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RESEARCH ARTICLE

Creating a space for young women's voices: Using 'participatory video drama' in Uganda

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Abstract

This paper draws upon research that explored the experiences of young women in relation to sexual health in Uganda with a view to enhancing gender-sensitive strategies. We have coined the phrase 'participatory video drama' to describe the exploratory methodology that the young women participants in our research used to present stories about their lives. The aim of this paper is to suggest that 'participatory video' (PV) and 'participatory video drama' (PVD) are innovative methodological tools to utilise when working with participants who experience voicelessness in their everyday lives. We contribute to an emerging body of work around this methodology by suggesting that the process of PV provides a novel and engaging platform for participants to express their experiences. PVD further creates spaces for the performative exploration of embedded power relations and is therefore informative and has the potential to be transformatory and empowering.

Keywords: Participatory video; Uganda; young women; empowerment

Introduction

The exploration of appropriate methodologies to broach the experiences of hard to reach groups in society has long been a preoccupation within many disciplines (e.g. Oakley 1981; Standing 1998; Sibley 1995; Sixsmith et al. 2003; Emmel et al. 2007). Feminist geographers have been particularly concerned to explore and theorise feminist 'ways of knowing' and epistemologies in order to discern gender-based disadvantage and particular knowledges from the standpoint of women (Gibson-Graham 1994; Harding 1998; Rose 1993, 1997). Certain methodologies are suggested as more appropriate to entering women's life-

worlds. These approaches strive for a heightened understanding for the researcher alongside an often explicit desire to enable a research encounter that creates space for social change and empowerment and the overturning of gendered vulnerabilities. With its focus on sexual health (primarily HIV/AIDs), this paper also draws upon critical public health which explicitly challenges scientific-logico academic norms by going beyond a traditional, biomedical focus on individual behaviour in favour of a wider economic, political and socio-cultural lens (Bunton and Wills 2004) and includes the search for appropriate methodologies to enable such a move.

'Participatory video' (PV) finds its intellectual home amongst the suite of methodologies that constitute 'participatory research' or 'participatory action research' (Freire 1982; Cloke 2002; Pain and Francis 2003; Pain 2004; Cornwall 2003; Reason and Bradbury 2006). The ethos of such research encapsulates a desire to move away from 'traditional' qualitative research where a researcher elicits information about 'them' in an extractive manner in favour of interactive research with an avowed commitment to the co-production of knowledge between the researchers and the researched (Ansell 2001). Participatory research also often contains an explicit quest for research to be a vehicle for social change and an assertion that participatory methods are more fruitful in pursuit of this 'end'.

The early reification of participatory methods in some community development quarters revolved around the assertion that participatory research enabled researchers to get closer to, and better reflect and represent, people's experiences. This elision of an approach with a claim that it enables a better representation of realities or 'truths' has been much critiqued. Concerns coalesce around the poststructuralist suggestion that participatory methods do not provide a mimetic lens into people's lives as participatory research itself is a form of power (Cooke and

Kothari 2001) whose dynamics may reflect powerful interests (Guijt and Kaul Shah 1998) that will inevitable shape research encounters and produce particular types of knowledge. We are cognisant of these knotty issues, but are also inspired by the conceptually sophisticated and reflexive set of participatory geographies (Cameron and Gibson 2005; Kindon et al. 2007) that argue it is injudicious to suggest that participatory research is somehow neutral and *not* imbued with power, and far more productive to explore the nuanced issues of the spatialities of power, multiple knowledges and representation within participatory approaches rather than an outright rejection of participatory research altogether (Kesby 2007).

The methodological challenge in our research of capturing hard to reach Ugandan young women's voices in an environment of gender inequality prompted us to adopt a participatory approach as we felt it would enable a flexible and engaging research experience more suited to young women's ways of knowing and expressing. An additional motivation was that children and young people are suggested to respond to participatory approaches in that they allow more self-directed involvement with the research process (Hart 1992; Johnson et al. 1995; Young and Barrett 2001; Ansell 2005). Participatory methodologies are therefore particularly appropriate to allow the active engagement of young people as 'meaning-producing beings' (Holloway and Valentine 2000) and to respond to commentators such as Kabwato (2005) who call for young people to be recognised as partners of development initiatives rather than as passive beneficiaries.

The application of PV within geographical research has emerged only relatively recently (see, for example, Kindon, 2003). Yet PV has a longer tradition of use in cognate disciplines such as cultural studies, for example Crocker (2003) discusses the first documented use of PV which

was an 18 month long research project in Newfoundland, Canada in the late 1960s that endeavoured to use video media to promote social change. Hume-Cook et al. (2007) describe how PV has been taken up in the last twenty years by community development practitioners (e.g. Braden and Mayo 1999; Lunch and Lunch 2006) and it crucially differs from documentary film making in that participants create videos according to *their own* rather than others' priorities. As such, PV offers participants an opportunity to de-stabilise the usual passive engagement with the dominant cultural form of film and become more actively involved in this media. The topics focused upon in PV often revolve around the presentation of a particular issue of concern (that may be co-determined by the participants and researchers/practitioners) and the video material may be subsequently reflected upon by the participants themselves and/or relayed to a wider audience. Less frequently seen in accounts of PV is how the methodology overlaps with the use of drama.

