> Like it's actually sad that they do this because at the end of the day girls don't - can't feel comfortable in their own skin - they can't feel comfortable in their own body, they can't wear what they want to wear, because they're scared of the comments they gonna get when they walking on the street, and I feel like girls or anybody for that matter should be able to wear what they want and express how they feeling you know, through whatever it is they wear or listen to or do but now that we've got people like this in life, people are too scared to express themselves. Therefore they dress in different ways, and that time they won't even be comfortable in those clothes but they just dress to cover up because they too scared to express who they are.
>
> (Lee, Women Interview, 2014)

The threat against and regulation of women in public spaces is not an isolated phenomenon, but can be understood as an expression of a broader context in which women's bodies and sexualities are controlled by men (Vincent, 2008). Vincent points out that young black urban women in particular are under intense public observation, commentary and criticism, and women who are seen as "straying from the correct way of expressing African female identity" (2008, p. 12) are punished with ridicule, reprimand, insults and sometimes physical violence. Even the expected female response to regulation through sexual harassment is controlled by the implicit threat of violence: "*You can't even fight back or say anything because they will like, eat you, you know*" (Ngonyama, Women Interview, 2014). Lewis argues that this control of black women's bodies has been "central to the construction of masculinist citizenship and nationhood, as well as masculinized ethnicity" (2009, p. 128).

Given that sexual harassment is a result of fixed codes of how masculinity and femininity are performed, a different choice – the choice not to whistle, or not to ignore the whistle, is a challenge to normative gender codes. The examples I am

going to describe reflect a "materializing of possibilities" that disrupt the scripts of gendered power and harassment (Aalten, 1997, p. 56). While our bodies are inscribed with cultural/gender/status norms, exploring different ways of being in your body through theatrical performance can make you aware of how you are inscribed, can challenge or subvert these inscriptions, and open the possibilities for you to be different.

The Women: Performances of Resistance

I can also say some stuff to you, brother

Some of the women have, on various occasions and with great enjoyment, whistled or commented loudly about men on the street – versions of the performance of sexual harassment they improvised on the train that I described in the previous chapter, but this time in public spaces, not within the safe bounds of theatre:

> We wanted to see how guys will react and then some of them they were so embarrassed and some of them they were so shocked. But it – it was something nice to see how guys will react and then to see – to show them that what they're doing to us it's not – it's not nice and they should like - they should – stop these people when they, they see them doing these kind of things cos it's not nice, it's not nice.
>
> (Miss J, Women Interview, 2014)

I too was quite shocked and a little alarmed when Miss J said this. Fantasies of power and revenge that can be acted out in the fictionalized space of the rehearsal room feels a lot more dangerous when performed in the real world. There is more than one reading of this behaviour. The first narrative might mourn the binary trap – that the women, in refuting the role of victim, see no other option but to be perpetrators. This binary between perpetrator and victim, and the social mechanisms that box individuals into one category or another, limited the participants in imagining other ways of being in public spaces, and led them to conclude that the only way to gain power or avoid being a victim is to act like a man. This behaviour is not changing the institution, but rather the role these specific women are playing within an institutionalized power relationship. While this problematizes their behaviour, it also begs the question, what other option is

available? What else can they change? Can these (or any) women really change the institution, fortified as it is by the entire weight of the patriarchy?

The second narrative is one of empowerment – that the women felt powerful enough to do this reflects their burgeoning confidence, their claiming of ownership of public spaces, a sense of belonging and entitlement being claimed from men. For example, Lee describes how their behaviour was a radical deviation of the expected script, and links their ability to speak back to a growth in confidence:

> So I think it's shocking to the men when women do it to them, because they don't expect us to speak back, they expect us to just walk past and keep quiet - but now we're actually doing it and we have the confidence to show them that I can also say some stuff to you, brother.
>
> (Lee, October Interview)

In their willingness to take on and do something about this 'not nice' issue, they are brave crusaders, activists; they stand in solidarity with other women (us) against men (them). Their motives are more complex than revenge: there is also curiosity to see how men will react, a delight in unexpectedly challenging a normative script, and even an educational purpose.

I am caught between admiring their bravery and wondering if this was a healthy or constructive choice. Yet, does it matter what I think? That I never intended the women to do something I perceive as risky? Would I be responsible if they got hurt? Perhaps, in making gender reversals so central to the process, I unwittingly enforced the idea that men and women are inherently different, and that power means acting like a man. I find this choice troubling because it seems like a liberation that seeks to oppress (Snyder-Young, 2011). However, is my personal view relevant? My approval or disapproval of these behaviour choices, my instinctive desire to decide whether change is 'positive' or not, returns us to my position in the work. I have already argued that who I am, white/female/middle-class/educated, is hugely relevant to the way I experience the world, and that my cultural values sub-consciously informed my practice in ways I wasn't aware of (Nicholson, 2005). Is it accurate to say that I approached the process with *no* agenda? My discomfort around this

particular choice that the women made suggests that this cannot be true. This is also evident from the internal conflict I expressed in my journal:

> *I worry that sometimes, I so passionately believe what I believe that I try too hard to assert that onto the group....they are younger than I am, and have different backgrounds and will come to different positions, and I need to accept that.*

(Reflective Journal, 2014)

Unless one assumes that there is a universal truth waiting to be discovered about social justice, we must accept that, like Snyder-Young says, “others, standing in different places, and committed to different political philosophies, *also* want to heal a broken world” (2011, p. 43). It engages us once more with the problematics of transformation: what kinds of transformation are sanctioned by the practice? Who is responsible for making transformation happen? These questions are reminiscent of a critique of Boal’s work offered by Plastow (2009): that he does not sufficiently interrogate the responsibility of the practitioner for what happens next. This story the women told me (I never witnessed it first hand) highlights the agency of the participants in deciding what meaning and practice to take from their experience of the process.

What are you saying?

> *In the first scene of the play, a group of men are sexually harassing women in the audience – each with their own particular technique and choice of words. In the beginning, this is funny, not particularly threatening, the men try to charm. However, as the women fail to respond, the men get more and more aggressive, until they are throwing insults at the women like bullets. A women in the audience (an actress) suddenly stands up, and walks towards them. As she approaches, they fall silent, and group together defensively. She stares at them defiantly for a long second.*

(Four Husbands, 2014)

After we had made the play, Ngonyama was walking down the street to get some lunch when she was disturbed by a man, in a group of men, “*talking too much*”

(Ngonyama, Women Interview, 2014). Gardener argues that 'street remarks', which she defines as "free and evaluative commentary that one individual offers to an unacquainted other in public places" (1989, p. 48), are an act of gendered power, a way of socially controlling women. Evaluation is an important aspect of this, and carries with it the suggestion that the perpetrator has the right to fulfil a regulatory role. It is typical that this particular man was in a group of men, as street remarks are a performance of masculinity for other men, to gain status by demonstrating control over women's bodies.

The socially correct or expected way for a woman to respond to this kind of behaviour is to ignore it, pretend not to hear, hurry past. However, Ngonyama deviated significantly from this prescribed script: she walked up to the man, and said, "What are you saying? *Khuluma*[17]. What are you saying?" Since sexual harassment in public spaces is premised on the objectification of women and thus the denial of their subjectivity, this simple request undermined the logic of the harassment, and contested its validity (Quinn, 2002). In approaching the man, looking at him, asking a question and expecting a reply, Ngonyama was speaking undeniably as a subject.

He responded aggressively, full of bluster: "and what do you wanna do?", and she persisted, "Nothing, but what are you saying, I'm asking you what are you saying? Say it to me now, what you saying." She refused his attempt to reduce her to her body, by looking him in the eye and demanding that he "say it to *me,* now". She was demanding to be seen as a person, not a perpetrator or a victim, and that he speak to her as such. This is entirely unexpected, an object that returns and questions the male gaze, and in this case, the man was unable to answer her dare – he could not repeat what he had been saying with her in front of him, looking at him and engaging with him directly because he could not maintain the fiction of her object-hood. The habitual game of street remarks, harassment and evaluation had been disrupted – it could no longer be framed as a game among men alone, and their

[17] Speak.

taken-for-granted masculine authority and ownership of the space had been contested.

Like the woman in the beginning of the play who confronts the men harassing the audience, Ngonyama refused to perform a passive woman ignoring street remarks, and thus stepped outside of her socialized *habitus.* As Ngonyama explains it in relation to the play-making context, "*it gave me a lot of confidence - like you know now I can stand up for myself to stupid guys*" (Ngonyama, Women Interview, 2014). Similarly to the previous section, this connects the personal growth and increased self-confidence that the participants highlighted, as I have discussed in the third chapter, with the capacity for political action: "any act of resistance, any refusal to repeat an act that confirms a subordinate identity, necessarily has a political effect" (McKinlay, 2010, p. 236). Her experience of personal development enabled her to make different, politicised choices in public spaces. This supports Fleishman's emphasis on the development of capacity and agency in the socio-cultural domain through performance-based projects (2009).

