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This paper reflects on our work with young people (boys and girls) in rural schools in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, in which we use participatory methodologies, particularly the visual (photo-voice and video-documentaries) not only to examine the nature and impact of gender-based violence on the lives of young people, but to explore possible strategies for intervention. The paper reflects on research with young people in rural KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, in which video-documentary production was used as methodology. It maps out some of the key issues that are critical to engaging ethically in research on gender-based violence with, about and for young people in and around schools in South Africa and looks at how we might contribute to an agenda for "doing least harm" in participatory research focusing on gender-based violence

"When images of the world's disasters flash across television screens" writes Jan Egeland in her Foreword to *Broken Bodies, Broken Dreams: Violence against Women Exposed*, "more often than not, we are presented with a rough sketch of the humanitarian crisis. Rarely do the cameras venture beneath the surface to look at the hidden impact of a humanitarian crisis on affected communities. If they did they would find that virtually without exception, it is women and children who are the most vulnerable". Such crises include gender-based violence, poverty, HIV and AIDS and others. Even more rarely, we would add, are the cameras which do venture beneath the surface controlled by the very people who are most affected (women and girls). This is in spite of the fact that an emerging feature of work related to confronting and combating gender violence is a recognition of the importance of the participation of the victims and potential victims themselves (as well as the participation of those who work with them), both in mapping out the issues, but more significantly, being positioned as protagonists in taking action.

Thus, informed by our work with young people (boys and girls) in rural schools in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, we argue that working with the visual (e.g., photo-voice, video documentaries, drawings, etcetera) offers a critical way to engage them in examining their everyday lives, and in so doing to expose or make public the everyday forms of crises they encounter. However, when it comes to addressing many of the stereotypes which may seem to be 'endorsed' within such productions, the ethical challenges are vast. Drawing from the work of Seseshredi & Chadran (2006) and others working in the area of community video, this paper looks at the ways in which the stereotypes might themselves become central to the pedagogy of working with the visual to address gender based violence. In particular, taking our cue from Maclure's (1990) cautionary note on the significance of enlisting the insights and aptitudes of the affected/targeted people on the research process itself, our work in rural schools uses participatory methodologies, particularly the visual (photo-voice and video-documentaries) not only to examine the nature and impact of gender-based violence on the lives of young people, but to explore possible strategies for intervention. Our work moves from the premise that as a marginal group, young people in South Africa live in conditions characterised by, among others, poverty, HIV and AIDS, and gender-based violence, and as such, present particular challenges for conducting research that is useful in understanding their plight and in informing interventions that might work to improve their lives. To paraphrase Michel Foucault, we may know what we do and why we do it but not what our doing does (Dreyfus and Rabinow, 1992). As such, in the conduct of our work, two key questions we have been struggling with have been:

- How can we as researchers adhere to a code of conduct in which we do not simply 'hear' the voices of young people for the purposes of research alone, but take appropriate steps to ensure that no harm is done in the conduct of such research?
- How can we ensure that in working with, for and about young people we do not further marginalize them or worse, endanger their lives, by putting them in a more vulnerable position than they might have been as a result of our participatory research?

While a number of scholars and organizations such as Save the Children (2003) identify a set of basic principles that should be observed in doing research or working with children through participatory methodologies in a variety of contexts, we have been struck by the relative absence of a sustained focus on ethical considerations and the potential harm that 'well-intentioned' researchers might cause in the name of "least harm". Thus, in this paper we attempt to map out some of the key issues that we regard as critical to engaging ethically in research on gender-based violence in and around schools in South Africa, particularly when visual methodologies are used. Like Lyn Mikel Brown and Carol Gilligan (1992) in their work with girls, we take a self-reflexive stance, where possible, to 'look back' (on some of our own research) in order to 'look ahead' to contributing to an agenda for "doing least harm" in participatory research focusing on gender-based violence and involving young people (boys and girls).