Drama for research is not a new notion, but geographers have tended not to use this performance oriented methodology despite performativity, often in an 'everyday' sense, being a well-versed concept in human geography (Butler 1993; Crang 1994; McDowell 1997; Dewsbury 2000; Gregson and Rose 2000; Thrift 2000; Crouch 2003). Much of the pioneering work of incorporating the performing arts into social science has come from educationalists. Dalrymple (2006) writes that drama-in-education and theatre-in-education flourished in the 1960s and 1970s and had a social change agenda with the aim of developing critical thinking or conscientizing the participants (Freire 1973; Freire and Shor 1987) so that they can become agents of their own change (Boal 1979). Although popular in certain pockets of the developing world (e.g. Brazil), it has perhaps not been until the 21st century that developed countries have

also begun to incorporate drama and theatre into their mainstream fields of education and development. Dalrymple (2006, 209) asserts that the, "role of an outside project is to become a catalyst for change by setting up a process of addressing a critical issue". For example, in the UK's 'Development Education' framework the arts are thought able to build relationships and develop sustainable communities, help heal the psychological scars of conflict, and be used to strive for positive change and social justice (Etherton and Prentki 2006).

This desire for change and social justice is captured through thinking about drama/theatre with a transformative objective, often called Applied Theatre (AT), and a spate of recent literature is testament to its conceptual emergence (Thompson 2003; Taylor 2003; Nicholson 2005). Researchers and facilitators of AT often work in situations of discrimination and exclusion towards a set of aims related to social transformation. Ideas on impact are, "likely to be framed in terms of a possible counter-narrative to the dominant ideology" (Etherton and Prentki 2006, 149) and as such AT is often an explicitly political activity that attempts to bring about changes in power relations. AT is generally taken to mean drama and theatre based activities taking place outside the formal school curriculum and traditional theatre buildings and is often undertaken with young people. Johnson et al. (1998) note that theatre pedagogy is a powerful process for enabling young people to explore and understand their reality, generate solutions to their problems and communicate their knowledge and learning to others. The recent popularity of AT is also linked to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) that spells out children's and young people's right to their own opinions, to express themselves in any medium, and to association. The CRC enshrines young people's independent and active participation in civil society as an inalienable right. Etherton and Prentki (2006, 147) argue that

it therefore forms, "the basis of a great deal of recent experimental work in using drama and theatre to advocate for children's and young people's positive role in civil society".

Our experience of 'participatory video drama' (PVD) with young women in Uganda leads us in this paper to reflexively explore the potential of PV and PVD to contribute to the suite of engaging and appropriate participatory methodologies. We make no claim to be an exemplar of practice, and it would be equally disingenuous to make pretence that our experience approached the purported 'gold standard' of *deep* participation (Hagey 1997). More pertinent is Kesby, Kindon and Pain's (2005, 145) suggestion that, "rather than being puritanical about the need to 'do participation deeply' or not at all, we recognise that the road to 'doing research differently' has to begin somewhere". Our motivation in this paper is to illuminate an explorative journey of using PV and PVD with young women in Uganda. The experience was methodologically fascinating and exciting and indicates its potential should the method be expanded and deepened. We make no apologies for the somewhat inconclusive nature of our findings which are presented here as nascent and emergent. They *are* suggestive, however, in that they speak of the potential of PV and PVD to provide a platform and open up a space for young women to articulate their voices and to performatively explore theirs and others' experiences; with regard to sexual health in this particular case. If more time were accorded to the project and longitudinal research devised around PV and PVD, then we believe this methodology has potential for this space of performance to begin to transform into action and possible social change, because, as Kesby (2007, 2814) suggests, 'participation can also be seen

as a resource for human agency that facilitates reflection and social transformation'[2]. As it played out in our research however, this social change dynamic has to stay within the realm of the potential. In this paper we wish to focus more on the *process* of PV and PVD and the 'moments' that arise through this methodological journey; we will offer some thoughts as to the *potential* of PVD for social change towards the end of the paper.

Following this introduction, which has introduced the concept of PV together with a consideration of the disciplines within which drama for research has developed, a second section contextualises the research in Uganda within policy and practice around sexual health promotion amongst vulnerable groups. The third section offers some reflections on both the process of PV/PVD and what the Ugandan young women's dramas are beginning to tell us about the sexual health context of their life-worlds. We close by offering some thoughts about the potential of PV and PVD for geographical research that is concerned with research participants who are 'hard to reach' and/or who habitually experience voicelessness.

Contextualising the research

This paper draws on an exploratory study which focused on young women living in a poor community where there is a high rate of HIV/AIDs. As such it responds to the observation of Matthews *et al* (1999, 135) that relatively little work has been done on the 'special position of exclusion' of children and young people in developing countries in comparison to those in Western contexts (an observation that is arguably still relevant today even in the light of valuable work which has begun to redress this research gap; e.g. Holt and Holloway's (2006)

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[2] Kesby (2007, 2814) is mindful, however, of the socio-spatial limitations of many participatory approaches that may prevent empowerment being, "distanciated and reperformed beyond the arenas of the interventions themselves" and he therefore urges a fuller exploration of the spatial dimensions of participation through the entanglements of power and agency.

collection on 'other' childhoods in a globalised world). Although a focus on women and gender inequalities in developing countries has increased over the past decades (Young and Moser 1981; Jackson 1996; Jackson and Pearson 1998; Kesby 1999; Baden and Milward 2000), this is not as apparent for girls and young women. In the context of a lack of young people's voices in development more generally (an oddity given the very young demographic profile of many African countries), girls and young women are less likely to have a voice. Our research was designed to explore appropriate methodologies that are capable of eliciting young women's voices with a view to adopting more gender sensitive approaches to sexual health. As such, this research was motivated from the outset by a desire to use methodologies that allow the more audible 'hearing' of young women's voices and for the researchers to learn from the participants' accounts of their life-worlds.