Prentki & Pammenter (2014) argue that personal change if pointless if there is no change of social context – for example, it is not productive to make women in oppressed situations more aware of their situation if they are unable to change it because the social context hasn't changed. However, this example, which suggests a strong connection between personal growth and political agency, is a compelling rebuttal to this claim. Ngonyama, who experiences this situation every day, was the most qualified person to choose an impactful intervention. To think otherwise would be to deny her agency and intelligence. The role of theatrical performance, then, was not to provide the means, but the consciousness and confidence: as Nelson argues, "people need to feel powerful in order to act" (2011, p. 165). Again, the outcomes of the drama praxis were unpredictable, determined more by the participants than the facilitator.

What is your short skirt saying?

> *"The other day I was walking. I was wearing a short skirt like that, I was walking with Fisher at Noord*[18] *– and then this guy, it's a taxi driver – a Zulu taxi driver - he threw erm…orange peel on me."*
>
> (Mandisa, Women Interview, 2014)

Mandisa's story resonates strongly with the experience and expectations of young black women in South Africa, except for the extraordinary rebuttals she makes to those expectations. I have chosen to recount the rest of her story as a script, because it is the specific choices she makes in her interaction with the taxi driver that challenge and refuse to conform to his expectation of how she should express her African femininity.

Mandisa: What are you doing?

Taxi driver: No, my sister, you're not wearing any skirt.

Mandisa: Papa, how old are you?

Taxi driver: *Are* no, I'm your father.

Mandisa: No – *ke eng*? (What?) What's your problem? Like, why *urhalela umtana*? (Why are you lusting after a kid?) Like, I'm your kid? And maybe I'm even your grand what what daughter.

Taxi driver: No….

Mandisa: *Dismissively. Kopa o ka tlompha phela. Kea o kopa.* (Please, I'm begging you)

Taxi driver: No I'm –

Mandisa: Please don't.

---

[18] Fisher is another student; Noord is a taxi rank in central Johannesburg.

Taxi driver: No I'm sorry my sister, I'm sorry.

She walks away.

The setting for the story is of some significance – a young woman in a mini-skirt at Noord taxi rank. Taxi ranks in South Africa have a long and notorious history of sexual harassment, particularly of women in miniskirts, and Noord Street taxi rank, where Mandisa's story takes place, is perhaps the most notorious (Vincent, 2008). Lewis describes Noord as a "prime site of masculine entitlement and aggression (2009, p. 130).

In 2008, this fact was foregrounded when Nwabisa Ngcuka became the first woman to report, but only one of many women to experience, being sexually assaulted and publicly humiliated by taxi-drivers as a 'punishment' for wearing a mini-skirt. In response, People Opposing Woman Abuse (POWA) organized a protest at the rank at which women wore miniskirts and publicly defended their right to public space, and to have control over their own bodies (Lewis, 2009). In 2012, the cycle began again: two women were assaulted because of how they were dressed and, two months later, there was another protest ("Miniskirt Revolution", 2012). Thus, Noord taxi rank has been for some time a site of contestation around what women are allowed to wear in public spaces. It is perhaps significant to an understanding of the place that none of the men who 'punished' these women has ever been arrested ("Miniskirt Revolution", 2012). In addition, while incidents such as these made headlines, sexual harassment at Noord taxi rank is routine, as it is at many South African taxi ranks.

Thus, the taxi driver's action of throwing his rubbish at Mandisa - an act calculated to humiliate and belittle - is not an isolated incident, but part of a history and contemporary reality in which women are expected to regulate their clothing choices because they are seen as responsible for the sexual behaviour of men (Bakare-Yusef, 2011).

Dress is a significant factor in constructs of masculinity and femininity. Vincent (2008) argues that the miniskirt is embedded with multiple intersecting layers of

political, cultural and sexual meanings. Certainly, despite its ostensible sexiness and pandering to the male gaze, it is a source of infuriation for some men. While some men, including the taxi driver in Mandisa's story, suggest that they are being provoked by too much flesh being on display, this is clearly both disingenuous and hypocritical, as Miss J pointed out in a later interview:

> These people, when they live in the rural areas; they wearing – girls they wearing short things – they even go around without a bra – naked! And then – but when they come here they change their mentality and do things that they don't do at rural areas - I don't know what's wrong with these guys...
>
> (Miss J, Women Interview, 2014)

If traditional dress that reveals female flesh is acceptable, why are miniskirts, which are hardly more revealing, so problematic? What construct of femininity is encoded in one that is not encoded in the other? South Africa is among many other countries in Africa, including Nigeria and Uganda, in which women's fashion has become increasingly politicised as a symptom of social and moral decay (Bakare-Yusef, 2011; Vincent, 2008). 'Indecent dress' in this frame of thinking, is a sign of moral degeneration caused by Western influence (ironically, the interpretation of revealing clothing as 'indecent' is informed by a Judeo-Christian sexualisation and shaming of nudity) (Bakare-Yusef, 2011). Thus, a young black woman wearing a miniskirt can be seen as embracing an unAfrican identity. Her fashion choices suggest non-conformity to restrictive gender norms and codes of femininity in African cultures (Bakare-Yusef, 2011; Vincent, 2008). Thus, while the miniskirt is, on one level, an expression of heightened femininity associated with weakness and objectification, on another it is a subversive refusal to submit to masculine control (Vincent, 2008).

Vincent (2008) suggests that post-colonial African leaders have historically used the metaphor of the nation as an extended family, and that in South Africa the public arena is redefined as filial. This offers a fascinating reading to the dialogue described by Mandisa. The taxi driver in this scene begins by addressing her as "my sister". Thus he situates himself as an older brother rather than a stranger – and therefore, his violence is not directed towards a stranger, but is an act of chastisement or punishment appropriate within a family. As a patriarchal family member, he has the

right – even the duty – to set the agenda for how she is allowed to be in the family space.

However, Mandisa resists his definition of their relationship. She challenges him by asking how old he is (further signalling her non-conformity to traditional notions of femininity, as this would be an inappropriate question to ask an older man in a traditional gender relationship). She draws attention to the fact that he is much older than her by calling him "papa" rather than "boetie" which would have matched his term, "sister". He uses this term to endow himself with even more authority, suggesting to her that he *is* her father, and if anything this gives him an even greater right to chastise her. This literal paternalism attempts to coerce her into acknowledging a familial relationship that affirms her subordinate position, and perhaps suggests that she should be both respectful and silent, as a girl with her father should be (Vincent, 2008).

Mandisa, however, appropriates his theme to emphasise how inappropriate and sexualised his behaviour is. She asks him why, if he admits to the age gap, he is lusting after a child. In making explicit that she interprets his actions as being motivated by lust, she dismisses the moral judgement that is his given motivation, and references the real source of his anger, which I would argue is the fact that she is sexy and beautiful – she is well aware that she is desirable, and she is in control of her desirability. Further, she evokes the multiple meanings of fatherhood, suggesting that he should be nurturing, not lusting, while he tries to emphasise the disciplining. She drives home her point (and her disgust) by suggesting that he actually old enough to be her grandfather.

Her parting words are a request that he leave her alone, but her tone of voice when describing the conversation suggested that her words and attitude stood in contrast – while she is saying, "I'm begging you", she sounds cold and dismissive, while he, trapped in his taxi and unable to follow her, calls apologies after her. It is interesting too that he reverts back to calling her "my sister" – a denial, perhaps, of the inappropriateness of their interaction, and perhaps a lingering attempt to draw her back into a relationship that does not exist.

When I consider the multiple and layered meanings of the miniskirt, it seems that Mandisa was 'saying something' by wearing her short skirt – and that what she was saying was not what the man who threatened her wanted to hear. As Vincent (2008) argues, clothing choices are a meeting point for gendered power relations, and in this case, Mandisa was claiming a right to her own body and sexuality that the taxi driver felt was rightfully his.

> He thought I was fighting but I was not fighting. If – I thought – if Fisher went there, he was gonna fight, but *nna* (me), I wasn't fighting, so I just went there and I asked what are you doing? And then he was like you're wearing a short skirt. Kere no. It's my skirt.
>
> (Mandisa, Women Interview, 2014)

If sexual harassment or punishment for wearing the 'wrong' kind of clothes is a symbolic suppression of female independence (Lewis, 2009), Mandisa's final statement, *"it's my skirt"*, is a challenge to that suppression, reminiscent of Eve Ensler's poem, "My Short Skirt":

> My short skirt, believe it or not
>
> has nothing to do with you.
>
> (Ensler, 2000)

Mandisa can wear the skirt because it is her skirt – and by extension, her body, her self-expression, her sexuality, her choice. The black female body is often inscribed with imposed meanings – in this case, the male taxi driver tried to inscribe his sexual and social dominance by monitoring how she was allowed to look in 'his' space. However, Mandisa refuses to take responsibility for his male gaze, or be apologetic about her non-conformity to the restrictive rules governing the 'correct' way to perform being a young black African woman in public space. She forces her harasser to imagine that female sexuality exists outside its capacity to arouse men (Bakare-Yusef, 2011). Mandisa's performance here is an act of activism; a way of enacting "critical citizenship" (Denzin, 2009, p. 257). That is, she is empowered and inspired to act on her desire for a different and better world (Denzin, 2009).