While elsewhere we have looked at a broader range of participatory approaches (Moletsane et al, in press), here we focus on the ethical challenges inherent in video representations and their use as research and intervention tools. This has been an area

within visual methodologies that has received less attention within the overall literature on ethics (and what can be shown in public), and at the same raising new questions about our work with children and young people.

Thus, we begin the paper by examining the ways in which our own research, exemplified by an excerpt from a video-documentary produced by a group of boys in one of the schools we have been working with, produced a set of ethical challenges during the research process itself (video-making) as well as in the final product (video-documentary). Informed by some of the principles for conducting participatory research with young people generally, and on gender-based violence in particular, in ways that do 'least harm', we reflect on this work and conclude with implications for doing visual research with, about and for young people, that does 'least harm'.

Looking back and looking ahead: The Challenges of Representation

Working with video production in community based research, while challenging technically, offers a unique view into the ways in which young people choose to re-present their worlds. The medium itself as we have explored it in short "make a video in a day'' sessions is a cross between more conventional forms of "role play'' and approaches to photo-voice that draw on staging techniques where participants might act out a particular scene (see for example Mitchell et al, 2007). Similar to role play the producers are playing with various scenarios of examining an issue, but similar to photo voice, the scenes are captured visually – they exist as visual texts and no longer are limited to the ephemerality of the dramatic moment. Critically, when it comes to ethical issues, the visual texts exist in a material form. What difference does this make? What are the ethics of doing participatory research with children, particularly video-making? Ethical issues tend to be what most adults bring up first in relation to children's participation, particularly in working with the visual. Given the significance of the emerging agenda on the participation of children and young adults in addressing violence against children globally, it is critical to work out the ethical issues. How, for example, do we ensure that our well meaning interventions as adults do not in any way further endanger the lives of young people?

First, we believe that ethical participatory research with children involves ensuring that their participation is both voluntary and relevant. This means that the issues addressed should include those which directly affect their lives and their participation should be of benefit to them. One only has to open a daily or even weekend newspaper, TV news programme and others, and is bombarded with accounts of violence in general, and gender based violence in particular. As such, in one of our 'make a video in a day' workshops, we chose to explore gender based violence as an issue that impacts the lives of young people in and around schools.

Second, many proponents of participatory methodologies believe that it is only when children have been given a significant voice that such interventions can stand any chance of being successful (see for example, Maclure, 1990; Schenk and Williamson, 2005 and others). For us, this can only happen if we create a child-friendly environment, using

child-centred ways of doing research. Taking up this challenge, we use video-documentaries (as well as other visual methodologies) to see how their 'doing research' and 'having fun' elements could contribute towards raising awareness about significant issues such as gender-based violence and HIV and HIV-related stigma (see for example, Stuart and Moletsane, 2005). We believe that it is because of this element of 'fun' that such methodologies can engage young people, and sustain their engagement in research and intervention projects aimed at addressing these issues challenges they face (Moletsane, de Lange, Mitchell, Stuart, Buthelezi and Taylor, 2007).

However, the schools we work with are located in contexts where there has been a resurgence of 'culture' as a marker of identity, and as such, culture, in and of itself is a critical condition to be examined in relation to ethical considerations. Thus, while we acknowledge the need for particular methodological approaches to doing research with, for and about children in this context, we also recognise that such research requires specific ethical considerations if the participating children are to benefit from the projects and if their safety and autonomy are to be effectively. For example, to circumvent the many taboos governing relationships in this context, on the one hand, we have argued for the use of visual methodologies, which we have noted, tend to provide some safe distance for the participants to explore otherwise painful experiences with the aim of finding strategies to address them. On the other, we acknowledge the need for caution against putting the children in further danger because of the projects we engage them in and the methodologies we use to do so. For example, what if the use of video documentaries (or photo-voice), with young people posing questions to adults in their communities is seen as breaking the taboos set to regulate their behaviour and going against 'culture'? Would obtaining the permission of the community gatekeepers (local leaders such as the chief or local councillor), who are usually, but not always the guardians of such culture, help prevent the fallout that may result from this kind of research?

