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Struggle for a Sustainable Solution

Building Safe Sex-Talk Spaces with a Rural Kenyan Community

Laura Ann Chubb

Abstract

Linda Tuhiwai Smith’s (1999) call to decolonise research processes—and the knowledge acquired through them—spawned a powerful shift in relationships between those who work in, and members to, local communities, by enhancing success through culturally relevant outcomes. This dissertation offers a context-specific example of a decolonising approach to working in partnership with communities. Explored within are activities conducted with members of a rural Kenyan community. Together a traditional East African gathering space, the baraza, was adapted to foster intergenerational dialogue on young people’s experiences, and adults’ assumptions, of their sexual learning and exposure. Adopting a Freirean conceptualisation of dialogue, the long-term goal of this project is to positively impact the Sexual Health Landscape (SHL) through adapting mabaraza for intergenerational sex-talk on this culturally sensitive topic. Ultimately, the four cycles of this project resulted in enhanced awareness of community-specific sex-related problems linked to poverty, adolescent pregnancies, gender inequalities, along with violation of, and vulnerability concerning, young people’s sexual rights.

In this study, I applied a community-based participatory action research (CBPAR) methodology through a critical post-colonial lens. I worked with a trained local research team to gather community contributors’ stories of sexual learning and exposure which were approached from a position of transformation. First, we developed a context-specific model from the information gathered to understand the sex-related problems characteristic of the community. This model narrowed our focus on the most significant issues requiring urgent response. Next, the research team and youth participants worked together to design storyboards and a film script as dialogic tools to share their experiences in mabaraza. These tools were springboards for reciprocal intergenerational sex-talk that did not require the verbal input of young people—simultaneously protecting their identity and strengthening their agency. The contextual model effectively widened understanding of community-identified sex-related problems; situating issues within the current post-colonising/neo-colonising context. Results evidenced meaningful ways to pair art-based strategies, which stimulate participatory dialogue in traditional spaces, while fostering community-driven, culturally relevant, solutions for critical awareness of sex-related issues. Finally, this work serves as a roadmap for encouraging community members to find power in the change process, while elucidating the challenges and possibilities for other novice CBPAR researchers endeavouring to undertake this line of inquiry.
Dedicated to my Dad,
Wayne Chubb,
who taught me that the relationships we build with people matter more than anything.
You were a man of few words when you wanted to be,
but made the ones you chose to use, count.
Yote uliyokuwa, niliwabeba nami. All you were I carry with me.
Acknowledgements

Weaving all the elements of this dissertation was a true collaborative effort between my research team, the community contributors who worked alongside us, Kasena and PANGO, my family, two supervisors, and friends (spanning time zones and oceans) along with the scholars whose work challenged me to think critically about my engagement with the world. To the community contributors from Mwakirunge ward and the smaller area of Mirimani, thank you for allowing me to enter and occupy space in your busy lives. Your willingness to share your local knowledge and experience, as well as your jokes, methalis, and home-cooked food. Your warm smiles and strong convictions about the importance of making changes in your community were inviting and inspiring. I would like to recognise Jane, Amanda, Daniel, and Samir – the wordsmiths who copyedited earlier versions of the chapters. Passive voice and split infinitives still get me every time, but I am a work in progress!

Thank you to the Society of Community Research and Action (SCRA) for awarding a mini-grant to fund **Cycle Three** of our project. Your support covered transport, food for sharing, and the costs of two computers to stay with our local research team, making testing mabaraza possible. In addition, I would like to extend my appreciation to all those who donated to my crowd funding campaign ‘Creating Conversations’. Without your generous contributions, professional training of a local research team, our meetings, and transport to and from the research site, would not have been possible during **Cycles One** and **Two** of this work.

Karen, I can never say enough about you, my Kenyan sister. You are one incredibly fiery young woman, with unparalleled gumption. I cannot thank you enough for your dedication to seeing this project through (during and after my presence in Kenya). Your passion about community issues, despite how daunting this work sometimes was, whilst also struggling to maintain balance with your career, family, and health, was always a strong source of motivation, helping to stoke my own fire. Staying up late drinking tea and laughing until our stomachs ached, listening to you complain about the lack of salt in my cooking, rooftop sunsets, beach walks, and doubling up on our boda-boda journeys, singing all the way to Mwakirunge are among my favourite memories from Kenya. Thank you for your beautiful friendship.
My appreciation extends to the authors of Old Enough to Know, especially Dr Susan Kiragu Kanayo for leading me to mabaraza in Kenya. Susan, thank you for being an inspiring teacher, deeply committed to transformative education, and for your compassion toward children with multiple vulnerabilities. You enter all your relationships with love, embodying the true essence of Ubuntu. Dialoguing with you (and your hubby) during the formative stages of this project was invaluable; it is something I will forever treasure. For living your passion to its fullest every day, and for your lovely friendship, I say, with fondness, “Asante Sana Dada”.

To my family—I did not choose you, but if I could, I would. To Leah, David, and Craig, I have learned so much from all of you because of how different you are from me and from each other. To Aunt Ann, your prayers, FaceTime chats, books, and updates to my wardrobe have been a source of stability throughout this entire process. I feel peace knowing that while her children are spread across the globe, Mom has you for support. Mom, there are not enough pages in this dissertation to convey the gratitude I feel for you. You are the most positive, determined, and powerful woman in my life. I never want you to discount for a second how much your love means to me. None of this would have been possible without everything you have given up so freely. To my wonderful Dad—I started this work for me but have spent the last year finishing it for you. Thank you for teaching me to be where my feet are, that every day can be a good day if you want it to be, and for having such a large family of hilarious and supportive siblings. In Boswarlos, you built our own little “Chubb Village” and I love knowing I can always count on one of my 13 aunts or uncles to share a funny story about you when I miss you most.

Finally, to my supervisory dream team, Professor Christa Fouché and Dr Allen Bartley, you have gone above and beyond to support me at each stage of this work. Learning from you both has been an absolute privilege. Thank you to Allen for your unique ability to lead me through the fog to clarity, for the impromptu meetings, and general enthusiasm for this project, which fuelled my excitement to push forward well after our meetings finished. In 2015, you shared a powerful piece of advice with your doctoral students. You said to appreciate the process and the fact that this is one of the rare moments in our lives when we have an extended period of time to think deeply about our thinking. This helped to ground me over the past year and allowed me to arrive at a space of trusting in the process. To Christa, my Kiwi mum (which is how I not-so-secretly refer to you), you have always felt like much more than a supervisor. Having the opportunity to work with someone whose work I hold in such high regard was an honour. Through my anxiety, tears, setbacks, and successes, your support and confidence in my abilities allowed me to believe
in myself. For the unspoken permission to let me run wild in my exploration of all the disciplines that inform this dissertation—whether explicitly stated or not—for getting excited with me along the way, and for never forcing me to compromise my passion for action research in spite of the constraints of the PhD, I am forever grateful to the both of you.
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<th>Definitions</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AIDS</td>
<td>Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome, or AIDS, is the latter stage of HIV progression, where the CD4 count of a person falls below &lt;200cells/microL, as a result of chronic HIV infection.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AR</td>
<td>Action Research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ARHD</td>
<td>Adolescent Reproductive Health and Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CBPAR</td>
<td>Community-based participatory action research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CICC</td>
<td>Coast Inter-Faith Council of Clerics is a Kenyan organisation of which the clerical leaders of all faiths practiced in Mombasa County are members.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Contributors</td>
<td>Young people and adults who contributed their voices/experiences to one or more of the four different cycles of research. Also referred to as contributors.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HIV</td>
<td>Human Immunodeficiency Virus. A retrovirus which is transmitted through bodily fluids. This virus attacks the helper T-cells (CD4 count) of an individual which are cells designed to fight infection and disease. Thus, HIV lowers the body’s immune system over time, exposing it to increased risk of opportunistic infections.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INGO</td>
<td>International non-governmental organisation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intergenerational Dialogue</td>
<td>Interactions between generation-diverse individuals; specifically, those interactions between groups of individuals belonging to more than two generations in the same space.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KINGO</td>
<td>Acronym used throughout the dissertation to denote a Kenyan branch of a prominent international NGO that operated within the research site. This acronym is a pseudonym</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
to protect the identities of those who contributed to this research.

*Even in-text citations have been de-identified this way and excluded from the reference list.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NGO</td>
<td>Non-governmental organisation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NPANGO</td>
<td>Acronym used throughout the dissertation to denote a new partner NGO in this research after dissemination cycle had finished. This acronym is a pseudonym to protect the identities of those who contributed to this research.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PANGO</td>
<td>Acronym used throughout the dissertation to denote the partner NGO in this research.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PLWH</td>
<td>Persons/People living with HIV or AIDS.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Team</td>
<td>Local volunteers from PANGO who took part in qualitative research training and were interviewed to be chosen for positions as researchers to assist in actions throughout all cycles of the research. Since these individuals had local knowledge and expertise, they are sometimes referred to as local knowledge experts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SHL</td>
<td>Sexual health landscape refers to the overall sexual health of a community related to: the frequency of sex-related issues such as teen pregnancy; rate of STIs/STDs; HIV/AIDS cases; sexual and/or gender rights violations; transactional sex; and the ability to address these issues openly without subjection to any form of silence (e.g., various expressions of discrimination, stigmatisation, marginalisation, oppression).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SLC(s)</td>
<td>Sexual learning climates are various routes and manners in which people learn about, or share, knowledge around sex-related topics. This includes the norms beliefs, attitudes, and practices that might influence risky behaviours or sexual and gender rights violations, which contribute to the overall condition of the SHL.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SRH</td>
<td>Sexual reproductive health</td>
</tr>
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</table>
STD(s)
Sexually transmitted diseases, interchangeably referred to as sexually transmitted infections (STIs), are infections (of which there are several types) that can be contracted during sexual activity when from a partner with an infection.

The Community/Community Members/The Research Community
These terms were used interchangeably when referring to the community at large—people living within smaller communities of Mwakirunge Ward who may or may not have been contributed during one or more cycles of the research.

T2T
Tools to Talk, was a concept developed by our team during analysis in Cycle Two. T2T referred to the access to, and understanding of sex-related knowledge, to engage in comfortable and positive educational sex-talk.
Chapter 1. Intergenerational Sex-Talk in Kenya: An Introduction

1.1. Sex-Related Issues in the Kenyan Context

Sex is something that is so vivid in Coast. It is a headline in at least one newspaper every week, it is the used condom on the dirt path walking home to the apartment in Bamburi, or the beautiful young girl entertaining the table of men at an upscale café to earn the day’s wage. Sex is the two unwanted children searching through the dumpsite for food, whose feet have extensive acid burns from the industrial pollution they wade through every day. It is the group of teenage mothers struggling to stay in school or the teenage girl carrying the child of her rapist along with the shame of losing her virginity. For something that attacks your senses just walking around in Coast communities, sex, in conversation, especially cutting across generations, fiercely inhabits the space of silence. (Laura, researcher journal, 6 June 2015)

In the East African country of Kenya, opportunities for openly discussing or questioning sex-related topics, or delivering critical sexual health information to local communities are virtually non-existent (Agbemenu & Schlenk, 2011; Cobbett, McLaughlin, & Kiragu, 2013; Kang’ara, 2007; Mwebi, 2007). Silence surrounding sex is a global issue, but is especially significant in contemporary Kenyan communities, where there are high levels of unprotected sex, coerced sex, sex for monetary or other material rewards, unplanned teenage pregnancy, polygamous relationships, intergenerational sex, wife inheritance, and a high prevalence of HIV (the Human Immunodeficiency Virus) and sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) (Maticka-Tyndale, Wildish, & Gichuru, 2007; Njoroge, Olsson, Pertet, & Ahlberg, 2010). These sexual events occur at an extremely young age, frequently before the adolescent body has physically matured (Maticka-Tyndale et al., 2007; Nganda, 2008). This is increasingly concerning, given that Kenya experiences an annual growth rate of three percent, of which 63% are below the age of 25, and those aged 10-24 account for 32% of the population (Ministry of Health (MOH), 2013). Consequently, multidimensional country-wide efforts are occurring, and required, to respond to the sexual reproductive health (SRH) needs and rights of its expanding young population (Graff, 2013).

As part of sex-related programme upscaling in Kenya, the policy on Adolescent and Reproductive Health and Development (ARHD) was created in 2003. Its goals were to strengthen approaches for dealing with the sexual health issues of young people; a plan to achieve this goal was instituted in 2005 (National Council for Population and Development, & Division of
Reproductive Health, & Population Reference Bureau, 2013). This plan was an early catalyst for a multitude of policies, a constitutional amendment in 2010, and strategies launched to improve the sexual health landscape (SHL) of Kenya—placing an emphasis on the integration of issues affecting young people (National Council for Population and Development et al., 2013). The SHL is a commonly employed definition in this dissertation. It encompasses the overall sexual health of a community related to: the frequency of sex-related issues such as teen pregnancy; rate of STDs; HIV/AIDS cases; sexual and gender rights violations; transactional sex; and the ability to address these issues openly, without subjection to any form of silence (e.g., various expressions of discrimination, stigmatisation, marginalisation, or oppression). Relating to this, another commonly used term in this work is the sexual learning climate (SLCs), which refers to the various routes and manners in which people learn about or share knowledge around sex-related topics. This includes the norms, beliefs, attitudes, and practices that influence risky behaviours or sexual rights violations, contributing to the overall condition of the SHL. SLCs are the methods that need to be understood to make positive changes to the SHL.

Kenya made a commitment to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and, in falling short, renewed its commitment to work harder to reach the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the Kenya Vision 2030. This vision evidences that, overall, Kenya appears to be focused on creating a middle-income country. However, nothing was mentioned in this initiative to address how this was to be accomplished without improving the SHL, especially for the younger generations. Taking into consideration the intricate link between problematic sex-related issues and poverty (e.g., dependency relationships, lower education levels when exposure occurs too early, or increased risks to sexual disease), it is alarming that a greater concentration is not being placed on specific gender and sex-related initiatives. The Kenya Vision 2030 is based upon three pillars: economic, social, and political governance. However, with its lack of implementation to date, in conjunction with its limited space for sex-related issues in its objectives, it is unlikely that the country will succeed in achieving its higher status, if keeping the foundations of these pillars strong is ignored. Without reshaping current and future programmes to account for a methodical consideration of contextual factors including intersectionalities between poverty, sexual rights, health, education, and global influences that change lines of relating (and the vulnerabilities young people experience in light of these intersections) these lofty goals will likely not be met (Corboz, 2009).
A range of country-specific studies on sex-related issues have emerged over the past decade, including factors associated with young people’s sexual behaviours (Avuvika et al., 2017; Frances, 2016; Kabiru & Orpinas, 2009b; Maticka-Tyndale et al., 2007) and their perceptions and knowledge of sex-related content (e.g., STDs, HIV/AIDS, contraceptives, and sexuality) (Embleton et al., 2016; Mucherah, Owino, & McCoy, 2016). However, while programmes addressing the gaps between sexual health knowledge and risky sexual behaviours in Kenya are necessary, they remain constrained in the extent to which they can generate sustainable change. One reason for this was highlighted in a guide for teachers, students, parents, pastors, and community workers in referring to particular dangers to which youth are exposed (Ndirangu, 2000). The author reported that many primary school-aged girls and boys are likely to experiment with sexual intercourse. This is similar to findings from Maticka-Tyndale et al., (2007), who noted young people refer to this act of experimentation as ‘playing sex’ and are suspected of engaging in premarital sex regardless of their level of sexual education. This highlights the need for access to accurate knowledge as well as safe spaces where young people can ask questions, and receive answers, to develop more positive sexual health behaviours.

The National AIDS Control Council (NACC) released the Kenyan AIDS Response Progress Report 2016 (KARPR), which stated that youths (15-24 years old) comprise the largest proportion of people living with HIV/AIDS (PLWH). Moreover, young people in Kenya contribute to 51% of all new HIV infections annually. Kenya has the highest rate of adolescent pregnancy of any East African country; the country is experiencing a generalised HIV/AIDS epidemic (KARPR, 2016; Sedgh, Finer, Bankole, Eilers, & Singh, 2015). The KARPR (2016) report noted that knowledge of HIV prevention among young people has increased from 48% in 2008 to 73% in 2014 for females and from 55% to 82% for males, over the same time period. Given that HIV infections among the youth population increased during that time, despite this increase in awareness, suggests a clear need for improved education. Compounding this, reports indicated a decrease in the percentage of men and women who display accepting attitudes towards PLWH, suggesting that HIV/AIDS-related stigma, despite increased health knowledge, is on the rise in Kenya.

In addition to the aforementioned topics, researchers have investigated the efficacy of sex education in public spaces, such as school, churches, and community groups (Campbell, Skovdal, & Gibbs, 2011; McLaughlin, Swartz, Cobbett, & Kiragu, 2015; Rashid & Mwale, 2016). However, there are few studies concerning the nature, experience, and context of young peoples’
sexual activity in Kenya; especially those documenting learning and exposure experiences (Cobbett et al., 2013; Erulkar, 2004; Maticka-Tyndale et al., 2007; McLaughlin et al., 2015; McLaughlin, Swartz, Kiragu, Walli, & Mohamed, 2012; Were, 2007). Taken together, these studies illuminate the need for sexual education to be inclusive of both genders and discuss sexual issues with more depth. In doing so, power relations that often control sexual encounters can be highlighted to allow for discussion of personal experiences, while supporting young people to ask sex-related questions.

In the past, studies have predominantly focused on the sexual knowledge, attitudes, perceptions, and practices of young people in Kenya, where the focus of intervention was on only one or two groups. Researchers in these studies suggested the need to review and revise policies on the delivery of sex education to focus on community interventions. They proposed meaningful questions for future research, but provided non-concrete or limited action plans for sustainable change (Akwara, Madise, & Hinde, 2003; Bauni & Jarabi, 2000; De Walque, 2006; Kabiru & Orpinas, 2009a; Oindo, 2002). Based on the literature, a viable strategy that allows young people to challenge and unpack sex-related issues in a comfortable environment must place an emphasis on their experiences and needs concerning learning how they learn about sex (Cobbett et al., 2013).

International research highlights that education programmes can reduce teen pregnancy, increase the age of sexual debut, and prevent STDs in adolescents—three elements disproportionately affecting the young people of Coast communities (Goesling, Colman, Trenholm, Terzian, & Moore, 2014; Kirby, 2001; Noonan, 2012). These programmes prove most successful when they deliver information via culturally appropriate methods that reflect (local) socially constructed knowledge, beliefs, and values (Kirby, Laris, & Rolleri, 2005; UNAIDS, 2011). However, current, and past programmes are usually short-term projects that serve as temporary Band-Aids, with little consultation or true participation from the community. The World Bank Participation Source Book distinguished participation as “...a process through which stakeholders influence and share control over development initiatives and the decisions and resources which affect them” (World Bank, 1996, p. 3). This was the working definition of participation employed for this research. What is not evident from these programmes is how young people, community leaders, teachers, parents, and other key community members, who have the potential to influence educational policy, can come together in open intergenerational dialogue on sex-related topics. It was on this basis that I decided to engage in a community-based participatory action
research (CBPAR) project with a number of key stakeholders and research partners from a rural Kenyan community in Coast province. Working with a research team, I employed a post-colonial analytical framework, to demonstrate that mabaraza – as one example of how an indigenous relational dialogic space, that is one of many such indigenous spaces – can be adapted as a useful tool for intergenerational sex-talk. Furthermore, I argue that communities like this one, have the cultural resources as well as the local knowledge and expertise to identify, and take control over, their own issues. Following a CBPAR methodological approach, a range of data collection methods were used (interviews, focus groups [FGs], youth participant photo-journals, researcher journals, and mabaraza) to understand mabaraza as transformative educational spaces for sex-talk. Adapting a conversational space that encourages intergenerational sex-talk has potential to foster communication about experiences of sexual learning and exposure which might, through dialogue, enhance awareness of, and investment in, tackling sex-related issues in rural Coast communities.

The communities involved in this research were located in Mombasa County, one of 47 counties in the southeast of Coast province. According to the Kenyan National Bureau of Statistics (KNBS) (2014) Mombasa County communities experience average to high levels of negative consequences, in terms of sex-related issues as described through a discussion of the following sexual health outcomes. Although new HIV infections reduced by 49% across Kenya from 2013 to 2015, Mombasa County showed an increase in new HIV infections by more than 50%. From 2008 to 2014, there was also a slight increase in the percentage of young girls and boys who experienced an early sexual debut (intercourse before the age of 15). Young girls who give birth are often denied the opportunity to finish their studies, making it difficult to gain skills and, ultimately, access employment. In a cyclical fashion, this lack of skills leads to an increased dependency on male partners or family members for support, which contributes to the low status of women and perpetuates the ongoing epidemic of generational poverty (Were, 2007). Despite reductions in new HIV infections, the young population remains increasingly vulnerable to risks associated with sex; necessitating further analysis of best practises for improving health behaviour outcomes. The Kenyan government has taken a centralised approach to education in which the majority of policies put into practice across schools in the country are designed to deliver consistent content, increase the number of competent educators, and achieve a greater reach across counties (Sidze et al., 2017). In 2015, there were a total of 15,400 programmes with a focus on HIV across Kenya. This is a marked increase from 2013, where 7000 HIV programmes, under CBOS and NGOS, were operational, but HIV prevalence remained stable
Given the high variability of sex-related problems across the country, the question of the efficacy of such an approach—which does not account for specific context and practises token forms of participatory engagement—must be called into question.

In recent years, international SRH programmes have moved toward promoting and implementing comprehensive sexuality education. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) (n.d.,) identified sex education that emphasises gender rights, age appropriateness, cultural relevancy, and scientifically accurate health information as a human right for in-school and out-of-school youths. In addition, the UNFPA stresses that content should be shaped to help young people negotiate intimate and family relationships. In addition, the UNFPA asserted that primary goals of comprehensive sexuality education should be to help youths become responsible, respectful, critically-thinking individuals with good self-esteem who engage in positive health behaviours. The World Health Organisation (WHO) definition for sexual health is “. . . a state of physical, emotional, mental and social well-being in relation to sexuality and not merely the absence of disease, dysfunction or infirmity” (WHO, 2010, p. 1). This is an inclusive definition that acknowledges the importance of the social aspects contributing to problematic sexual health outcomes. For the purposes of this dissertation, the terms “sex education”, “comprehensive sexuality education”, “sexual reproductive health education”, and “holistic sex education” are used synonymously throughout.

1.2. Mabaraza: Traditional Spaces to Dialogue

Human existence cannot be silent, nor can it be nourished by false words, but only by true words, with which men and women transform the world. To exist, humanly, is to name the world, to change it. Once named, the world in its turn reappears to the namers as a problem and requires of them a new naming. Human beings are not built in silence, but in word, in work, in action-reflection (Freire, 1993, p. 69).

Baraza (or its plural form mabaraza) is Kiswahili for a type of group gathering, and for this study was considered the optimal space for fostering, and understanding what is discussed, when sex-talk dialogues unfold. The Brazilian philosopher, Paulo Freire, has been praised as “. . . the greatest living educator, a master and a teacher” (Taylor, 1993, p. 1). His work on the construction and re-construction of the self through dialogue (with an absence of power and the presence of critical thought, authenticity, and respect), has changed the trajectory of educational
programming and pedagogy to being more participatory—giving the student increased autonomy. The decision to employ Freire’s conceptualisation of dialogue in mabaraza was influenced by similarities between this study’s research site and the disadvantaging sociocultural contexts in which his theories were shaped. Within the context of poverty, a Freirean understanding of dialogue may prove to be a paramount tool in chipping away at root causes of sex-related problems in rural communities. Freire’s central focus on illiteracy, and dedication to liberation via literacy, was underscored by issues of poverty—an eminent social condition that continues to plague numerous rural areas across Kenya. It is worth noting that in his later writing of The Pedagogy of Indignation, Freire (2005) expanded upon his original conceptions of illiteracy, from the inability to read and write to a wider definition that included a lack of critical consciousness (or conscientization) to read and re-write the world—a core construct of this project that is explored in greater detail in Chapter Three. Dialogue, as conceptualised by Freire, constitutes a reciprocal relationship where all parties demonstrate respect through sharing with, and learning from, one another. This process has revolutionary powers when engaged in authentically. Freire posited that this could be accomplished through conversing in a genuine manner. He stated, “The essence of dialogue itself: the word . . . Within the word we find two dimensions, reflection and action” that when engaged in authentically, have the power to “transform the world” (1993, p. 68).