Conclusion

These demands by the women to be treated as subjects rather than objects in public spaces are examples of the way that conceptual and politicized action can be manifested in embodied acts; what Lewis describes as “the power of the mobile body (2009, p. 135). They draw attention to the way that in ‘performances of resistance the personal is always political” (Denzin, 2009, p. 265). McKinlay argues that “in Judith Butler’s hands, the malleability of identity offers the potential for insubordination, resistance and liberation” (2010, p. 238). Ngonyama, Miss J and Mandisa, in their performative experiments, engaged their bodies in political acts of subversion, mockery, parody, inversion and irreverence. In doing so, they interrogated representations of gender that are usually normalized and invisible, and experimented with ways to challenge, test and claim power. Regimes of gender as described by both Bourdieu (1990) and Butler (1993) determine what women’s bodies can do or be, but these moments suggest that these frameworks are not absolute, and that theatre-making can be a means to assail, interrupt, and transcend what seems determined. If *habitus* has, as Bourdieu (1990) suggests, shaped the women’s aspirations and beliefs about their futures and where they fit into society, theatre-making has raised the standard of these expectations and given them the confidence to assert new standards. Denzin’s proposal that the purpose of critical performance pedagogy is “to create a critical consciousness that leads empowered citizens to take action in their neighbourhoods and communities” (2009, p. 262) seems to aptly describe how the women connected the theatre-making process to their everyday lives. The notion of critical consciousness seems more important in considering theatre’s ‘impact’ (at least in this instance) than the idea of rehearsing pre-conceived, permanent solutions to problems in a way that can be transferred to the outside world. The three performances of resistance that I have analysed in this section raise important questions about the kind of transformation that collective theatre-making practices are predicated on, and the responsibility and relationship the facilitator has with what comes after the process.

In the next section, I will examine the way the ways the process influenced the men’s lives. I have separated the men and women because their modes of response were so distinct from each other. In part, I think this is because of the different positions

of power they were approaching the process from: without simplifying their roles into oppressor and oppressed, the men had more freedom to change their behaviour, whereas the women were more concerned with what they were subjected to, which they had less power to change. Therefore, the woman's actions are well described as experiments; the men's are better described as decisions.

What Kind of Man Are You?

> *"It's always about what the man wants – the man is the head of the family – when the man says do this you have to do – do not like ask questions, you just follow, so the whole experience kind of made you ask yourself, like I always say, what kind of a man are you?"*
>
> (Freddy, Men Interview, 2014)

Sexual harassment in public spaces is a way for men to build relationships with each other – the performance of masculinity through whistling or remarks in public spaces then, is not only for the benefit of the female target, who is after all only an object, but for other men (Quinn, 2002). Girl watching and commenting can be seen as a dramatic performance to produce and perform a certain kind of masculinity. How narrow this masculinity is, is demonstrated by the fact that victims can also sometimes be men who don't fit within its confines. As some of the men in the group described, if you are not part of the group actively taking part in sexual harassment, you may be targeted as well: *"like whenever you pass there with your school bag they be like, 'hey sissie, hey, hey wena' you know, just because you don't wanna be part of that group"* (Mtshepang, Men Interview, 2014). Thus, men who don't conform to the construct of masculinity produced by being a perpetrator of sexual harassment are reduced to the status of a woman, i.e.: someone who it is valid to evaluate, ridicule and reprimand. In this way, the harassment serves as a way to police both the correct way to be a woman and the correct way to be a man.

'Girl watching' requires men to objectify women and to suppress their empathy for them (Quinn, 2002). In a series of transportations during the process, the men engaged with female narratives in various ways, including through the embodiment

of performance; in this section I will show how, in so doing, they humanized women as victims of sexual harassment and thus made remaining a perpetrator untenable. Quinn claims “Men learn that to effectively perform masculinity and to protect a masculine identity, they must, in many instances, ignore a woman’s pain and obscure her viewpoint” (2002, p. 397). In these examples, women’s negative experiences of sexual harassment were foregrounded, female viewpoints were made visible, and I suggest that this effected an ‘unlearning’ which reduced the men’s motivation to protect or perform a traditional masculine identity. Every single male participant, either during the process or in the interviews afterwards, said that they realized whistling, street remarks, and girl watching is wrong and those that said they habitually did those things were adamant that they would stop:

> I will never do it again. I will never whistle to women, I will never swear at them again. Actually it’s something which I have decided because I am that type of guy like who used to, who used to do all those things, I used to whistle, I used to like uh, if they do not respond, like Mtshepang said, give them…names – label them, in a bad way. I didn’t care how they gonna take it, and then of course like uh, to prove the point to *majita*[19] as well, and I even used to tell myself that ‘ok like I don’t care’ because their parents do not feed me, so why should I care? But after this process I made a decision like in my mind and I know I’m gonna do it – I will never ever treat women like I did before.
>
> (Queshaah, Men Interview, 2014)

If sexual harassment is a way of performing masculinity to other men – which Queshaah in this speech specifically draws attention to – by no longer being harassers, these men have changed the way they perform masculinity and thus extended what masculinity can mean. This was so unequivocally expressed that it begs the question of whether the men were obligingly offering the right answer in this context, what they quickly realized I wanted to hear. Indeed, actual behaviour change would be impossible to determine, short of following every male participant with a notebook. While I cannot know for sure that the men no longer whistle, I do have two lines of argument that there was a genuine shift in thinking on the part of

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[19] The guys.

the men and that the intention to change behaviour is convincing and should be taken seriously.

The first argument is that the change described is contained to a very specific realm of experience – commenting on or whistling at women in public spaces; the personal behaviour change they described does not extend to the other themes that were explored in the devising process. So, they did not make claims to behaviour change in other areas where my values must have been equally obvious. In fact, quite often I suspect that they rather enjoyed expressing views they knew I wouldn't agree with. However, I wonder whether both agreeing and disagreeing *were* to some extent a performance the men gave of what they thought was expected of them, in 'positive' and 'negative' ways – I acknowledge that it is difficult to know which aspects of their responses or choices were informed by their perceptive awareness of what I was hoping to do, and intended to help me feel that I had achieved it. Despite the further ambiguity that this thought implies, there does seem to be a clear difference in their categorical response to this particular issue. For example, despite explorations of gender relations that led men to muse on how we take it for granted that a man is the head of his household, none of the men expressed that they, personally, would not expect to be the head of their family.

My second line of argument is based on the progression of thinking around harassment that can be discerned in the comments and responses from the men at various stages. This progression is a gradual shift of appraisal, a process of humanizing women, particularly as victims of sexual harassment. It is possible to follow this shift, from viewing harassment as normal, to irritating, to abusive, to hurtful. I argue that this made the status quo, in which many of the men harassed women, untenable, since sexual harassment is only justifiable if the perpetrator dehumanizes the victim. When the men performed femininity, it was impossible for them to ignore or refute the female viewpoint.

Their first engagement with women's experiences of public spaces was through working with gender reversals: one of the groups created a scene I have already described in which three boys sunbathing on a beach are rudely interrupted by two

girls playing football. After the workshop, one of the men in the group reflected, "*you get to realise that you can be irritating to girls, as a man*" (Thabo, Rehearsal, 2014). It is not by accident that theatre-makers talk of 'inhabiting' a role – a word that implies intimacy and relationship – as opposed to 'objectification', a word that implies distance. The intimacy of experiencing a perspective that is usually female is reflected in his language as he continues, "*like we were just relaxing there and these girls came over and were bothering us*" (Thabo, Rehearsal, 2014). In a later workshop, the men listened to the women speak about being harassed - for many of them, what they were listening to was a description of themselves from someone else's perspective. This experience was heightened when they noticed how women portrayed men in the gender reversal scenes:

> We don't treat women right, because the way they portrayed their characters was like, the way men behave in a certain way, I would say – so it made us realise that we have to – because like, I felt like the women were not listening to us, when we were playing the female characters they were not listening to us – so somewhere somehow it shows that we are not listening to women a lot, we just tell them what to do.
>
> (Manyuza, Men Interview, 2014)

Manyuza's insights here are not from embodying women, but observing women playing men. The men then, engaged through multiple frames, as performer and audience member, storyteller and witness.