The work was conducted in partnership with Straight Talk Foundation (STF), a health communication NGO based in Uganda that produces materials aimed at young people. It aims, through its communications projects, to increase the understanding of sexuality and reproductive health, and to promote the adoption of safer sex practices (www.straight-talk.or.ug). Their experience of working with young people in Uganda (especially within certain cultures and locations) is that boys and young men are more confident, vocal and actively involved in projects around sexual health than girls and young women. Uganda is a 'least developed country' with a gross national income of US$250 per capita, where sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and HIV/AIDs continue to be priority public health problems, especially for young women. Although Uganda has succeeded in reducing HIV prevalence rates from a peak of 18% in the early 1990s to 6.4% in 2005, women continue to have higher

prevalence rates at a younger age compared to men due to certain biological susceptibility factors together with commonplace intergenerational sexual relations (Kelly et al. 2003; Ministry of Health 2006). For young people aged 15-19 years the proportion of girls infected with HIV/AIDs (2.7%) is higher than boys (0.3%)[3], an imbalance of great concern (Ministry of Health 2006).

Of the multiple vulnerabilities that young women living in poor countries may experience, sexual health vulnerabilities are prominent (UNAIDS 2005; UNICEF 2007; WHO 2006). Young women in poor communities are at greater risk from STIs than young men, they may experience limited choices and indeed coercion and violence in relation to sexuality and sexual health which leads to fewer options for safe sex (Seeley and Butcher 2006; WHO 2007). Sexual health is therefore a recognisably important area of health that impacts on experiences of poverty, as well as gender (Epstein et al. 2006). Improving young women's sexual health alleviates poverty through reducing morbidity and mortality from STIs. Also entwined is the potential of enhanced sexual health to lead to greater decision making power and control within young women's lives (Tamale 2005). In this study we resist portraying young women as poor and powerless despite the many real issues in their lives, but rather as active agents of their sexuality (Chimbiri 2007).

There is a considerable body of research exploring prevention of STIs/HIV amongst young people, with risk avoidance and reduction being the traditional cornerstones of public health initiatives (Halperin et al. 2004; WHO 2006). Yet there is scope for improvement in

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[3] Whilst the 15-19 years prevalence rates show that girls are nine times more likely to be infected than boys; if the figures are disaggregated by age they show that by 18-19 years girls are nineteen times more likely to be infected than boys.

current approaches to prevention given the complex nature of the problem, "[T]he social, cultural, economic, political, ethnic, gender and environmental factors are just as important as the biological factors when attempting to find solutions or devise strategies to combat disease." (Kalipeni et al. 2007, 1015). Government and non-Government agencies in Uganda have been tackling the problem of high rates of STIs/HIV in young people for some time, many working with schools and communities using communication, education and advocacy strategies. The ongoing experiences of these agencies would seem to mirror changes taking place in public health thinking, an increasing recognition that traditional health education with its emphasis on providing information for individual avoidance of risk is insufficient and has limited impact (WHO 2006). Indeed, Uganda's AIDs Commission National Strategic Plan 2007-2011 explicitly calls for a reduction of the more 'technical fix' approaches to prevention and an enhanced focus on gender issues in the quest to combat HIV/AIDs. There is increasing recognition of a need to link up multi-disciplinary efforts which acknowledge and promote the role of protective factors, such as those of parents and schools, as well as recognising that young people may not be able to 'use' knowledge in an empowered way (WHO 2006).

The ability to 'use' state and/or NGO provided knowledge regarding sexual health is of course refracted through the complex socio-cultural environment and emergent social relations that young people are located within that in turn constitute their subjectivities and positionalities. In semi-rural areas of Uganda, as in the case study of this paper (see below), the socio-cultural environment is an intriguing mix of the 'modern/changing' and the 'traditional' (see also Parikh 2007); the young women participants in this research receive sexual health education at school and through the radio, watch Nigerian soap-opera infused television, listen

to hip hop music and some even carry mobile phones. Yet 'modern' young women in semi-rural Uganda are also inflected with more 'traditional' structures and prescribed sets of social relations that see them having an acute sense of generational hierarchies (particularly revolving around respect for parents and other elders) and patriarchal dominance. That state and other NGO proclamations about the achievement of sexual health and the equality of women do not always translate into praxis on the ground is influenced in no small part by these socio-cultural mores. Some of these tensions in young women's lives are exhibited in the dramas described later in the paper and the delimiting nature of such social relations for potential action/change will be explored.