It was in the spirit of authenticity and respect that research for this dissertation was completed with the collaboration of members from communities in Mwakirunge ward. We worked together to discover whether adapting a traditional meeting space (the baraza) could revive traditional modes of intergenerational communication about sex (elders and young people dialoguing on sex-related topics). Kaplan, Sanchez, and Hoffman (2017) stated that ‘Intergenerational’ implies an orientation for working with generation-diverse populations and activating new relationships (sometimes in the way of reciprocal learning experiences) that are rooted in the interactive processes between generations” (p. 14). Expanding on this definition, intergenerational dialogue, as employed in this study, focuses on interactions between generation-diverse populations. Specifically, those interactions between more than two generations in the same space. Oduaran (2014) noted a lack of visible research on intergenerational programmes and practises, particularly in Sub-Saharan African communities (SSA), such as those in Kenya. This is disconcerting given that intergenerational relations have increased due to higher populations of children orphaned by AIDS, resulting in grandparents or other adults stepping in to fill the role of parental guardian (Oduaran, 2014).
Mabaraza can be intergenerational settings that function as a welcoming forum or an area to debate and resolve community issues. These gatherings can also serve as a means for local or national governments to inform or consult their constituents on political matters (Naanyu et al., 2011). However, Mabaraza are more than just gathering spaces, they can be viewed as an indigenous social process, complete with cultural rules and traditions that reflect the communities in which they are carried out (Naanyu et al., 2011). Mabaraza have been a component of Kenyan culture since the pre-colonial era, when they served as a space for the council of elders to debate and resolve legal or political matters (Kenyatta & Malinowski, 1961; Naanyu et al., 2011).

Traditionally, mabaraza were used to address issues of deviance or social stability (Kenyatta & Malinowski, 1961; Naanyu et al., 2011). Loimeier (2005) traced the roots of mabaraza back to Zanzibar, a small archipelago now part of the United Republic of Tanzania. He defined the practice of gathering in this way based on spatial, social, and temporal characteristics. Socially, mabaraza can take on both formal and informal structures, from a council of elders deliberating on county budgetary issues, to a group of individuals debating the outcome of a football match over a cup of kahawa (coffee). Well-established mabaraza are generally arranged in the same location with similar hours, thereby inhabiting a distinct history over time (Loimeier, 2005).

In present day, especially in relation to research and education in Kenya, mabaraza are utilised as a means of obtaining and disseminating health information to, and from, communities. The Uganda Human Rights Commission (UHRC) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) jointly published a handbook on conducting community public meetings which described the baraza as “… a platform for empowering them [the community members] with information and knowledge that can enhance their ability to participate in their governance; claim their rights; and ensure that duty bearers fulfil their obligations to the communities” (n.d., p. 6). Communal mabaraza, such as the one used in this study, are associated with specific accessible locations, have no restrictions on who can attend, and typically have gendered seating arrangements. Members are expected to be respectful and maintain good manners.

Naanyu et al. (2011), found the baraza to be a viable process for engaging communities because it “… promotes community learning through an exchange of information embedded in powerful personal stories …” is easily replicable, and “… it deepens social discourse and learning for community action” (p. 23) as those involved in the dialogue begin to think more critically. A baraza can be an ideal research method because researchers can engage larger groups of
participants at once over an extended period of time, and the space allows for the influence of social context (embedding the findings in existing power structures). In addition, mabaraza, as adapted in this research, take place in natural and informal community settings, which are inclusive of a variety of community collaborators—“. . . those who are affected by or can affect a decision . . .”—with no restrictions on who can attend (Usadolo & Caldwell, 2016, p. 2). Finally, mabaraza spaces are directed by the needs and wants of the participants, increasing comprehension of community perspectives and relevancy of future action plans (Naanyu et al., 2011).

Anticipating community apprehension about gendered power when different community collaborators come together in the same space, and upon the recommendations of Kenyan young people in Naanyu’s et al. (2011) study, this research purposefully used gender divided mabaraza to reduce power relations that might decrease participant comfort levels with engaging in intergenerational sex-talk. There has been an intense focus on participation literature to access and promote authentic expression of child and youth voices (Wyness, 2013). Lee (2001) proposed the authentic, unmediated child’s voice be called into question. He surmised that because our understanding of the world is shaped through our interactions with, and understandings of, others, mining for such authenticity is unproductive—especially since exchanges between young people and adults are overly interdependent (Wyness, 2013). As such, a researcher must account for the context in which these exchanges occur. Based on this premise, my research focused on promoting intergenerational dialogue that elected to support all community contributors to converse within the baraza space, thereby encouraging negotiation of how they choose to represent themselves. Due to the friendly and inviting nature of our approach, our work was known in the community and to those who generously donated to our crowd funding campaign as the ‘Creating Conversations’ project.

1.3. Reviving Traditional Spaces to Encourage Sex-Talk

Traditionally, sexual education in African cultures began with the grandparent (Tony, 2007). Children were divided by sex; males were educated by their grandfathers and females were educated by their grandmothers. Parents were expected to not use sex-related words and to avert any act that could be perceived as sexual in nature (Prazak, 2000; Tony, 2007). Today, these practices are dissolving quickly through modernisation and urbanisation, and because of access to other, often unreliable sources of information, such as peer-to-peer exchanges (IRIN, 2008;
Since the responsibility of sex education has traditionally rested with the extended family, maintaining a balance between cultural appropriateness and best practices for achieving more positive sexual health outcomes is imperative. The disappearance of traditional modes of sex education in the home and a lack of standardised sex education curricula, or context-specific programmes in Kenya, calls for community-led initiatives. To break the silence on sex-related issues, especially between youths and adults, working with different groups affected by/involved with sex-related problems should be considered as a potential route to finding solutions aligned with traditional culture. Mungai, Wairire, and Rush (2014) stressed that when doing social work (i.e., work that involves people, the human factor), it is imperative to start “. . . with where they are, and the systems that affect their lives” (p. 173). In doing so, the likelihood of generating sustainable health outcomes is increased. Thus, a proposal was put forth by our partner non-governmental organisation (NGO), who are denoted throughout this work as PANGO for identity protection purposes, to use mabaraza to foster intergenerational dialogue on sex-related community identified issues.

In a qualitative review of barriers to parent-child communication on sexual and reproductive health issues in East Africa, Kamangu, John, and Nyakoki (2017) found only four studies concentrated on inhibitors to this form of intergenerational dialogue, one of which was a dissertation coming out of Kenya: (Bushaija, Sunday, Asingizwe, Olayo, & Abong’o, 2013; Nundwe, 2012; Seif & Kohi, 2014; Velcoff, 2010). Thus, further information is needed to understand what occurs when multiple groups (e.g., age-sets, genders, and generations) of adults and young people enter the same space to dialogue on these sensitive topics.

To address these gaps, several international development programmes have set out to train differing members of society to bear the responsibility of delivering comprehensive sex education. Some of these major players in Kenya include organisations, such as: the joint United Nations Program on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS); the Population Council; United States Agency for International Development (USAID); ActionAid International; the Kenyan AIDS NGOs Consortium (KANCO); Family Health International (FHI); The Centre for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC); Guttmacher Institute; and the International Planned Parenthood Federation, among others. These are also inclusive of specific programmes from the aforementioned organisations such as: IMPACT; TeenWeb; The World Starts with Me (WSWM); The Global AIDS Program (GAP); Tuko Pamoja (We Are One); and Youth for Youth (Y4Y). These programmes have used a variety of approaches in comprehensive sex education. Mwangi (2016)
contended that “... contemporary Kenyan society can learn that the responsibility of teaching Sexuality Education can be extended from parents to other trusted and responsible members of the society” (p. 88). This begs the question: can mabaraza take on function of the new extended family?

The benefits of testing a traditional baraza setting as a safe space for intergenerational sex-talk were originally twofold. Using this space would prioritise traditional forms of expression and sharing local knowledge. As the baraza has remained an essential component of the research community’s culture for discussing issues, using the space would ensure the content and process through which dialogue occurs is culturally responsive. Secondly, using a larger group setting would have the potential to spark intergenerational conversations on typically taboo topics (i.e., sex-talk) (Kesterton & de Mello, 2010). However, before testing the baraza as a viable space, it was necessary to interact with, and work alongside, community contributors to discover if adapting baraza as a tool for intergenerational sex-talk was an idea endorsed by a significant number of community members, rather than an idea that came from a single voice or the non-governmental organisation (NGO) partner.

1.4. Research Question and Goals of the Study

The meta-question directing this research was, “How can a traditional East African gathering place (i.e., baraza) be adapted as a safe space for intergenerational dialogues on sex-related issues in rural Kenyan communities?” The goals of the research project are shown in Figure 1: Primary and secondary goals of the research. The two primary goals (PG) are depicted by the black squares, and their secondary goals (SG) are depicted in the subsequent colour-coded squares. In exploring how a traditional baraza can be adapted for intergenerational dialogue on sex-related issues, the intent was to account for dynamics that approximated a more realistic life scenario (different ages, genders, and relationships of power).
Figure 1: Primary and secondary goals of the study

Our research team examined what transpires when these spaces for dialogue around sexual topics are engaged. In considering the adaptability of the mabaraza, our research team aimed to derive practical implications that focused on context-specific content to both increase the relevancy of community-driven solutions and involve several community contributors in educational dialogue. The premise in doing so was that shaping this space could potentially offer a decentralised approach to comprehensive sex education through conversation that would work with (not against) the current centralisation of curricula employed across the country.
1.5. Research Site: Overview of Location and Community Contributors

Community is generally thought of as sharing a geographic location, experience, or sense of identity (Burke et al., 2013). The community contributors in the research were groups of young people and adults from locations in, and around, Mwakirunge ward, from PANGO, as well as the main international non-governmental organisation (INGO) operating in the area, referred to as KINGO to protect the identities of individuals who work here. Mwakirunge ward is part of Mombasa County; one of 47 counties in the country, and is located in the southeast of Coast province, Kenya. Data were gathered for this study at two research sites: 1) Mwakirunge ward; and 2) PANGO Office in Mombasa County.

Mwakirunge is a ward comprising several small communities. It lies approximately 17 kilometres outside of Mombasa city. It is a formal rural settlement with a population of 8,627 (4468 females and 4159 males) as of 2017 (KNSB & Society for International Development-East Africa (SID), 2017). Of this population, 2,059 residents were between 10-18 years and 2,534 were between the ages 15-34 (KNSB & SID, 2017). Out of the communities located within Mombasa County, Mwakirunge, at 42%, has the highest percentage population without any formal education (KNSB & SID, 2017). In addition, the ward also has the lowest population with a secondary education level or above within Mombasa County (KNSB & SID, 2017).

Development in the ward has resulted in it being one of the two highest in the County whose population have access to improved water sources. Unfortunately, this is not the case for sanitation, with the ward having the lowest level in the County when it comes to use of improved sanitation (i.e., private latrines, septic tank, and sewer) — with only approximately 25% of its residents using improved sanitation facilities. There are other environmental concerns in relation to the unmanaged disposable waste site that enable an environment of vulnerability to risky and violent sexual activity, as well as having a myriad of other health and social concerns (England, 2017; Mwobobia, 2014; Njeri, 2015). Table 1 gives an overview of the socio-economic context of Mwakirunge with regard to employment breakdown. Out of the ward population eligible to work (4145) the majority sustain themselves through a family agricultural holding (i.e., owning a farmland, selling produce to food kiosks or to larger markets closer to Mombasa City). Just under one-quarter of those eligible to work (22.2%) do so for pay. This has resulted from lack of
opportunities for work and slow transitioning from a traditional trade economy to a capitalistic model driven by physical money (i.e., Kenyan Shillings/bob).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Work for pay</th>
<th>Family business</th>
<th>Family agri-cultural holding</th>
<th>Intern/volunteer</th>
<th>Retired homemaker</th>
<th>Full-time student</th>
<th>Incapacitated</th>
<th>No work</th>
<th>People working in ward</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>22.2%</td>
<td>5.6%</td>
<td>27.8%</td>
<td>1.3%</td>
<td>26.6%</td>
<td>11.8%</td>
<td>0.2%</td>
<td>4.4%</td>
<td>4,145 (#)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: Employment breakdown in Mwakirunge ward
**Data extracted from KNSB & SID (2017, p. 28)**

In line with Coast province statistics, rates of teenage pregnancy, HIV, and rape are rising in the Mwakirunge. At the time of this research, there were 21 teenage mothers at the secondary school and three known cases of female children (14 years and under) pregnant in this community. We observed a number of contextual factors (e.g., local organisational policies, community norms, socio-economic landscape, interaction of differing tribal cultures, access to sexual health resources, number of schools, proximity to dumpsite, and presence of external organisations), compared these descriptions to Coast statistics, and spoke with concerned community members. We reflected on programmes currently enacted by PANGO and sponsored by KINGO. Both organisations have a strong presence in the community and work together on programme implementation. After this assessment, it was clear that members of the community both needed and wanted to begin addressing sexual health issues plaguing the young. This dissertation is a representation of the steps our research team took with the community to begin devising solutions to these issues.

Mwakirunge and its smaller communities are supported in PANGO’s out-reach efforts. PANGO has strong working connections with institutions and organisations such as: the Kenyan Ministry of Education (MoEK); KINGO; APHIA Plus; USAID International Centre for Reproductive Health (ICRH); and the Government of Kenya (GoK). PANGO maintains strong relations with governments and NGOs nationally and internationally from a variety of countries (e.g. U.S.A., U.K., Denmark, Kuwait, and Canada). PANGO employs participatory educational theatre (PET) as a means of conveying its messages for behaviour change on a variety of topics. Prior to commencing this study, PANGO’s Chief Programme Officer consulted with community members on areas in which change could be facilitated. Among the identified issues, such as
water sanitation, dumpsite clean-up, and availability of sanitary napkins for young women, were several sex-related matters, including a large number of teenage pregnancies and reports of sexual violence.

1.6. Methodology: Community-Based Participatory Action Research

It was necessary to ground this work in both the Action Research (AR) family and critical theory framework. Birthed from the principles of systemic change in and between organisations, AR has developed into an approach that has the potential to give individuals opportunities to participate in shaping interventions and policies that influence their daily lives. Herr and Anderson (2005) defined AR as “. . . inquiry that is done by or with insiders to an organisation or a community, but never to or on them” (p. 3). Other scholars have denoted AR as emancipatory in that researchers can use critical reflection to identify and evaluate entrenched beliefs for their constraints and opportunities with the aim of improving systems, creating new knowledge, and generating solutions to critical problems (Naanyu et al., 2011; Stuttaford & Coe, 2007). Hart and Bond’s (1995) definition, while dated, has remained a constant reminder that AR is inherently interdisciplinary and its processes, regardless of the initial approach, are fluid: “. . . during the life of an action research project it may shift from one type to another as it moves through the spiral of cycles” (p. 46).

Wallerstein and Duran (2008) laid out a variety of terminologies operating under the umbrella of work that combines research and action, indicating their usage in their respective fields. The authors premised that research located within spaces where research and action are combined fall within two specific historical traditions: the northern tradition and the southern tradition. They define research falling within the northern tradition as being heavily focused on the practical application of enhancing systems (i.e., health, governance, welfare, and environment). Alternatively, research more closely linked to the southern tradition tends to be “. . . openly emancipatory research, which challenges the historical colonising practices of research and political domination of knowledge by elites” (Wallerstein & Duran, 2008, p. 27). The specific AR approach applied from the outset of this research was community-based participatory action research (CBPAR). A CBPAR approach is a form of AR in which action is accomplished

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1 The field of Action Research (AR) has come a long way since Kurt Lewin, who first coined the term (in the northern tradition) in 1946, referring to it as: “. . . a comparative research on the conditions and effects
through reflexivity of both the researcher and the participants. Ivankova (2017) defined CBPAR as “. . . a methodological approach that focuses on seeking solutions to practical issues, generating evidence-based knowledge for improving practice, and empowering participants for change action” (p. 284). In this type of research, depending on predetermined roles, data are collected and analysed by both the researcher and participants to establish an action plan that promotes relevant resolutions or steps toward more sustainable solutions to community-identified issues (Culhane-Pera et al., 2010). The acronyms CBPR (community-based participatory research) and CBPAR are used interchangeably throughout the literature. While the definition of CBPAR can simultaneously be conceived as CBPR, I employ the CBPAR acronym throughout this dissertation to place an emphasis on the importance of action in this type of work.

According to Naanyu et al. (2011), CBPAR aligns well with using the baraza as a method for data collection, as the guidelines for best practice in conducting this form of gathering align with those for carrying out a CBPAR project. They are as follows:

- reflective critique—participants reflect on issues, interpretations, and assumptions;
- dialectical critique—conceptualisation and understanding of issues occurring through dialogue;
- collaboration—participants are co-researchers, and all are believed to hold influential ideas;
- risk—the possibility of change threatens previous ways; and
- plural structure—the multiplicity of views opens doors to cyclical discussion and leads to multiple interpretations for action. (Naanyu et al., 2011)

These elements were invaluable in adapting mabaraza during our research. In the same way CBPAR revolves around uncovering solutions and advances concerning more positive outcomes in the future, mabaraza have been noted to improve the quality of interactions from start to finish of a gathering, while also taking steps toward change (Naanyu et al., 2011).

This specific CBPAR project has been developed with the goal of intergenerational sustainability, a concept launched by Kaplan et al. (2017), which places emphasis on the co-construction of knowledge and reciprocal learning to enhance the quality and meaningfulness of of various forms of social action, and research leading to social action . . . ”, involving “. . . a spiral of steps, each of which is composed of a circle of planning, action, and fact-finding about the result of the action” (pp. 35, 38). His ideas concerned with investigation of the roles of critical thinking and reflection in a democratic environment were informed by a Deweyan approach.

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life amongst community members. Intergenerational practices promote collective effort towards achieving sustained positive outcomes for the community as a whole by rallying for increased citizen engagement and comparison of experiences across generations (Kaplan et al., 2017). Intergenerational sustainability as a working concept aligns well with the capacity building aspect of this CBPAR project, where the goal after having fostered capacity to conduct research activities was that the local research team and community members might continue to work together to improve social issues for future generations. Thus, this research is premised on the idea that shaping pathways for intergenerational dialogue can foster increasingly sustainable communities because of the capacity to be more inclusive.

Dick (2000) described AR as “... a family of research processes whose flexibility allows learning responsiveness. Vague beginnings can move towards better understanding and practical improvement through critical analysis of the information, the interpretation of it and the methods used” (p. 5). The design for this research stemmed from notions of emancipatory change and transformative education, connected to a Lewinian conception of the AR process—plan, act, observe, reflect. Employing a CBPAR methodology in a PhD dissertation required running and documenting two concurrent processes: the research and the action. Since this project was born out of my PhD research, this dissertation will focus more on reporting the research than the action. However, I attempted to strike a balance between both. Planning was conducted initially and continually revised within each of the four cycles of research denoted in Figure 2; each of which involved their own reflective and iterative processes.

**Cycle One: Access and Training** involved the points of access negotiated at the university, international, and community levels to obtain permission and be welcomed to work with community members. Training of a research team was necessary to ensure local leaders remained engaged as points of contact for community members after data gathering was complete. Learning from this cycle is discussed further in Chapter Five. **Cycle Two: Working with Community Contributors**, is linked to the first primary goal of this study to understand the contexts through which young people and adults’ sex-related learning experiences are informed. A number of data collection methods were utilised to document a variety of community contributors’ sex-related learning and exposure experiences, which are reported in Chapter Six.
Cycle Three: Adapting Mabaraza, is linked to the second primary goal of this study, to understand how the traditional gathering space can be adapted to foster intergenerational dialogues on sex-talk. These adaptations, the dynamics that occurred while testing the space, as well as possibilities for intergenerational dialogue on sex-talk, are explored in detail in Chapter Seven. Cycle Four: Dissemination involved sharing and discussing the results of the adapted mabaraza as well as proposing the possibilities of mabaraza being incorporated either alongside or as an alternative to health programming on sex-related issues. This is reported in both Chapters Seven and Eight. Upon completion of cycle four ownership of, and future movement with, the ‘Community Conversations’ project was transferred fully to local members of the research team and community contributors. Each of these cycles involved community contributors in different ways as outlined in Table 2. Details of the research planning and cycles of research will be discussed in the methodology section in Chapter Two.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Activity</th>
<th>Community Contributors Involved</th>
<th>Project Cycle</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Qualitative research training sessions</td>
<td>Young people, in or out-of-school, who volunteered regularly with our partner NGO.</td>
<td>One</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Photo-journal interviews</td>
<td>Young people in school</td>
<td>Two</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus groups</td>
<td>Adult contributors from varied positions in community (e.g., teachers, parents, community elders, NGO volunteers, NGO workers) as well as out-of-school-youths.</td>
<td>Two</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mabaraza</td>
<td>Diverse groups of community contributors, both male and female, ages ten and older.</td>
<td>Three</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dissemination Mabaraza</td>
<td>Diverse groups of community contributors, both male and female, ages ten and older.</td>
<td>Four</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2: Community contributors’ involvement in research activities during each cycle

PANGO’s programme officer shared the project development (i.e. research design, methodology, and draft implementation schedule) with potential research team members before I arrived in the country. Potential research team members provided feedback to shape the study design in a more culturally appropriate manner (e.g., reviewing appropriate questions to ask in interviews; deciding to initially address young people and adults separately or together). It was determined that my role as a principal researcher was to train a team in community research skills, provide knowledge and resources where possible, and interact with members of the community to indicate the local value of critically responding to sex-related issues. In terms of facilitation of data collection sessions, a local member of the research team initiated the process and guided community contributors to drive the dialogue. The fluid research design was unanimously agreed upon by the research team before data collection commenced (the different cycles would allow us to implement knowledge gained during each, to strengthen how we worked with the community) and collectively adapted as required. Bob Dick (1993), referred to this as responsiveness, and deemed it to be the most crucial aspect of conducting action research.
1.7. Researcher Positionality: A Position of Possibilities

Positionality can be defined as the power that our privilege affords us. It is dependent upon social class, economic status, ethnicity, race, history, exposure to ideas, and experience (Herr & Anderson, 2014; Takacs, 2002). Herr and Anderson (2014) noted that researchers often have “. . . complex relationships to the setting that is being studied” which causes them to assume multiple positionalities (p. 43). This research constantly invited me to interrogate my own privileges. In doing so, my assumptions and ways of relating were actively challenged, which shaped and reshaped my understandings of the research community. De Marrais and Lapan (2004) viewed this process of being reflexive as a way of being ethical in research. It incites a deeper analysis of what we observe or experience through research. Being reflexive in writing encourages researchers to share different stories about the dominant culture, with the goal of shifting misconceptions of those framed as ‘other’ (De Marrais & Lapan, 2004; Patai, 1994). Schön (1983) suggested that researchers ask themselves before, during, and after a research activity the following questions: What do I need to know before I start this task? What do I anticipate will happen? What might go well or be challenging? What happened? Why did this happen? Is there something I can do to increase the success of this activity? Was it addressed appropriately? What did I learn? What would I do differently next time? Without these questions (and subsequent reflections) we risk repeating mistakes of the past, re-inscribing systems of inequality, or missing an essential piece to the puzzle. Reflexivity was a vital tool in helping me to understand my multiple positionalities that were active throughout the duration of my fieldwork.