The clarity and lasting impact of these shifts seems vindicated by the fact that they were reiterated by many of the men some weeks after the process, without prompting, including Gift:

> Before, uh, I didn't care much about what girls thought. I'm gonna be honest, you know. I come from a rebellious background you know, a community that's very rebellious and my friends are very rebellious so when a girl crosses the street, we have to say something. What she says in return, how it affects her, we don't care, you know, and this whole process just affected me in a way that you know I'm more considerate about other people's feelings, especially girls.
>
> (Gift, Men Interview, 2014)

The kind of realisations that the men describe highlights a huge divide in communication between young men and women about their daily experiences. While many projects about gender engage with women only, I saw this as one of the most valuable outcomes of making a play, and a strong argument for men and women to work together in gathering, creating and sharing knowledge about sexuality and gender. Etherton and Prentki (2006) point out that the majority of applied theatre is done with victims – and they argue that this limits the impact of the work. While it might be successful in the moment, it results in little change in the socio-cultural domain. Therefore, projects that are only concerned with 'the oppressed' may be limited in their ability to bring about material changes (Etherton & Prentki, 2006). Furthermore, interventions such as Boal's Forum Theatre, which work only with the 'oppressed', place the responsibility for social change solely on the shoulders of victims of oppression (Prentki, 2013). If oppressors are seen as unable to change, they escape any responsibility to do so (Prentki, 2013). According to Prentki (2013), the effect of applied theatre in this model is to train participants to adapt and cope within the system they are oppressed by, rather than to hold the system itself accountable. The tendency, then, as Friedman points out, is to enact more "rehearsals for adaptation to the world-as-it-is than rehearsals for qualitative change" (2010, p. 6). In this way, "under the guise of resistance most applied theatre in reality becomes a performance of domination" (Prentki, 2013, p. 7). While the men in this process might be viewed as 'oppressed' in other aspects of their lives, in relation to the theme of sexual harassment they were usually perpetrators or oppressors. In this process, their behaviour was revealed to them as oppressive to others – and so, they were held accountable. The attitude and behaviour change they described was very affirming for the women, who were usually victims of sexual harassment, and suggest a change that might (in a small way) improve the lives of women in the public domain. This suggests that applied theatre can be a productive and meaningful intervention for the powerful as well as the oppressed – and as Prentki suggests (2013), that the binary between oppressor and oppressed is not a productive one. Following Prentki, "instead, a dialogical relationship between self and other is proposed as a means of taking us beyond the bourgeois binaries of good

and bad people into an analysis of our own roles within the systems we purport to excoriate" (2013, p. 1).

The belief or hope that drama can catalyse social and personal transformation in the real world drives much applied theatre praxis, and was what motivated my project (Sutherland, 2013). The moments of change that I have described are based on anecdotal evidence only; while they cannot be verified or measured, I believe they make interesting suggestions about the relationship between theatre and change, which I will explore further in the following section.

Is the Revolution Rehearsed or Improvised?

I have struggled, while conceptualizing, reflecting on and writing this thesis, with my own tendency to want to answer the questions that seems to lie implicitly beneath a great deal of writing about the transformative capacity of theatre: did it work? Was it a success? What problems did it solve? How might this be measured or proved? While I think I have convincingly shown that "moments of transformation, resistance, resilience, challenge and transgression" did exist in this theatre-making process in relation to normative constructions of gender and sexuality, Edmondson persuasively critiques the obstinate optimism of theatre and performance scholars (2007, p. 8). The pressure to make strong claims for the efficacy of theatre that I detailed in the second chapter is not specific to South Africa: it is a global phenomenon (Omasta & Snyder-Young, 2014). Omasta and Snyder-Young, in an analysis of published research about applied theatre, found that the vast majority "affirmed the power of theatre to change lives for the better" (2014, p. 15). We are, as Edmondson (2007) points out, fond of happy endings, and are able to discern moments of transgression and transformation within grotesque inequalities, and celebrate the agency, resilience and creativity of those in situations of the worst oppressions– situations in fact, much like those that many South Africans face with regards to sexuality and gender. This suggests that researchers are often advocates for the field, and that there are significant gaps in research about the more ambiguous or unpredictable workings of theatre. Yet it is of key importance to distinguish between research for advocacy purposes and research for its own sake

(Omasta & Snyder-Young, 2014). The former leaves little room to talk about failure, about the pedagogical and artistic shortfalls that might also extend our understanding of how theatre-making works (Gallagher, 2008).

This is a useful starting position for this section, which extends on the arguments and reflections of the previous chapters to consider questions around the 'impact' of theatre in the socio-cultural domain, and what the useful ways might be to conceive its possibilities and limitations. I will provide a critique of the notion that theatre is a 'rehearsal' for the real world, and draw on Thompson (2012) and Nicholson (2005) to propose an alternative: that while theatre might provide a space for practicing empowering real world interventions, it is perhaps more important that theatre opens space for improvisations.

When examining the relationship between the theatre-making process and the transformations or transportations that I have described, I find the description or justification of theatre as a 'rehearsal' for 'real' life, as suggested by Boal (1992) and Thompson (2012), unsatisfying in the context of this process. This construct suggests that what is rehearsed will be enacted as it was planned and prepared, and that decision making about real world decisions are made beforehand, in the theatre space. This would require the world outside to be as predictable and ordered as a play. It feels reductive, as if theatre and performance serve as a practice ground from which lessons can be transferred directly into the public sphere. Theatre, in this construct, is a tool, and the ending predetermined (Friedman, 2010). Friedman critiques this conception of the purpose of theatre as "tool-for-result instrumentalism" (2010, p. 7). The actual responses of the participants seem to suggest a much more complex relationship between individuals' experiences in theatre and the choices they make in their everyday lives. While I believe that creating a play enabled and catalysed the participants to perform themselves - their gendered bodies - differently in public spaces, the decisions they made about how to do so seem completely their own. Mandisa's confrontation of the taxi driver is not something that was discussed, rehearsed or decided upon by the group beforehand: it was a strategy that arose in the moment, based on Mandisa's increasing critical awareness of the taxi driver's actions as abusive and demeaning, rather than normal,

and the growth of her self-confidence. Theatre served less as a rehearsal for life than as a door opening onto a multiplicity of possibilities beyond the boundaries and scope of what was enacted in the theatre. In some ways, this openness goes back to the initial intention of the project: as I did not want to problematize sex, sexuality and gender only as sites of oppression or suffering, there were opportunities to step outside of that framework, which is itself quite oppressive.

These observations have more in common with Friedman's (2010) alternative model for understanding theatre and change: he suggests that theatre, rather than seeing itself as a pedagogical tool, should see itself instead as a form of play, as this is the only way to find or create something beyond what we already know. He argues that this releases us from our assumptions and limitations about the world as it is and as it might become (Friedman, 2010). In this, he proposes a "theatre *for* nothing" (Friedman, 2010, p. 7).

Returning to Bourdieu and Butler, our experience of the world is governed to a large degree by gendered scripts and normative interactions, which are enforced and reinforced through the iterative rehearsals of our everyday actions – within this strict repetition (which continuously generates our *habitus)*, theatre opens up spaces of spontaneity, playfulness and fluidity that destabilize the rigid structures of habitual ways of being. When the women made their performative experiments, they were choosing to engage in improvisation over repetition (Thompson, 2012) – to step into the unknown by breaking out of the public performance of a 'nice girl'. Their alternative performances of gender identity were momentary shifts, rather than permanent changes, experiments rather than preconceived solutions. Nicholson's proposal for the concept of transportation (2005) rather than transformation seems relevant to these interventions, which I neither predicted nor controlled.

While the men's comments suggest a more permanent and definable shift of appraisal, I wonder how this process will compete with the *habitus* that makes up their real world experiences, with its many pressures of masculine performance and values. For example, one man moderated his anti-harassment sentiments

somewhat: *"I make it lighter, very light, very light like, like 'hello', like nice – not, 'Tjovitjo vitjo baby ntwana what what ma babeza![20]'"* (Manyuza, Men Interview, 2014). Manyuza's response suggests that the impact of the process on his performance of gender identity might fade with time. He still sympathizes with women as sufferers of harassment, but has changed his behaviour to the extent that makes *him* comfortable – he makes it *his* definition of "light". Perhaps this is also a tactical strategy to satisfy both the condoned version of masculinity and his social conscience. He has to negotiate the demands of his multiple identities in various spaces, with different factors becoming more or less important according to the context.

My reflective view is that the theatre-making process offered two things that are often not part of everyday life: opportunity and choice. It provided a space to engage about something not usually spoken about, and the participants decided how to use it in their own lives. I believe that what theatre can do is offer choices, more choices than are visible otherwise, and open the body and mind to a range of feeling and experience. Bourdieu and Butler emphasise the repetition and scriptedness of our daily exchanges – in making change, an individual is choosing to step into the unknown, the uncertain, the unpredictable – spaces where scripts have not yet been written. Thus, it is the capacity of theatre to create space for improvisation rather than space for practice that I think accurately describes how the participants chose to translate what they gained from the process into their everyday lives.

This suggests that there is no predictable cause and effect when it comes to theatre-making. This seems to be a necessary understanding for a process that intends to let the participants set the agenda, where their individuality and agency is valued. With the same theatre-making approach, a different group of individuals would have made a different play, highlighted different aspects of their lives, and been affected by their engagement in different ways – because the identity-in-becoming of the participants determines the nature and outcomes of the process. I suggest that this

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[20] (Whistle) – baby baby what what my baby!

unknowability, this unpredictability, is to be celebrated – the magic of theatre lies in its very ability to transcend the predetermined, the fathomable outcome. It is in the indirect, the difficult to measure, the impossible to put into words, that theatre really operates. As Edmondson argues, “The extraordinary complexity of theatre and performance is strange stuff indeed, and perhaps in our rush to celebrate it, we are not being fully attentive to its ambiguities, dangers and gifts” (2007, p. 9).