Story making in Busoga

The study took place in a semi-rural part of Jinja district, Busoga, Eastern Uganda as STF consider this a particularly difficult area to access young women's views and experiences due to entrenched gender inequalities. Our research involved working with 15 young women, aged 15-19 years[4], and it aimed to explore their lives as a means of contributing to strategies to enhance their sexual health. The young women were selected over the course of several weeks on the basis of being school attendees because we wished to conduct the research in English, a language common to the members of the research team and participants. Following initial meetings with the young women, we invited them to join a week of activities in February 2007. As mentioned above, STF were becoming increasingly aware through their work that young women in Busoga need a different approach to enable their voices to be heard. Using our

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[4] The young women were selected from the age group 15-19 years as this is a particularly vulnerable group in terms of HIV risk (see footnote 3). We followed well-established social science ethical codes for working with young people (Alderson and Morrow 2004).

experience of participatory methodologies in other development arenas, we decided to introduce various participatory research methods. The activities across the week included drawing, stories, games, aspirational writing, diaries and PV. We should note at this juncture, that neither us nor our STF colleagues were 'PV experts'. We have long been committed to participatory research at a grassroots level, but the particular use of PV was new to us in this project and stemmed largely from conversations with STF about how to 'do research differently' with young women together with being inspired by the PV work of Nick and Chris Lunch at Insight (www.insightshare.org). It should be added that our novice PV status seemed to encourage a much more equal 'learning together' with the young women in Busoga that may have helped erode some hierarchies. Whilst there is no doubt that the young women perceived us as 'outsiders', there appeared to be a levelling effect of us all fathoming how to operate the video cameras together with no overseeing 'teachers'; just lots of learners.

We started the study by asking young women about their lives, for example, 'what is the life of a Busoga girl like?', 'what challenges does she face?' This approach was inspired by Harding (1998) who, as a starting point for feminist research, suggests exploring women's lives in a general sense, rather than looking at externally determined variables. In this way it allows for a fuller representation of young women's standpoint using their own language and narrative style, not fragmented as it might be with other methods. In the course of exploring different methodologies with the participants throughout the week, it emerged that drama through PV excited the young women greatly and had wide appeal. Our thought was that the young women would act a drama and utilise their newly learnt video camera skills with a rotational video operative ('filmer') from amongst their group. The groups, however, all decided that they

wanted to participate wholly in the dramas and didn't want to be behind the lens of the video camera; a choice that was made as they had earlier experienced what it was like to be a filmer and instead they wished to perform. The researchers therefore operated the camera whilst the young women acted out the dramas. Before the dramas emerged at the end of our week together, the PV games throughout the week had involved the young women using the two video cameras, first learning how to film each other, gaining filming skills such as 'framing', and then interviewing each other on camera (see Figure 1), before finally looking at the results together on a laptop (see Figure 2). These exercises generated a lot of fun and conversation. The story telling was then used to provide material for the dramas.

Figure 1: Learning how to use the video camera

Figure 2: Viewing video recordings on a laptop

The participants wrote a short story about 'the life of a Busoga girl'. The stories were rich, varied and fascinating. They ranged from stories about girls going to school, talking to friends, but mostly involved darker themes of parent-daughter disagreement, forced marriage, rape, unwanted pregnancy, and HIV. The young women decided to make their dramas using an 'integrated theme' from the stories. They felt an attempt to dramatise just one theme from their stories would be impossible to disentangle due to real life complexity and inter-connections. The young women developed stories with characters in groups and took a few hours to plan under the trees (see Figure 3). As mentioned earlier, although the participants didn't film the dramas themselves, the PV part of the process seemed important in giving young women confidence to act out a drama for an audience. They were further pleased that their

work had been 'captured' through the filming for viewing by themselves and a presentation of their work for their parents later in the week[5].

Figure 3: Planning the dramas from stories

Emerging dramas

The young women's work consists of three dramas, based on their 'life stories of a Busoga girl'. There was strong common ground between them with each drama centring on a daughter as the main character, involved in exchanges with parents. The daughters were presented with a choice made by their parents which leads to them leaving school or home,

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[5] This participant-agreed screening of the young women's dramas constituted a 'community viewing'; although the audience was comprised mostly of the participants' parents due to the timing of the screening (determined by the community venue that was being used and the researchers' departure from the field on the last day of the week of activities). Straight Talk Foundation expressed an interest in using the dramas for wider community screenings and to further communicate with policy makers at different scales. It is such re-performance beyond original arenas that holds the potential of contributing to social change. Although beyond the remit of this particular time-limited piece of research; future research efforts could be oriented towards a careful evaluation of the ongoing and 'spreading' outcomes of participatory research experiences.

getting married or going on the street, which culminates with the daughter being raped and infected with HIV/AIDs. Yet, despite the similarities each drama has distinctive elements. Although a textual representation of the young women's work is rather dissatisfactory as it flattens the emotional performances due to a necessarily disembodied representation, we have here attempted to present short synopses of the dramas to provide a flavour of the stories.

Drama One

This starts with a daughter returning home from school with a good report to show both her parents. Her parents are pleased. Her father then informs her that he does not have work and she will need to leave school and marry a man who will give them cattle.

> Father : 'I don't have money. I have been working in Kampala but these days there is no longer jobs. So I am thinking that you can get married. We have got a man who gave us these things (pointing), these cattle.'