Through reflection, I achieved a better understanding of myself, the lens through which I conducted social analysis, and my approach to research. Ultimately these reflections aided in conceptualising my positionality as a ‘position of possibilities’. Throughout the research—both during fieldwork and while doing the theoretical grounding required of a dissertation outside the research context—I spent a significant amount of time trying to articulate exactly who I was as a researcher. Was I the ultimate outsider with key informants and pre-existing relationships that gave me access to the community I worked with? Or did my inherent desire for connectedness shape my way of being in the world? Both sub-questions came from a different position I occupied in my life: the academic and the social. In doing this work, however, it became clear that my position was both of these, and many more, as other sides emerged. My researcher identity became a position of possibilities in the sense that through a concerted effort to interrogate my actions, I was enabled (and sometimes required) to move in and out of different
spaces. Each space provided me with new tools and made up a different fragment of this identity. The journal excerpt below is one example of many where I reflected on the possibilities for positioning both myself and those I worked with, within a collaborative space:

> We are all but fragments. Fragments of our families, our friends, our societies, our experiences. We are all fragments. Fragments that become compounded over time. We can slowly or rapidly lose pieces of ourselves. Or gain chunks we never imagined existed. We are all but fragments of each other’s worlds. As we interact, our fragments can take on new shapes, new forms. We judge each other’s fragments to make sense of our own. We are all storied fragments, responsible in part, for the dynamic and diverse nature of what it means to live. (Laura, Researcher journal, 12 December 2015)

When I wrote this excerpt, I was reading the work of Marcelo Diversi and Claudio Moreira (2009) entitled Betweener Talk: Decolonizing Knowledge Production, Pedagogy, and Praxis. The authors posited that the stories we tell as researchers can be fragments (p. 59) of the social, political, organisational, or cultural contexts, of a person’s lived experience rather than an overarching category in which we place all people in the same space. This resonated with the complexities in my research and how I had to negotiate my position(s). The identity the authors denoted as ‘Betweener’ (pp. 21, 23, 27) is most representative of my battle with juggling oppositional identities and the uncomfortable feelings of living in my privileged skin (Breen, 2007). I would suspect that Ngugi wa Thion’o, and indeed Frantz Fanon, two scholars whose works are pivotal to the project of decolonising the mind, would be displeased with my desire to seek out improved initiatives for Sexual Reproductive Health (SRH) in Kenya, rather than focusing on investigating potential indigenous modes of SRH in my own Canadian context. My discomfort with living the in-betweener identity was enhanced when I read wa Thion’o’s (1994), Decolonising the Mind, an experience from which the opening forward to the chapter influenced my thinking around identity and the right to space (i.e., to occupy space and time in others’ lives) for a long time:

> Frantz Fanon distinguished in The Wretched of the Earth writers who seek models for literature in the metropolitan countries and writers who seek models in the indigenous cultures of their own nations. (Rivkin & Ryan, 2004, p.1126)

This discomfort, of wanting to conduct research with communities whose vulnerabilities are multi-faceted, and genuinely caring about how those stories are told—what Marlowe (2010) refers to as dignifying the stories of others—was contrasted with a deep-set fear of having a negative influence on the community. This thinking stemmed from the negative history of research, in which foreign researchers and organisations perform neo-colonial projects, either through data gathering or introducing new programs with short lifespans, left in their transitional stages, which leave little positive impact on the overall situations in the community. Researchers
parachuting in, taking stories or information, and leaving without giving anything of value to the people (Smith, 2000) was a central reasoning for choosing a CBPAR approach.

I could not claim in this space to be 100% altruistic, as that would only serve to re-inscribe the majority power that members of dominant, global, northern societies, or those with esteemed positions in communities already hold. Moreover, I do not pretend to be an expert, only an explorer. I recognise (and openly acknowledge) that seven years ago my need to become actively engaged in the development field in relation to HIV/AIDS and sexual behaviour was, as Heron (2007) stated, less about the desire to help others (although this is likely how it first transpired) than it was “... a profound desire for self” (p. 156). Acknowledging this hard truth enabled me to develop politics of accountability whereby I actively challenged my conceptions of the community and assumptions I had about how relationships between researchers, NGOs, and community members should occur. I sought to understand what optimal relationships of power are and how they function while endeavouring to be mindful of how, in the past, some researchers have served to victimise and further marginalise research communities through their actions and publications. Finally, I acknowledged my privileges as a white, Western, educated woman with the ability to travel and the time to devote to learning about cultures different from my own, while working to transform them—a process I unpack later. The idea of coming to know ourselves through trying to understand others, which can be enveloped in the Ubuntu philosophy, is explored in greater detail in sections of Chapters Two, Three, and Nine of this dissertation. Positioning myself as a community development researcher was something I had difficulty grappling with throughout the process—ethical standards became more than institutional guidelines to follow, transpiring into a means of negotiating respect. Methods became more than just tools for gathering data, and, instead, became different ways for dialoguing about similar and diverse experiences. Finally, data became more than components to report outcomes of research, but rather community members’ stories of daily living, learning, and resisting, as well as ideas for reconciliation.

It is imperative I acknowledge that neither my research team members nor the community collaborators who contributed to this research needed me to provide them with a podium to project their voices. My interest in working with those who want to share or raise their voices around sex-related community issues stems from my experiences of international volunteerism and grew from my position with PANGO after conducting my master’s research in 2011. Upon completing data collection, where I documented women’s negotiation of their identities living
seropositive for HIV, my visions for change suffered a little defeatism. Stigmatisation and discrimination, almost three decades after the disease’s discovery in the country, was rife; resulting in a myriad of social welfare challenges for PLWH. The extent of discussions occurring were framed from biological or moralising perspectives, leaving little to no room for the topic’s insertion into everyday conversation. The lack of visibility regarding sex-related topics continues to constrain efforts, especially those of individuals in community or family settings, to tackle problematic health outcomes generated in these silences. Accordingly, following a post-colonial research tradition, I entered the research space with the assumption that privilege, power, and oppression are interacting forces that impact all, but serve to subjugate some groups more than others. Despite the subversive nature of these forces, they can have real and damaging consequences for development programmes and the people who access them. I wanted to uncover community-identified issues coupled with community-driven alternatives through examining how existing programmes might be better approached or supplemented by maximising community reach with a new dialogic approach.

I argue that engaging with my own positionality and thus my privilege—along with its subsequent power—allowed me to analyse the implications of my approach. To avoid reproducing unfavourable discourses or perpetuating systems of dominance, I was reflective when speaking, writing, and listening. Constantly addressing and reassessing my positionality served to maintain balance between the responsibilities of principal researcher, friend, student, educator, community development worker, and outsider.

1.8. Critical Post-Colonialism: A Theoretical Framework for Analysis

Scholars’ use of the term ‘post-colonialism’ differs depending on how they wish to employ the theory. Post-colonialism can be viewed both as the period after colonial rule has ended, or as a theoretical lens from which cultural, social, political, economic contexts, and relationships within them, can be analysed and interpreted. This is the lens I employed in this study. Using post-colonialism as the theoretical lens for analysis, in the most basic of terms, involves analysing the forces that contribute to the continuation of colonialism in current societies which imposes ‘otherness’ upon marginalised groups (Abdi, 2013). Thus, the dominant group, either through intention or by default, is deleterious. Colonisation results in the removal of the personal, the historical, the cultural, and the traditional—forcing the subjected to live disconnected between
their real selves and the dehumanised selves they are conditioned to embody (Abdi, 2013). In the Kenyan context, wamaskini is the term assigned to “impoverished subjects” or groups subverted in ways described above (Lang’at, 2008, p. 57).

De facto colonialism ended after World War II as the emergence of the universal right to sovereignty gained popular support, major global colonisers realised they lacked the resources to continue managing empires, and colonised nations were winning independence more frequently. However, post-colonialists argue that colonialism persists today in new forms. In applying a post-colonial analysis in this research, a focus was placed on examining neo-colonising elements (contemporary expressions of colonisation) that might be persisting in the particular Kenyan community, a country, which until 1963, had been under colonial rule. There are two elements of colonialism; the first being militaristic, characterised by conquest over and acquisition of territories. The second is referred to as civilising, which is denoted by the occupation of minds, cultures, and identities (Ashcroft, 2001). For the purposes of this study, the analysis focused on the civilising component of colonialism, more specifically, the ways in which colonisation of the mind has occurred in relation to community members approaches to dialoguing about and addressing sex-related issues. Throughout this work, I refer to post-colonialism in two specific ways. The first in Chapter Four, as the literal time period after Kenya gained its independence from Britain and the second is in reference to its use as a guiding theoretical framework for analysis as previously indicated. Post-colonialism in the latter sense is unpacked in Chapter Two, as part of my methodological strategy for analysis. Building on this theory are the terms ‘hybridity/hybridisation’ used in discussion of the interplay between global and local influences on the SLC, as well as post-colonising and neo-colonising, which are predominantly used in the latter half of this dissertation (Chapters 6-9) to distinguish forces/elements acting in the community that serve to suppress voice, agency, and ultimately, the sexual rights and desires of some of its members.

1.9. Overview of the Dissertation

In writing this dissertation, literature and theories were predominantly consulted from disciplines of education, social work, international community development, communication studies, post-colonial studies, and sexual health. This, combined with a project that could only develop based on community direction, has resulted in an interdisciplinary merger of ideas, that when taken together, offer a complex, but encouraging vision for working with rural Kenyan communities on
sex-related issues. The dissertation has been divided across nine chapters. Describing this complexity was the focus of the introductory Chapter One.

This first chapter is followed by **Chapter Two**, divided into four sub-sections, which traces the development of my ontological, epistemological, and theoretical framing, which led to a CBPAR methodological approach. The chapter presents my critical deconstruction of the assumptions and power relations at work, which informed decisions made throughout the research. Three useful concepts are described: hybridity; decolonisation of the mind; and resistance. Each of these concepts were critical to my post-colonial interpretation of relationships that transpired in dialogue. Understanding the SHL from such a lens, I argue, is paramount in considering future community sexual health projects and programmes that aim to work in partnership with indigenous or traditional communities in the rural Kenyan context. The research design is detailed in this chapter, which focuses on the four cycles of research; how I negotiated entry and access into the community and trained the research team. This lays the foundation for **Chapter Three** which builds upon the methodological decisions by focusing on participants (recruitment and sampling, the research team as co-inquirers, and the community contributors who shared their experiences), the five methods for data collection with a variety of community contributors, as well as techniques of data analysis and rigour. Reflections from my research journal are integrated alongside in-depth descriptions of the methods to better illustrate how data collection developed over the fieldwork period. The chapter’s final sub-section is an integration of the standard and CBPAR-specific ethical principles that were considered in this research. Research journal excerpts are included in this discussion to evidence how ethical concerns were approached and rectified as a team. Taken together, these two chapters comprise a record and critical justification for the design decisions made in the development of the ‘Creating Conversation’ CBPAR project at the heart of the thesis.

**Chapter Four** presents an atypical literature review that would be more commonly associated with a theoretical styled thesis. With this chapter I argue that it is imperative to understand the historical trajectory of Kenya’s SHL with regard to norms, behaviours, discourses, and practices in order to design meaningful and sustainable future programming for those who are most affected and afflicted by sex-related problems. In addition, mabaraza are set within their historical contextual development to evidence the capacity for adaptability of these spaces. A deeper understanding of the evaluation of these traditional spaces was necessary to anticipate the potential challenges that our research team might face in adapting mabaraza for spaces of
intergenerational sex-talk. Adding to this, awareness of the traditional and colonial features that shaped sex-related notions in the past were necessary to analyse neo-colonising elements that continue to structure current constraints on sex-related dialogues. This chapter lays the foundation for sex-related knowledge, socially accepted norms for discussing the topic, and gives a deeper understanding of SSA, and more specifically the Kenya, context to consider the viability of adapting mabaraza spaces as discussed in Chapters Five to Eight.

**Chapter Five** describes Access and Training—the first of the four cycles of research as laid out in Figure 2. and is the first chapter that reports on fieldwork processes. The chapter provides a description of the hoops researchers must jump through to access key participants in order to begin negotiating working relationships alongside a brief recollection of the processes involved in training a CBPAR team. Reflections from some of the research training participants are integrated throughout to evidence the capacity-building that ensued in the AR process. In order to address the study’s primary goal about the contexts through which adults and young people inform their sexual learning, exposure, and communication experiences, having a capable research team with knowledge of local traditions, norms, beliefs, and practices was essential.

**Chapter Six** is the first chapter reporting on analysis of data, specifically during **Cycle Two** (Working with Community Contributors). Its focus is on the first primary goal, to understand the context through which community members experience or learn about sex-related issues. The accounts shared in this chapter paint a vivid picture of the ways through which young people acquire sexual health knowledge either through direct or indirect exposure. The consequences of the vulnerabilities young people experience are extremely dangerous in the context of traditional meeting Global North informed ideals, especially those that are sex-related. The findings are then situated within a contextual model, “the funnel of silence”, co-developed by members of our research team as a lens for reading the sexual learning, exposure, and communication experiences of adults and young people in the community. Arts-based strategies resulted from our work with young people during this cycle which became useful tools for initiating dialogues in mabaraza.

**Chapter Seven** is the second chapter reporting on fieldwork processes of adapting mabaraza, as well as the second chapter that lays out an analysis of data, exclusively that which was collected during **Cycle Three** (Adapting Mabaraza) as detailed in Figure 2. The chapter focuses on the second primary goal of the study, adapting mabaraza for content and context, as a potential
A decolonising approach for fostering intergenerational dialogues on sex-related issues. It examines data collected over a period of four months of fieldwork. The aim of this cycle was to foster intergenerational sex-related dialogues with the dual goals of raising awareness and addressing community issues in relation to sexual learning, communication, and exposure experiences within the community. This was considered vital to break silences surrounding sexual health issues currently prevailing. Thus, how mabaraza spaces were adapted for intergenerational sex-talk are explored in conjunction with themes that emerged from dialogues, which reflected a SHL in a hybridising context. The findings evidence that “...cultural systems bear particular social interests and grow out of historically specific ways of life” (Connelly, 2009, p. 83) and that the genesis of the SLC is being impacted by intersections between local and external (national and foreign) ideals that shape a complex SHL undergoing processes of hybridisation. The dialogues analysed evidence a complex entanglement of sex-related issues that will only tighten if unattended.

Chapter Eight briefly reports on how processes of dissemination occurred and is the third and final chapter where an analysis is presented, specifically of the data collected during Cycle Four (Dissemination). The major theme of the chapter is the potential for adapted mabaraza to be promoted as effective tools for intergenerational sex-talk, provided specific community, programme, and national-level challenges are mollified. The current state of the project is described and future possibilities for traditional gathering spaces, such as mabaraza, to become indigenous social processes for change on sensitive issues are proposed.

In Chapter Nine, three developments across the dissertation are culminated: a conclusion to the research project; temporary conclusions to my researcher positionality; and conclusions to an ongoing project. I contend that mabaraza can be sustainable spaces for intergenerational sex-talk, while simultaneously functioning as safe spaces for working on the project of decolonising the mind. However, in the current hybridising context of the SHL, these spaces cannot function without support from strategic allies. Further to this, partnering relationships that develop through CBPAR must be carefully and cautiously negotiated, to ensure projects remain community-driven and owned. I highlight the fact that the strengths of conducting this project, within a CBPAR methodological framework, far out-weighed the obvious limitations, and that the work required, was a deeply confronting yet rewarding, resulting in a complicated space through which I continue to enact my researcher identity. Finally, I defend that cultural revitalisation of an approach to intergenerational sexual communication, which re-establishes
collective concepts of self, will only strengthen unity amongst multiple community contributors, while working toward young people becoming, and recognised as, responsible sexual agents.
Chapter 2. What Does Your Hum Sound Like? A Post-Colonial CBPAR Methodological Approach

2.1. Deconstructing the Frame: Onto-Epistemological Lenses to Methodological Approach

In 2013, hundreds of people across the globe reported hearing a mysterious hum coming from the sky. Radio and news broadcasting stations received audio or visual recordings, and Facebook newsfeeds filled up with amateur videos showcasing a number of the world’s citizens staring open-mouthed in disbelief at the sky. The response was usually accompanied by an exclamation of excitement (sometimes panic): “What is happening? Where is that coming from?” Meanwhile, tucked away at my hub, surrounded by stacks of papers and books on loan from the library, I was experiencing my own intense, unexplainable hum. In my first semester of doctoral studies, I was grappling with questions such as: “Why do social issues and systems exist as they do? What is my position on why people believe what they believe? Or behave and interact as they do? How do I view the problem? What are potential pathways for arriving at solutions? And what is my approach to research design?” I understood some elements I wanted to piece together to answers to these questions—these formed the melody I kept humming but needed further attending in order to distinguish the lyrics. In academic terms, these questions fit within my exploration of three key concepts: the ontological; epistemological; and theoretical lenses within which research is understood.

The panic and excitement expressed by those in the viral videos were feelings I shared while negotiating my epistemological framework and methodological approach for this research. At that time, I began working through various lenses to eventually arrive at a place where I could not envision any other methodology for this research. The hum became a metaphor through which I discovered and understood the worlds I navigated. The decisions worked through to reach a CBPAR methodological approach are detailed in this chapter. Figure 3, ‘Decisions on Research Structure’ has been adapted from Kayrooz and Trevitt (2005) and illustrates the different lenses applied at the ontological, epistemological, theoretical, and methodological levels to develop the framework for this research:
As per Figure 3, I selected the onto-epistemological lenses which shaped my strategy for inquiry that led to the choice of methodological approach— the decisions are deconstructed in this chapter. Over the course of the following four sub-sections, definitions are provided for social constructivism, my chosen epistemology, and the theoretical perspective of critical inquiry in terms of how each underpinned my approach to a post-colonial CBPAR in practice. Finally, the CBPAR methodological approach is explored. This overarching approach was employed in this study’s design, to encourage research with different community contributors, that was democratic, but critical, and ensured maintenance of ethical principles and integrity of the project. The following chapter will build on this methodological discussion to explore who the participants were, how data were collected and analysed as well as the ethical decisions encountered throughout the research.
2.1.1 Ontological Perspective: Ubuntuism

Humanistic approaches to philosophy and research emphasise that we exist because of others; we cannot fully comprehend our existence without assessing our actions and inactions in relation to another. Humanism is an increasingly ethical dimension of metaphysics that recognises the value of the personal as well as the collective. This frames a particular ontology, or the study of the nature of how we come to exist in the world. Sandra Smidt (2014), in discussing pivotal concepts underpinning the work of Paulo Freire, defined the word ontological as “... the essence of being human” (p. 21). She pointed out that understanding what it means to be human is subjective as it can be conceptualised differently. These conceptualisations depend on the attributes, values, and experiences of the person doing the naming, and can produce separate and shared meanings for those involved.

Smidt’s (2014) interpretation of Freire’s ontology privileged key concepts concerning Freire’s notion of “... dialogue, or encounters with others, mediated by the world....” (p. 21) and his theory of ‘becoming more fully human’. Freire contended that people are “uncompleted beings, conscious of their incompletion, and attempt to be more fully human” (Macedo as cited in Freire, 1993, p. 8). He believed that in order to reach an increased humanised state, “... mutual respect, humility, trust, faith, love, hope and critical thinking” must exist (Smidt, 2014, p. 22). He posited that this state of humanisation cannot be achieved in isolation; it requires a desire to understand connectedness amongst people and a need to create unity amongst our differences. Thus, working to dismantle the “... antagonistic relations between the oppressors and oppressed ...” (Freire, 1993, p. 87) takes place in spaces of constant flux, such as our natural environment and the social, political, economic, and cultural fabrics in which we exist.

Predating the writings of Freire, who positioned dialogue as a powerful tool for transformative learning that can work to deconstruct power imbalances affecting individuals or groups and the structures within which they exist, was the ancient value system of Ubuntu. Stemming from the Zulu people, an ethnic group of Southern Africa, the philosophy of Ubuntu (or Ubuntuism) is imbued in eons of culture and encapsulated through the phrase “umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu” or “A person is a person through other people” (Thornton, 2009, p.19). The concept of Ubuntu is shared across other languages in the African context with Bantu roots (e.g., the Kiswahili phrase “tu ni watu” or “utu”) (Ntamushobora, 2012; Thornton, 2009). The premise of this philosophy is that people cannot exist without one another (Brock-Utne, 2016). Our places of origin, races,
ethnicities, and cultures are to be celebrated because of, and not in spite of, these differences. Thus, Ubuntu may be seen as “...a spiritual condition in which communication, comprehension, reconciliation and forgiveness for divergent histories and their interpretations is possible” (Nahnsen, 2006, p. 12). Oduaran (2014) asserted that Ubuntu, in relation to how it enriches “...intergenerational relationships in SSA as a whole” is an element requiring deeper exploration (p. 176). Accordingly, in this research, Ubuntu, and its alternate and similar conceptions Utu and Harmabee (explored further in Chapter Four) became a useful lens for understanding how dynamics between intergenerational groups in each baraza unfolded.

Conceptualising how I became the researcher I am now, versus the one I was when the work for my doctorate commenced, as well as how I chose to interpret the encounters with, and amongst, community contributors, required me to interrogate my ontological position. At different points in my research, I was informed by the writings (some more than others) of Fanon, Spivak, Anzaldúa, Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o, Guevara, Foucault, Memmi, and Tuhiwai Smith. These critical theorists of their own varieties led me on winding pathways—disrupting my sense of self and inviting me to challenge my ways of relating. They each asked me to question my right to occupy the position of an allied academic and, thus the post-colonial research space (Caine & Mill, 2016; Jones & Jenkins, 2008). All, invariably, influenced the critical lens at which I arrived, as explained toward the conclusion of this chapter. Eventually, I circled back to align myself with many of Freire’s concepts, explored in great depth, first, in his eminent Pedagogy of the Oppressed; in particular, that of humanisation. However, when working in the East African context, many of these notions became clearer through Ubuntu. This is not because there was outward preaching of the philosophy, but, rather, the inherent nature of how those I worked with interacted through the unspoken language of tolerance and an earnest appetite for learning, even if, at times, this was approached with caution. Scholars have cautioned against the appropriation of Ubuntu as an idea (Chimuka, 2015; Ntuli, 1998). However, Ubuntu served to enhance my understanding of Freire’s lifelong crusade to encourage a world of individuals to ‘become more human’ or, alternatively, combat dehumanisation through working together. Both approaches are underscored by tolerance for difference, celebration of difference, and learning from, or through, humanisation as defined by Freire is a calling innate to all humans, where individuals seek to experience freedom for themselves and simultaneously with others, where people stand in relation to one another no longer occupying the positions of the oppressor or the oppressed. Freire’s concept of humanisation—in particular, its connection to becoming humanised through dialogue—will be explored in greater detail in Chapter Three as it relates to mabaraza.
the interaction of these differences. Hence, my understanding of what it means to be “ontologically” human lays within a relational space of subjectivism. It is further informed through diverse dimensions of connections with others that are not immune to change.

2.1.2 Epistemological Perspective: Social Constructivism

Epistemology determines what characterises knowledge, or how we know what we know. My epistemological stance, or how I understood my own and examined others’ reality, was guided by social constructivism. A paradigm is a set of beliefs or assumptions on which certifiable knowledge can be built (Shkedi, 2005). The social constructivism paradigm encompasses the notion that what individuals know is shaped by their lived experiences. Following such an epistemology requires critically reflecting on how social contexts influence what is known, how knowledge is interpreted, and how it is shared or transformed. Hence, what is known can change, transform, or be disregarded, with each new exposure to a particular experience or idea (Kayrooz & Trevitt, 2005). This was particularly true in this research, as with each iterative cycle, new insights were gained which informed best practises for working collaboratively. However, while I argue that knowledge and insight are not fixed (e.g., identities, beliefs, norms, or behaviours have the capacity to transform), the rate at which conceptualisations change might be significantly slower when concepts such as culture (e.g., sex culture) are considered.

In terms of the collaborative relationship between myself (the researcher) and the community contributors, social constructivism, as an epistemological perspective, was valuable because it placed an emphasis on “. . . the subjective interrelationship between the researcher and participant, and the co-construction of meaning” (Mills, Bonner, & Francis, 2006, p. 26). Therefore, the participants and I (researcher) were interconnected, in that the findings that emerged were inseparable from our relationship.

There are five key assumptions of the social constructivist paradigm, around which I based this research:

- All knowledge is understood through subjective experience; a universal truth does not exist (O’Connor, 2015; Stake, 1995);
- What is understood is only temporary. Knowledge is fluid—it can change, develop, or dissolve as experiences are accumulated (O’Connor, 2015; Yilmaz, 2008);
• Knowledge is context-specific. It will change as the social, and, thus, power dynamics within which experiences occur are altered (O’Connor, 2015);
• Existing knowledge, and prior understanding, informs how individuals learn or understand (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994; O’Connor, 2015);
• Knowledge is socially constructed and is, therefore, shaped by an individual’s level of social interaction, their own thoughts, feelings, beliefs, and values, as well as the beliefs and norms of the society in which they live (Yilmaz, 2008).

Constructivism was born out of a frustration with theories of knowledge that were objective and, typically, Western (Yilmaz, 2008). Constructivism asserts that individuals and groups assign meanings to their experiences by combining ideas from existing knowledge, feelings or understandings, beliefs, and social norms. The knowledge or meanings that arise from these meaning-making processes are subjective, unfixed, and, ultimately, influenced by the societal and cultural systems in which the experience was created (Fosnot, 1996; O’Connor, 2015).