Conclusion: Ethics and the Foolish Witness

My conception of the relationship between theatre and change has implications for how I approach theatre-making as a practitioner, especially from an ethical perspective. Therefore, to conclude the thesis I will reflect on how this experience has helped me begin to map out my manifesto as a theatre-maker, facilitator and scholar (in the understanding that this too, like everything else, exists only as a process). What are the possibilities to develop a genuinely meaningful, empowering practice in a context so overwhelming that it seems that failure is inevitable? While I do not regard this theatre-making process as a failure, I am troubled by how many of the claims of this thesis fall into a category of research about theatre and performance that Edmondson (2007) critiques. In celebrating the aspects of making *Four Husbands for Ma Lindi* that were empowering and transformative, it is also important to locate the process within its social context, in which the same inequalities, oppressions and silences about sexuality and gender remain, as ever they did – and to acknowledge that making a play didn't (can't?) magically remove these enormous and oppressive realities. Facing the enormity of systematic patriarchy, misogyny, homophobia – what does it matter to make theatre? My development and understanding in this regard is perhaps the most profound way in which this creative/research process has interacted with my own identity. I would like to revisit Salverson's proposal for the foolish witness (2006) as a way of thinking about some of the key discoveries and dilemmas I have encountered in researching the participants' and my theatre-making journey, and to explore the role I would like to play as a facilitator and theatre maker more generally. I wonder if the foolish witness offers the space to acknowledge and respond to Edmondson's warnings about the dangers of hope (2007), and a way to continue in the face of seeming hopelessness.

The facilitator as a foolish witness suggests an ethics of practice that is located, embodied and willing to be destabilised. It proposes compelling and complex responses to many of the dilemmas and uncertainties I have expressed throughout the thesis about my role in the process. For Salverson (2006), it is important that the witness is a subject, not outside the context but embedded within it. This points to a

reciprocal relationship with the participants, and an awareness of how I, in my subject-hood, have impacted on the process. This is consistent with the methodology I have already laid out, in which the researcher is visible and located in the work. Furthermore, it does away with the idea of the neutral facilitator who appears or claims not to influence the process, and instead affirms that my expertise and myself is what I have to offer. It is the offering of our skills and self that make us truly available, and availability is how I am implicated and invested in what I witness, experience and discover, because being a witness-subject involves being willing to disturb your own sense of self. This suggests that my values, beliefs and assumptions (whose role I have been troubled by) are also inevitably a part of the process – and what is important is that this should be as explicit as possible, and that I should be as willing to be destabilised in these aspects of myself as I expect the participants to be. This does not frame the relationship between facilitator and participant as the changer and the changed, but rather suggests that both are in an unstable, unpredictable process of change together. This is a vulnerable position, and one, in hindsight, that I should have trusted a little more. I controlled the process with a fairly sure hand – and I think Salverson's proposal (2006) is an opportunity to relinquish, and in so doing become truly available to what the process offers. This would be to answer Prentki's call for each of us to embrace the art of the fool; "to enter into a dialectical relationship with our foolish other" (2013, p. 1).

For Salverson, the fool, the clown, is the ideal witness in a tragic world, finding the courage to continue to engage in the face of inevitable failure. Murray (2015) also uses the identity of the fool or clown to reflect on the purpose of the facilitator in theatre workshop processes. For him, this evokes "the revolutionary possibilities of the playful" – he suggests that, in refusing to take ourselves seriously, we create opportunities to construct what is yet to be known, to work in the subversive, unpredictable world of carnival (Murray, 2015, p. 354). Prentki (2009) argues that this serves a dual purpose: it is a method of playing that is an escape from the real world, while also a way for people to explore how to make their world a better one. He suggests that these seemingly contradictory roles are encompassed by a theatre practitioner who is both social worker and fool. For Prentki (2015), it is the fool who

can expose the contradictions and tensions of our lives, social structures and choices, who can go where others fear to tread.

This emphasis on foolishness seems an appropriate mode in which to engage with the terrifying enormity of the oppressions people in South Africa face in relation to sexuality and gender. It avoids creating an "aesthetic of injury" (Salverson, 2006, p. 150), which portrays tragic victims defined only by their loss and pain – "all otherness is sentenced to loss" (Salverson, 2006, p. 150). In fact, it seems like the *only* mode in which to dare to look for resilience, joy, desire and pleasure in the face of the horrifying statistics and daily brutalities that create the context of this work. It is a role in which one might engage in the dilemmic space (Preston, 2013), where there are no 'right' or easy choices and failure is certain – and in its predictability, not to be feared. After all, live performance is, in the very act of collectively creating and performing, itself an act of hope (Edmondson, 2007). This invokes a more complex understanding of sex-positivity than what I started with, because it doesn't deny or ignore the pain that exists in the world of sex and gender. Although I didn't fully articulate it, my initial, rather vague notion of what I thought of as 'sex-positivity' made the 'issues' invisible by focusing only on what positive and empowering aspects we might discover – I planned workshops exploring healthy reciprocal relationships, orgasms, falling in love. I did not think in the beginning of the importance of participants' painful experiences being witnessed and acknowledged; as I stated in chapter three, I did not think of healing as an important aspect of a positive approach. However, for the foolish facilitator, and equally foolish participants - or as Murray (2015) suggests, playmates or co-conspirators - while pain exists, and it might be hopeless to try to do anything in the face of vast structural inequalities, you do something anyway - the world of sex is full of pain and violence, but we live anyway, we are sexual beings who feel desire and joy, we fall in love even as our hearts are breaking – we have the courage to assert the potential for happiness, health and joy in the face of these overwhelming odds. We are, as Salverson says, "in the shit" (2006, p. 153), but we are living and loving and *making* love. This is the willingness to attempt the impossible, to take risks in the face of failure; even if our attempts are doomed, "We still cherish those powerful moments

of performance in which the margins triumph and the centers are destabilized" (Edmondson, 2007, p. 7).

The tension between the promise and risk of hope is a productive one: it reminds me to be cautious of why and when I am hopeful, and to ask whom my hopefulness serves. It demands that I construct narratives of my practice with care, and to pay attention to what I have chosen to leave out. It is a critique that troubles my inclination to 'finish' this thesis – to provide neat conclusions that lead to a well-formulated, modestly expressed but ultimately positive affirmation. I have no wish to apply "a theoretical salve" (Edmondson, 2007, p. 7). However, it is the awareness of the impossibility of the task that allows the clown to fail – and to keep trying. Success is not really the reason to engage – it is the engagement itself that is of value. In this, I do believe the foolish witness has something to offer: "truthfulness and a willingness to engage in the face of failure" (Salverson, 2006, p. 153). Indeed, perhaps it is impossible to approach the making of theatre as anything but a clown, who is "innocent of the impossibility of hope" (Salverson, 2006, p. 153).

Therefore, I conclude, messily, with the hopeful beginnings of a proposal for a theatre practice guided by the paradoxes of the fool: the world of sex and sexuality is full of danger, but in the fool's world of the carnival, danger is safe (Murray, 2015). In a context defined by very serious issues, in theatre we need the courage to play. To laugh. To have fun. To make up a dance about drinking tea. The real revolution is that revolution is not a serious business. To engage productively with reality, we need to escape into fantasy. And yet, to find joy and resilience, we must acknowledge and witness the reality of our pain. The more we fail in overwhelming circumstances, the more we must hope. And finally, if we are to discover anything unexpected, we need not to know where we are going.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Participant Self-Descriptions

	Pseudonym	Describing words
1.	Freddy	Funny, brown eyes, short, light skin, loving, gifted hands
2.	Gift	Xhosa speaking, focused, ambitious, passionate, genuine
3.	Hollywood	Secretive, emotional, caring, observant
4.	Jomo	Kind, reserved, hard worker, objective, creative
5.	Lee	Funny, absurd, shy but talks a lot, optimist, loving
6.	Loti	Determined, inquisitive, curious, dedicated, talkative, observant, calm, loving
7.	Mandisa	Playful, funny, sweet, loving, loud, crazy, naughty (sometimes)
8.	Manyuza	Committed and passionately talented artisan
9.	Miss J	Smart, magnificent, talkative, naughty, observant
10.	MLindos	Man of honour and loyalty
11.	Mtshepang	Tall, light skin, respectful, talkative, determined
12.	Ngonyama	Loving, beautiful, kind, hard worker, forgiving, humble, exciting
13.	Palesa	Caring, lion – go getter, giving.
14.	Pebble	Jolly, simple, sweet, humble, warm-hearted
15.	Thabo	Humble, spiritual, reserved, introvert, accountable
16.	Queshaah	24 years old boy, Mosotho, coffee colour, hard worker
17.	Yellow	Crazy, fun, sweet, dedicated, talkative, workaholic, emotional, not patient, irritated by small things, not heartless
18.	Zulu-kid/Fisto's	Black brain, revelation, Mr Happy Feet, Coffee colour, Culo (the song)

Appendix 2: Consent form

Consent to participation in a research study and the publication of results.

