

Chapter 4

METHOD

This chapter outlines aspects of the study site and design. The instruments for data collection, characteristics of the participants, and the procedures and methods of data analysis are also described.

4.1 Study site

The material presented in this study was part of a larger international project involving the investigation of interpersonal violence and HIV risk behaviours among adolescents living in Baltimore in the United States, Rio de Janeiro in Brazil, and Eldorado Park in South Africa (Ricardo et al., 1998; Swart et al., 1999) to develop and implement appropriate intervention programmes for adolescents from each of the three sites. The purpose of the international study was to examine the extent to which exposure to community and structural violence is related to the presence of violence (psychological, physical and sexual) within adolescent dating relationships, and the extent to which dating violence is related to high risk sexual behaviours. In addition, the study also sought to obtain insight into the context in which youth develop their dating relationships and the meaning they ascribe to their relationships. Accordingly, the project combined the use of quantitative and qualitative research methods to obtain the relevant information for the study. The three sites were specifically chosen as they provide access to teenagers living within economically marginalised areas that are well known for their high indices of violence. The three sites do however, have very different historical, political and social systems. The data collected from each site was initially analysed separately, followed by a comparative analysis among the three sites to bring to light the common strategies and differences in the approaches used by youth to keep themselves safe and healthy, or alternatively place themselves at risk for dating violence and HIV infection. In this respect, the data presented here represents the South African component of the larger international project, and is drawn from the survey and focus group discussions with adolescents from seven secondary schools in Eldorado Park.

Eldorado Park was established as a township in the late 1960s, south west of Johannesburg. The area is approximately 20 kilometres from the central business district of Johannesburg. It is an established, stable residential area dominated by formal, low-cost, small brick housing, and in some areas council owned apartment blocks. Current estimates place the population at approximately 350 000. Facilities within the area, including schools and clinics, are also used by residents of surrounding informal settlements. Historically Eldorado Park was reserved for those classified as 'coloured' during the apartheid era. With the removal of the Group Areas act and subsequent political changes in 1994 however, some of the adolescents living in the neighbouring areas of Soweto and informal settlements began attending the high schools in Eldorado Park. Informal settlements consist predominantly of temporary dwellings called shacks and while local government makes provision for water and refuse collection, these areas have no electricity or formalised amenities such as shops, clinics and schools. The adolescents from Eldorado Park, Soweto, and the informal settlements share similar backgrounds in the sense that these communities face high levels of unemployment, poverty, overcrowding, violence, crime (Butchart & Kruger, 1999; Butchart, Kruger, & Lekoba, 2000; Swart & Seedat, 2001), and consist of people who were previously disenfranchised under apartheid rule. However, their backgrounds are diverse in respect of language, cultural heritage and socially constructed differences along 'racialised' identities.

4.2 School survey

Permission was sought from the principals at the seven secondary schools in Eldorado Park to administer the study to the learners during 1998. A total of 928 grade 9 to grade 12 learners, making up approximately 15.3% of the total population of 6049 learners from the seven high schools in Eldorado Park took part in the survey. There were 494 (53.2%) female and 434 (46.8%) male participants. The average age for female participants was 16 years ranging from 13 to 21 years. For male participants the average age was 17 years ranging from 14 to 23 years. While adolescence is one of the terms used to distinguish the age group between childhood and full adulthood, an exact definition of this age group is problematic as it varies for different countries and cultures (Dowsett & Aggleton, 1999). In the present study, learners older than 19 years constituted a minority of the sample (5.8% for males and 1.8% for females) and although they may not be considered to be adolescents in the traditional sense, I

elected to include them as in the reality of South Africa they form part of the secondary school population and hence need to be represented if appropriate locally-based interventions are to be developed.

The purpose of the school survey was to estimate the prevalence of sexual coercion in dating relationships, alcohol use, and high risk sexual behaviour for sexually experienced female and male learners, and to examine the association between coercive sexual experiences and high risk behaviour. The advantage of surveys is that they allow for the collection of quantitative data on various forms of behaviours and events. Accordingly, survey data are useful for estimating the prevalence of specific behaviours and reporting on specific patterns of behaviour in a particular population. Nonetheless, the information obtained from survey questionnaires, like other self-report measures has limitations. Specifically, the data are limited by the extent to which a person recalls certain events and admits to engaging in certain behaviours. Adolescents in particular may under-report sensitive issues such as sexual behaviour and violence. Alternatively adolescents, particularly males, may over-report sexual behaviours in order to demonstrate their sexual prowess. Another limitation associated with questionnaires or similar instruments is that while they measure acts of behaviour, they provide little information about the meaning and context of such acts (Jackson, 1999). In this respect, it was anticipated that the data obtained from the focus group discussions would complement the quantitative findings by providing insight into the context of sexual coercion in adolescent relationships.