Choosing to adopt a social constructivist epistemology for this research meant assuming that the individuals involved had to construct their own meanings around exposure to ideas sexual in nature and how they should be discussed. These notions were contextual to the beliefs and norms inherent to both society and culture of the Kenyan community with which I worked (Hendry, Frommer, & Walker, 1999). O’Connor (2015) posited that those working within a constructivist paradigm “…don’t give power to participants; they recognise that participants have power and attempt to facilitate its discovery among those participating in its inquiry” (p. 22). This was a critical notion driving the post-colonial theoretical lens for analysis and the CBPAR methodological approach described later in this chapter. Following this epistemology, I acknowledged the power of community members to pose questions, and construct new theories of knowledge, around how best to use the traditional baraza for intergenerational sex-talk in an appropriate, culturally, religiously, and politically safe manner. Pairing AR and constructivist epistemology was ideal for mobilising a large community of people that varied in age, gender, and social location, in order to define, understand, re-work, and develop new knowledge around best practices for implementing sex education in a rural community in Coast province, Kenya.

2.1.3 Theoretical Perspective: Critical Post-Colonialism

From constructivism emerges the theoretical paradigm of critical inquiry. The critical inquiry paradigm encompasses theories that thoroughly assess why certain phenomena, events, or ideas
develop or emerge as they do; critiques of these elements are then used to change society as a whole (Kayrooz & Trevitt, 2005). Critical theory is rooted in Karl Marx’s critiques of the relationships between economy and society that underpinned much of his work. The development of critical theory, as a field, can be traced to the Frankfurt School, which enlisted well-known scholars such as Max Horkheimer, Theodor Adorno, and Jürgen Habermas (Geuss, 1981).³ A critical theoretical framework was used in this project to ensure that research was not for the sole purpose of generating new knowledge but, instead, demanded using evaluations, reflections, and recommendations for change. The theoretical framework from which research is approached dictates the methods used to collect data (and, eventually, how the research report is shaped). Critical inquiry was the optimal choice for underpinning the theoretical perspective through which data were collected and analysed, as its core guiding principles mirror those upon which this research was designed. The guiding principles of critical inquiry are as follows:

- identify and challenge injustices in society;
- understand change, as it occurs, in relation to social struggle;
- apply knowledge gained through research processes as a first step in addressing these injustices;
- aim to gain transformative outcomes;
- situate the meanings participants ascribe to their experiences in the context of wider social forces (political, economic, religious, ideological systems) that might place constraints on those very experiences;
- describe the relationship between societal structures and the limits they might place on an individual’s creativity and, subsequently, their ability to confront the injustices with which they are faced;
- necessitate more etic and emic approaches, from which to scrutinise and conceptualise arguments (Schofield Clark, 2008).

³The Institute for Social Research, often referred to as The Frankfurt School, was developed as “a social and political philosophical movement of thought” and is the origin of Critical theory. Describing each aspect of the Frankfurt school and its development alongside Critical Theory is outside the scope of this dissertation. However, for an in-depth description of the progression of Critical Theory, The Frankfurt School, and further reading see Coradetti, C. (n.d.). The Frankfurt school and critical theory. Internet Encyclopaedia of Philosophy and its Authors. Retrieved from http://www.iep.utm.edu/frankfur/
Following these principles, critical inquirers can use emic or etic approaches. “The emic approach investigates how local people think” (Kottak, 2006, p. 47). This approach examines how individuals understand and distinguish the world, the socially acceptable norms to which they ascribe, what has meaning for them, and how they interpret, describe, and rationalise their experiences. The etic approach shifts the emphasis from the local to the outside researcher. While my focus was on the emic approaches of community members who shared their stories, and contributed to the dialogues in mabaraza, it would be wrong to ignore the influence of my physical presence during data collection, and on the language and placement of their narratives in this work. Consequently, this co-constructed nature of the work required attention be given to my influence on how data were shared. Thus, I, as the researcher, interpreted and described the behaviours and beliefs I observed in the research context, focusing, specifically, on the macro-systemic factors that influenced interactions in the research setting (Lounsberry & Mitchell, 2009). Throughout the process, I endeavoured to make my assumptions, values, and beliefs transparent and maintain an account that works to limit ethnocentric, cultural, religious, political, and exclusion bias. Schofield Clark (2008) asserted that, by combining emic and etic approaches, the strongest interpretation of the cultures or societies within which research is conducted can develop. Merging the two approaches reduced the risks of generalising both individual experience and my researcher conclusions about the specific culture. From an epistemologically constructivist stance, and through the lens of critical inquiry, I aimed to understand what happened when an intergenerational dialogic space for sex-talk was shaped, how it developed, and how it was constrained.

Post-colonial theory sits within the critical inquiry paradigm. Edward W. Said (1985; 1988; 1991; 1993), Homi K. Bhabha (1990; 1994) and Gayatri C. Spivak (1988; 1990; 1996) are titled “The Holy Trinity” of post-colonialism, as each have made a significant contribution to different foundations of post-colonial studies (Young, 2001). To explore each of these contributions would be outside the scope of this dissertation. However, many of their concepts were considered for my post-colonial perspective, some of which are expanded here and in other chapters of this dissertation. I cannot decidedly align with any of “The Holy Trinity” in my approach, as their primary focus was on discourses of colonialism and the representation of “the other”. However, Homi Bhabha’s (1990) conceptions of “hybridity” and “third space” (described in the next sub-section) have proved particularly useful in my analysis of a post-colonial identity, as it relates to Kenya’s SHL. In my conception of critical post-colonialism, I emphasise the importance of how these concepts were useful in understanding the ability of those who are increasingly susceptible
to vulnerability, disadvantage, and marginality when attempting to claim autonomy over their lives.

In his seminal book, Orientalism, Edward Said discussed how the West created an identity in contrast to the “other” (1978; 1985). This concept underscores much of the critique of current development interventions, detailed further in Chapter Four, that highlights the question: How can the West be characterised as “saviours” if they do not convince the developed world to identify as victims? Scholars following a critical post-colonial perspective assert that institutions, such as academia or NGOs, have potential to serve as maintenance workers of the colonial civilising project. With the ability to capitalise on their power – because of virtually unrestricted resource access – they can spread particular sets of knowledge (e.g., governance systems, trade agendas, religious philosophies, and even systems for medical care), buttressing the interests of the West. This results in instances of the West assigning members of developing countries identities of helplessness and dependence (the modern version of uncivilised) (Lang’at, 2008). This emphasises not only country-level dependence on external actors for different types of resources, but, also, the increase in number of incentivised communities who look to operating NGOs – or other development institutions – for answers to a variety of problematic social outcomes affecting them, and, thus, play into the deficit model for health and development. These dynamics perpetuate a process that, in the past, has frequently resulted in temporary interventions or projects with unsustainable lifespans, despite good intent (Kapoor, 2007; Parpart, 2014).

Researching from the outside requires a critical relation to the historical, societal, geographical, gendered, socio-economic, political, and cultural (Fawcett & Hearn, 2004). This post-colonial frame was valuable for unveiling and examining imbalances of power that shaped the lived experience of individuals I worked with and their community. It had implications for how our research team worked with the community to shape mabaraza for intergenerational dialogue, as a solution for problematic sex-related health and social outcomes. Hence, I employed post-colonialism in a critical way not only to read the interactions, relationship dynamics, and stories shared in this CBPAR project, but, also, to work with community contributors toward self-determination through a decolonised approach (Tuhiwai Smith, 1999).

The next three sub-sections introduce three core concepts: hybridity; decolonisation of the mind; and resistance. These are concepts used for exploring the impacts of shifting contexts and foreign
influences that shaped the current SHL of Mwakirunge. The terms are useful for understanding prevalent ideas influencing communities in Kenya; where values, norms and practices are shaped by ‘glocal’ ideologies – or those societies whose structures are changing, as a result of the intersections between local and global cultures (De Leeuw, 2001).

2.1.3.1 Hybridity

A basic definition of hybridity could be described as the coming together of two cultures, whereby elements from each are shared and merged to create the hybrid. To understand this process, within the relation to sexual identity negotiation and sexual understanding, I argue that hybridity should be considered through Blackwood’s (2005, p. 222) conception of “cultural location”. This encompasses “. . . the global, regional, and historical flows that have created specific discourses, knowledges, and ways of understanding the world in specific areas . . .” in which intersecting norms, behaviours and practices reshape “. . . certain routines, long-term relationships, and shared understandings; they are a unique combination of influences that are neither territorial nor privileged sites of cultural process” (Blackwood, 2005, p. 222). Bolatigici (2004, p. 77) frames this interaction of difference as favourable, and hybridity as “coexistence”.

Bhabha (1991) conceptualised the meeting point of cultures, where values, beliefs, and practices intersect to negotiate new identities, as the third space, illustrated in Figure 4:

![Figure 4: Third space of Kenya’s SHL](image-url)
Halstead (2003) defined this as a space between, where fusion occurs amongst colonisers and colonised. Corboz (2009) emphasised that, in order to fully grasp how sexual identities are constructed, it is crucial to understand where and how sex-related knowledge is appropriated and negotiated. Consequently, within this study, hybridity and third space are considered functional concepts for understanding how elements of sexual identities are constructed through intersections of different ideas of global and local norms and beliefs, informing the contemporary SHL in Kenyan communities. In all this, it is important to remember that the SLC, and the SHL it appears in, like any element of communities, is not fixed. It is normal to pull in influences, taking in the new and transforming the old. Kompridis (2005) cautioned critical theorists to realistically remind ourselves that whilst culture can be multiply influenced and dynamic, changes are far from instantaneous and occur over long periods of time. The possibility for multiple hybrids to exist, with respect to one community; however, the focus of this dissertation will be, specifically, in relation to SHL of the community.

2.1.3.2 Decolonisation of the Mind

Decolonisation of the mind, stated simply, can be taken as critical consciousness with regard to the forces that impact upon a person, shaping their beliefs and attitudes, norms they subscribe to, as well as the identities they perform. Decolonisation of the mind, in post-colonial studies, seeks to deconstruct and dismantle the restricting effects of colonial discourses on a person’s identity, personal history, and self-determination. There are three basic strategies for dealing with colonialism: acceptance; rejection; and accommodation (Morgan, 2003). Tuhiwai Smith (1999) and Perez (1999) discussed colonialism in the realm of decolonial—the colonised subject who performs their agency against the persistence of varying colonial forces impacting how they live their lives. This is the decision to choose between acceptance and rejection of colonial forces. Although the ability to exercise one’s agency “... hinges on the question of whether individuals can freely and autonomously initiate action, or whether the things they do are in some sense determined by the ways in which their identity has been constructed” (Ashcroft, Griffiths, & Tiffin, 2013, p. 6). Both authors, working in different contexts, present a paradox positioning of colonial and decolonial, in order to avoid what might be implied through pairing the term “post” with colonialism—which would imply that we are in a time where effects of colonialism are no longer. The third strategy for dealing with colonialism is accommodation. Historically, accommodators tried to hold surviving elements of their culture and experience while smoothing the path for the colonisers (e.g., people such as government officials, political leaders, or
religious leaders). These people often benefited from colonisation by expediting the exploitation of others, but helped resist in small, but important, ways, thus, creating an extremely complex identity. In current times, cultural colonisation is a popular item. This is where a colonialist ideology operates within a traditional community culture, infiltrating, sometimes dismantling, and, often reshaping notions of normality (Tyson, 2011), subsequently resulting in colonisation of the mind.

Tuhiwai Smith (1999) examined the effects of colonisation on a person’s assertion of their agency in various realms. It is to this notion of how people can access and execute their agency upon the relationships of power at play in their worlds, in order to work toward achieving self-determination, ownership of their identity, and reclaiming their history, that I conceptualise decolonisation of the mind. The project of decolonisation of the mind is a core construct that will be explored in greater detail in Chapter Four. Power is omnipresent in post-colonialism and, in this dissertation, as deconstructing relations of power are pursued through coming together in mabaraza. I opted to use Paulo Freire’s conceptualisation of power because I adopted his concepts, to a large extent, throughout this work. Freire’s conceptualisation of power places an emphasis on reading and coming to name our worlds, as a means of transforming them, and suggests there is a need to name the forces of power acting upon us, if we are to arrive at critical consciousness in which we can assert agency to enact change.4

Freire’s ‘Banking concept of Education’ is a critical idea that speaks to the importance of dissecting how, what, and for whose purposes we learn, and the decisions made about using that learning. In the field of education, Paulo Freire framed decolonisation of the mind as the student subjected to the ‘Banking concept of Education’, where knowledge is transmitted from teacher to passive student, analogous to depositing coins into a bank (1970). When we consider this concept in contexts outside the traditional teacher-student classroom relationship, in a community development setting, the person holding power might be a project facilitator or community elite sharing an agenda. Thus, following this concept, one could assume that knowledge is deposited from the facilitator and received passively by those gathered in the space. Freire (1970, p. 71)

4 The debate Michel Foucault initiated about power as not being only a central function of repression but also a positive force through which different discourses are produced cannot be ignored (Foucault, 1980). His conceptualisation of power differs from Freire’s where Foucault asserted that naming power was essentially a waste of time and that we should instead consider its effects (Walshaw, 2007).
advised that it is crucial to examine these relations of power by looking at the “narrative character” of the story—is the facilitator dominating the conversation? Who is speaking and what position do they hold? Thus, in education for critical consciousness (or decolonisation of the mind), it is imperative that those facilitating the space not fill the minds of contributors, as if they were depositing money into a bank, but ensuring that dialogic processes are occurring.

Awareness of the ‘Banking Concept of Education’ is essential to understanding how participant dynamics in research, especially collaborative research such as this, might unfold where exercising one’s agency can be a means of resisting or reacting to power deconstruction and, thus, transformation in one’s positioning to sex-related problems in the community.

Decolonising the mind still implies that something needs to change. Where does this leave academics wanting to work within collaborative spaces to avoid re-inscribing elements of oppression or colonial ways of being? Would we consider a decolonised mind one that has been cleansed of systematic colonial thinking? I want to renew a question that has been asked by scholars who problematize the concept of ‘decolonising the mind’ (Wane, 2009). Can a mind ever be decolonised entirely? Or, do we decolonise our minds to be recolonised again? As an academic working in collaborative indigenous/traditional settings, it is necessary for me to take a hard position on this, as I will either be a person responsible for feeding or fighting (post)colonial systems of oppression. In this way, I take a Freirean approach, in that decolonising the mind is reached, first, through conscientization. Following this, the subject is more aware and can choose to resist or react, exercising their agency relative to the issues. Thus, using a critical post-colonial theoretical framework, my role in the research was to help foster this conscious-raising process.

While the goals of research, specifically those from an AR methodological position, are usually related to education and awareness, it is crucial to note that education can also be oppressive (Smidt, 2014). Can decolonising methodologies be conceived as an increasingly ethical approach, as endeavoured in this research? Duarte and Belarde-Lewis (2015), in discussing what constitutes indigenous ways of knowing in research practices, asserted that such decolonised approaches should involve imagining how knowledge can exist within the academic research space—how it is produced, by whom, who shares it, and where. Connected to this is the importance for researchers working in the indigenous space to consider why it is important to collaborate and create space for indigenous peoples to develop and decide how their ontologies are documented and shared. A second tenet they advised for non-indigenous researchers, developing decolonised approaches in partnership with indigenous peoples, was to encourage
their “indigenous epistemic partners” to envision how they see and want to shape their futures (Duarte & Belarde-Lewis, 2015, p. 679). Finally, the authors noted that decolonising approaches must allow for discovery to test how indigenous ways of knowing applied in research contexts by, for, and with, indigenous peoples might work better to improve circumstances as opposed to outside action plans. Naanyu et al. (2011) stated that in combining research with the Kenyan indigenous social process of baraza, the opportunity for knowledge to translate in context, becomes more immediate, natural, and useful for its participants.

Decolonising methodologies align with culturally responsive methodologies described above. Research should be a tool that enables the indigenous partners to frame how knowledge about them is produced and shared. In doing so, research conducted by, for, and with indigenous peoples should create opportunities to investigate how their knowledge has been shaped through post-colonial power structures, preventing them from moving beyond the “margins” (Ormond, Cram, & Carter, 2006, p.177). These approaches should be interrogated to the extent they employ dialogic and non-dialogic actions. The former should foster cultural connection, enable moves toward self-determination, and allow space for understandings and perspectives to change; while the latter replicates imbalances of power, changes the meanings of knowledge shared and inhibits reciprocal dialogue (Freire, 1970).

### 2.1.3.3 Resistance

Hollander and Einwohner (2004) pointed to the act of resistance as being linked to the ability to access critical consciousness, a necessity when working on the project of decolonising the mind. However, resistance can be defined in many ways, depending on the usage of the term. Hollander and Einwohner (2004) distinguish three ways of understanding resistance—“in terms of the perceptions of the resisters, their opponents, and other observers” (p.538). The authors asserted that each instance involves a form of action through “active behaviour, whether verbal, cognitive, or physical” and opposition, which involves a critical consciousness evidenced through raising questions, rejection of the status quo, and actively asserting ‘no’ (Hollander & Einwohner, 2004, p. 538). An important point to consider, in light of these defining categories, as has been noted in resistance literature (Hollander & Einwohner, 2004; Scott, 1985), is that those who are oppressed by different structures of dominance—the wamaskini of society—seldom have the luxury (i.e., the resources, the time) to enact public forms of resistance. The authors argued that, in positioning how resistance is understood or explored, a line can be drawn between scholars who
assert that resistance involves a process of recognition or scholars who believe it to involve processes indicating intent.

Hollander and Einwohner (2004) discussed intriguing questions about awareness of one’s resisting to the individual and to others—is intention to resist required for it to be conceptualised as a resistant act? Aligning with Scott’s (1985) intention is significant, because the act does not always achieve the desired effect; however, it is the effort put in, the interrogation of injustice that is significant, as it is an indication that individuals are being critical and raising consciousness on problematic issues. Because these debates are so loaded, it is best to follow Weitz’s (2001) suggestion “. . . to try to assess the nature of the act itself” in order to look for answers to the question “why might they be resisting?” Conceptualising resistance in this way, might highlight meaningful reasons for shifting constraints on sexual communication across the different eras. Understanding these terms, in relation to how they contribute to the trajectory of the Kenya’s current SHL, may inform best practices for opening up such dialogue, especially amongst different generations.

Using a critical post-colonial theoretical framework, and these three core concepts for contextualising and analysing, this work endeavours to build upon decolonising methodologies that can be employed in the Kenyan context. Employing a decolonised methodology that positions youths’ experiences and voices at the centre may uncover best practises for enabling young people to access and act on their agency in intergenerational dialogues, where various dynamics of power are at work. The section to follow is an in-depth exploration of the decisions made around using and employing the specific methods to gather young peoples’ and adults’ stories related to sex (the findings of which relate to Cycle Two and will be reported in Chapter Seven) as well as approaches used for dialoguing about—and to address solutions to—issues surrounding these experiences that will present a milieu where young people’s experiences and perspectives are increasingly valued in the future (refer to Cycle Three findings, reported in Chapter Eight).

2.1.4 Methodological Approach: CBPAR

Crotty (1998) defined methodology as “the strategy, plan of action, process or design lying behind the choice and use of particular methods and linking the choice and use of methods to desired outcomes” (p. 3). An updated use of the term by Creswell (2014) defined methodology
simply as the “process of research” (p. 20). It was crucial to choose a culturally responsive methodology whereby research was gathered, assessed, and represented in line with existing values and community structures (Berryman, SooHoo, & Nevin, 2013). CBPAR is premised on the same principles of community-based participatory research (CBPR), for which differences are minimal, aside from the inclusion of “action” to emphasise its importance to:

1) acknowledging the group participating in the study as a unit of identity;
2) recognising the strengths and resources of the community and working to build upon them;
3) creating and encouraging an environment of collaboration and co-learning;
4) finding a balanced relationship between action and research that proves to mutually benefit knowledge in the field and the community;
5) emphasising the relevance of community-defined problems;
6) ensuring the process is cyclical, iterative, and reflective for both researcher and participants;
7) disseminating knowledge gained to all those involved and by all those who partnered in the research;
8) requiring longstanding commitments to the goals of the project by all those involved (Israel et al., 2006).

When taken together, these characteristics created a methodology that took into consideration local knowledge, built on resources that were available, and allowed for innovation in their use. This increased the likelihood of producing knowledge that aligned with community need, and, thus, increasing the trustworthiness of the research findings. In addition, the collaborative aspect of the research process allowed for persons with varied knowledge and skills, those with diverse social locations, and members of different cultures to work together. Finally, a CBPAR methodological approach encouraged empowerment of community members to take stock in, and devise solutions to, their self-identified issues, while working to undo a lack of trust harboured, regarding research and outside researchers (Holkup, Tripp-Reimer, Salois, & Weinert, 2004).

In choosing CBPAR, I aimed to unearth the systemic forces that continue to limit access to knowledge and opportunity in the rural Kenyan research context by both examining and challenging practises that continued to value implementing knowledge produced in Western or foreign settings over those which were tribal, indigenous, or local. The CBPAR model was influenced by Kemmis, McTarrgat, and Nixon’s (2014) critical participatory action research.
This approach emphasised the liberation of people or groups from “irrationality, unsustainability and injustices” (p. 14). There is a considerable body of literature about forcing another entity into “other” status through various forms of possession (e.g., colonialism, the male gaze, culturalism, and other forms of analysis, categorisation, and interpretation) (Browne & Varcoe, 2006; Chitando, 2011; Tuhiwai Smith, 1999; Memmi, 1965). To counter this tendency in outsider research, whereby a Western-trained researcher seeks to conduct a study with locals in global South, indigenous, or tribal contexts, I proposed the best means of doing so was by designing a study with the community that was rooted in solving issues identified by them.

MacLure (2010) discussed the awkwardness of theory and how it stutters practices and makes us think about what we do. Integrating theory with my approach to research was more difficult on paper than in actual practise. However, the constant buzzing of theory in the backdrop ensured I remained reflexive and enabled me to remind the research team to follow suit. This was a disciplinary exercise that forced us to interrogate our thoughts and assumptions, to ensure we employed a culture-centred approach. CBPAR was an appropriate form of collaboration in this research, as contributors who informed this study were actively involved in their communities through other development projects or held positions of authority in the local government, were employed outside of this project, or were enrolled in educational programmes at various levels. The aim was to arrive at a reciprocal collaboration between myself, as the outsider, the research team, and the community contributors. Since community contributors held different positions in society, levels of commitment to the project were not always equal. However, CBPAR was a valuable research methodology because it enabled reduction of power, while empowering individuals by encouraging reflexivity of their experiences, which informed how action plans were developed.

Previous AR conducted in Kenya has explored the challenges that teachers, other adults of the community, and youth face in terms of being able to speak openly on issues related to sex (Cobbett et al., 2013; Kiragu, 2007; Maticka-Tyndale et al., 2007; McLaughlin et al., 2012). In these studies, researchers have done well to outline what is known by youth and what they are curious about, as well as the fears adults have about their youth receiving sexual education or engaging in open dialogue about such topics. However, CBPAR as a methodology for enhancing the delivery of sexual education has been limited in Kenya and reports of intergenerational dialogue (as defined in Chapter One), on sex-related issues, remain limited in peer-reviewed research. In addition, AR studies that do focus on issues of sex in Kenya concentrate primarily on
understanding what young people know about sex, but place little emphasis on strategies that enable safe spaces for posing questions or receiving accurate health information.

Dialogic spaces are necessary because they create an opportunity for exchange of ideas about sex and allow for a confirmation of what is thought and heard in the community. More importantly, these spaces can provide an avenue for ideas and beliefs to be challenged, re-informed, and shared through an unfolding process of intergenerational learning. In this way, our research team attempted to bridge gaps between knowledge creation, delivery, interpretation, and use. The study was participatory, inclusive of different community member voices, as contributors to both process and outcome. The post-colonial CBPAR approach was appropriate, as research with communities involves dynamic, iterative, and, sometimes, unstable processes that require researchers and participants to be flexible while remaining critical.

2.1.4.1. Every Methodology with Its Limits

Keeping the attractiveness and advantages of the approach in mind, every methodology has its limits, including CBPAR. Many of the attributed limitations are linked to inconsistencies in implementation processes, which can cause the questions around what applying the methodology actually entails (Darroch & Giles, 2014). I would argue that the inconsistencies are unavoidable when engaging in authentic CBPAR, as committing in advance to particular actions or responses would disregard the participatory human factor for which the methodology asserts to allocate space. Other limits to a CBPAR approach revolve around its time-consuming nature. Often, the length of time required to carry out a successful CBPAR project that results in sustainable outcomes for those involved, does not fall within the stipulations of grant schedules, organisational goals, or research programmes where project duration and expected outcome targets are time-sensitive (Darroch & Giles, 2014; Israel et al., 2006).