Thank you for verbally agreeing to participate in this research project, which is aimed at investigating the effectiveness of using drama processes to interrogate issues of gender and sexuality in a South African urban context, specifically with first year students at the Market Theatre Laboratory.

The purpose of this form is to obtain your informed, written consent for your involvement in my research.

Your participation involves being a researcher, performer and theatre-maker in a play-making process guided by me as a facilitator/director in 2014. In these roles, you will be integral researchers in the process, and the main focus of my study will be our process of theatre-making and your reflections on the impact that has had on you.

Some of the things I may use in my research include:

- Your journal, written as part of the theatre-making process (2014)
- Descriptions of the group's creative process and products (2014-2015)
- Recordings and photographs of rehearsals and performance
- Group and individual interviews with you as the participants in and co-researchers of the study (2014)
- Written questionnaires (2014)
- My analysis of the theatre-making process and your journey within it, as well as your feedback on my interpretations (2015)

In the research outputs (thesis, academic papers etc.), I will not use participants' names, and will make every endeavour to protect your identity. Before any results are published, you will be able to see them and discuss any changes that you feel are necessary. You are also able to withdraw as a participant from the research at any time.

Attestation of agreement and confidentiality:

I, Clara Vaughan (the researcher) do hereby swear that all information obtained as a result of this research will be treated in such a way that the confidentiality of the provider of that information will be maintained.

Signed: Date:

I, …………………………………………………………………. (research participant) do hereby acknowledge that I have been informed of the nature, method and purpose of this research project, and have given my informed consent to participating in the project.

Signed: Date:

Appendix 3: Script

Notes on the text:

1. At some moments in the play, the performers are playing themselves; at others, they are playing a character. In the latter case, I have indicated in the stage directions which participant plays the character.
2. As this is a workshopped play, the script emerged during rehearsals, and was only written down (by all the participants working together), after the performances had already taken place. The script is written and performed in multiple languages. I have provided translations into English where necessary to convey the meaning of the scene.
3. All the scenes are described in the order that they were performed. However, I have provided the actual script of selected scenes in which the text was particularly developed and written down in detail (not all the scenes were ever fully transcribed), or which convey something I have discussed specifically in the thesis.

Four Husbands for Ma Lindi

As the audience enters, the houselights are up, a great song is playing, and the empty stage is lit with a few props arranged around the perimeter. The house music fades away but the houselights stay up as Queshaah enters, as though he is an MC. He looks at the audience nervously, does a few dance moves, a bit sheepishly.

SCENE 1: MAJITA

Queshaah: Ladies and gentlemen, greetings to you all. We are going to give you a very beautiful play, a nice show indeed which talks about gender, sexuality and...sex. Of course, we are all the way from the Market Lab – *he breaks off abruptly, distracted by a girl he's spotted in the audience.* Uh, all the way from the Market-*he breaks off again. Shakes his head in disbelief. Under his breath:* Yoh yoh yoh....*Loudly:* Eh! Majita tlo boning! *The other men in the cast gradually enter from various parts of the stage and audience. To the girl in the audience:* Hello...hello!

Mtshepang: Yho! Yho! Yho! Hello.

Queshaah: You are beautiful. Seriously you are beautiful.

As the majita (guys) enter, they start speaking to the girls in the audience.

Freddy: Yho!

Gift: Hello sweety.

Hollywood: Yho! Yho!

Freddy & Hollywood: Checka dilips tsela.

Jomo enters, waving.

Manyuza: Yho! Yho! Shit, bona ngwana ole.

Queshaah: You look like an angel sent to come and please my heart.

Freddy: Bona ngwana ole.

Gift: Ndi cela uthetha nawe.

Queshaah: You....yes, you...I am talking you. Skashebakwawa...or are you lost? Then consider yourself found.

Freddy: Eh...sweety ke ringa lewena sani.

Hollywood: Wena, sweetheart please just three minutes, I will not take long.

Qheshaah: Five minutes...tloho. Ke battle nomoro tsa hao...I will call you, wena aa don't call me.

Gift: Bbm or whatsapp nyana?

Queshaah: Ntse ke emi seka nsengyetsa nako plus ke o etsetsa le favour o le so...bona sefebe ke wena kea o betsa. Keng na ka wena sefebe..

The majita start to become confused, irritated, then angry that the girls in the audience aren't responding. They become aggressive, and start to berate the audience all together. Palesa gets up from the audience and starts to walk towards them.

Majita: Eish!

They go silent as she approaches. She stops and turns to face the audience. Houselights down.

SCENE 2: QUESTIONS

Palesa: Why do men act like dogs?

Miss J: What do I have to do to give a very good BJ?

Yellow: Why are girls scared of masturbating?

Queshaah: Why matekatse a rata ho dlala hard to get so?

Pebble: Eintlik why o nahana hore my no means yes?

MLindos: What provokes you to have sex?

Jomo: Is sex everything in a relationship?

Lee: Ok, I've got one –what would you do if you found out your partner is a transsexual?

Hollywood: Would she tell me if I was good or bad?

Manyuza: Does size really matter hle batho?

Gift: Ndime ixhesha iligakanani na pham'kokba ndimlye lam ntana?!

Mandisa: Is it possible that my boyfriend is gay?

Freddy: This one is for the ladies…why do women like teasing but not pleasing?

Mtshepang: Unqayendla yini loko ukhoma kuri sati wawena yitsobo?

Zulukid: Wasi kanjani ukuthi awusona isitabane?

Thabo: What makes women so insecure?

Ngonyama: What would you do if I didn't have a punani? (vagina)

Loti: Guys, what's the big deal about sex anyway?

SCENE 3: I'VE LOST MY VIRGINITY

Everyone starts discussing what Loti has asked, while taking their places for the next scene. This is a dance piece, in which each person has a crumpled-up piece of paper in their t-shirt. As the piece and the words progress, they take out the paper, hold it, drop it, jump over it and finally pick it up again.

Mandisa: Guys! Guys!

Everyone: What?

Mandisa: Have you seen my virginity?

Everyone: What?

Mandisa: I've lost it.

Pebble: Tjonna wee….I've lost mine and I'm still looking for it.

Palesa: I lost mine to my cousin.

Freddy: I've lost mine and the rest of the world can go to hell.

Lee: I lost mine and I found L.O.V.E

Jomo: I lost mine when I got married.

Yellow: I lost mine and my pastor says I'm no longer a Christian.

Hollywood: I lost mine and I didn't feel anything.

MLindos: I lost mine and I felt cursed.

Ngonyama: I lost mine at my parents' house!

Manyuza: I lost mine in a Jacuzzi….

Everyone: Oooooh.

Loti: Lost? I gave mine away.

Miss J: I lost mine but I was single.

Mtshepang: I lost mine to Virginia.

Thabo: I lost mine to a prostitute.

Queshaah: I lost mine and I'm happy about it!

Gift: I lost mine and now I'm a Dad.

Everyone: Huh?

Sipho: What?

Everyone: Shame/sorry/eish.

Everyone moves to the front to face the audience and opens their paper. Each has a number written on it – the lowest, 8, the highest, 22. It is (could be?) the age they lost their virginity.

SCENE 4: A TASTE OF THE CAKE

Jomo, Mandisa and Ngonyama start to sing: Ndiyazifela. Everyone dances into a tableau of young couples. Yellow is standing in a spotlight, holding a cupcake up high in one hand. Hollywood steps forward.

Hollywood: We didn't know anything about love, or rather, relationships. We talked about it as if we had a clue. We grew up in this lovely relationship. Discovered things and learnt a lot between each other. It was perfect. We were both virgins. I almost thought she was a kick from my ancestors. So as time went on, like in any other relationships, I felt a need to have a taste of

that cake. I mean one good turn deserves another. I had it in my mind. I wanted it to be one of those remarkable moments. And there she was telling me how she was not ready to have sex with me.

Yellow: Why are you rushing into things? We will do it at the right time.

Hollywood: I was blindly in love with her. I believed I have sensed a bright future together. I listened and respected her values. Sometimes later during the holidays she visited her relatives in another province and after the holidays the same day she came back, she told me she was no longer a virgin.

Yellow moves the cake from one hand to the other.

Yellow: I was drunk and I met this other guy. That's when it happened.

Hollywood: I looked her in the eyes. I was speechless. I needed some time to deal with it. It conquered me emotionally. At the same time I was drastically in love with her. Though I thought a heart sees further than a head, hoping what a man has gotten, a man can get. But because it has been not her intentions, that she was drunk and it was a mistake, I never got a taste of it. Of the cake. We broke up. There was a lot of emotions going on between us. She started dating taxi drivers and doing a lot of dirty things. After some months she came back to tell me how sorry she is and that she needs me back. I loved her. And we had it. I got the cake. But I didn't feel anything. It felt like she wanted to give me her cake to heal a part of her soul about our relationship. I feel used and wasted. And now she's gone with a part of my soul.

SCENE 5: SIBUSISO'S PLAN

A popular dance song:

Yellow: Ima kancinci

All: Nyawo phambili

Bambi _figure

Shake umzimba

Fenqe fenqe faka!