> Her mother supports him: 'You have to go. You have a rich man.'

The daughter leaves with the man and goes to his house. Some time passes and the young wife is pregnant and sick. She speaks to her husband. He is angry.

> Husband (shouting): 'You are infected?'

> Wife: 'You are the one.'

> Husband (shouting): 'I am the one? Me, I am not the one, maybe you! We should go for testing.'

She returns home to her parents and they are saddened.

Drama Two

Here a mother is angry with her daughter. They have a conversation about housework and behaviour.

> Mother: (in a strong and demanding voice): '[Daughter], come. You are supposed to do some work.'
>
> Daughter (in a quiet and submissive voice): 'Which work mum?'
>
> Mother: Like (pause) 'You don't know the work?' (shouting)
>
> Daughter (in the same quiet voice): 'I don't know – tell me.'

She discusses her problem daughter with her neighbour who tells her to arrange marriage for her daughter. Then she calls in her brother to help.

> Mother: 'The problem I have and the reason I have called you here is my daughter. She has become a problem to me – she doesn't want to listen to me; and she walks up and down the whole day; she doesn't want to work; she doesn't want to go to school – At least you can help me and take her. I'm tired of her.'

The Uncle visits and speaks to the daughter. She is sent to stay with him. She goes out and meets her friend. She greets them and High-5s them. 'Hi girl' says one. They arrange a meeting with a man who she meets alone and is raped. She is infected with HIV. Her mother finds out and is grief-stricken.

Drama Three

Here a widow is trying to cope with three daughters after the death of her husband. She says over and over that she cannot cope anymore and she calls her daughters to tell them they must marry.

Mother (sitting alone): 'I am tired of this home. I don't know what I will do. Since their father died, I am tired of the orphans. I don't know what they can bring. I don't want to care for them. I am tired of coping with them.'

The most outspoken daughter tries to resist.

Daughter: 'For me, I first take care of my future before I get married. You are even lying!' She states that, 'The government says a girl shouldn't marry until 18 years.'

But the mother is insistent.

Mother: 'Excuse me. Give me a break! Me, I don't follow the government of today. If you deny to get married, you have to look for where to live and leave my home.'

This outspoken daughter goes off, and meets a strange man.

Man (enters and takes a seat): 'Now, it is time to look for a girl. I am going to look.' (He sees the daughter coming and stands up with hand on hip). 'She is the one. Hello young girl.'

Daughter: 'Hello'

Man: 'How are you?'

Daughter: 'I am fine.'

Man: 'I have been looking for a girl, now I have met you. So, I love you.'

Daughter (hand on hip and in a surprised and contemptuous voice): 'Think about what you have said!'

Man (repeats with his hand on hip): 'I love you.'

Daughter: 'You are even lying. You find your level best. I'm not even your size. You are not my age. How can I love you? How can my family hear that I love such a man? Don't even familiar me.'

Man: 'Now, if you receive me … (and he grabs her).'

Daughter (cries): 'Mummy, Mummy – help me!'

She returns to her mother who is grief- stricken by the news that her daughter has been raped and is HIV positive.

We found ourselves in the situation of having these three powerful dramas, but without the resources to get the groups back together later to analyse them. In line with a feminist agenda we wanted to move away from a dominant academic discourse in our analysis. We wished to avoid overly abstracting the young women's stories, extracting and separating out themes, especially as this approach had in effect been rejected by young women in their making of the dramas. We aimed to emphasize what appeared to be important to the young women in their making of the dramas. As we had used an arts based method, we turned to arts based analysis to consider the narrative not only from the point of view of the content, what the story seems to be saying, but also from the point of view of 'how' it is being said (the form of the narrative) in terms of the culturally specific characterisation, plot, embodiment, voice, and narration techniques. Rose (2001) and Pollock (1988), in their use of feminist analysis to understand women's visual work were useful here, along with Mauthner and Doucet (1998) and Denzin's (1970) suggestion that a 'readings' approach to analysis is capable of bringing out multi-layered meanings

A critical arts based analysis thus considers not only the story at 'face value' but also it looks at underlying ideas and values. It adopts a critical approach in looking at what is missing, gaps in the narrative, unexpectedness, tensions as well as what is on the surface. Artists of all kinds are respected and have a status of their own in this type of analysis, what they say and how they say it has 'weight'. It appeared to us that the participants as playwrights and actors in

their dramas had used a range of powerful techniques to convey their ideas. We have tried to look not only for the obvious realist elements of the performances, but also for the critical and subversive dimensions in terms of what is missing or distorted; whether there are hidden themes or messages, where special dramatic techniques are used to make a critical point that might highlight moments of resistance.

As discussed in the introduction, the aim of this paper is primarily to discuss a methodology that is engaging, flexible and participant-focused. In the course of this however, it is also interesting to delve a little into how the experience of PV and PVD in this Ugandan case study enabled the participants to reflect upon their own situatedness with regard to sexual health issues, which also enables STF to further explore young women's knowledge about their lives.