To address this, Schenk and Williamson (2005) suggest that consulting with such gatekeepers is essential not only to get their permission, but also to ensure that they accept and endorse the project activities as culturally appropriate. We note that this might be difficult in cases where such projects aim to challenge the patriarchy that informs and supports the taboos and the violence that often is associated with it. How might community elders respond when children speak out on sensitive issues (including sexuality, gender-based violence and AIDS) in their presence? What might happen if as the two authors suggest, researchers used a gender equality lens in the planning, development and implementation of the research and development activities and considered the role of power dynamics in the community, for example, between the researchers and the young people, between the children and the adults in the community, or between males and females among the children themselves? Could the activities be negotiated with the gatekeepers, and could such negotiation lead to real benefits for the young people?

We agree with scholars and child activists who charge that it is the responsibility of researchers to anticipate the direct and indirect consequences of their participatory work with children (e.g., Schenk and Williamson, 2005). In cases where these have been

unforeseen, it is our responsibility to mediate the negative impacts of such consequences. In this section we draw on one exemplar from our research, a video-documentary produced by a group of high school boys to highlight challenges of representation and participation to the principle of 'doing least harm' and attempt to identify strategies for developing and implementing participatory projects that are ethical.

An Excerpt from 'Rape': A video-documentary

The excerpt we use in this section comes out of our work in collaborative video with young people in two rural high schools in which we map out the various issues that impact on their lives and attempt to identify strategies for addressing them. One of our projects in the schools we have been working with involves one day video making workshops, in which participants (teachers, students, community health care workers and parents) learn to make short video-documentaries mapping out an issue/problem they encounter in the school, community and family. These workshops have involved all-girl and all-boy groups. In this particular video-making workshop, together with the participants, we addressed the issue of gender based violence in and around schools. In the example we use in this paper, an all-boy group produces a video called *Rape.* Their story line is organized around the multiple rapes of one girl (G) by her boyfriend (S). The actual narrative is broken up into eight short scenes, four of which directly depict the *staged* rapes. The scenes below depict how the encounters between the boy and his girlfriend start off in a loving way, but quickly move to coercive (and forced) sex. (Below we offer an English translation of the scene that was originally produced in isiZulu):

2nd RAPE SCENE

S: Where do you live now my baby? Give me a hug. No way, let's sit down.

G: Take a break and have some fresh air

S: [Grabs her.]

G: Just wait a bit. Wait! Stop!

S: What is the matter with you?

G: I don't like to do it. I don't like it.

S: What don't you like?

G: To do it. I don't like to.

S: What?

G: Eh. . . eh. . . I don't like to do it . . . Eh. . . eh. . . You know what, I'll cry out loud

S: Come on now baby (Rape takes place). But who are you going to cry out to? Come on baby.

G. [Reports her boyfriend to the police. He is imprisoned.]
...

8th Scene
[S is in prison.]

S: Ei! I am now regretful. I raped my sweetheart. When I get out of here she will not even want to see me. Ei, I raped a person really. I am in prison now. Its tough . . . even to eat. It is me that is getting raped now. They mount me. Ei, now I regret what I did. I don't know what to say. I don't know what to do. I am in prison now. I raped a female person. I raped her and beat her and am in prison now. I don't know what to do now. The men in here mount me and beat me. Just look now, when I get out of here the babes in the location will leave me. I won't get another cherry because I am known to be a rapist now. But you, my brothers out there, I'm telling you, restrain yourselves, be strong, don't rape females because you will be sentenced and grow old inside (prison).

At one level, the video production can simply be read as a very disturbing and graphic representation of aggressive masculinity, one which reinforces all of the negative stereotypes about boys and young men, and as explored elsewhere an exploration of masculine identity (Weber and Mitchell, 2007). Indeed, in many ways the scenario depicted here is no different from the kinds of testimonies that are described in face-to-face interviews with young people in various South African locations in which boys report that it is "okay to hit your girlfriend" (Sathiparsad , 2006) and that when a girl says 'no' they really mean 'yes'. Another is that it is "okay to expect sex'. The video is a problematic one in that there is a fine line between interrogating rape and glorifying rape. Its fraught state is exacerbated by the fact that S shows no concern to the one who has been raped (G) but only concern for himself and his imprisonment and the fact that "*When I get out of here she will not even want to see me*.