4.2.1 The survey questionnaire

With respect to the larger international project (Ricardo et al., 1998) the survey questionnaire was originally compiled on a review of the literature and research findings in the field of adolescent romantic relationships and adolescent behaviour regarding sexuality, aggression and health. An in-depth pilot administration of the questionnaire took place in Baltimore, followed by the development of the questionnaire to be implemented in Rio de Janeiro and South Africa. Before implementing the actual survey in South Africa another pilot of the questionnaire was conducted among a class of 45 grade 8 learners from one of the high schools in Eldorado Park to determine whether or not they understood the questions presented in the survey and whether or not they deemed them to be relevant. Consequently the measure

underwent several revisions based mainly on language. Although the questionnaire was administered in English, some of the less common English words were translated into Afrikaans as a consequence of feedback received from the pilot administration.

The questionnaire consisted primarily of multiple choice and Yes or No items and was designed to gather information on a number of themes, including sociodemographic data; dating violence (psychological, physical and sexual); beliefs about violence and relationships; exposure to interpersonal violence within the family, school and community; involvement in community violence; drug and alcohol use; sexual behaviour; and sources of information regarding romantic relationships, sexual relations, and HIV/AIDS (a copy of the revised questionnaire is included as Appendix A). Only the measures pertinent to the present study are described in more detail below.

The experience of sexual coercion in dating relationships (items from Section C 15, 16, 19, 20, 41, 42, 43, 44, 47, 48, 53, 54, 63, and 64 in Appendix A). An adapted version of The Revised Conflict Tactics Scale (CTS2) was used as part of the questionnaire to measure the prevalence of sexual coercion in high school learners' romantic relationships (Straus, Hamby, Boney-McCoy, & Sugarman, 1996). The CTS2 consists of different scales which measure the use of physical, psychological and sexual violence in dating or marital relationships. The CTS2 demonstrates good internal consistency reliability for the individual scales with an alpha coefficient of .87 for the sexual coercion subscale, and there is also evidence of construct and discriminant validity (see Straus et al., 1996). A study of university student dating couples in 17 countries also reveals high alpha coefficients of internal consistency (.82 for the sexual coercion subscale) and low confounding with social desirability response set (Straus, 2004). The revised sexual coercion subscale consisted of 14 items for which the respondent had to indicate whether or not s/he had perpetrated or been the victim of such an act in his/her relationships (Yes or No). For example "I used threats to make my partner have sex" and "My partner used threats to make me have sex". In accordance with the literature on dating violence and sexual coercion (Jackson et al., 2000; Poitras & Lavoie, 1995) the prevalence rate for sexual coercion was calculated as the percentage of respondents who reported having experienced at least one act of coercion in a dating relationship. Two rates are calculated, one for victimisation and one for perpetration.

Beliefs about the acceptability of sexual coercion in dating relationships (items from Section D 6 and 8 in Appendix A). Participants' beliefs about the acceptability of sexual coercion in dating relationships were investigated with respect to Yes or No responses to two separate items, namely 1) If a partner makes one have sex against one's will, that means that it's just their way of showing love, and 2) If a partner makes one have sex against one's will, that means that s/he is drunk or on drugs. The first item was specifically chosen due to the literature suggesting that adolescents may view sexual coercion as a positive aspect and in some instances as signifying love. The second item was chosen because of the trend for international studies to reveal that approximately half of the sexual assaults involve a perpetrator who has been drinking (see Abbey et al., 2004) and that the involvement of alcohol may provide an excuse for the perpetrator's behaviour. I specifically chose the item on alcohol as little research has examined the role of alcohol and sexual coercion among South African adolescents.