Attempting to read the dramas

Drama One

The story starts on a positive note with the father expressing his pleasure and approval for the daughter's good school report. The change from this positive phase comes quickly however, and the story descends rapidly into difficulty with the announcement of the father's loss of job and inability to pay school fees. There is therefore the need for the daughter to marry (with the implication that not only are the family unable to pay for her to go to school but they might need the 'bridewealth' income from her marriage to support the family; Parikh, 2007). The daughter, whilst saying 'no' to her fate, is unable to resist. Her parents seem reluctant also, but there is a sense of helplessness in the face of the change in circumstances. The drama conveys a sense of the fragility of female schooling, with the daughter's life changing

for the worse very rapidly. The father's voice is the strongest in the narrative, with the mother deferring to her husband, apparently supporting him. The second main voice in the drama is the daughter's new husband. The daughter is submissive in body, words and tone to her parents and husband, conveying the sense of a good, well behaved daughter who is subject to bad fortune. We see that she shifts from parental control to her new husband's control and dominance. When she tells the husband she is HIV positive his voice is violent and angry, although we sense that it is he who has infected his wife.

Drama Two

Dramas two and three mainly involve an exchange between a mother and daughter. In drama two an angry mother shouts at her rebelling daughter about her unwillingness to do housework and her bad behaviour in moving outside the house with 'bad groups'. Her uncle is introduced and he uses strong tones of authority to support the mother. Although the daughter appears to be submissive in her body and tone, her words are contradictory as she refuses the traditional act of kneeling to greet an adult due to a 'problem of knees'. Her actions are also at odds with traditional expectations. She goes to meet her friends, saying 'hi' and 'high-fiving'. She then meets a man who says, using cocky and self-assured body language, that he 'loves' her before proceeding to rape her. Unlike the daughter in drama one she is projected as a badly behaved young woman, with a suggestion that she is perhaps being punished for her resistance to deemed 'proper behaviour'. It would appear from the dramas, however, that 'good' or 'bad' behaviour from the daughter may not influence the outcome of the story which touches upon notions of the futility of personal action.

Drama Three

This drama is dominated by the voice of the widow and one of her daughters and both speak with strong voices. The widow is saying that she cannot cope. She has a number of children and since the death of her husband she is finding it too difficult. She asks the daughter to help with the washing of clothes rather than going to school. Then she moves on to say, 'you can get married I am tired of you'. She calls her other two daughters and asks that they get married. One of the daughters is particularly outspoken and argues strongly with her mother, 'I first take care of my future before I get married.' But the daughters are forced to leave home. In the next scene the outspoken daughter meets a man who proceeds to 'chat her up'. She rejects him, telling him that he is not the right 'level' or 'size' (referring to the fact that he is older than her). But he ignores this resistance and attacks her 'Now if you receive me…..'. The mother hears of the rape through one of the daughters and finally the raped daughter returns. She is pregnant and she tells her mother that she has HIV. The mother is sorry for what has happened.

What the dramas together affirm is that young women do have strong voices and are a rich source of embedded knowledge about the sexual health context of their lives. PVD provided them with an opportunity, one that they used with relish, to express themselves. Their voices were present in different styles using varying dramatic techniques. They used multiple voices and enacted different performative roles and the voices conveyed their lives through dramatic means. As has been seen, these portrayals often depict familial life underpinned by patriarchal gender relations. Sylvia Walby (1989, 1990, 1997) theorised patriarchy in a way that emphasises the structural nature of women's oppression which is key to consider in this paper,

yet we are cautious not to marginalise women's agency in the course of deploying the concept of patriarchy (Pollert 1996; Gottfried 1998).

The vocalisation and embodiment of multiple voices was an important feature of the dramas. The different voices included those of daughters; different kinds of daughters, daughters behaving in different ways. Although the daughters were central characters to the plots, the most vocal voices were of the parents, mainly mothers' voices and one father in drama one. This is reflective of Ugandan children and young people's continued respect for all adults, but particularly parents. Other voices were that of an uncle, a neighbour, a husband, and a rapist[6]. These multiple voices gave a real sense of the peopling of young women's lives and the importance of these kin and other significant relationships (Kilbride and Kilbride, 1990; Ankrah 1993). It also links to the idea of multiply constituted rather than individually oriented subjectivities (Sugden 2000). This gives a sense of the reality of their lives as by presenting these multiple voices we can feel that we are watching a real scene of life. Through the eyes of young women we see how they perceive the people in their lives and the emergent relationships. For example, the parent who is unemployed feels he has little choice but to arrange for his daughter to marry as a husband can offer wealth in the form of cows. The widowed mother cannot cope and also takes action to relieve herself of the burden of managing her daughters by insisting that they marry. Whilst parents are generally sympathetically portrayed in the dramas however, the other important group in the lives of young women - men - are portrayed in quite a different and negative way.

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[6] It is important to point out here that the terms 'rapist' and 'rape' were readily used by the young women in this research so are not imposed, or 'etic' terms. It is equally critical, however, to contextualise this normalisation of these terms within the prevailing socio-cultural environment where coerced/forced sex is depressingly mundane.