Relinquishing control over the process—as required of a large portion of CBPAR because it is participant-driven and, therefore dependent, can also be a challenge to structured researchers, presenting as another limitation to this approach (Israel et al., 2006). Finally, despite its hallmark as an increasingly ethical, power-reductionist approach, it would be impossible to stabilise all power relations intersecting within any given community context (Darroch & Giles, 2014; Wallerstein, 1999). Janes (2016) argued that it is sometimes necessary for a researcher using a CBPAR methodology to assert their power, in an effort to avoid reproducing inequalities that may
arise. This can be achieved by protecting participants from expert knowledge, in efforts to not subvert them. Additionally, subversion could occur if a researcher elects when and how they choose to engage and are not authentic in their approach. A preferable stance would incorporate Janes’ (2016) position of “. . . open engagement of difference and not deference” (p. 120). As a result, this places value on individual learning that can transpire across collectives and reminds those employing a critical lens in their CBPAR work that not all relations of power are negative (Tuhiwai Smith, 1999).

**2.1.4.2. Research Design**

This section will discuss the research design. I aim to depict the complexities of shaping and implementing a research study using a CBPAR methodology. To achieve this, I will first discuss the four core cycles of research. Following this, I will explore the necessary steps to enter the community, and, finally, how I negotiated access to begin collecting data from adults and young people. With each succeeding cycle of research, as depicted in Figure 2: Research design (see section 1.6), the research team aimed to clarify answers to the broad research question laid out in Chapter One “How can a traditional East African gathering place (i.e., baraza) be adapted as a safe space for intergenerational dialogues on sex-related issues in rural Kenyan communities?” This allowed for new questions to emerge about the sexual learning climate (SLC) in the community.

**Planning of Research.** To describe the planning element of this CBPAR study, I would like to use Herr and Anderson’s (2014) description for proposing and carrying out an action research thesis as “designing the plane while flying it”. This metaphor can be likened to my experiences of planning prior to, and during, fieldwork. From the outset, the plan was loose and constantly shifting within each cycle, as it was directed by what different groups of community contributors communicated to us.

Planning began prior to arriving in Kenya. Before negotiating entry into the community, I conducted a needs assessment of the target participant population by reviewing academic literature about the effectiveness of sex education programmes in the country that considered the current concerns (high teen pregnancy rates and early sexual debut) in the Kenyan press, participatory spaces, and, more specifically, mabaraza as a tool for sex-talk. I communicated with the program coordinator of our partner NGO who sought community member concerns and
gauged their initial level of commitment to a sex-related project. Entry into the rural Coast community was initially negotiated through a former partnership established during my master’s research project with PANGO.

As an international researcher, I relied on PANGO for in-country contacts to ensure that the details of the study were circulated to potential participants before my arrival in Mombasa. Since PANGO was a non-profit that relied on its volunteer members, recruitment was not always a central focus, until closer to my arrival in Kenya. To ensure that the responsiveness to our project was reached (e.g., we hoped for at least 100 participants to contribute their stories or concerns to define and begin devising a solution to sex-related community issues), the Programme Officer of PANGO and the research team helped with recruitment and scheduling. Over a three-month period, members from PANGO, teachers from the potential participating schools, and a community worker discussed how the research relationship could build community capacity and, potentially, form a partnership that fostered co-learning. On my side, this was impossible to do, before arriving in the country, without the proper approvals.

Once in Kenya, I had to acknowledge my cultural humility. Defined by Tervalon and Murray-Garcia (1998), cultural humility is the belief that despite efforts to educate or form close relationships with individuals from the culture, or submerge oneself into cultural practices, an outside researcher will never fully reach a true understanding of what it means to belong to the culture being researched. Cultural humility involves the willingness to share power, engage in collaborative decision-making, show up, and demonstrate a commitment to the community after the specific research project has finished (Hacker, 2013). This acknowledgement is paramount to help CBPAR researchers assess their own cultural beliefs, the assumptions they hold about their collaborators, and the community in which the study will take place. This notion enables partnerships defined by mutual respect and trust to develop (Hacker, 2013). In order to successfully demonstrate cultural humility, as the researcher, I had to communicate my intentions, my educational, and cultural and experience backgrounds, as well as the objectives for the project and my PhD degree programme had to be explained. The research team I worked with did the same, in relation to how they viewed my presence, their roles, and commitment to the project, their experiences, their educational/cultural background, and their hopes for the outcomes of the project. This contributed to my cultural humility as it evidenced research team members’ willingness to share and trust me to occupy time in their lives and the community.
**Cycle One: Access and Training** of the research design involved negotiating access with various levels of gatekeepers to work with diverse community stakeholder groups (youths-in-school, out-of-school youths, parents, teachers, elders, chiefs, NGO volunteers and workers) and training the research team. Negotiating access is often referred to in action research studies as the entry process whereby roles are negotiated, and relationships are built (Herr & Anderson, 2014). These processes occurred throughout the month of February and the first two weeks of March 2015. A brief description of training is provided here but the learning generated as a result, as well as the process of accessing participants for this study, are detailed in Chapter Five.

As part of the reciprocal collaboration relationship with our partner NGO, I crowd-funded NZ$4,000 to spread across professional qualitative research skills training in community AR and research activities (meetings, transport to and from the community, document printing and mobile credit). We hired a Kenyan scholar, Dr Susan Kiragu, the co-founder of the Kenyan NGO ‘Children in Freedom’. Dr Kiragu has a long history of community work in Kenya and a deep
passion for the field of AR, safe spaces, and the rights of young people. She designed three days of intensive training workshops in which 18 youths at our partner NGO actively engaged in role play, tested each of the methods used in the study, and discussed why CBPAR methodology is so valuable to research informing community development programmes from the bottom up. In addition to this three-day training period, the persons selected as the final research team members participated in further skill development workshops over the first month. These forms of training can be highly beneficial, as evidenced by the researcher journals and trainee reflections:

We had another research team training session today that touched on the language we use, especially the sensitive terms that people do not usually feel comfortable talking about (e.g., sexual intercourse, STIs, sex work) . . . I found out that not everyone is comfortable to talk about sexual terms and everyone gave their views and experiences for why they were comfortable or not. I learnt that some things may seem easy to talk [sic], but when it comes to actual discussion, some people shy off. This session has really helped me open up and I know when we start in the community I will be able to communicate effectively. (Wendy, excerpt from researcher journal, March 2015)

The capacity building exercises noted in this excerpt is further expanded upon in Chapter Five, where Cycle One is detailed. Equipping local community members with research skills accomplished two things: 1) it enhanced the power/capacity of individuals to identify potential problems and come up with their own solutions; and 2) it empowered and improved the critical thinking skills of the community contributors, increasing the likelihood that future researchers will not exploit vulnerable populations (Flicker et al., 2007). Data collected during our research training evidenced the value of capacity building in CBPAR. Quotes will be highlighted briefly in Chapter Five, evidence of the learning that transpired during Cycle One. However, an in-depth exploration of data from these training sessions, whilst powerful, were outside the scope of this dissertation. Transcriptions of the training sessions were not necessary as content summaries and reviewing the recordings were sufficient to make sense of the learning that emerged from the process.

Cycle Two: Working with Community Contributors involved collecting and analysing preliminary data about the SLCs of the community contributors (spaces for sex education, how sex education is discussed, young people’s knowledge or experiences of sex-related issues, adult knowledge on sex-related issues and problems identified by community contributors). In AR, this cycle is known as the reconnaissance (Townsend, 2013). The ‘generative themes’ component of Freirean Culture Circles were adapted in this cycle as a starting point for considering how best to use, and adapt, traditional spaces for dialogue.
The use of ‘Culture Circles’ in a transformative educational capacity can be traced back to Paulo Freire’s doctoral dissertation (Souto-Manning, 2010). Freire’s Culture Circles were spaces he designed for teaching adult literacy which integrated cultural elements to ground the teaching and learning that occurred in these spaces, within the realm of its participants’ experiences. Learning, as he conceived it, occurred through dialogue, where respect exists for other viewpoints and there is no forcing its participants to adopt any one perspective. Instead, a person’s perspective might shift through learning that occurs during reconceptualisation processes as a result of considering others’ stances (Souto-Manning, 2010). To Freire, dialogue characterised “. . . an epistemological relationship. Thus, in this sense, a dialogue is a way of knowing and should never be viewed as a mere tactic to involve students in a particular task” (Freire & Macedo, 1995, p. 379). According to Freire, being dialogical was the act of engaging critically. He termed this process conscientisation (a word borrowed from Frantz Fanon, a seminal influencer on the discipline of post-colonialism), which he believed to represent the process of learning where one arrives at a higher awareness – or consciousness raising. Coming to this awareness, or criticality, was something Freire saw as an imperative for altering the states of oppression individuals experienced (Freire, 1970). To change one’s disadvantaged location in society, he argued one must, first, be able to read their world to understand why they occupied that position (Freire, 1970).

Freirean Culture Circles have a five-phase critical cycle. Each stage of this cycle was considered for its value in informing how best to encourage sex-related dialogue in the traditional East African space. The five phases involve the following:

- ‘generative themes’ where students share lived experiences through dialogue and, in turn, highlight themes arising from them.
- ‘problem-posing’ where students problematize the themes they identify from their lived experiences.
- ‘dialogue’; as defined from Freire’s perspective as explored in Chapter One, a two-way sharing process, where individuals enter the interaction with mutual respect for other opinions, that may cause them to reconceptualise their own views.
- ‘problem solving’ where students develop plans for change.
- ‘action’ where students engage in the implementation of solutions developed. (Souto-Manning, 2010, p. 32)
Additional tenets require that the process unfold organically, at its own pace, and should be repeated. Further to this, “. . . participants provided their own experiences, which were presented as problems to the circle” (Souto-Manning, 2010, p. 31). These experiences generated themes around adult literacy, a tool Freire saw as a means for reaching liberation. Like mabaraza, these dialogic spaces are not without power dynamics that can, potentially, enhance silence for those already experiencing it. In the Culture Circles, verbally sharing experiences are not always possible due to ethical concerns. In addition, vulnerability to stigmatisation was noted by Souto-Manning (2010), who described participants’ initial hesitancy to share in such a space when she enacted Freirean cultural circles for her study. As a concept that informed the development of my methodology I asked the question: Do these components still have the operational capacity today? Freire’s Culture Circles derived from an academic curiosity to foster more culturally relevant literacy educational experiences that were relevant to those in non-academic spaces. To my knowledge, documenting his idea of dialoguing as transformative education applied to intergenerational sex-talk in traditional gathering spaces has not yet been explored. Nor has his concept been applied in research on communication about the sexual learning and exposure experiences of young people with adults as well as how to address them in order to make positive changes to a SHL of a community. The Culture Circles phases previously described, informed how contextual data were collected to understand sex-related community issues through ‘generative themes’. This allowed youth and adults to problematize the nature of young people’s sexual learning and exposure in the community.

We worked separately with young people and adults to compare and contrast their similar and differing relationships with sex-related learning and exposure experiences. Data were collected over a three-month period, March–June 2015. Data were analysed after collection and translation. To gather these data, our research team partnered weekly (over a period of four weeks) with teachers in Mwakirunge secondary school to facilitate conversations, critical thinking, and literacy related to sex. Young people were given a camera and a journal for which they were invited to share personal accounts of their sexual learning and exposure experiences interviews. This process is termed photo-journaling. Photo-journaling was a key method used to collect contextual data about the SLC of young people in the community. Its uses as a method, processes, and limits are detailed further in the chapter to follow. Findings from this cycle were affirmed in an informal meeting with youths attending the participating school, adults, and out-of-school youths in a baraza setting. Feedback was provided and informed Cycle Three of this research. Findings from Cycle Two are discussed in depth in Chapter Six.
Cycle Three: Adapting Mabaraza involved answering the study’s main question by documenting what dialogues and relationships transpired when mabaraza were adapted as spaces for intergenerational sex-talk. Similar to Freire’s Culture Circles, his idea of problem-posing, in relation to themes identified, was adapted within mabaraza settings. Data in this cycle were collected over a three-month period, June–August 2015. Data were analysed, immediately after collection, and translated to provide timely feedback for the next cycle. Findings from this cycle of the research are discussed in depth in Chapter Seven.

Cycle Four: Dissemination was the final cycle that informed the doctoral dissertation, but not the final stage in the action research project to build intergenerational spaces for sex-talk with community contributors. Two dissemination mabaraza were held, in which our team and the village elder, a man who played a pivotal role to ensure our ‘Creating Conversations’ project was carried out successfully, welcomed all contributors and any interested community members. The findings were shared, affirmed, and discussed; pathways forward were debated. These actions were also recorded, translated, and analysed. This information is discussed in Chapter Eight when referring to future recommendations. The findings were used to formulate the executive summary for the MoEK, the SCRA, development of mentorship workshops, and will continue to be used in the future to formulate funding applications for future programming with PANGO and KINGO after completion of the dissertation.

2.2. Finding my Song

Readers should not be fooled by the linear conceptualisation of the various lenses through which I moved, as presented in this chapter (see Figure 3). The movement was, significantly, messier and more perplexing. In my quest for clarity of concepts, I felt (more than I would perhaps like to admit) lost in the melody, unable to recall the exact lyrics. In psychology, this phenomenon is known as an earworm, or an involuntary recurrence of a tune that creates a “cognitive itch” in the brain and “the more one tries to suppress the songs, the more their impetus increases” (Eueser, Oosterhoff, & van Balkom, 2016, p. 90). The overall experience is termed “stuck song syndrome” whereby the melody can provoke specific feelings or draw associations. This was my experience in shaping and understanding the specific methodological approach I applied; moving with a loose plan and many unknowns in each cycle’s early stage, was my unexplainable hum—a song for which I did not fully know all the lyrics but recalled the melody and chorus that held it
all together. Having committed to and enacted a CBPAR approach, the lyrics to my “song” now seem obvious. The openness to adapt the study’s direction based on community contributors’ suggestions, and exploratory nature of the research, were key in the process of understanding how to move toward sustainable spaces for intergenerational sex-talk. Thus, figuring out the lyrics to my song as I moved with the team and community contributors through each cycle (i.e., how to do CBPAR as I was doing it), can be equated to coming up with the words to fit a melody already known.

Even though CBPAR is considered an increasingly democratic approach to conducting research, at times, throughout this work, it was impossible to disregard the epistemic privilege tied to research. As this was a part of a PhD programme, there were ethical and procedural regulations, as well as specific timelines and academic expectations, required of me as a principal researcher. It was my hope that approaching a CBPAR project through a critical post-colonial lens would highlight the power imbalances inherent in research-community partnerships, and amongst community members themselves, in an effort to deal with (and not sweep under the rug) challenging and pertinent issues of working in the collaborative space. Discussions of power and privilege are picked up in different sections of succeeding chapters in this dissertation. I hope it remains apparent throughout the reading of this work that, whether explicitly stated or not, there was always a hum in the background, the lyrics and my song growing clearer the more engaged I became.
Chapter 3. A Mountain of Sand and Multiple Scoops: Research Methods for CBPAR

3.1. Continuing to Shape the Methodology

One of my favourite things about Kenyans is their ability to slip a wise proverb, or methali, into a variety of conversations. Methalis in Kenya are literally embedded into clothing such as kangas—traditional wraps worn by women of all ages—and figuratively woven into the language through public addresses, lectures, and intimate conversations. During a community-based qualitative research training workshop with the research team for this project, Dr Susan Kiragu-Kanayo, in lecturing about methods, stated, ‘There must be a scoop to shovel the sand. The shape and type of scoop you choose is up to you but choose wisely.’ This resulted in our research team’s first discussion on how exactly we would triangulate the methods of interviews, photo-journals, FGs, mabaraza and reflective journals for community members to best represent themselves and be represented within this work.

The previous chapter detailed the conceptual framework in which I operated and specifically the methodological approach of Community-Based Participatory Action Research (CBPAR) used in this study. In this chapter, I build upon the research design discussed in the previous chapter to explore the methodological decisions I made relating to participants (the research team as co-inquirers, the community collaborators, as well as the methods of sampling and recruiting participants), the five methods of data collection with a variety of community collaborators, as well as techniques of data analysis employed. In addition, I report the ethical considerations. At times, reflections from my research journal have been integrated alongside thick descriptions of the methods to better illustrate how the data collection developed over the fieldwork period.

3.2. Participants

This section is about the participants: the populations I worked with, the sampling methods, and how they were recruited. Collaboration, and how it is defined, is the most crucial component to the brand of CBPAR a researcher chooses to employ. These relationships demonstrate the depth of co-inquiry, depict community representation (which can reflect the confirmability and validity of the results to those most affected by providing answers to the research question) and in turn, foster a sense of ownership over achieving a community-led solution (Herr & Anderson, 2005).
The prior partnership PANGO had with the MoEK gave our research team permission to contact any of the 20 affiliated schools to invite students and teachers as collaborators in the research. The participants for this study, generally defined, were members of the research team and community collaborators which included different groups of youths and adults from a rural community in Coast Province, Kenya, along with members of NGOs who work with them. Both of these groups are described further in the following sub-sections.

3.2.1 The Research Team

The research team supported me in meeting the study aims through research skills training; addressing research questions, aims and objectives; and collectively analysing data and developing the research findings and recommendations. This informed an executive summary for the MoEK, feedback to the community members and to the NGO operating in the ward. Upon commencing the project, the research team was a carefully selected group of six individuals (excluding myself) who acted and advocated on behalf of the community and the community’s concerns. However, there was a final team of five (including myself) because two of the Kenyan members (one male, one female) from our partner NGO, departed the research after three months due to family duties. The remaining members included two female Kenyan volunteers from our partner NGO, a male of New Zealand origin, trained in qualitative research as well as myself. The fifth member was the programme officer for our partner NGO who acted as an advisor because he was unable to attend each team meeting due to external time commitments. The team consulted him on matters of access, mobilisation and culturally responsive data collection and dissemination tools.

The research team members were all proficient in English and Kiswahili, had received at least one level of university or college education, and with the exception of myself and another researcher, and were all from rural communities in the Mombasa region. A requirement to be a member of the research team was that they had successfully completed the research training workshops, and submitted a resume and letter detailing their reasons for wanting to be involved, that I reviewed prior to arriving in the country. In addition, it was necessary that the local team members had previous experience working with members of the community and could demonstrate strong skills communicating knowledge of its cultural, social, economic, and political context. A statement of collaboration (SOC) was developed with the team detailing the work term, an overview of the duties, time commitments and payment. In addition, a terms of
research (TOR) contract was developed with each team member outlining a month-by-month breakdown of tasks to complete for each week to ensure that the research process flowed smoothly.

### 3.2.2 Community Contributors

Community contributors included youths both in and out-of-school, teachers, parents, sex educators, religious and local government leaders, health workers as well as NGO volunteers and employees. For the purposes of reporting and maintaining ethicality, in terms of proceeding with action plans, young people, and adult contributors, who lived in the community, were deemed residents. In contrast, NGO workers and their organisations present in the community were deemed non-residents. Community contributors participated in this project during one or more of cycles involving data collection and dissemination. This was previously outlined in Chapter One (see Table 2 in section 1.6) and will be expanded in this chapter through the discussion of the various data collection methods.

In **Cycle One**, 18 out-of-school youths participated in research training while informal meetings engaged eight members of the local government (the Chief, assistant chiefs, village elders and religious leaders). In addition, an informal meeting with NGOs working in the area was held where we shared the objectives and goals of our study with five organisation employees. In **Cycle Two** (Data Collection Round One), 75 persons were reached. Of these, 32 were adults up to age 75 and 42 were youths between 10 and 21. In **Cycle Three** (Data Collection Round Two), 114 total participants were engaged across the four mabaraza (one female, one male, one co-gendered; and one co-gendered dissemination baraza). 81 participants in total, primarily adults, attended our final dissemination mabaraza—some of them had participated in various cycles of the study whereas others were interacting with the information for the first time. Accounting for participant overlap in the mabaraza, we engaged a total of approximately 270 participants for data collection across the four cycles of research.

In **Cycle Two**, the adult participant group comprised a range of men and women. These included teachers, religious leaders, parents, out-of-school youths aged 21-30, local government staff including the community Chief and village elders, community health workers and NGO program officers, other employees, and volunteers. Community members with these defining characteristics were key contributors who partook in mabaraza.
The Kenyan policy on youths defined them as individuals between the ages of 15 and 30 years. Kenyans within the age bracket of 1-30 years make up at least 70% of the country’s total population (KNBS, 2013). However, they have often been omitted from the design, planning and implementation of policies and programmes by which they are directly affected. This research focused on how sex-related discussions could be improved and specifically cooperated with secondary school aged youths and out-of-school youths between 10 and 25 years to document their experiences of sexual learning and exposure in Cycle Two. The participating school in the community had current and well-established partnerships with our partner NGO and the MoEK; thus, access was significantly easier. The youths’ participant group was recruited from students enrolled in this government-funded secondary school. This rural school is located in Mwakirunge and was only accessible by dirt road. Reaching the participating school in this community took approximately 50 minutes by motorbike. The school was co-gendered with a total enrolment of 180 students. The average class size was approximately 30 students to one teacher. These young people as well as out-of-school youths, or those who did not have the opportunity to create a photo-journal (see section 3.3.2), were also invited to dialogue in mabaraza.

The role of the community contributors was to share their individual narratives to identify underlying themes contributing to sex-related issues (e.g. rape, gender-based violence, early sexual debut, adolescent pregnancy, and high rates of STIs/STDs). The role of the community contributors was particularly crucial before the study commenced and after it concluded because they determined how best to build conversational spaces for sex-talk. The community contributors worked with our research team to relay concerns and experiences to the organisations present in the community. However, upon the research team’s exit from the community, and development of a proposal for mentorship, it was reiterated that it was up to the community contributors to participate in, and drive, future programming. Ultimately, it was their decision to continue working toward a sustainable solution and to advocate for learning opportunities regarding sexual information. This would involve organising and attending meetings to devise strategies for implementation and asking for help from local leaders at community meetings when designing these spaces. Once the research was over, members of PANGO incorporated the findings of the study into their community programmes and began working toward staged changes as was suggested during Cycle Four of the ‘Creating Conversations’ project.
3.2.3 Sampling and Recruitment

The head of PANGO led the sampling process by setting up initial meetings with community contributors. He has 16 years of experience with community-based interventions and community programming, and a lifetime of local cultural expertise. He also has extensive understanding of school and governmental systems and is experienced in facilitating large groups of people for community action purposes. The community contributors for this study were collected using purposeful and snowball sample strategies. Purposeful sampling involves accessing those individuals who, because of certain characteristics, experiences, or skills, will be best able to help answer the research question. Snowball sampling is a type of non-probability sampling that relies on the assumptions that social actors are not predictable like objects and that randomised events are unrelated to actual social life (Magnani, Sabin, Saidel, & Heckathorn, 2005). In this type of sampling, participants are identified through their connections with persons who are current study participants and share relevant experiences about the topic under study. This sampling method was predominantly employed whilst seeking community contributors to join the adult participant group. While utilising this sampling method, our research team, who worked closely with the community through volunteer positions with PANGO, suggested potential community contributors. It was imperative that the research team understood the principles around selection bias, sampling, and validity, to enhance recruitment success and the transferability of the sample to the specific population being targeted (Hacker, 2013).

Distribution of information sheets, promotional fact brochures, and presentations conducted with the study’s primary partner PANGO were used during recruitment. For Cycle One, the Chief Programme Officer at our partner NGO sent out email and text invitations to recruit community contributors to participate in research training sessions. Key community contributors aided in this mobilisation in Cycles Two to Four, in particular one village elder, a deputy principal from the participating school, and the Boda-Boda driver from the community who transported our research team to and from research sites. In addition, for Cycles Two, Three and Four, research team members spent time in the community having informal conversations with community members while inviting them to participate in mabaraza.

3.3. Methods: Hearing, Reading and Seeing as Data

The research team employed a combination of methods for collecting and analysing data to inform best practices to foster sex education conversations. These research procedures took place
in a variety of settings. Data collection solely with youth groups (e.g. narrative/photo-journal interviews) took place in a private classroom, in the school where each child is enrolled. Data collection done solely with adult groups (e.g. FGs) took place in either a private room within the PANGO building or convenient private outdoor spaces in the community (e.g. outside the local church or in a meadow outside the community meeting hall). The mabaraza were held in a centrally located outdoor space (e.g. outside the church) or inside/outside the community meeting hall which could accommodate larger numbers of individuals. A combination of five data collection methods was utilised, including semi-structured interviews, photo-journal interviews, video-recorded mabaraza, FGs and reflective journals. The following sections outline each method and their implementation, provide a rationale for their use and discuss how meanings were mined from the data.