Alcohol use (items from Section I 5 in Appendix A). Learners were asked if they used alcoholic beverages, and had to select one of five responses: never, sometimes, on the weekends, 1 to 3 times per week, or every day. As relatively few of the female respondents reported using alcohol on the weekends, 1 to 3 times per week, or every day, the last three responses were combined to form the category 'regularly' for the purposes of making gender comparisons more meaningful. Therefore, for the purposes of analysis alcohol use consisted of three categories: never, sometimes, and regularly.

Sexual risk taking behaviour (items from Section F 2, 4, 5, and 12 in Appendix A). Four items were considered: non-use of a condom at last sexual intercourse, more than one sexual partner in the past 12 months, ever been or gotten someone pregnant, and ever had a STD. The two latter items were included because they reveal evidence of high risk behaviour (UNAIDS, 1999b). Affirmative responses to each of the above items were given a score of 1 and then summed to obtain a sexual risk taking behaviour score.

4.2.2 The survey procedure and sample

The survey questionnaires were administered in a group session at one of the secondary schools. At the other six schools, the questionnaires were distributed and administered by

guidance teachers who were briefed on the procedures for administration and rationale for the study. Students were informed that the questionnaire was to be completed anonymously, and that their participation was voluntary and they could opt not to answer questions about which they felt sensitive. A stratified sampling method was used whereby the school population of 6049 learners was divided into strata on the basis of school, grade and gender. In order that the sample reflected the proportions of the larger population of learners in Eldorado Park attending each of the seven schools, the specific number of learners at each of the schools was obtained and divided by the total population to calculate the proportion of learners for each school. These proportions were then used to determine the required number of learners from the seven schools that needed to be recruited to obtain a sample of 1000 learners. For example, if the number of learners attending a specific school represented 15% of the total school population in Eldorado Park, 150 learners were to be recruited from that school to make up the sample of 1000 learners. In the same manner, the number of learners in grade 9 through to 12 was selected to reflect the proportion of learners in the respective grades within each of the seven participating schools. In addition, for the purposes of a comparative analysis across gender, equal numbers of female and male learners were to be randomly selected from each grade to participate in the study. In this respect, educators were instructed to divide each grade by the required number of learners for the survey. For example, if there were 30 female learners in a grade and 10 were required for the survey, the educator was instructed to select every third female learner on the class register. The same sampling procedure was to be followed for the selection of male participants. It seems however, that some of the educators did not always adhere to the correct sampling procedures as only 928 of the 1000 required number of participants completed the survey. In addition, the final sample consisted of slightly more female than male participants (53.2% [n=494] were female, and 46.8% [n=434] were male).

In order to determine the reliability of the information obtained from the survey the author conducted a reliability check by recruiting a new sample of approximately 10% (n=94) of the number of participants in the original survey. The required sampling procedures described above were used to recruit the 94 learners. A Binomial test was performed on each item in the questionnaire and at the recommended criterion of $p < 0.01$ no differences were found between the two sets of data (i.e., the original survey and the 10% reliability check) suggesting that the

survey findings were a reliable estimate of the opinions and experiences of grade 9 to grade 12 learners in Eldorado Park. Although the survey sample may be representative of the larger population of school going adolescents in Eldorado Park, caution should be taken in generalising the findings beyond this site to represent learners from other socioeconomic communities or to the adolescent population in South Africa in general. Learners from other communities with different socioeconomic conditions and cultural backgrounds may not have the same experiences with respect to interpersonal violence and sexual encounters.

4.2.3 Data analysis

Data from the questionnaire were analysed using SPSS. The prevalence of coercive behaviours (both sustained and perpetrated), beliefs about sexual coercion, alcohol use, and high risk sexual behaviours were calculated. A series of Pearson's Chi-square tests were used to measure significant gender differences for the abovementioned variables.

For the purposes of further analysis learners were classified into one of four groups according to their experience of sexual coercion in a dating relationship: 1) No coercion - the respondent reported neither perpetrating nor sustaining sexual coercion; 2) Perpetrator only - the respondent reported perpetrating but not sustaining sexual coercion; 3) Victim only - the respondent reported sustaining but not perpetrating sexual coercion; or 4) Victim/perpetrator - the respondent reported both sustaining and perpetrating sexual coercion. A series of Pearson's chi-square tests were used to measure significant differences among learners according to victim/perpetrator status for beliefs about sexual coercion, alcohol use and high risk sexual behaviours. These analyses were conducted separately for female and male learners, and where cell numbers were insufficient to permit the use of chi-square tests, dominant trends are presented.