At another level, and here is where our concerns about "least harm" arise, we are confronted with the fact that the boys in their filming manage to "borrow" Lenda, a girl from one of the other video groups to play G, in spite of protests from the facilitators that they must come up with a way to represent the rape without actually demonstrating the rape and certainly not with a girl. Another group, for example, also wishing to represent rape uses a behind closed doors scenario so that although we hear a girl calling rape we do not actually see the action. What adds to the problematic of *Rape* is that we had planned to screen all the videos at the end of the day so that everyone in the group would see all the productions. What we were confronted with as the research team however were a number of on-the-spot issues to be resolved: How could we protect the girl who was the victim of a rape, albeit staged? How could we make sure that the other girls who were in the audience were not themselves victimized (for example, emotionally) by this public representation of rape? At the same time, how could we permit the boys to have their video screened but within a context that made it clear that the rape scenes they had

produced were not condoned? The solution for the moment was for one of the members of our team to address the whole group in isiZulu (the mother-tongue of the learners), on the dangers of equating (forced) sex and love, and of seeing relationships between boys and girls and only involving either abstinence or rape. This was our attempt to ensure that at least no one in the workshop, theoretically, left the session thinking that the production was unproblematic. However we had no way of knowing how effective this intervention was or what may have happened to Linda as a result of her participation as a victim of rape in the video production. While we did conduct follow-up work with the producers of all of the videos where we asked them to reflect on their work and to consider what they could have done differently and how they would like to see their video used in the community, we nonetheless cannot fully account for individuals. Did we, in fact, do 'least harm'?

Addressing Ethical Considerations in Visual Methodologies

What right do researchers have to uncover these sorts of situations and then inevitably 'walk away' from them? Fiona Leach (2006) asks this very question in her analysis of interview studies on gender based violence in and around schools where girls in focus groups or in one-on-one interviews may be asked to comment on the behaviour of male teachers. As she observes, it is one thing for the research team to help communities to document cases of gender based violence, but how does the research team help to protect the informants? How does the research team ensure the often promised anonymity and autonomy of the participants in cases where such participants are minors and are under the guardianship of the very teachers (and other adults) guilty of abusing them?

To put it more broadly, what are the dangers to children and young people brandishing cameras in and around schools and/or asking questions about sensitive issues such as gender-based violence, AIDS, and other issues, and thus breaking some of the culturally-based taboos set to regulate their behaviour in these communities? Would adult researchers accompanying them during their picture-taking, or informing them about the dangers of visual work suffice? Would teaching them to request informed consent from their subjects be enough? The issues are very real since the safety of the child video-makers or participants more generally is at stake.

Moreover, there is the possibility that the intervention could be seen to be exploitative, a point that has been raised in relation to the children photographers in *Born into Brothels*. What happens, for example, to the producers (the children) when the video has been made? In what ways do the children themselves benefit? In these contexts, it becomes imperative that researchers and others using these methodologies take all possible precautions to ensure that no harm or the least harm befalls the participants, but that their participation benefits them in the end.

A related ethical challenge involves the ownership of the products: the photograph or video. Who owns it: the project leader, the researchers, the participant who took the photograph/made the video, or the person(s) photographed? How/why does this matter?