3.3.1 Semi-Structured Interviews

Semi-structured interviews were employed as the first instrument of data collection in Cycle Two. I, or a member of the research team, personally interviewed out-of-school youths and adult participants face-to-face using an interview guide that was pre-developed by our research team; the use of its contents was validated and finalised by the Coast Inter-Faith Council of Clerics (CICC) as recommended by Flick, von Kardoff, & Steinke (2004). The interview guide consisted of 12 questions; however, new questions were added if topics arose from which relevant data could be gathered. Since we gathered information from informants belonging to different social classes, genders, ages, educational levels, cultures and in some cases religious beliefs, the potential for diverse constructions of the same event or topic, such as how sex education can or should be delivered, was certain to exist. Interviews were used with three community contributor groups—NGO volunteers, local government staff and NGO programme heads—to collect in-depth understandings of current and past sexual health projects in the community.

The interviews were conducted in a variety of convenient, accessible, comfortable, and confidential settings. All interviews were audio-recorded and aimed to be thirty minutes to one hour in length, lasting only until no new information was communicated or the interviewees felt they had fully conveyed what they wanted to share. The questions focused on the challenges of having conversations about sex and teaching sex-related information, how and where they learned about sex as youths and their experience of either delivering sex education to the participant community or being a part of shaping the education programs. It was our team’s idea
that if community contributors (even at the local policy level) have opportunities to develop emancipatory learning and to think about their role as instigators and enactors of policy change, transformative understandings of their ability to increase sexual literacy in their communities might be identified. Thus, participating in this research allowed a diverse group of community contributors to share their individual voices within sex-related discussions to develop understanding around how to reduce the current early pregnancy rates, misinformed knowledge about STDs and dangerous decisions regarding having sex.

I, along with the four members of the research team, transcribed all interviews verbatim in Kiswahili (where needed) and English while I still resided in Mombasa. A member of the team was always present during the interviews to ensure that if the key informant had difficulty communicating a concept in English, it could first be shared in their mother tongue and later translated for analysis. Before each interview, the research team and I ensured that all informants were sufficiently informed of their role and value to the study along with their ability to participate in a member checking process—to change, add to or erase sections once the interview was finished and transcribed to ensure that the findings produced were trustworthy (Twycross, & Shields, 2005). An in-depth description of the process of analysis is presented in the ‘Data Analysis’ section later in this chapter. The data gathered from these interviews are presented alongside an analysis of the findings in subsequent chapters of this dissertation.

3.3.2 Photo-Journal Interviews

Photo-journaling was part of the second method of data collection employed in this study, specifically with the young people participant group in Cycle Two. The use of photo-journals as data was first developed as a methodological approach variously named ‘photo-voice’ or ‘photo novella’. Wang and Burris (1994) coined the term photo novella in their small-scale study of the effects of social factors on how rural women, from a Chinese province, engaged with health policy. Photographs were used as a means for each woman to share her voice. The process of using photography to communicate thoughts, feelings and experiences encouraged the women to actively participate in their lives through individual and collective critical analysis of the social factors that constrained or enriched their health status. The collection and analysis of photographs has its roots in empowerment, education, documentary photography and feminist theory (Wang & Burris, 1994).
In Wang and Burris’ study, the camera served as a supplementary lens to the oral content of interviews or FGs. The voices that were illuminated using photography predominantly influenced social policy and transformed research, and the everyday experiences it sought to document, through powerful and stimulating images. Berger (2008) acknowledged photographs as unconventional means of seeing and gaining a deeper understanding of the participant’s experience:

An image is a sight, which has been recreated or reproduced. It is an appearance, or a set of appearances, which has been detached from the place and time in which it first made its appearance and preserved—for a few moments or a few centuries. Every image embodies a way of seeing. Even a photograph. For photographs are not, as often assumed, a mechanical record. Every time we look at a photograph, we are aware, however slightly, of the photographer selecting that sight from an infinity of other possible sights . . . The photographer’s way of seeing is reflected in his choice of subject. (pp. 9-10)

Castleden and Garvin (2008) discussed the challenges posed by using photography in research:

The act of taking pictures in any community is a political act and, as with other methods, the resulting data disclose that which is photographed and hides that which is not. As such photography can be an intrusive activity and may lead to unintended consequences. (p. 1396)

The deliberations and steps taken to protect the privacy of those involved in the photography activities are addressed in the ethics sub-sections of this chapter.

Guidelines were given to the youths by organisers, helping to carry out the ‘Creating Conversations’ project in the school setting (two teachers and four members of the research team) to create the photo-journals. Wilson et al., (2007) signified the method as a powerful tool for youth development, whilst elaborating on its value for accessing agency to take stake in the problems affecting their lives:

. . . a rich tool for youth development . . . it offers a promising prevention approach by affording young adolescents the opportunity to experience participation and self-determination (voice and choice), to learn new skills, and to take action about things that, from their own perspective, affect their health and safety concerns in the community. (p. 259)

Thus, the content of the photo-journals was a co-construction between the project facilitators and the young people who participated. The guidelines for taking the photographs might have influenced the content that young people chose not to include or topics that were under-explored. In the initial session, facilitators spent two-hours with the young people, asking them informally about what they would describe when they hear the word sex. Amongst laughter and some intense revelations, members of research team worked with the youths to experiment with the

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digital photo-taking process in preparation for their time spent documenting their experiences onto their own.

These guidelines for taking photographs also formed the topics of some of the semi-structured questions asked during the photo-journal interviews with consenting young people in school. A member of the research team read through the interview guide at the end of each photo-journal interview with young people to ensure they understood the meaning of the question. The questions were developed out of a thorough reading of literature which ultimately led me to specific resources: Core instruments for asking young people about their sexual health behaviours instituted by WHO and developed by Cleland, Ingham and Stone (2001); as well as a detailed ‘Toolkit for Change’ developed by McLaughlin et al., (2012) as a guide for practitioners wanting to build programming on “sex and AIDS education with children, teachers and stakeholders” (p. 109). As the foundational content for the Toolkit was informed by findings from three SSA countries (Kenya, Tanzania, and South Africa) it provided a good starting point to design questions community contributors, especially the young people, could answer to contextualise their learning and exposure experiences with regard to sex. Our team translated the adapted questions from Cleland et al., (2001) in our photo-journal interview guide, which sometimes necessitated yes or no responses, to Kiswahili, which helped better locate some of the topics in context of participants understanding when required. The photographs and the attached captions were analysed alongside transcripts from interviews about the photo-journals with young people. In these sessions, we reviewed photo-journals created by the youths and asked them to respond to questions about their experience of learning about sex-related topics where comfortable. The findings were used to inform how sex-talk was initiated in the baraza space, which was done through the use of storyboards developed out of the photos and captions from young people’s journals.

I should mention here that I have no formal training in the visual arts, but I like to think creativity has always been a part of my process for conveying understanding. From creating Polaroid photo collages for my wall as a child, teaching myself guitar just to create a melody for the lyrics written in my adolescent years, to designing a dance routine as part of a project for my Bachelor’s in Physical Education; in my creative process, I have engaged with various forms of art. Inspired by a reading required in a methodology course during my Masters that employed ‘collage as inquiry’ (Butler-Kisber, 2008), I decided to use photo-voice as a method and have come to value the marriage of words and photos to capture a specific moment in time (explored
further in section 3.2). The storyboard idea was perhaps inspired by my love for collages. In this way, the photos and words of the young people became a storyboard art project, which highlighted the most common ways they experienced sexual content, received ideas about sex, or directly participated in sexual acts. Storyboards, and their usage, are discussed again in Chapters Six and Seven.

While our team worked with young people regarding methods of communicating their ideas to adult contributors, the adults were asked to participate in a series of co-gendered and gender-divided FGs. In these spaces, adults negotiated answers to the following questions:

- How successful are current forms of sex education in the lives of youths?
- How do we want our youths to learn about sex education?
- How knowledgeable are our young people on ideas related to sex?
- What constitutes effective sex education?
- What are the main elements required for a functional space for sex-related dialogues of change to occur with young people?

In answering these questions, the adult contributors were introduced to current statistics about sexual risk-taking, sexual infection rates, unplanned pregnancies, and other sexual issues among young people. This information provided adults with a contextual background for how youths explained their experiences related to learning about sex and their risk for unplanned pregnancy, rape, and sexual infections unless they could be equipped with the appropriate information and avenues to ask questions about sex. Based on previous research, having access to accurate and appropriate sexual health information results in more sexually informed decision-making, decreased adolescent pregnancy, a later sexual debut and decreased sexual infection rates (UNAIDS, 2011).

3.3.3 Focus Groups

Another method of data collection employed in Cycle Two was FGs. FGs involved gathering a number of out-of-school youths or adult participants—typically four to ten—to discuss the research topic in depth (Ritchie, Lewis, Nicholls, & Ormston, 2013). This method enabled researchers to collect a range of views on the study topic. Barriers to disclosure were considered because the FG topics were sensitive in nature and the groups were heterogeneous; therefore, varying levels of ease in contributing to the discussion were anticipated. However, these
challenges were mitigated through moderator efforts. To ensure that the voice was not male dominated (as is typical of a public space in East Africa), the moderator advised participants at the beginning of each FG that it would be their job as contributors to champion the voices of their neighbours in the group. Thus, when one person was finished speaking to the point of discussion, they passed a recording device to their neighbour while encouraging them to share their opinion on the issue at hand. For topics where members of the group felt uncomfortable, the moderator helped the group explore alternative words to use that made the discussion easier (e.g. replacing ‘having sex’ with ‘taking part in the activity’) or by asking questions about closely related topics which eventually resulted in the participants guiding the discussion back to the main point.

In addition, the FG environment, in contrast to structured or semi-structured interviews, enabled community collaborators to take control of the direction of dialogue, highlighting their key sex-related concerns rather than relying on the moderator to lead the discussion. FGs offered a solution to the context-specific challenges of rapidly changing weather conditions and the fact that for most of the day during round one of data collection, our community collaborators were in the fields as it was prime farming season. Both factors reduced the amount of time participants had to commit to the discussion, but the FG context maximised the amount of data that could be collected, especially in terms of breadth. In addition, adults in the FG found commonalities amongst their experiences with sex-related matters once the discussions commenced. This enabled them to give and receive support; something that would not have been possible in a setting where the data collection method was more individually focused (Munday, 2006).

FGs were used to illuminate the social context of the research, making explicit how individuals chose to discuss the topic of sex, how they developed their understandings of sex in relation to others in the group and how sex-talk was constrained, enhanced, or altered by this sharing setting (Ritchie et al., 2013). The conversational nature of FGs, which promotes speaking and listening, encouraged participants to reflect on their own thoughts about the topic and sometimes refine or elaborate on their experiences (Ritchie et al., 2013). This method was well suited to the CBPAR methodology as it permitted youths and adults ‘to generate their own questions, frames, and concepts and to pursue their own priorities on their own terms’ (Kitzinger & Barbour, 1999, p. 5). Thus, FGs offered an opportunity for each participant to share his or her voice and exchange and compare experiences with others.
A research team member with the ability to translate was present at each one-hour FG. My role as a researcher in this setting was as a moderator, ensuring that the conversations did not stray too far from the topic under investigation (Ritchie et al., 2013). We used open-ended questions to start conversations and focus on key issues. If a topic arose in discussion that was salient to the research question, it was explored. Originally, our team planned to use FGs with adult participants only. However, while some students waited to have their photo-journal interview with a member of the research team, a FG was held to maximise our time and theirs, expanding the opportunity to gain a better understanding of the contexts within in which they learned and talked about sex. This focus group deviated from the interview guide used with the rest of the participants. Instead an interactive environment was fostered whereby a member of the research team facilitated an educational PowerPoint with images where youths had an opportunity to respond to questions, ask questions, and share their stories on different topics. During the first two months of data collection, we held one FG with teachers only, one with parents of youths-in-school, one with adults and out-of-school youths, one with an international NGO present in the community, and two with mixed age groups of adults and out-of-school youths. We also endeavoured to conduct a FG with PANGO volunteers and workers, but it resembled a forum setting as it was attended by more people than anticipated.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Focus Group Type</th>
<th>Number of Community Contributors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents of School Aged Young People</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adults and Out-of-School Young People</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youths in School Co-Gender</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FG 1</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FG 2</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partner NGO Volunteers (forum)</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International NGO Workers</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3: Number of community contributors for each focus group

These FGs were particularly useful in the initial weeks of research. They highlighted in a short period of time an extensive number of stories about how sex education is and can be delivered and how many of the young people in the community experienced sex-related challenges due to inadequate access to health information or learning opportunities. Where interviews were used to record change, and understanding at the micro level, FGs made apparent what was occurring at the macro level (Ritchie et al., 2013). Data collected from FGs were analysed (techniques detailed in the ‘Data Analysis’ section of this chapter) and the findings were combined with those...
of the youths’ photo-journals and key informant interviews to guide how sex-talk was initiated in mabaraza.

### 3.3.4 Mabaraza

As introduced in Chapter One, in Kenya, the baraza is a traditional gathering space for dialogue imbued in the societal fabric in terms of resolving community issues and informing the community on new policies and has been utilised as a tool for consultation when a new program is introduced as well as a gathering space for locals to bring attention to and dialogue about topics of interest. The following is a description of how the baraza was adapted in Cycle Three as a tool for data collection.

As traditional East African spaces for dialogue and debate, mabaraza were appropriate to examine as a process for intergenerational dialogue on sex-talk because they are central processes to indigenous ways of knowing, which are imperative in approaching research from a decolonised space (Cochran et al., 2008). The baraza setting was informed by community ideas. All questions posed by the research team and topics explored in this space emerged from primary research findings in Cycle Two. These questions were also approved by the CICC. In addition, the training that the research team members received before the research commenced involved building skills to monitor and balance power dynamics in groups with uneven social, economic, and political statuses. Shaped in this way, the baraza was adapted for intergenerational sex-talk. The information from these spaces informed best practices for effective communication about sex education in the current programs of the participant community.

The research team implemented mabaraza with the assistance of key community contributors such as elders and chiefs. The composition of these spaces is detailed in Table 4. Each baraza followed a similar format that included specific processes (as described in Chapter Seven), probing discussion questions and activities. This space invited young people to discuss concepts documented in the photo-journals they constructed during the community sex education project. The young people selected photos and accompanying descriptions from their journals to place on boards, creating a story of exposure to sex-related information in their communities. The youths were invited to share and explain these storyboards or to have a research team member guide the baraza attendees through their processes of constructing their experience. Some of the young people who constructed the storyboards were unable to attend each of the mabaraza. Thus, it was
unanimously agreed that the young people wanted research team members to present on their behalf, reading their photo descriptions verbatim. These storyboards highlighted key sex-related issues in the community and were the starting points for intergenerational sex-talk. Four mabaraza were held and documented (two gender-divided and two mixed-gender) and their composition is detailed in Table 4:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mabaraza Type</th>
<th>Community Collaborators (#+)</th>
<th>Young People (#)</th>
<th>Adults (#)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Co-Gender</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dissemination (Co-Gender)</td>
<td>80 (55M,25F)</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4: Mabaraza composition

The responses to these displays and discussions to be analysed were recorded using digital voice recorders, a laptop, and a video camera. The use of more than one type of recording device was necessary to capture the density of multiple voices in one space and ensured that the conversations in the baraza were well-documented and could be easily revisited. Participants in the mabaraza were given the option to receive full copies of the transcript before the dissemination baraza to add to or change their original contributions, or to provide feedback on a summarised version of the transcript during the dissemination baraza itself (member checks). The research team only viewed these recordings during the member-checking and analysis stages. The process of the mabaraza analysis is described in the ‘Data Analysis’ section of this chapter. The data gathered from the mabaraza are presented alongside an analysis of the findings in Chapter Eight of this dissertation.

3.3.5 Reflective Journals

For the final method, I, along with research team members, endeavoured to keep a reflective journal from the outset to the conclusion of the project. Guba and Lincoln (1985) described the reflective journal as a form of diary in which the researcher habitually records details of the study experience throughout its duration. Reflective journals are predominantly used to encourage reflexivity through acknowledging and interpreting the researchers’ own assumptions, their objectives for carrying out the research and the methodological decisions and motivations for those decisions throughout the process (Guba & Lincoln, 1985; Ortlipp, 2008). A reflective
Journal is useful in understanding how the researcher’s biography impacts the research findings and the subsequent knowledge produced. This method evolved out of feminist analyses and researching practices that examined differences or intersectionality between race, gender, sexuality, class, and ability (Hughes, 2012).

Keeping a reflective journal enables researchers to explore and affirm what they believe and their subjective positions in relation to those participating in the study (Ortlipp, 2008). As a researcher employing CBPAR, the relationship between the researcher and participants is so linked that it commands reflexivity. Richardson (1994) described writing as a method of inquiry in that the practice of writing allows us to construct our world through words. She noted that researchers continue to attempt writing as a means of sense making despite the inability of words to produce an exact representation of the studied world. Richardson (1994) asserted that:

Although we usually think about writing as a mode of ‘telling’ about the social world, writing is not just a mopping-up activity at the end of a research project. Writing is also a way of ‘knowing’—a method of discovery and analysis. By writing in different ways, we discover new aspects of our topic and our relationship to it. Form and content are inseparable. (p. 923)

Hence, I chose to use the reflective journal as a method of data collection to avoid ‘the interpretive crisis’ defined by Denzin (1994, p. 501) as a problem of determining the appropriate amount of influence a researcher should have on the study, and how or if it should be controlled. Thus, I, along with research team members, used individual reflective journals to make explicit our thoughts, feelings, and opinions and to document our experiences throughout the research period. I strived to record my reactions to participant responses, collaboration suggestions, my personal opinions, the assumptions I challenged and the times I felt confronted. I wrote about the power dynamics between the participants and myself, along with the undercurrents between participants of different statuses. The research team members were encouraged to document their experience of working in the communities, the frustrations, and positives of working as part of a research team, juggling time commitments, their observations in mabaraza and the development of their researcher identity throughout the process. One excerpt from Kay’s journal, a member of the research team, evidenced her annoyances with juggling time but equally her delight in learning new techniques while coming to understand the roles of a researcher from the early stages of the research:

It is annoying having to work (regular job at NGO) on the weekends but it’s all sacrifice. I must go to work today, have meeting to sit [sic] and a lot of minutes to write down. Unfortunately, (after arriving at work) the meeting didn’t happen as planned. We had to push it to next week because very
few people turned up. Maybe it is because everyone gets exhausted by the end of the week and they just want to rest, I assume. The day goes by lazily, but gladly it ends.

I do my research work at home and decide to use the rest of the weekend using Google Scholar!!! Thank God for Laura’s help. I find amazing stuff but it’s frustrating that I can’t seem to download full text, not unless I purchase online! I keep trying and reading, hoping that what is able proves sufficient. A boring weekend of reading and more reading—hmmm, who is to say I am not a researcher? (Kay, Researcher Journal, 28 February 2015)

Journal reflections like this are incorporated throughout the dissertation chapters, enriching the descriptions of context and our how our identities became embedded in the research process.

Davies and Gannon (2003) asserted that the most important aspects of research are “. . . the assumptions made about the nature of, and relation between, subjects, the text they produce and the conceptual tools and strategies that are used to analyse them” (p. 7). Placing an emphasis on these aspects in the analysis of my reflective journal, made visible to myself how I arrived at certain constructions of experiences while engaging with the community, along with my own biases and their influences on the research outcomes. Reflexivity in research is founded upon acknowledging the influences that dominant systems of power—whether historical, ideological, political, organisational, or social—exercise over the researcher and the researched. Reflexivity, beginning with assessing how different forms of power constrain research conduct and interactions, is a vital part of implementing a research action plan that builds capacity and fosters emancipation from marginalised situations to produce positive research outcomes (Shacklock & Smyth, 1998). Keeping a reflective journal and using it in the write-up process served to make my intentions, and those of the research team members, as transparent as possible.

3.4. Data Analysis

Mishler (1986) defined data analysis as the process of conveying a direction, structure and cohesion to the information collected throughout the research, which leads to uncovering and understanding the meaning of the data. In this study, I thematically analysed the data through two units of analysis including narratives and visual content which are described in more detail to follow.

Jovchelovitch and Bauer (2000) identified two types of analytic traditions with narrative data: structural and thematic. The research team and I employed a thematic analysis. We determined that the best way to remain true to the intentions of each speaker was to preserve the contexts in which their speech occurred. Thus, the unit of analysis for all verbal and textual data collected
was large blocks of texts (Ryan & Bernard, 2000). This is an appropriate unit of analysis, as Shkedi (2005, p.80) identified: ‘No person can be understood outside his/her culture, likewise no phenomenon can be understood outside of its culture’. Hence, by not separating the large blocks of text by individual words, and, instead, analysing holistically, the research team attempted to preserve the contextual meanings through which participants voiced their stories. Narratives opened up possibilities for communicating unspoken knowledge, understandings, and experiences (Linde, 1993). Narratives can be generated from conversations, photographs or other visual imagery and written texts such as letters or diaries (Riessman, 1987). Early definitions of narratives had a standard formula: a main character, a catalytic incident that created certain actions and reactions for the character and a climax.

Riessman (1987) asserted that not all narratives collected by researchers need employ this exact formula and may change and develop based on the nature of data collection. Narrative, is not simply my retelling of young peoples and adult’s stories about how sex was taught, learned, discussed, or practiced. Instead, narratives that arose from conversations within interview, FGs, mabaraza and classroom settings, along with those accompanying photographs, were analysed collectively and individually. The findings demonstrated how participants came to design the reality of their experiences and reconstruct those realities in the collaborative research process. Creswell (2014) noted that another benefit of analysing narrative data is that collecting stories from the participants about issues that directly affect them provided a space where they could access and assert their voices. The importance of researchers sharing, and analysing, participant narratives is illustrated in the following quote by Andrews, Squire and Tambouku (2013):

> We frame our research in terms of narrative because we believe that by doing so we are able to see different and sometimes contradictory layers of meaning, to bring them into useful dialogue with each other, and to understand more about individual and social change. (p. 2)

Thus, this approach enabled our research team to further understand those who generate stories, the function of structuring stories in a certain way, how stories are transferred and interpreted, in what ways stories are used and in other cases, how stories, or aspects of them, are silenced. For the purposes of this research, I focused on the negotiation of social identities in the wider context of ease or unease with sexual expression, sex-talk, and education practices. I also analysed how narratives about sex, from youths and adults, were constrained, encouraged, resisted, or silenced by prevailing discourses that existed inside and outside of mabaraza.
Visual content was the second unit of analysis, which included photographic data gathered during photo-journal interviews with young people. These data were analysed separately and alongside the textual data from young people’s journals to uncover themes. This involved answering ‘how’ and ‘why’ the images were produced (Riessman, 2008). To uncover those aspects, the research team asked these questions to each youth in their photo-journal interview to understand their “how and why” allowing them to add any further information they may have left out in their journal. In a team meeting, all photographs were printed and brought together. As photo-journal interviews had been conducted by different members of the research team, they were not familiar with each of the photographs or the stories the youths had attached. The process of having team dialogues about the photographs before pairing it with its written journal entry, allowed the team to interpret the photographs, layering it with their assumptions around the community, the young people interviewed, and their own biases around gender roles, education, and sexuality. This was a great exercise in interrogating inherent stereotypes and prejudices to ensure these were removed from our final analysis.

To explore the data thematically, our team analysed interviews, FGs and mabaraza data in the same manner. My strategy for analysis was a combination of portions from Schmidt’s (2004) five-stage analytic strategy for semi-structured interviews with organic top-down and bottom-up thematic coding processes (Yin, 2015) that transpired when analysing all transcripts from each cycle of data collection. The complex coding process that follows was practically managed through electronic entry of notes/codes and made accessible through a shared Dropbox folder online. The process was as follows:

1) Determine analytical categories. After all the interviews were transcribed in English and Kiswahili, each member of the team vigorously familiarised themselves with the contents of the transcripts. While pre-set codes extracted from the data gathering guides (photo-journal instructions, interview/focus group schedule—see Appendix 1.1) were considered, our research team relied on emergent codes identified through prolonged engagement reading hardcopies of the transcripts. Since data were principally gathered in Kiswahili, I was not able to have the same level of repeated exposure to data that enhances rigour, as would normally occur in a project where translation was not required (Guba & Lincoln, 1985). To mitigate this, three weeks for Cycle Two and three weeks for Cycle Three were set aside for team members to read—individually and collectively—analyse and discuss the transcripts in detail.
2) Develop a guide for coding. A first step required each member of the team to develop his or her own codebook, which included the title of the code and a brief description of what it represented. To help determine key themes, at this stage transcript data collected were analysed first through a word count. This technique is a form of content analysis that allowed the research team to identify what terms young people and adults used most frequently to discuss sex-related issues and which words they shied away from. It enabled the team to understand the relationships of power between the intergenerational groups when dialoguing both separately and together (Leech & Onwugebuzie, 2008).