Mtshepang: Everybody say hell yeah!

All: Hell yeah!

Jomo: And stop.

Everyone freezes into another tableau, women draped over men, except for four men who help tell the following story through mime. Mtshepang plays Sibusiso.

Jomo: It was a Saturday evening when my friend Sibusiso told me:

Sibusiso: Ey ntwana re ya tswa tonight! (Hey friend, we're going out tonight!)

Jomo: That was so surprising cos he never did that to me before.

Sibusiso: Ey boy, e ba grand ke tlo tsiya poi! (I'll pick you up later)

Jomo: I agreed to the plan and went home and prepared myself.

Boys: Beep beep!

Jomo: Surely Sbu came with his brother's car.

Sibusiso: Ntwana a re vaye! (Let's go)

Jomo: I thought we were going to a nearby place but I realized when we were at the freeway that we were going far. "Where are we going?"

Sibusiso: O se ka wara boy! (Don't worry boy) *Laughs.*

Jomo: I also laughed to myself and thought, typical Sbu. He's full of jokes.

But when we entered the busy streets of Johannesburg he laughed even more seeing my worried face. He parked the car and the next thing we were at the door of Diplomat Hotel. I didn't know what to do. The place looked very strange to me. I was hesitant to go in, but Sibusiso dragged me in.

Song starts: Oh shit! It's happening tonight…..

Jomo: It was like a dream. I couldn't believe what I was seeing with my eyes. First thing we saw were half-naked women. I wanted to go out on the spot but Sibusiso made me feel comfortable.

Boys all drink.

Jomo: As I was starting to feel very comfortable, Sibusiso hooked me up with one of the prostitutes. Because I was drunk, I went on with the flow and went upstairs with the prostitute. When we got into bed I didn't know what to do. I was shaking. I remember the girl saying to me:

Prostitute: Take off your pants and stop wasting my time.

Jomo: Something inside me just wanted to run far away from this place but I took off my pants very slowly and she pulled me by the penis and I got an erection immediately. And that's how I lost my virginity. Sibusiso's plan worked after all.

SCENE 6: THE GREY AREA

A group of friends chilling together. Gift plays the character Smooth, Miss J the character Precious.

Manyuza: It does work mthana, it does work!

Freddy: Ntwana mamela- (Friend, listen)

Manyuza: Mfana you must understand, women are like soccer. First you have to know how to defend and attack and score the goal mchana!

Freddy: Mxm. Listen to this one! Eh Smooth!

Palesa: *Trying to get his attention.* Smooth.

Freddy: Ntwana who's the best player in the world?

Freddy & Smooth: Christiano Ronaldo!

Palesa: Smooth!

He saunters over to her and they start caressing each other.

Lee: Guys phela we must do our homework.

Manyuza: Maar how can we do our homework while Mr Smooth le girlfriend ya hae baile busy. (Are messing around)

Smooth: My guy…my guy…how about you get yourself a girlfriend?

Lee: No Smooth, we trying to do our school work and lena le busy la Frikana and wena chome am sorry maar you look like a slut.

Two girls, Ngonyama and Precious walk past, talking and giggling about the men they took home the night before.

Ngonyama: Hi guys.

Precious: Hi Smooth.

Smooth: Hey sweety, how you doing?

Palesa gets angry and walks away from him. The boys look after Precious longingly.

Manyuza: Oh mfana Precious! If I could get that piece o nija ...you're the man.

Gift: Ah watseba.

Freddy: Ah boy, Precious – she's nothing, she came to my place last week...we chilled on the couch....and the next thing, we started kissing.

Everybody: And then?

Freddy: I started rubbing her shoulders.

He starts rubbing Lee's shoulders to demonstrate.

Lee: Hee man matter! (Protesting)

Freddy: That's the same thing she said. I then started unbuttoning her blouse-

He demonstrates on Palesa.

Palesa: Ha senna ena! (Protesting)

Freddy: Easy ma sweety, I'm just trying to show you a good time. So then I took off her pants...and then there she was, in my bed, naked!

Everybody: And then?

Freddy: Nothing.

Manyuza: What?

Freddy: She slept.

Smooth: Ndiku xhele sisi fede se'ntwana esi!

Manyuza: Why o he o sa motsose? Why?

Freddy: I even tried the classical skill, putting my legs between her thighs-

Smooth: Yoh! Lomtwana ushiye ewayi yakho seyimile?

Freddy: Eish, waste of an erection.

Lee: Sorry guys to burst your bubble, but not everything is all about sex.

Palesa: Dankie chomme. (Thanks friend)

Pebble: Haa, nna ke re ha o le ngwanyana neh, o bo o ya to a guy's place, o be o hlobolakaka moo, what do you expect? Surely o ntse o e batla man! (Surely, if you go over to a guy's place, you know what he's going to want, as a man)

Lee: Maybe she just had low self-esteem.

Smooth: Self –esteem yamasipa! Ma, if I invite you to come by my place, don't expect us to just sit there and watch movies. We washed our hands, now let's eat!

Palesa: Heee papa. No means no. If I don't want to sleep with you I don't wanna sleep with you. If you not cool with that, screw you nigger I don't have time for bullshit.

Manyuza: Ho lena le tlo kena masipeng.

Palesa: No lena ke lena le tlo kenang masepeng cos you sleep with girls without their permission.

Smooth: Yoh! Talking about masepa, okare ke masepeng. *Gift answers his phone, and Yellow steps forward, talking on hers.*

SCENE 7: BREADWINNER

Yellow: Hello? Hey, baby I've been trying to get hold of you. *Call drops. Looks at audience.* Cell C. This is my boyfriend. Mampara. I met him at Taboo. He's so hot and sexy I couldn't keep my eyes off him. Hey, mathata! So me growing up as a kasi (township) girl, I didn't think he would notice me. When he approached me, I went all crazy. He asked for my numbers, I gave him. Oh

snap! I forgot to ask him his name. I started receiving text messages from him, phonecalls: "Morning mababeza, smatsatsa ngwana wa go tlhapa ka lebese. How about lunch sometime? From Mampara. I've been seeing him for a month now. He does everything for me. *Queshaah steps forward in his own space, holding a loaf of bread.* I told him I'm running out of grocery – within an hour, he bought the grocery. He bought Naledi her school shoes. My mother just lost her job. She can't afford to pay for my school fees. He's going to pay for them! I thought I was going to be excluded. I love him so much! But last night…we went to his house. It's so big and beautiful. He started kissing me and pulled down my pants. I love him so much but… "no, wait. Mampara I can't do this. I'm not ready." He started looking at me like I'm some sick prostitute and he said, "after everything I've done for you." And he walked away. *Pulls up her pants.* Why didn't I do it? Why ke sa mo fa kuku? *Picks up the phone and calls again.* Hello? Hi, baby can you hear me? Hi, hello? Baby-

Thabo starts to play the guitar and sings. During the song, Queshaah and Yellow face each other. Yellow takes the cake from her pocket – they exchange bread for cake and walk away.

Thabo: Love is not to blame

But those that use the name in vain

Now nobody wants to love again

SCENE 8: WAITING TO BE NEGATIVE

Five people, each in their own space, reach out their finger, feel the prick of a needle, and withdraw their hand. They begin to speak, their voices interweaving, each the internal monologue of their character as they wait that 2 minutes before the HIV test shows a result.

SCENE 9: A WOMAN'S PLACE

In this scene, the same group from Scene 6 discuss Mother's Day. The conversation ends with an argument between the men and women about which gender has a more difficult life. They begin to imitate each other, cruelly. They are interrupted when Miss J stands up and

tings a teacup with a spoon. Lee sings an adaption of a song where men usually asks women, where's the African beer?

Lee: We Ma Dlamini (Hey Mrs Dlamini)

Liphi itiye (Where's the tea?)

Men: Likhona! (It's here!)

SCENE 10: TEACUPS

All the men collect a teacup, saucer and spoon from Miss J. They come and sit in a row at the front of the stage, their legs stretched out in front of them like women on mats. The women make a tableau at the back, sitting in traditionally masculine positions. A playful movement piece about enjoying a nice hot cup of tea – the men all move in unison, traditionally feminine movements, stirring, sipping, offering gracefully. At the end of the sequence, Queshaah is left alone with a cup of tea, while the others join the tableau, sitting as women sit on either side of the stage. Queshaah starts to sing and tidy the stage.

SCENE 11: HOUSEHUSBANDS

Queshaah plays a house husband called Austin. Ngonyama is his wife, Fatima. In the scene, Austin's friends come round to visit to drink tea and watch TV. When his wife, Fatima returns, she is furious that Austin's friends are in 'her' house. Her friend, Miss J, is equally furious that her husband, Jomo, has been sitting watching TV instead of cooking her dinner. He leaves, shamefaced. Fatima berates Austin, pointing out that it is her tea, her sugar, her TV. She comes close to hitting him when it turns out there is no meat for dinner, only rice. Austin tries to placate her by massaging her shoulders. She relaxes, and spins him around, looking at his body appreciatively. He laughs awkwardly and suggests they watch a little more TV, but she wants to go to bed. They switch out the light.