The style in which men are depicted through voice and body says much about gender relations in an environment where intergenerational sexual relations are commonplace ('sugar daddies' and 'something for something love'; Luke 2003, 2005; Konde-Lule et al. 2005; Moore 2006), which overlap at times with a social acceptance, or least resignation of the inevitability, of coercive sex (Kesby and Gwanzura-Ottemoller 2007; Kesby, Gwanzura-Ottemoller and Chizororo 2006). An example comes from drama three where the rapist first depicts 'cockiness' when he greets the daughter. He does this with a cheeky declaration of love, and through his body language with his hand on hip and his hip thrust forward. This conveys an image of male confidence, someone who is sure of themselves. Another example is that of the husband in drama one who becomes angry when his wife tells him she is HIV positive. The style in which men are depicted seems to be saying something about the 'power over' that men hold in relation to women (Rowlands 1995), particularly in patriarchal contexts. The analysis of power has been considerably sharpened by Allen (2003), who says that power has various modalities which overlap, move back and forth and produce effects in quite different ways. He says that 'power over' can be in the form of domination, coercion, authority, manipulation, inducement and seduction. The depiction of men in the dramas perhaps indicates that young women perceive men to be in possession of some of these modalities, although Kesby's (2007) poststructuralist analysis of power also urges us to consider power as refracted through social norms and as dispersed within the discourses and practices that *position* men as 'powerful'.

The voices further convey a range of emotions in the dramas. Anger and despair is used by mothers and daughters. The husband in drama one is irate in the way he talks to his wife. Daughters and parents represent fear and grief through their performances. These emotions

help to convey the sense of a tragedy unfolding, and a feeling of the fragility of young women's lives which reinforces to the audience the seriousness and pain of the crisis which occurs. Emotions haven't always been considered a 'valid' area of research for geography, but the so-called emotional turn in the discipline (Anderson and Smith 2001, Davidson et al. 2005) emphasises how social relations are lived through emotions and calls for a deeper understanding of the *relationality* and *spatiality* of emotions rather than as, "entirely interiorised subjective mental states" (Davidson et al. 2005, 2). Emotional performances may be heightened in spaces of drama, but may nevertheless be indicative of the range of spatial scales and contexts that emotions are experienced in the everyday lives of the young women in our research. The enacting of sometimes very visceral emotions by our participants, such as anger and fear, provide a window for researchers and practitioners through which to view the young women's social relations. It is through these social relations and the emotions that they elicit that their pursuit of sexual health is mediated.

Some voices in the dramas further convey resistance through humour, by using a dissonance between cheeky words and a submissive voice (drama two with the daughter in her exchanges with mother and uncle). It was Foucault (1977) who perhaps most famously developed a nuanced analysis of power to suggest that it lacks rigidity or any monolithic form and is indeed defined by the concurrent existence of *resistance*. In drama three resistance is conveyed in a different way with a straightforward statement in an assertive voice (the daughter speaking to the mother). The technique of humour as a means of resistance seems to have a crucial role here for the young women.

The point about humour and other related techniques ('foot dragging' etc. Scott 1985) is that they are a subtle source of resistance, they make resistance possible because they are prosaic and indirect in an environment where it is difficult for young women to be directly resistant and critical. This makes the drama no less powerful as a means of resistance, indeed it may have even more impact on the audience. This resonates with similar research in Zaria, Nigeria in which school-based drama using these different kinds of techniques had considerable impact on the adult audience (Kafewo 2008). Similarly, the declamatory statement or speech, impassioned and strong, such as in drama three is a device used to great effect by dramatists. Yet, despite these signs of resistance, the withdrawal from school and ensuing tragic events seem to be projected as inevitable with young women having little or no control over them in a circumscribed environment. The young women seem to be saying that they are constituted by (at least) two competing discourses; the more 'traditionally' framed socio-cultural mores that are projected in a constraining light, and a set of futures that are imagined as liberated from these restrictive social relations.

Our research demonstrates that the innovative methodology of PVD can allow the hearing of young women's strong voices and an airing of their ideas regarding constraints on the promotion of their sexual health. So what exactly are these ideas that are being presented dramatically? The dramas portrayed a sense of young women's desires – for schooling, freedom of choice, security from trouble. These desires fit broadly with a gender empowerment agenda (Kabeer 1999; Parpart 2002; Sharp et al. 2003). The young women want the kind of change which is part of that agenda, and they wish to move away from what is often projected as their prescribed roles and lives.

Young women seem to be saying something about tradition and the need to change; resisting certain practices that can be interpreted as being patriarchal, or constitutive of the 'patriarchal bargain' (Kandiyoti 1998). They are especially concerned about the tradition of arranged or forced early marriage as a means for the family to get out of difficulty. Yet, they have a mature understanding of how difficult life can be for their parents. There is a strong sense in the dramas of the young women's vulnerability in the face of a hostile environment. They are vulnerable to negative swings in the fortunes of their parents which often have a direct impact on them. The young women seem to have an embedded fear of this downswing in their fortunes as they return to the integrated theme of 'trouble' in each of the dramas that is at least partially constituted by structural economic constraints.