3) Group, test, and revise. In the second stage of analysis, the team gathered to share their codes. Next, we compiled four lists with separate titles. The first list, called ‘Significant Codes’, included all those codes that had been mutually identified by every member of the team and thoroughly discussed by the community. The second list, titled ‘outlier codes’, included codes that stood out to the research team as relevant to the research question, but were not heavily unpacked during interviews or FGs. ‘Sub-significant’ codes made up the third list, which included topics that contributed to one of the ‘Significant’ codes but were unpacked sufficiently enough to require their own discussions. The final list was deemed ‘non-relevant codes’ and encompassed topics that were mentioned several times but had little to no relevancy to our study’s question.

4) I solely analysed all data collected in Cycle One: Training and Access, as it was unrelated to the study’s main question but provided useful insights into the value of training a research team for a CBPAR project. When analysing data collected during Cycle Two, I entered the team coding sessions with three broad domains in my codebook: 1) Norms and beliefs surrounding sex-related discussion and practices; 2) Sex-related knowledge sources; and 3) Extent of sex-related health knowledge and understanding. Across the three domains, there were 12 sub-domains containing a number of codes. Data collected during Cycle Three resulted in four domains with 16 subdomains of codes related to the elements required for mabaraza to be shaped as a functional and sustainable space for intergenerational sex-talk with community members. Across the two cycles, these codes were not fixed and remained amenable to ensure analysis of young people’s and adults’ narrative accounts were considered from the increasingly emic perspectives of local research team members and my etic perspective as an outsider researcher.

5) Compile a guide. After the coding lists were agreed upon in the second phase of analysis, a finalised guide was distributed to each member of the team. For one week, all data were
re-coded by the team to match the guide. **Cycle Two** resulted in four key themes with their subsequent divisions, **Cycle Three** evidenced four main themes for mabaraza to be shaped as an intergenerational space for sex-talk. For the dissemination baraza the team presented themes from both **Cycles Two** and **Three**, and after their responses to the data I later reframed the main findings of the study within my own onto-epistemological lens and using critical post-colonial theoretical frame, resulting in two key themes (see Chapter Eight: **Cycle Four**).

6) Distinguish narratives. The final codes helped piece together small narratives to produce overarching community narratives to establish the main sex-related issues in the community (see Chapter Six: **Cycle Two**). These codes created a platform for devising discussion topics. The data collected during mabaraza were analysed using the same strategy to understand how mabaraza could be shaped as sustainable spaces for integrational dialogues on sex-talk (see Chapter Seven: **Cycle Three**). People use narratives to construct who they are, how they build understanding and how their narratives are told. ‘When’, ‘where’, ‘why’ and ‘how’ can help explain the influence of social, cultural, religious, political, historical as well as other prominent discourses that exist within a certain space or community (Rosenwald & Ochberg, 1992). The goal of analysing how and why these dialogues transpired in a particular manner was to reduce the impact that misinterpretation, limited access to or availability of health information or services and the silencing sex-related discussions have on community vulnerability to STDs, early teenage pregnancy, sexual violence, and age of sexual debut.

Throughout the analytic process, reports must uphold transparency amongst the research team and participants. To achieve this, we held an open discussion forum at each stage of the research to share, affirm or contest the findings and used the feedback to inform the next stage of the research – this was our first level of member checks. A dissemination baraza (**Cycle Four**) was held to affirm the final findings to be reported in this dissertation about the community and plans for change. This was completed by sharing small excerpts of narratives relating to the confirmed themes from the data collection process (**Cycles Two** and **Three**) that had been coded by our team. In addition, to remain transparent, my analysis (findings and interpretations) in this dissertation have been shared with research team members, the Chief Programme Officer of NPANGO and those community contributors who shared an interest in supporting the development of mabaraza as sustainable spaces for sex-talk. Involving community partners in analysis can be both challenging and rewarding (Cashman et al., 2008) This was a taxing
endeavour as we went back and forth over email and video conversations for two years, where I shared my interpretations, and a team member, either by herself or in conjunction with another community contributor, affirmed or rejected the analysis. While I conducted a post-colonial analysis for the doctorate, I worked with a member of the research team to simultaneously re-work these new insights into current state of the ‘Creating Conversations’ project and designs of future cycles. A hard copy of the project will be available at PANGO, after the completion of the dissertation defence, for those who did not have email. Additionally, a translated summary of the findings in Kiswahili will be completed by the research team.

Rigour in qualitative research encompasses the notion that the findings collected will maintain credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Anney, 2014; Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). As will be clear from the discussion of the procedures for data collection and analysis above, a variety of accepted measures of rigour as noted by Denzin and Lincoln (2005), were used to ensure that the data collected maintained the highest quality. In addition to triangulation of data gathering methods, public forums where data were disseminated, allowed for opportunities for the analysed data to be contested, re-informed and affirmed along with the formation of, and extensive involvement by, a research team to support the findings and confirm accurate representation (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). Furthermore, the research team thoroughly engaged with our own positionalities, and thus privilege, throughout the research but especially during data analysis, to anticipate and evaluate how our locations were affecting the research process, as evidenced in an excerpt from my research journal on the 8th of September 2015 after the last dissemination had concluded:

In reflecting on the rigour of this process, so much time and energy has been put into negotiating community needs, feelings, and team motivation. Working with a community was never going to be easy. The original data collection strategy was bound to change, regardless of the effort to foresee potential problems or diversions. Despite the meticulous and continuous structuring, or rather, restructuring of methods—in our team’s experience, events never seemed to unfold as planned. However, maintaining a weekly and monthly schedule, whereby all meetings with community contributors were set at least two weeks in advance, gave our research team and participating community members time to shift daily activities. This was vital, as plans were often diverted for a number of reasons (e.g., bad weather making the dirt roads impossible to cross; parallel community meetings; optimal harvesting conditions resulting in low turnout rates; and poor mobilisation efforts).

Out of the 28 weeks spent in country, I spent at least two set days a week at our partner organisation’s office. This allowed our research team and organisational and community partners to easily locate me in the event questions arose, schedules shifted, new ideas developed or they felt like catching up for a chat. In addition to placing myself in a professional office environment, I, accompanied by a local research team member, also spent 2-3 days of 15 weeks of the 28 walking around and speaking with, the community we worked with. This allowed me to communicate the reasons for my presence. It opened up a space for community members to informally learn more about the project, bring their own ideas, ask questions, and contribute on their own time, at a more convenient location. I feel our
the degree of engagement was sufficient to develop rapport with the community and thus, a reciprocal sharing relationship. I only wish we had more time. (Laura, personal communication, 08 September 2015)

In maintaining the rigour in both data collection and analysis, it was necessary to address the ethical considerations inherent in all research with human participants as well as those specific concerns that arise when working in collaboration with community members. The final two subsections of the chapter explore how data will be presented as well as the ethical considerations in this project.

3.5. Data Presentation

This project is meant for our partner NGO, community members and the community contributors who generated a greater understanding of how to begin tackling sex-related issues in the ward through conversations. It is a community-specific, evidenced-based source to consult, in order to gain insight into the context of the SHL, as well as intergenerational attitudes about ideas for change. Chapter Eight of this dissertation sets out a discussion of the viability of adapting mabaraza. The recommendations for change at various levels and prospects for further research are presented with the goal of catalysing movements by community members, individually and collectively, to improve the ward’s SHL.

Madison (2008) highlighted some critiques associated with presenting data from the “other” alongside the perspective of the privileged “expert” academic researcher. Key to my analysis and presentation of participant contributions was to avoid heavily overlaying my interpretations of their stories, as to not further silence their voices. This was achieved through processes of member-checking (as highlighted earlier in the chapter), going back to young people, adults, and research team members during each cycle to affirm their accounts related to sex. Given that the group dialogue flowed organically, community members sometimes deviated from the topics central to the storyboards presented. Thus, in my analysis I had to make the decision to group portions of different sections of their conversations when the same idea reoccurred. I believe that amalgamating these ideas in the analysis resulted in a fuller story around the ideas they deviated on. To some extent, the analysis was driven by my reading of the transcripts through a post-colonial lens, searching for moments that equated to neo-colonising elements influencing attitudes, beliefs and exposure to sex-related ideas, moments of resistance with regard to some new cultural ideals, acquiescing or full-on welcoming of these elements into community members’ worlds, shaping their SHL. While this could be viewed as an imposition of my beliefs,
I have endeavoured to present three sides of neo-colonial encroachment on the community to illustrate that not all community members conceptualised these intersections with values and attitudes of their Kenyan culture in a negative manner.

Another aspect of Madison’s (2008, p. 394) critique I endeavoured to safeguard was to avoid imposing too much “theoretical speak”. Having done so would only serve to take the stories and their value out of the everyday context of community, where lines of relating are established alongside natural conversations. Instead, through clarifying transcripts and in assessing my interpretations and explanations, I tried to make explicit “. . . those meanings that need to be excavated, contemplated, and engaged” (Madison, 2008, p. 394). I hope it is evident through reading the findings and analysis that I fully grasped the amount of trust bestowed upon myself and the research team from community members who so willingly shared their knowledge and experiences.

3.6. Ethics

Community-based participatory action research has a messy and dynamic approach, requiring iterative engagements throughout the research process. Ethical issues, or at least the articulation of them, can disappear just as quickly as they arise. As needs and wants of the community change, those involved in research processes have more time to understand and challenge the main issue. In this ever-changing environment, CBPAR is not exempt from the ethical issues inherent in all forms of research but can also bring new challenges when striving to adhere to an original ethics approval. Often ethical principles and guidelines play out differently in practice, which presents particular challenges to the researcher in preparing an ethics application (Davis & Holcombe, 2010). Fouché and Chubb (2016), in a review of ethical dilemmas facing action researchers, provided strategies and suggestions for overcoming difficulties in the review board process and maintaining high ethicality in the field. In an effort to illustrate how some of this confusion can be mitigated between researchers and communities, I have provided a nuanced description of the standard ethical procedures required of all research with human participants and as outlined by my university’s ethics review board. Since all our work with communities could only be carried out with mutual respect and an element of trust, enacting and interrogating the ethics of our actions were central to the partnerships formed. In addition, community-specific ethical considerations that arose before and throughout the duration of fieldwork are explored here. Through iterative processes, I consulted my supervisors, research team and, at times
dialogued with community members to work through these challenges together, but more importantly, to ensure my fellow research team members and I held ourselves accountable throughout the process.

Scholars have necessitated that work done in cross-cultural settings move beyond the scope of standardised Western ethical notions (e.g., harm versus benefit, confidentiality, anonymity etc.,) to reconceptualise these aspects in a manner more relevant to participants’/collaborators’ lived experiences (Kindon & Latham, 2002; Pain, 2004; Sanderson & Kindon, 2004). Thus, the following sub-sections of this chapter aim to both describe the ethical considerations, with regard to this project, but also enhance understanding of the specific application of CBPAR principles.

### 3.6.1 Ethical Procedures

Ethics approval was obtained from the University of Auckland Human Participants Ethics Committee (UAHPEC) in December 2014 (See Appendix 1.3). Upon approval from UAHPEC, a second ethics application was made to the National Commission for Science, Technology, and Innovation (NACOSTI) in Nairobi, Kenya, a government body responsible for issuing permits to foreign researchers. The application was approved on the 22nd of December 2014 for a period of three years, permit number NACOSTI/P/14/4886/4096.

A statement of collaboration (SOC) and terms of research (TOR) were shaped with the research team within the first two weeks of commencing fieldwork preparation. A professional translator was necessary due to the volume of data collected across all mabaraza and because my first language is not Kiswahili. Thus, a confidentiality agreement was signed before the translation process began.

Participant information sheets (PIS) and consent forms (CF) were produced for all adult community contributors and youths 16 years and older. For those participants under 16 years, participant information sheets and assent forms (AF) were created which required the signature of a guardian. Written permission to conduct research with secondary public schools in Coast Province, Kenya was obtained through a joint affiliation with the primary partner NGO, PANGO and the MoEK, giving the research team access to 20 participating schools (see Appendix 1.6 for partnership documents). In addition to this permit, I required a multiple-entry tourist visa which I renewed every 90 days while in the country.
In line with UAHPEC requirements and conventions, all data are being securely stored for six years, separate from the consent and assent forms (described previously in section 2.3 of this chapter). Electronic data are stored in a password-protected file on my computer and university server. Hard copy data are currently secured in a locked cabinet in my university doctoral office in New Zealand but were stored in a locked cabinet in the PANGO program office while in Mombasa. As the principle researcher, only I had a key to access the hard copy files.

3.6.2 Ethical Considerations

The ethical considerations for this dissertation are connected to the UAHPEC and NASCOTTI procedures described in the preceding section. All information was given to participants by myself and research team either via email or in person. PIS, CF and AF were given to secondary school youths, their parents/guardians and all adults who chose to participate in the study. Members of the research team were available to read aloud (in the participant’s language of choice) the PIS, CF or AF for those who could not read or who needed further clarification in person, over the telephone or via email. An oral script was read aloud in Kiswahili and English before commencing each baraza (see Appendix 1.3). Access to the CF is restricted to the principal researcher and they have been stored as per the data handling protocols described in a later section.

The letter of information about the research study, addressed separately and specifically to young people and adults, was read aloud when we met so that each individual would understand that agreeing to participate in the study was completely voluntary. All participants were informed in English and Kiswahili that participation was voluntary and choosing not to participate would have no negative effects for them personally or in terms of their associations in the community. Those who chose to participate had the ability to withdraw and were informed they would not be obligated to provide an explanation for doing so.

All participants were informed of the harms and benefits of participation. A potential risk to the individuals participating in this study was feeling uncomfortable with topics surrounding sex that inevitably came up during FGs and mabaraza. However, all consenting participants did so voluntarily and were able to withdraw at any stage. While there were minimal harms associated with participation in this study, the research team set up appropriate contacts with trained professionals such as counsellors, nurses, doctors, and peer educators. Before agreeing to
participate, all adults and youths were made aware of these services and given their information should they wish to contact these sources outside of the study time.

In terms of benefits, youths who often have no voice when it comes to discussing how they are educated or what they would like to learn were given a space to express their feelings. This allowed them to learn from one another, ask questions on ideas about sex they were struggling with, confirm accurate health knowledge, and discover new ways to communicate with adults when they have sex-related questions. In addition, young people kept their original photo-journals as a representation of their self-expression and a reminder of their capacity to work through challenging topics by themselves and with community members.

Given the sensitive and potentially stigmatising nature of so many of the discussions involved in this study, the imperative to respect the participants’ privacy was paramount. I guaranteed my own conduct to safeguard privacy and confidentiality within the interview/focus group settings and in terms of storing the collected information. However, I could not guarantee that the youths and adults would refrain from sharing what was discussed during the interviews/FGs with friends or other members of the public. The following steps were taken to reduce these issues:

- Participants and research team members were reminded of the importance of keeping all information discussed in interviews/FGs confidential;
- Translators and research team members were required to sign a confidentiality agreement for data collection, transcription, translation, and analysis, which stated their cooperation in not disclosing any details of the interviews/FGs or revealing the identity of the participants;
- Consent forms were stored in a cabinet at the office headquarters of PANGO during fieldwork, which was a secure location separate from any of the information obtained during data collection and only accessible by myself, the principle researcher;
- Only myself, the research team and my academic supervisor have access to the data—including photographs, journal text and audio-recorded information—apart from when translation occurred;
- Upon returning to the University of Auckland, the data were stored in a locked cabinet in my office;
- Participants were addressed (verbally and in text) by their pseudonyms. Immediately following the completion of the interviews and construction of the photo-journals, the data
documents were coded according to these pseudonyms in addition to other processes detailed below;

- Participants were encouraged only to share what they were comfortable sharing;
- Audio data collected from each individual interview/FG were transcribed and kept in hard copy and electronic form. It will be stored for six years after the completion of the dissertation, at which point all data from this study will be destroyed as per the UAHPEC convention.

Working to build on this privacy, all members of the youth and adult participating groups were non-identifiable and only associated with their chosen pseudonym, such as Bill, Jane, Lucy, etc., since the beginning of data collection. That same name was used in translation, transcription and any written findings appearing in the results of this research. Anonymity was important to the adults participating in the FGs, as the possibility of being recognised by another community member was very likely. In this situation, each member of the focus group was debriefed on the importance of confidentiality and using a pseudonym if they wished to give life examples of people they knew or themselves, and were also asked to either sign the consent form (when participating in a focus group) or acknowledge a verbal agreement in the oral script which detailed the confidentiality agreement for the group. The research team requested that all members of the FGs/mabaraza not discuss the sessions but made all members aware that there was no guarantee this would not happen. Issues of anonymity may have arisen for the youths who chose to share their photo-journals. Negotiating how young people would represent or have their voices represented was an ethical consideration as social norms around discussing the taboo topic of sex had the potential to generate judgment, stigma, and place youths face to face with those people their sexual learning and exposure stories might be about. Wyness (2013) highlighted several critical issues scholars have posed to question the authenticity of children’s participation and ability to truly convey their voices. These include:

- Is consultation with “… children always an inferior form of participation?”
- To what extent is “… the advocacy of children’s interests by adults … a lesser form of participation than more direct involvement of children?”
- In what situations are adults better positioned “… to promote children’s interests than children themselves?” (p. 433).

Our research team considered these critical questions, which prompted a discussion about the commitment to the study along with how young people would like to represent themselves in the wider baraza space. Because some of the youths decided that they were unable to attend due to
prior commitments or felt uncomfortable voicing their opinions in the moment during a baraza, it was decided that their photos and accompanying descriptions could be shared anonymously as discussion points. While using storyboards to present young people’s ideas enabled their opinions and experiences to be shared, it is important to remember that these representations were layered by the research team member’s voice that presented them in mabaraza.

### 3.6.3 CBPAR Specific Ethical Considerations

While it is outside the boundaries of this dissertation to explore all ethical considerations to CBPAR projects, the most common issues arising in this work were:

- Visual Ethics
- Role Definition
- Power Dynamics
- Reimbursement
- Data Ownership
- Data Dissemination

#### 3.6.3.1 Visual Ethics

In this research, confidentiality was treated with the utmost importance, but as with any research study, it could not be guaranteed. To combat confidentiality being breached while using photography, and to ensure the safety of the participants and those who chose to be photographed, the research team had to consider visual ethics. We enacted a number of steps which were negotiated with those who authored the images. This included assigning a pseudonym to each youth who chose to share their photo-journal in an interview. Young people were adequately informed of all the risks associated with displaying their names in such social spaces as the baraza and were educated on the importance of using a pseudonym. Other steps included such techniques as pixelating images to reduce facial features and identifying characteristics; anonymization software which enabled the conversion of photographs to various formats including but not limited to watercolour, cartoon, acrylic, black and white, and embossment; and blurring identifiable features, usually the face (Wiles et al., 2008). Wiles et al. (2008) problematized efforts to maintain anonymity in photographs:

> in much research, obscuring faces affects readers’ ability to make sense of visual data because faces are necessary to enable us to interpret physical, psychological, social and emotional aspects of
individuals. Without seeing faces we cannot begin to interpret basic social facts about individuals, such as their age and social class, let alone how they feel and what they, or researchers, are intending to portray by the image (p. 21).

Since the photo-journals of the young people in this study were collected with the aim of capturing the contexts in which sex education is delivered, discussed amongst them, or experienced, blurring sections of the images or converting the format of the photograph, did not always make sense. Because these practices have been noted to reduce voice, generate objective identities, sanitise findings, and are often not reusable (Wiles et al., 2008; Williams, Dicks, Coffey, & Mason; 2007), issues of this nature were discussed and confirmed with the participating youths on a case-by-case basis. Any photographs shared with the community or in written reports were de-identified in the image and the text it supported. For those photographs taken by participants containing people, institutions and identifiable locations, the participant had the option to work with the research team in photo manipulation (e.g. blurring of images, technical and creative retouching, colour enhancement, etc.) or to discard the image entirely. Due to the importance of the topics that arose from the photos, the youths chose to keep the photographs and blur the faces and identifiable texts. Contributors gave written consent for any photos or video recordings that were taken and used in this dissertation write-up. Contributors were informed of the plans for data retention, disposal and sharing. Each youth had the choice to sign a form giving the researcher the rights to reproduce their photographs for educational purposes.

3.6.3.2 Roles Definition

To enhance the societal impact of research, Ozanne and colleagues (2016) suggested that it was important for community contributors to share power in the process of identifying problems and in designing a solution to include “. . . the interests and insights of end users to balance rigor against relevance” (p.2). As a doctoral student, I was required to develop a research proposal detailing the processes for this research. I had to make the argument that CBPAR projects are open-ended in many respects, especially in terms of changes to goals/aims of the study as these were directed by community wants and needs. My partner NGO consulted with community members and the Chief before the project to gauge commitment to a partnership in terms of a need and want to resolve the sex-related problems occurring in the community. Despite our research team including questions about mabaraza being adapted as a process for intergenerational sex-talk in our initial data gathering about the context in Cycle Two, the ideas to create and shape mabaraza to work at reducing these issues had to be a community driven
process. This was juxtaposed against the time and funding constraints attached to my Doctorate. This sparked questions about what I, as a principle researcher, was receiving for doing the research, which most assumed to be financial remuneration – a common assumption of action researchers (Moller et al., 2009). Maiter, Simich, Jacobson and Wise (2008) contended being transparent lays the key foundations for trust and reciprocity amongst researchers and their community partners. Thus, it was also imperative that I openly committed to sharing my intentions with the research as well as elements of my background and formative experiences with the team and community members we worked with. To mitigate these issues each member of the research team had to communicate his or her reasons/interests for participating in the research prior to beginning data collecting in a research team meeting and while interacting with community members, what they hoped to gain or achieve and their level of committed involvement to the study.

The roles and responsibilities of each research team member were negotiated, clearly defined, and written in a document; and all research team members were given a copy (e.g. SOC and TOR). These remained living documents where the opportunity to re-negotiate roles was invited at the end of team meetings or upon a research team member’s request. As the research team comprised locals with a diverse set of skills and knowledges, we often found ourselves being surprised by what we learned from others, as one research team member remarked:

OMG!!! The experience was amazing. The enlightenment was beyond my imagination. It’s only when you learn from others and share ideas that you begin to appreciate the power in what you don’t know. (Kay, researcher journal, 26)

Surprise in what we could learn from each other as team members occurred across the research duration when roles shifted. Where initially local research team members attended research, training organised by myself as the principle researcher, there was a point during Cycle Two where one of the local researchers, Kay, who had previous experience with analysis, arranged an hour-long training session for those team members who felt they required more exposure to coding processes before working with the community stories we collected. This allowed Kay to access her leadership skills, apply content learned through her own experiences in academia, and presented an opportunity to build research capacity of her colleagues. This represented an instance where the roles that would typically exemplify a traditional positivist researcher to participant transaction—‘knowledge’ imparted from the former to the latter—became instead, a collaborative space where different levels of skills were welcomed and celebrated.
The research team members understood that throughout the study they were liaisons to their community in terms of mobilisation of community members to attend FGs and mabaraza, ensure the agenda was communicated properly and any changes community members requested were incorporated. As a research team member, there was responsibility to maintain open lines of communication about how their specific tasks in relation to the research were developing with other members of the team. Understanding the sex-related issues affecting community members was a task each local research team member explored in-depth, in order to help me, as the principle researcher, comprehend the landscape in a culturally meaningful way. Their engagement with local knowledge and ideas through research within their own locale is thought to be empowering for individuals as they become a vehicle for influencing larger decisions affecting their community (Schensul et al., 2008).

3.6.3.3 Power Dynamics

Pain (2004) in discussing power related to participatory forms of research asserted that “power and empowerment are central concepts . . . both in attempts to minimalize the ‘us and them’ between academic researcher and participants, and in reversing conventional assumptions about who owns and benefits from research” (p. 656). Two central issues of power were pertinent in this work. First was power sharing in terms of roles between myself as the “academic expert” and the roles of my team members, as well as community contributors as the “local experts”. The second issue was of representation in the writing-up of results from the study. Endeavouring to provide a platform where space can be imagined for different voices is difficult to traverse within the context of the doctoral dissertation, and definitely not one that was settled in writing this work. Despite the large chunks of texts presented in an effort to preserve voice, the academic epistemic privilege I was afforded, required that all things academic (my interpretations of stories, positionality, methodology etc.,) be written alongside the voices of the contributors to the ‘Creating Conversations’ Project.