SCENE 12: UPSIDE DOWN ZULU

As Austin and Fatima leave the stage, the drum starts, the men rise. A traditional Zulu dance, but the men are dancing the female role. They pick up the tea cups, which have been left at the front of the stage, and incorporate them into the dance. As they leave, coquettishly, the women take the stage, performing the aggressive, high-energy, male part of the dance.

SCENE 13: FOUR HUSBANDS FOR MALINDI

It's in the afternoon, Ma Lindi's husbands are preparing supper. Pebble plays Ma Lindi.

Mtshepang: Kanthe di tlo go butswa neng tsona dijo tse?

Manyuza: Di ready and smells so good!

Ma Lindi enters, both men go up to her and each kiss a cheek, taking her bag and ushering her to the only chair.

Pebble: Hmmm!

Manyuza: Lovy...

Thabo enters with a tray of dishes.

Thabo: Dinner is ready! Come guys, help me dish up. *He greets Ma Lindi with a lengthy kiss and playful moment while the other two look at the food.*

Mtshepang: What's this?

Thabo: Ok, this is macaroni with soya cheese, eeeh, this one is raw salad – it's avocado with onion, tomato and asparagus. And this one is grilled steak, surely you're gonna love it!

He takes a piece of steak and feeds it to Ma Lindi. She chews, taking her time.

Pebble: Mmmm, baby this is delicious.

Mtshepang takes a piece and puts it in his mouth.

Mtshepang: Ag! *He spits it out.* Di dimpe dijo tse!

Ma Lindi: But why does everything have to be about you?

Mtshepang: But Ma Lindi you know I'm the one who always cooks in this house.

Ma Lindi: I know you are the best cook in the house but why don't you give Sammy a chance so that le yena can prove hore he is able?

Mtshepang: But Ma Lindi each and everything around the house these days is about him. Sammy this, Sammy that. Ke kgathetse ke this. *He walks away.*

Pebble: Oh! Is this the issue here? Mtshepang! This is my house. I'm the head of this family. You don't walk away while I'm busy talking to you. A wa nkutlwa? Ebile tswa o ilo hlatswa dijana.

He comes back to the table.

SCENE 14: WALKING TO SCHOOL

A tightknit group of community members watches as Ngonyama walks, four men almost invisible behind her (Hollywood, Queshaah, Loti, Zulukid). Mtshepang is set apart. As he tells the story, the rest of the cast enact it through physical theatre. The men behind Ngonyama become predators, wolf-like, one is tap dancing, creating a menacing rhythm. The group playing the community is fascinated, shocked, judgemental, but never helping.

Mtshepang: I leave home early to go to the train station to go to school. Few houses away from my home, here comes this guy behind me.

Loti: Au, sweet makondovious!

Mtshepang: When I look at him, he was about to touch my bums.

Ngonyama and Mtshepang: Yewena! Uzama ukwenzani? (Hey, what are you doing?)

Mtshepang: Ne a rota mare bjalo ka le kgema. I turn back and run home, he follows. I stand on the verandah looking at him as he makes fun out of me.

Hollywood: Yewena magosha, sefebe a tlo bona mmao. (He is hurling insults)

Mtshepang: I am lucky there was no-one there to hear him. He doesn't stop. My eyes are looking at him but my ears are listening for the train, I'm going to miss it, I'm going to be late, I close my eyes and pray and when I open my eyes, he is gone. I leave home, I walk, if I am quick enough I'm going to make it – ka kwa sepotlo sa se poo ka morago g aka – it's him, I start running, screaming for help.

Ngonyama and Mtshepang: Thusang! Thusang! Help me!

Mtshepang: No one responds, he is coming, se bata kgomo, he is coming – ah! Uncle Job!

Uncle Job: Don't worry Ngwanaka, you are in good hands.

Mtshepang: But as the stranger gets closer and closer, I can see fear all over Uncle Job's face, and he starts looking around as if he has lost something important.

Queshaah: Yewena sefebe, hold my hand, a ke berekisi dihlare. (More insults)

Mtshepang: I run, as I look back I see Uncle Job's fruit and vegetables rolling down the street. I do not look back again.

SCENE 15: GIRL AFTER GIRL

As Ngonyama and Mtshepang disappear, Mandisa emerges from the group. She stands in front of the audience shyly. For this whole scene, the attackers of the previous scene remain a visual presence, wolves waiting to pounce.

Mandisa: I am nine years old. My favourite colour is green. I love my Mum. My best friend is Thando. My favourite game is… *(she covers her eyes)* MOKUKU!

As children, the rest of the cast run around looking for a place to hide.

Mandisa: 1….2….3…..4….5….6…7….8…9….10!

As she jumps around to look, she sees her father standing behind her. She starts to run away, but he touches her, and she stays still.

Mandisa: Papa….please. Not today.

Another game starts, a new space of a playground is created. Palesa is knocked over.

Palesa: Osile wena, ka bobe! Ko motsa mamaka. I'm eleven years old. I like marshmallows and when my Mom takes me to school, and when she combs my hair-

A man has come behind her and grabbed her by the throat.

Manyuza: Yewena, hao nka rasa fela, otla bona mmao. (Be quiet or I'll kill you)

The girls break the mood, start singing Beyonce's "Who run the world", and dancing.

Ngonyama: I'm fifteen years old. I love my family…except my brother. When I finish school I wanna go to Wits….I love my friends, they call me Nicki Menage. I have a boyfriend – my JZ. I love him cos he buys me lunch.

Her boyfriend approaches. All the girls simper.

Mtshepang: Hi babes. *They kiss, sloppily. The girls gaze. He's holding a package of food.* Kao spoile ne? (I spoil you, don't I?)

Ngonyama: *Giggles.* Ja.

Mtshepang: I think it's time I got something in return.

Girls: Hah! Ayayayaya!

Transition to the streets of Joburg.

Precious: I am eighteen years old.

Men: Precious. Precious.

Precious: My favourite colour is black. My favourite movie is Drag Me to Hell –

We can't hear her because the men are calling her name so loudly. She loses her temper.

Precious: FUUUCK!

She walks away. The guys are quiet for a beat, and then snap out of it and saunter centre stage. One guy speaks admiringly about Precious, and Jozi (Manyuza) boasts that he has had sex with her. The others are disbelieving, so he goes into details. It becomes evident that he raped her. One of the guys says as much, and the mood shifts, with the other guys standing up for Jozi.

SCENE 16: GROWING UP

Zulukid and Loti's monologues are intertwined, Zulukid speaks of his father calling him a sissie and telling him to be a man, Loti speaks as a young boy, in trouble because he pinched a girl's bum at school, imitating his older brother.

SCENE 17: MAJOZI AND ME

In this monologue, MLindos, who was one of the men listening to Jozi describe having sex with Precious, is wondering why he can't do the same thing.

MLindos: Grandsharp angifrostani, ukuthi why ngingafrostani, ukuthi mina ngiyafrostana...uyangithele, entlek I know that there are so many girls out there, I know that Majozi is having sex with them. Majozi is having sex with them without their permission. So nami kwamele ngibangene labantwana,

ngihlale ngomqondo madzala, ngithi skelem, skelem...skelem, pha! Umtana angifake. Izinto zibe mthebelele sizwane kamnandi. Mara makaso ngibayizis, ngiyoveskane ngi thathe ngobuso benja. I mean nakhona kuyafana I'm just like my friends, we all have hands to fold warm those we love. Hearts to keep close the love that we give and brains baba, to bring union between two worlds. Anyway anyeke ngimane ngihluwe ukuthi. *He greets the girls in the audience:* Hello. Hello sweety...Ayi, ayi uyabona ke! Uyabona ke! Mina I don't like it when I greet a girl she doesn't respond. Phela makayenza so ngiyoveskane ngiyithathe ngobuso benja. Futhi I will never go to jail, I'm just like Majozi...Heee! Bafowethu UMajozi umhlabile UPrecious kuma danger box and a ka fahlakanga. Uyabona ke manje instead of me giving myself reasons why I can't I will just, I will just give myself reasons why I can. I really do not see anyways of me asking any questions. Phela abantwana aneva bamane bakuqome nje esthubeni. Banga bekanga ikhindo lakho, ubuhle bakho, ubuwena bakho madzala...ayi, never. So manje yazi yini mina I will fuck every girl meanwhile I'm looking for the one to love me.

SCENE 18: I WANT

A movement/spoken word piece reminiscent of the virginity scene in the beginning of the play. Everyone finishes the line, "I want..."

SCENE 19: SOMETHING THAT YOU'VE NEVER SEEN BEFORE

A song begins:

I'm something that you've never been before

Yes I am, take me as I am

I'm something that you've never seen before

Yes I am, take me as I am

I'm something that you've never seen before

And I'll be yours forever more

I'm something that you've never seen before

And I'll be yours forever more

Individuals perform solos within the song, reflecting something about themselves, in multiple languages and styles – raps, praise poems, lyrics - and then the song changes:

Izizwe zizongiqonda (The nations will know who I am)

Ukuba mna ndingubani na

THE END