Some of the methodologies we use in our work (photo-voice, video-documentaries, writing, drawing) are themselves safeguards against the direct and indirect negative consequences of participatory research. For example, we have often used published writing as a starting point to uncover the silences that often surround issues affecting girls (and women) in these contexts in a relatively safe way (for example, incest, rape, domestic violence, and others). Thus, we argue that in the context of gender-based violence and HIV-related stigma and the violence it generates against girls and women, researchers and activists may use such writings as data sources as well as prompts for girls to openly, albeit indirectly discuss issues that affect them without any direct threat of censure and/or violence against them. Furthermore, our work has suggested that video documentaries can in some ways, also circumvent some of the ethical issues that arise more directly in photo-voice. For example, that the episodes in the video documentaries are staged provides some distance for the participants to discuss the pertinent issues in a relatively safe space without their views being attributed to them and held against them, thus reducing the ethical issues inherent in this kind of work. Unlike direct conventional interviews, the distance and anonymity provided by visual data, particularly staged or 'directed' images of a controversial and taboo subject such as gender-based violence (including rape and incest), HIV and Aids and HIV-related stigma, is key to opening such dialogue and for safely disrupting the commonly held views and attitudes towards the disease and those who are infected or affected by the virus. Other approaches that could provide such distance and a sense of safety for young people to participate meaningfully in research and interventions aimed at addressing the negative impacts of violence and AIDS might include drawings, films, theatre and music. However, as we illustrate in the case studies we present above, that the photographs or the scenes in the productions are staged is not always a guarantee that our research does least harm to the participants. Instead, such interventions, unless carefully mediated, can cause further harm, for example, by reinforcing negative stereotypes about individuals, groups and about the very issues they target for change.

To address these challenges, several scholars (for example Schenk and Williamson, 2005; Reddy and Ratna, 2002 cited in Save the Children 2003) identify a set of key principles that must be observed in doing research or working with children through participatory methodologies in a variety of contexts. For young people living in the context of poverty, HIV and AIDS and gender-based violence, who are often marginalised by the unequal power relations existing in their families, communities and schools (based on gender, social class, race and other identities), this is particularly important. As the authors referred to above also note, the unequal power dynamics between researchers and participants also warrant a careful consideration of the environment in which participatory research takes place. As such, the proposed ethical principles for setting up and conducting such research are essential for safeguarding vulnerable participants' safety and dignity, and for ensuring that they benefit from the projects which they are asked to participate in.

So, what are some of the principles that might inform research and development work which takes this agenda seriously? The first is related to respect for participants, what Schenk and Williamson (2005) identify as "principles and safeguards to ensure that information gathering… is done ethically at all stages of the activity" (p. 3). For ethics

bodies in institutions of higher education and other research institutes, this often means that in obtaining the participants' informed consent, researchers have to ensure that participants understand that they have the right to autonomy (to decide whether to participate in the project or not and to withdraw at any stage without fear of reprisal) and anonimity. In research contexts characterised by gender-based violence as well as taboos that regulate relationships and interactions according to gender, age, social class, and other markers of identity, this means that, in addition to guardians understanding and exercising this right on behalf of their sons and daughters, the young people themselves must be given opportunities to understand and exercise this right on their own behalf. The challenge is to ensure the right to informed consent in ways that do not put the young people in further harm as a result of their participation in our projects.

   The second principle is related to the right to protection. Citing Reddy and Ratna (2002), in a guide for NGOs and others participating in the United Nations' 'Global Study on Violence against Children, Save the Children (2003) remind researchers that the international Human Rights framework guarantees children several rights, particularly through the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) (Retrieved on December 10, 2007 from www.savethechildren.net/alliance/resources/chpart_childrenviolence.doc). These include the right to protection from violence (for example, gender-based violence) and from disease or the impacts thereof (including HIV and AIDS). So, while children's participation in matters that affect them is seen as a key principle to achieving these rights, could their participation in research projects that purport to address their plight lead to further harm and marginalisation? How can we ensure their protection within such participatory projects? How do we balance the notion that children's direct participation is essential as it is a means to advocacy on their behalf and as it ensures that the issues that adult researchers and others overlook do come to the fore through the voices of those directly affected and the need to do least harm?