There are also important ideas about young women's attitudes to men and future husbands in the dramas. Unlike the sympathetic portrayal of parents, the young women present men in the dramas in a very negative light, as shadowy and rather frightening figures. Men appear to be the 'other', stranger. There is a sense of not knowing them as people and not engaging with them. The two main male characters are a harsh husband and a self-confident rapist. What is emerging is a sense of a big gender divide between young women and men and perhaps the existence of a pernicious kind of 'power over' young women by men (Pattman 2005). The dramas reveal a strong sense of the agency of young women being constructed and fashioned through the weight of socio-culturally constructed gender roles and emerging relations. Gender relations are critically important to young women's sexual health, and more broadly to their well-being. Young women in this research are highlighting problematic gender relations, and a first stage of addressing these is to understand their dynamics and the way in

which they are framed. We suggest that PVD is a powerful part of this process of understanding the situated embeddedness of gender relations for young women in Uganda. PVD has created the space for the performative exploration of power relations and if dialogue emerges between and amongst women, men, young women and young men (Cornwall 2000; Chant 2000; Greene 2000) then this exploration can serve as a potential springboard for deeper empowerment through social change.

These issues are of significant concern for those involved in sexual health promotion. As we discussed earlier in this paper, the traditional cornerstone of sexual health promotion for young people is provision of information for individual avoidance, typically within the space of school. Yet, there is increased recognition that there is more to sexual health promotion than this. Amongst other strategies, there is a greater recognition of the key role of protective factors such as parents and community (WHO 2006; Mayer and Pizer 2009). The dramas highlight the important role of parents, men and the wider community in relation to young women's sexual health and they describe the importance of poverty in influencing the behaviour of parents. The dramas show (through the eyes of the young women) just how difficult it is for parents to protect their daughters in such a hostile environment, particularly when they themselves experience a downturn in their fortunes. In giving emphasis to the idea of a protective environment, the dramas reinforce the message that there needs to be a stronger focus on this within sexual health promotion, although they do not pull any punches as to the difficulties that might be encountered in doing so.

The dramas also express young women's desire to go to school and indeed in sexual health promotion terms, it is difficult for young women to be accessed if they drop out of

school. The cornerstone of gender empowerment policy in relation to young women is the emphasis on attending school (building on Millennium Development Goal 2 which aims to achieve universal primary education by 2015). This research highlights how much the young women feel they are at risk of falling out of school. Clearly increased opportunity for remaining in school is vital for young women's empowerment. Provision of 'free' schooling for young women would increase the chances that parents would allow young women to stay at school; and this would have an effect on access to sexual health promotion. Yet, it is likely that there is a need to go beyond the technical fix of provision of a school place to creating more gender-sensitive school environments through various means. For example, in the Ugandan context, increasing the numbers of female teachers is vital (Brock and Cammish 1998), alongside addressing negative gender constructions which act as a barrier to young women's inclusion in school-based health education and affect their ability to make informed and confident decisions about sex, as well as other appropriate strategies (Ahlberg et al. 2001; Stromquist 2002).

Can decision makers learn from such non-traditional research? It is always a challenge for participatory research to be taken seriously by decision makers because it is based on the voices of, and the knowledge of, the subjects of research; particularly if they are those who are not normally heeded as in this case. These types of outputs are often not regarded as a legitimate basis for making decisions. However, there is an increasing interest in sexual health promotion which acknowledges and uses the social nature of behaviour, and the stories which people tell to describe and explain that behaviour. Also, sexuality (and therefore sexual health) is inherently *embodied*, and therefore it lends itself for promotion purposes to a strongly performative element, often unaccompanied by conversation (see, for example, the 2007 UK TV

anti-chlamydia campaign which presents a drama of young people clubbing, dancing, kissing with no verbal interaction, Health Protection Agency UK 2008). So it would seem appropriate to acknowledge and use the embodied nature of sexual behaviour in research around sexual health, and the methodology of PVD can begin to broach such embodied dynamics.

Conclusion

The aim of this paper has been to argue that PV and PVD are innovative methodological tools to use when working with participants who experience voicelessness in their everyday lives. Through our research in Uganda we found that PVD is a powerful dialogic means for young women to express themselves and articulate their voices. The platform of PVD allowed a freer form of expression for participants in our research, in a way that conventional research methodologies may not. We found that drama offered the young women scope to create powerful scenes to express their life worlds and explore embedded power relations; perhaps in a 'rehearsal for reality' way of questioning, and trying out alternative means dealing with, everyday social relations (Jones and SPEECH 2001; Kesby et al. 2002). They used their voices and bodies to enable the performative 'playing' with others' positionalities. The embedded situatedness of such role-playing may be useful for representing, and potentially resolving, conflict.

Drama means that participants do not have to speak out directly to a group in public as themselves but can take on a character and interact with other characters as 'active' agents in the narrative. The young women seemed to grow in confidence from the audience being obliged to be quiet, not interrupt, listen, and be 'passive' rather than distracting or interjecting as might be the case in a typical group discussion. As such, we argue that PVD has tremendous

potential for accessing young people's voices, and for deepening participation. In the setting of our research, it seems particularly appropriate because of the difficulties in accessing young women's voices, the fact that young women are seldom listened to, and the added imperative for policy and practice to urgently act in a hostile environment of poverty and sexual health risk.

For geographical research more broadly, we suggest that PVD is an exciting and innovative methodological tool to employ, particularly if research participants are 'hard to reach' and/or habitually experiencing voicelessness. Although the Ugandan research detailed in this paper was small-scale, we feel it has touched upon a realm of great potential as PVD has been shown to create space for the performative exploration of embedded power relations. It is therefore informative and has the potential to be transformatory and empowering if its usage is deepened and extended.

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