Finally, a CHAID (Chi-squared Automatic Interaction Detector) analysis was undertaken to examine the association between sexual coercion and risky sexual behaviours in relation to other explanatory variables, namely, sociodemographic factors and alcohol use. The CHAID procedure is described in more detail in the section on the findings.

4.3 Focus group discussions

Focus group discussions were employed to collect information on young people's views about coercion and sex in dating relationships. The focus group method is particularly useful as it can be used to examine "not only what people think, but how they think, and why they think that way" (Kitzinger, 1995, p.299). Focus groups provide an interactive social context within which research participants generate data, exposing dominant values, beliefs, and norms about specific issues such as sexuality and dating relationships (Barbour & Kitzinger, 1999). Focus groups consisting of young people of similar ages can mirror the dynamics of the peer group (Allen, 2005) and offer insight into the sociocultural contexts in which adolescents function. In this respect, one of the limitations of focus group data is that the articulation of group norms may silence individual voices of resistance (Kitzinger, 1995).

4.3.1 Focus group procedures and participants

Focus group discussions were conducted with a group of female and another group of male learners at four of the secondary schools. Each of the eight groups participated in three consecutive sessions, totalling 24 focus group discussions. Learners from grade 10 and 11 were selected by guidance teachers to participate in the discussions on the basis that they represented a variety of learners in terms of academic performance and home language, and were willing to participate in the discussions.

Focus groups were conducted by two facilitators of the same sex as participants. While different teams of facilitators were used across the four schools, the same team of facilitators conducted the three consecutive sessions with each group. The facilitators consisted of five staff members from the UNISA Institute for Social and Health Sciences (ISHS) and two visiting international team members who were working on the project in the United States and Brazil. The ISHS facilitators were all South African and consisted of two male and two female staff members who grew up in Eldorado Park and had degrees in education or psychology, as well as a white female psychology intern who is the author of this study. The international team consisted of a Brazilian female professor affiliated to a university in Washington D.C. who was a clinical psychologist, and an African-American male psychology intern.

In the first focus group session, participants were informed that the discussions would focus

on the issues raised by the questionnaire and to participate they would need to commit to attending two follow-up focus group sessions. Learners were told that they were to report on the beliefs, behaviour, and experiences of youth in general in the community and not required to recount personal experiences. Learners were assured of the confidentiality of their information and informed that pseudonyms would be used to protect their identities in any written material. All the learners who presented for the first focus group session gave their consent to participate and attended the two follow-up sessions. The focus groups consisted of between 8 and 12 participants and were primarily conducted in English with a few of the participants speaking Afrikaans at times. In case some of the focus group participants may have become upset by some of the issues raised in the discussions, provision was made for counselling by the two clinical psychologists (one female and one male) on the research team who gave out their telephone numbers so learners could contact them.

In line with the broader aims of the larger project the first two sessions focused on 1) life in the community, 2) relationships, 3) sexuality and STDs, and 4) violence in relationships. The third session focused on learners' perceptions of selected survey findings, the causes of violence and associated risks, and suggestions for programme interventions. Although all of the focus group discussions were tape-recorded with the consent of learners, technical problems and poor audibility meant that approximately six of the 24 discussions could not be fully transcribed. This resulted in fewer transcripts from the male learners' discussions being available for analysis.

4.3.2 Data analysis

The material from the focus group discussions was used to explore the ways in which young people view and talk about coercion and sex in dating relationships. The analytical approach is informed by feminist and social constructivist theory (Allen, 2005; Hird, 2000; Hird & Jackson, 2001; Tolman, 1994, 2000). The actual process of analysis consisted of three stages. The first involved the reading all the transcripts and selecting all instances of young people's talk about sexual relationships. In the second stage, multiple readings of the selected material were undertaken to identify recurrent themes in young people's talk of sexuality and relationships that contribute to coercive and risky sexual practices. The third stage of the analysis involved the reexamination of these patterns of talk for evidence of resistance to

dominant discourses of heterosexuality. The transcript extracts presented in the findings exemplify patterns of talk about (hetero)sexuality, relationships and coercion.

4.4 Conclusion

In this chapter I have outlined the site, design, methods of data collection and analysis for the study on sexual coercion and high risk sexual behaviours in adolescent dating relationships. The results of the study which are based on analyses of information obtained from the survey and focus group discussions are presented in the next chapter.