      Furthermore, Schenk and Williamson (2005) identify the principle of justice, suggesting that participating in research and development projects must benefit all participants equally and that those who are unlikely to benefit from participating must not be involved. According to them, deciding who participates in research and development must involve recognition of power relations, not only between the adult researchers and the participants, but also among the various groups of participants (for example, between the boys in *Rape* and Linda, the girl who played G). Participant selection must target representation from the distinct realities of a wide variety of young people in communities. For example, social class, age, HIV-related stigma and other social identities which mark the varied and complex contexts and realities different people come from must be considered in making such selections.

      Schenk and Williamson (2005) also suggest that research and interventions must minimise harm and maximise benefits for participants. A criticism of research and intervention projects that promote children's participation is that they may be regarded as their own form of exploitation, particularly when adults recognize that it is impossible to

achieve any sort of insider status or insider insight without the assistance of children. Here, we think for example, of projects like Ross Kauffman and Zana Briski's *Born into Brothels* (2004) based on *Kids With Cameras* work, which has been criticized as exploitative, deceptive and potentially harmful to the kids. So, how, for example, do we ensure that our well meaning interventions as adults do not in any way further endanger the lives of young people, particularly when issues such as gender-based violence and HIV-related stigma are explored? How do we ensure that Linda's participation in the video-documentary: *Rape* does not 'mark' her for marginalization and violence by those who see her in the video (her peers in the school and potentially others in the community)?

   An analysis of the video-documentary we use as an exemplar in this paper suggests that in ensuring these principles, researchers using participatory methodologies, particularly the visual, must avoid tokenistic involvement of young people. Instead, as the Save the Children guide cited above suggests, researchers must strive for "meaningful, good quality children's participation [and give them] a genuine opportunity to express their views" must be Retrieved on December 10, 2007 from
www.savethechildren.net/alliance/resources/chpart_childrenviolence.doc
Such an agenda should be characterised by approaches that are safe, non-discriminatory, child-/girl-friendly and most importantly, ethical. For this to happen, the guide also suggests that such participants must be involved in the design of research and interventions, particularly the visual, which must be
   We want to heed Schenk and Williamson's (2005) call that children "who are in especially vulnerable situations require additional safeguards to protect their welfare" (p.11). For us, the children we work with live in contexts characterised by gendered and racialised negative impacts of gender-based violence and other social ills (e.g., poverty, orphaning, HIV and AIDS and HIV-related stigma). So, how might we protect their welfare when we invite them to participate in research that involves the visual?

   We are also mindful of some very specific situations in relation to gender-based violence. What happens, for example, to those girls (and boys) who have been victims of rape or incest when their participation in projects brings to the fore the very emotions the projects target, including fear, shame, distress, loss and anger (Ansell and Blerk, 2005)? How prepared are we as researchers to ensure the emotional safety of the participants in our research studies? How do we avoid the band-aid phenomenon – opening wounds and then offering only a piece of plaster to deal with them?

Conclusion

   We all know (and might have even participated in) research projects which go into communities only to gather the data needed for research papers for publications without any consideration of what impact our brief sojourns make on the lives of the communities we study. How can we ensure follow-up? The public viewing of the documentaries made in the schools provided opportunities for us to provide and obtain feedback and for evaluating the value of the project. This public viewing also offered an opportunity for us

to observe any negative impacts the project could have on the children who participated and to take some ameliorative steps where necessary and where possible, as we did in the case of the rape video. The fact that the research team itself affirmed the importance of the video documentary on rape (as opposed to 'something nicer' as some of the teachers had expected) helped, we believe, to make their product an acceptable form of expression more generally.

   Clearly the ethical issues surrounding "least harm" must also contribute to "most good". For Ethical Review Boards in universities and research units, too often the principle of least harm, we would argue, is not balanced with 'most good', and even least harm is defined only in relation to perceived immediate dangers but not in relation, say, to long-term disillusionment. Judith Ennew (1994;1998) draws attention, for example, to the harm of raising expectations of children and young people that something good will come of a study when we as researchers know that this is unlikely given the time or costs involved. These situations are potentially harmful to all participants – but when we know what the long term benefits can be when girls' participation is taken seriously we have an even greater responsibility to balance least harm with most good because if we don't, who will?

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