In terms of the baraza as a dialogic space, power dynamics were unavoidable due to the presence of persons of different gender, ages, socio-economic statuses, along with the existence of cultural notions of respect between elders and young people (who must be given the invitation to speak on such taboo topics). These were important considerations for the question of ‘who speaks when?’ (Janes, 2016). Since the essence of testing mabaraza was to explore how
intergenerational dialogue could unfold, it was important that the facilitator, initiating the discussions, prompted different people when the conversation lagged for too long. Thus, it was critical to document how these dynamics played out in our mabaraza. In typical research, the researcher often guides the discussion. To enable a shift of power and ownership over the dialogue to its participants, I as the principle researcher contributed minimally to the dialogues, used Kiswahili where I could, and handed the role as facilitator of process over to our local research team member. She at times prompted the discussions with images from the youth photo-journals and participated in the dialogue where she had shared similar concerns and experiences. The presence of male research assistants (whose roles were to note-take or set-up the camera for the sessions) might have had an influence on how much some of the women in the female-specific baraza chose to participate in the dialogue. We aimed to assuage this through explaining each of our roles on the research team after the Village Elder’s introductions (who exited once the female baraza commenced), oral consent script was read, then having the male researchers stand at a distance from where women congregated for the baraza. The community had the power to legitimise the focus of the study and even garner support for the action component as is common in such research, but power ultimately resided with me and the academic system I was affiliated with until I withdrew from the research context (Travers et al., 2013).

Power imbalances were also inherent to our research team dynamic where roles and responsibilities shifted at different points. Since the breakdown of relationships between the research team members, or changes within those relationships, had the potential to impact the local community, boundaries around roles and responsibilities needed to be pre-determined as outlined in the SOC. The SOC ensured that research team members abided by the principles of CBPAR and outlined guidelines for the commitment levels of all community partners. The co-development of the SOC helped mediate power imbalances that often arise in CBPAR projects, where power-discussions can create underlying tensions in a research team (Travers et al., 2013). Despite providing numerous opportunities for the research team and partner NGO members to engage in educational workshops (e.g. how to conduct FGs and interviews, how to analyse different types of data, interview guide design, giving presentations, how to conduct a literature review, ethical conduct in community research, different types of research, transcription, report writing and reflexive research practices) which allowed for the acquisition of new skills and warranted the capacity to conduct basic community research, these activities did not always serve to balance power. Issues can often arise when community members become deeply involved in the research, especially when the research team comprises community members (Schensul, Berg,
& Williamson, 2008). As conflicts arose amongst research team members a process was initiated in our first month of working together to raise, dialogue, and alleviate concerns:

- **Step 1:** Team members were to write and send me an email dealing their concerns.
- **Step 2:** A private dialogue between myself and the research team member expressing concerns was set up and it was decided if it was a topic that needed to be further addressed to the entire team.
- **Step 3:** A team meeting where necessary. Researchers were encouraged to follow the motto “Explain and express, but respect”. This involved explaining their issues, expressing the emotions associated with their issue, but maintain respect for those who their issue was directed toward. This required that they provide a plan for how they would prefer the relationship continue in the future.
- **Step 4:** Dialogue and reach a working consensus.

Where issues were with my management of the team, research team members were welcomed to write down their concerns anonymously for me to read out and start a dialogue around the issues during our weekly team meeting. Local members of the research team expressed that engaging in dialogue through these steps was helpful and alleviated the sometimes-stressful dynamics of working within our differences.

### 3.6.3.4 Reimbursement

Upon signing the SOC and agreeing to actively take part in the study, the research team members fully understood that their compensation for level of involvement may differ from other members of the team based on skills, time devoted to the project and available funds. Each team member received a digital recording device they could keep upon completion of the project, were guaranteed a reference for job applications, a possibility to co-author should they wish, as well as covered transport costs to and from the research sites and a stipend for phone credit to communicate with the team. In addition, they were informed of exactly how much funding was available for the duration of the project, which included a detailed breakdown of their pay ($300 USD for the length of the project).

As this was a living document the tenets of their payments were negotiated after one month when a team member put forth their concern about transport to and from the NGO on meeting days. This issue was cause for tension between myself and the team, as before the research existed, the
research team members commuted to the NGO daily on their own accord. This was in line with PANGO’s philosophy that ‘if you want to improve your skills and thus yourself, you find a way to show up’. I advised the research team I was open to compromise on the basis that they could vocalise why they wanted changes to occur. Despite their knowledge of available funds for the research at the outset and their agreement to receive the allotted lump sum payment at the conclusion of their contract we went back and forth on this in a two-hour meeting which resulted in an agreement for research team members to receive a weekly transport stipend for the days they completed tasks at the PANGO offices for the research. This sum was in excess to team research meetings where food, transport costs to and from the research site, and increased phone credit to communicate more actively with one another.

As part of my research, I interacted with community contributors from a range of cultural, social, and religious backgrounds. All contributors were Kenyan and member to one of nine sub-tribes of the Mijikenda which include Giriama, Digo, Chonyi, Jibana, Rabai, Ribe, Duruma, Kauma and Kambe. Those who are Mijikenda typically are of a lower-socio economic status. Members of this tribe work the lands, grow much of Mombasa’s food, are highly skilled crafts persons and comprise the majority of the labouring population. Moreover, they experience cultural knowledge and tradition loss as a result of urbanisation and the need to find higher paid work in the city. In acknowledging the labour-intensiveness of their lives, our team ensured to work around their schedules and followed their suggestions for when to hold mabaraza, as to maximise the opportunity for people to be able to attend. In addition, a small token was presented to each participant at particular points in cycles of data collection.

Research on participatory ethics of populations where access to basic needs are limited (e.g., food, water, shelter, health care) as defined by the UN charter of Human Rights, raises issues about whether or not giving money is a form of acknowledging the vulnerabilities and working on the basis of standard basic human rights principles, or view this exchange-knowledge for monetary compensation as a form of coercion (Embelton et al., 2015). As our project sought to ‘decolonise the mind’ and part and parcel of that is working to decrease the dependency on external funds as has been cultured through NGO ‘paid participatory’ programming, this raised a huge ethical dilemma for me as the principle researcher. To mitigate this and to enhance the relational experience, small snacks were distributed instead of money. During **Cycle Two** of the research, young people who created photo-journals as well as shared the details in interviews and participated in informal activities while they waited for their interviews, were given sodas and
lollies/sweets as well as a copy of their photo-journals. The four digital cameras used in the research were donated to the school after photo-journal interviews finished. Adults who took part in Cycle One, were given a small stipend of 200 Kenyan Shillings in appreciation of the time they took out of their work to share their local knowledge. In Cycle Two, our research team transferred a stipend to the local village elder to ensure his phone credit was high to maintain good communication and supplement his efforts as he played a pivotal role in mobilising community members for our mabaraza. Finally, despite limited resources for the research, a cold soda and Mihogo ya Kukaanga (roasted cassava root sprinkled with chilli and fresh lemon juice), or packages of biscuits, were given to every participant in appreciation of them taking the time to contribute to this work during mabaraza in Cycle Three.

3.6.3.5 Data Ownership

Data ownership in regard to this research refers to the right to use and share them. Since the data were jointly owned by The University of Auckland, the research team members and the community members who participated, the rights of each partner to use and share the data differed. These rights were defined in the SOC developed jointly with the Programme Officer of PANGO and two NGO staff who participated as members of the research team (see Appendix 3). In the SOC, community-level contributors (youths and adults) had the right to own a copy of their participant transcript. The SOC outlined that in terms of authorship, any document authored solely by the principal investigator (PI) after the conclusion of the project will be fully owned by her, but she must consult with the research team before submitting it for publication. In terms of potential articles/documents compiled in conjunction with research team, all members will share authorship. The partnership between the research team and me, as the doctoral researcher, was defined by doctoral researcher control with a greater degree of community partnership. As such, there are varying degrees of data ownership. It was made clear from the outset that I would use the data for the written component of my dissertation.

3.6.3.6 Data Dissemination

Finally, the team, alongside the community, had to consider the ethical issue of potentially releasing data that unflatteringly portrayed the community or individuals in the community. Data that critique the contexts and therefore those who inhabit the space, have the potential to further marginalise communities and can have negative implications for community-driven initiatives taking off at the grassroots level (Flicker, Travers, Guta, McDonald, & Meagher, 2007; Mikesell,
Bromley, & Khodyakov, 2013). PANGO made a commitment to work with the youths and adult contributors to devise sustainable solutions in light of any uncomplimentary data emerging before disseminating with potential partners that may consider funding programmes in the community. Thus, the data disseminating process served as an opportunity to acknowledge community awareness of any negative issues and work together to design a course of action to change them.

3.7. Chapter Summary

This chapter has outlined the decisions related to the implementation of CBPAR in this project, including the complexity around recruiting and sampling community contributors and the implementation of five key data collection methods (semi-structured interviews, photo-journal interviews, mabaraza, FGs and reflective journals). How the data collected using each of these methods were analysed was detailed. Interpretations that arose from the analysis will be expanded on in Chapter Six: Cycle Two and Chapter Seven: Cycle Three.

Working through the various ethical considerations both before and during the research process, presented the opportunity to interrogate how these decisions translated in the research process. The trials, tribulations and new insights resulted in my taking a hard stance on design of ethical guidelines for CBPAR. I argue for the use of a consequential perspective of ethics; meaning ethical guidelines should be different depending on the context (Kiragu & Warrington, 2013). Thus, the contexts in which ethics will be practiced are also where their principles should be negotiated and cemented. Community-based participatory action research, despite its numerous practical, political, and ethical challenges, is a valuable approach because, as with most social problems, having communities define their own issues while actively being part of finding solutions enhances the potential for change to be sustainable. Before interpreting the findings, it is necessary to have a more in-depth understanding of the context in which the content about sexual learning and exposure experiences and the possibilities for change were shaped.
Chapter 4. Seeing the Past into the Future: The Structures and Discourses Underpinning Kenya’s Sexual Health Landscape

Organisations like FHI [Family Health International] place ‘community participation’ and ‘community mobilisation’ at the centre of their programming. Participation, in this case, is defined as communities participating in the final stages of intervention. The program is already planned, packaged and researched before it reaches the grassroots. (Rolston, 2011)

Development programmes, such as those shaped in the global fight against HIV/AIDS, are typically informed by Western paradigms. Their goals or mission statements are often designed outside the context in which they would operate, and they are constrained by the expectations of their donors (Jackson, 2011; Parker, Ali, Ringell & McKay, 2014; Thor Thorvardarson, 2007). Where community development projects are driven by specific indicators, such as the number of participants engaged, the quality of these projects’ impact is often jeopardised (Tripleline Consulting, 2013). This research endeavoured to test adapting a traditional space for intergenerational sex-talk, to assess its impact as a sustainable intervention for improving SLCs and SHLs. The aim was to design a more focused smaller-scale and cost-effective initiative that was community-driven, as opposed to programmes designed with the goal of quick roll-out in any context. I argue that interventions designed in this vein which combine traditional gathering spaces, dialogue, and decolonising approaches to research in varying capacities, holds the potential to instigate change. Depending on community need, this model might offer a way forward for developing pathways to community-identified sex-related issues.

Bourn (2015) noted that recent evaluation and impact studies have employed “. . . changes in behaviour” as an appropriate measure for evidence of programme effectiveness, a practice which “. . . makes major assumptions about what people do with their learning; but also . . . takes no account of context and wider social and cultural influences” (p. 167). Taking Bourn’s (2015) critique into consideration, endeavouring to understand contextual factors around how both positive and harmful norms, behaviours, and practices related to sex evolved, changed, or absolved over time, can be valuable in informing the designs of future sexual health interventions. This knowledge can help sexual health programmers, researchers, and those who work with communities, to find meaningful ways to work together in increasingly hybrid contexts. The current chapter examines the concepts and literature, in particular those from SSA contexts, which informed the research team’s approach to the study’s main question. Literature have been weaved together from a range of fields to make sense of the significant changes to the
SHL overtime. In addition, this literature reflects the importance and adaptability of a dialogic space, as well as past and current routes of sexual communication. While the literature included does not sit vividly within a single field, the knowledge links throughout each section build the foundations for understanding the context—imperative for those considering to work with this (or similar) communities on sex-related issues.

The first half of the chapter highlights prevailing sex-related discourses including the ‘culture of silence’ and the ‘dark continent’. Dominant gender codes and roles; structures for socialisation and sexualisation; and structures related to economics, politics, and the family are discussed through three chronologically defined eras in Kenya’s history: pre-colonial, colonial, and post-colonial. Family, health, wealth, culture, political, and societal structures in these different eras continue to shape the country’s current SHL. Literature from across Kenya is considered, and where possible, articles concerning changes across Mijikenda sex culture, the dominant tribe for which research participants for this study were affiliated, are examined. Connections between cultural loss and mind colonisation are drawn. N’gugi wa Thiongo (1994) described the largest detriment, in relation to the effects of imperialism, as being the loss of this critical consciousness through the dropping of the imperialistic ‘cultural bomb’ (p. 3). He wrote:

... the biggest weapons wielded and actually daily unleashed by imperialism against that collective defiance is the cultural bomb. The effect of a cultural bomb is to annihilate a people’s belief in their names, in their languages, in their environment, in their heritage of struggle, in their unity, in their capacities and ultimately in themselves. (p. 3)

Decolonising the Kenyan mind involves acknowledging the trajectories that have altered the structures of relations and discourses. The loss of socio-cultural unity; changes in individual and collective capacities; and the shifting structures of different environments have all contributed to Kenya’s contemporary SHL across the three eras discussed in three sub-sections.

The second section of the chapter provides a brief overview of the SRH programming contexts within Kenya. Specific references to contemporary changes in policies and laws are made regarding adolescent reproductive health (ADRH). Both the potential benefits and the drawbacks of implementing guiding policies through sexual health programming in Kenya are illuminated. Following this, the third section of the chapter explores the traditional East African gathering space, the baraza. The use of this space is traced from informal patriarchal bench meetings through to today’s political decision-making assemblies, evidencing the adaptability of the space. Similar to Freire’s Culture Circles described in Chapter Two, understanding the history of the
traditional space is essential to honouring its background and adapting it for sex-related dialogue (Naanyu et al., 2011; Souto-Manning, 2010).

The fourth section of the chapter is an exploration of peer-reviewed research studies that evidence barriers to sexual communication in the context of SSA, with particular emphasis on East Africa and Kenya. The concept of a ‘culture of silence’ is highlighted, again, in SRH literature for its value to understand factors that increase the vulnerability of people, especially young people, who engage in risky behaviours or sexual learning exposures that maintain the cycle of poverty, as well as the multiple vulnerabilities linked to sex-related issues. An emphasis in this section is placed on intergenerational sex-related dialogues, and the lack thereof, in the Kenyan context. The final section of the chapter details pathways for investigation and identifies ways of improving contemporary approaches to resolving problematic issues in Kenya’s SHL.

4.1. Changes to Sex-Related Discourses, Practices, Structures, and Behaviours Through the Eras

‘The past is not only a position from which to speak, but it is also an absolutely necessary resource in what one has to say. . . Our relationship to the past is quite a complex one, we can’t pluck it up out of where it was and simply restore it to ourselves’. (Hall, 1989, pp. 19–20)

Hall’s quote highlighted the need to develop an understanding of Kenya’s rich and complex past to better appreciate how the country and its people have arrived at its current sexual health landscape. Understanding one’s cultural knowledges, and the current suppression of such knowledges, is necessary to enthusiastically engage in decolonising the mind to become an active and accountable societal actor (wa Thiong’o, 1994). The succeeding sub-sections trace different sexual constructions through Kenya’s pre-colonial, colonial, and post-colonial eras, in terms of the norms (roles and identities), behaviours, and practices that have shifted as a result of differing foreign influences.

4.1.1 Pre-Colonial Kenya: A Focus on Traditional Sex-Culture

For young people, in pre-colonial times, sexual education was more than simply having a conversation with adults and learning about sexual activities; it was a rite of passage (Bilinga & Mabula, 2014; Kioli, Were, & Onkware, 2012). Sexual education entailed a highly methodical process based on young people entering ‘age set’ or ‘age grade’ systems (Kioli et al., 2012, p. 2).
These systems imposed structures for understanding (gendered, cultural, political) as well as responsibilities to uphold and rights to be respected, which were conceived as laying the foundations for their transition to adults as responsible, self-controlled actors in society. This occurred between 14–17 years of age (Kioli et al., 2012). Coinciding with this education, young people were made aware of sexual codes of conduct (who, what, and where these relations were allowed). For example, across Kenyan ethnic lines, high value was placed on women’s fulfilling child-bearing and rearing roles. Without marriage or procreation, opportunities for families to establish networks in different spheres (social, political, economic) and across clan lines would not occur. This value persists in many of the societal contexts in present-day Kenya, with slight variations around the age norms for conception (Nganga, 2012). By and large, women were viewed as property and socialised to respect this gender code, abiding by the local practices of dowry which required their subversion to physical, emotional, and social dominance by the males who ensured it.

Many pre-colonial gender roles and the socialisation practices around them prevailed across ethnic boundaries (Nganga, 2012). In addition to these structures for understanding, young people were ‘exposed to the society’s heroic history, responsibilities relating to family life (including sex education), and the secrets of success as a son or daughter, spouse, parent or as a member of the community’ (Kioli et al., 2012, p. 2). Ahlberg et al., (2001) and Kioli et al., (2012) observed similar findings in their studies on cultural rites of passage and teaching of control to young people—specifically, in regard to circumcision and the cultural notion of Ngwiko/Ngweko (a process in which groups of youngsters would sleep together in the same room, in order to remove temptation of sexual intercourse). These systems of learning were further impacted by the economic backdrop of Kenyan communities.

During the pre-colonial period, ownership and gathering of goods, land, and wives were more indicative of status than physical money. Susan Watkins (2000) echoed this sentiment by noting how elderly people claimed that larger families meant more wealth. Ng’ang’a (1981) elaborated on this asserting, that at the time, the wealth of Kenyans was ‘based on individual and/or private accumulation of livestock. The acquisition of land was dependent upon the acquisition of livestock as a source of labour power to propel migration’ (p. 10). Through this symbiotic system, trade between people (e.g., trader-farmers and hunter-traders) is what increased the ability to acquire goods, livestock, and wives (Ng’ang’a, 1981). During this period, survival and success were relationship dependent and, therefore, a unity between the people existed for mutual
betterment. However, scholars caution that this sense of community was not exclusive of power hierarchies (Higgs, 2011). In fact, while Kenya was viewed as a communal society, it represented itself as a community based upon differentiation (Ng’ang’a, 1981).

The move from a collective to a capitalistic society created a shift in cultural factors; currency transitioned to becoming the new barometer by which to measure one’s success, value, and ability to move up the socioeconomic ladder. Society shifted away from a focus on communalism, in pre-colonial Kenya, to a focus on individualism in colonial Kenya (Higgs, 2011). This transition underscores how monetary currency became tied to poverty, gender, and survival in post-colonial Kenya. For these reasons, this topic is revisited in the sections to follow on colonial and post-colonial Kenya, that highlight the context in which this transition occurred and its impact on sex culture.

4.1.2 Colonial Kenya’s Sex Culture

This section focuses on how sex practices, sex behaviours, and most importantly communication about sex, shifted as a result of colonial influences. This shift served to silence values related to traditional sex education practices in Kenya. Frantz Fanon described colonisation, and the forces associated with it, as a systematic process by which colonisers subjugated the colonised through measures that devalued the pre-colonial history of the colonised and, as a result, created confusion in regard to cultural/historical identity (Wane, 2009). This erosion of the past was accomplished through numerous methods, one of which was the use of violence. However, in this context, violence was not simply the act of physical harm; it is that which may also affect one’s mental, spiritual, or emotional state of well-being, distinguished as ‘psyche-violence’ (Wane & Kavuma, 2001, pp. 2–3). Hodges (1972) noted how crimes of all types, especially sex crimes such as prostitution, were expedited during colonialism because money became the new form of currency, a product of the Western world. Further, he claimed that the onset of industrialisation also brought ‘crimes of violence’, which were non-existent before colonialism (Hodges, 1972, p. 21).

To elaborate on this climate, we need to observe how colonisation has led to the current system in Kenya—a model in which monetary currency and tangible goods have replaced the former systems of wealth in ‘the pre-capitalist societies’ (Ng’ang’a, 1981, p. 7). In the context of shifting status quos, colonialism played a role in creating sex-related issues for Kenya, through hindering
the empowerment of women by actions such as altering cultural values and beliefs and permitting the continuation of sexual inequality.

During the colonial period, several factors led to the transition from a commodity-based community to a currency-based community. Ng’ang’a (1981) noted the central role of the missionaries, who were intent on working against the socio-economic interests of the indigenous people by recruiting, teaching, and creating strict rules for groups (such as ‘heathens’ or the destitute). To this end, missionaries established Western versions of schools to persuade Kenyans to adopt Western values and culture at the expense of their own (Watkins, 2000). Through colonialism, Kenya experienced a drastic overhaul of its educational system. The new system was based upon Western methods and attempted to diminish aspects of Kenyan culture, such as language, values, history, and culture (Wane, 2009). At the expense of neglecting opportunities to learn locally pertinent knowledge and experiences, formal educational curricula were developed by colonisers, thus generating a culture of silence around sex communication for educational purposes. The concept of the culture of silence has been employed in a variety of contexts. In this work, it is theorised from a Freirean perspective as it relates to the need for the development of a critical consciousness to avoid and overcome subversion by oppressive forces (Giroux, 2001). Freire developed the concept of Culture Circles as a means of breaking what he called ‘the culture of silence’ around issues of illiteracy. Smidt (2014) provided a simple but powerful definition for this concept:

Those who are being oppressed become so powerless that they do not even talk about what is happening to them. They don’t talk about the injustices, insults and acts against them. They have neither voice nor will. (p. 72)

Freire believed that those with elite positions, belonging to the ruling class, benefited from the culture of silence. This concept has since been expanded to other fields. Significant to this dissertation is its exploration in the sexual health literature, particularly in African contexts, where struggles people face is kept secret at the margins (Adjetea, 1994; Jewitt & Ryley, 2014; Mbugua, 2007). Throughout the literature on sex-related issues, the culture of silence has been noted to increase fatalism (powerlessness as expressed through relying on destiny and external entities) in PLWH (Bond, 2010; Katito, 2014; Kithinji, 2013) and gendered notions of sexuality (Babatunde & Ake, 2015; Barasa, Wamue-Ngare, & Wanjama, 2013; Jewitt & Ryley, 2014). During the colonial era, these silences caused strife within the community and led to failed education reforms and rising attrition rates due to disinterested students dropping out (Wane,
2009). The after-effects of the forced integration of colonial norms into everyday life established the foundation for a system with the mantra of ‘integrate or suffer’. While education, in the traditional sense, was impacted by colonialism, one cannot stress enough how the complete reform to sexual health education changed the state of Kenya.

As noted by Kioli et al. (2012), sexual education for young people was much more than a discussion with their parents; it was a highly complex system which encompassed the aid of parents and extended family, as well as the use of rituals and ceremonies. This system acknowledged the fact that this transitional period marked a transformation for the youths. Through the impact of colonialism, however, these traditions were phased out and intertwined with an education system based upon colonial ideals. How were future generations expected to learn (or even resolve sex-related problems) if the new system imposed on them did not cater to their cultural ways of learning and knowing?

Due to the Eurocentric endeavours of colonialism, institutions were developed that were aligned with religious tenets; foreign ideals were exported through teachings of nuns or missionaries (Wane, 2009). This enhanced the culture of silence and inculcated the belief that “. . . sex education should be avoided, and children’s sexuality denied”, suggesting that “. . . sexual attitudes and norms are produced in particular times and spaces and, therefore, are potentially malleable” (Cobbett et al., 2013, p. 71). Through these processes, pre-colonial thoughts concerning sex-related norms, practices, and behaviours were shifted. Promoting the idea that education was a tool to achieve a higher status in society, colonialists corralled indigenous Kenyans into conforming to their belief systems, furthering the aforementioned cultural losses. This has continued well into the current post-colonial era, in which high value is placed on education, a discourse readily promoted in development programming.

4.1.3 Contemporary Kenya: Norms, Practices, and Problematic Sex-Related Issues

Through the course of its history, Kenya has faced the effects of colonialism. In his article diagnosing the political, cultural, social, and economic states of the time, entitled ‘Neo-colonialism: The New Rape of Africa’, Hodges (1972) asserted how, though granted independence in 1963, the country, at the beginning of the post-colonial era, still remained under colonial influence because it was denied economic/political autonomy and its own governing
bodies lacked power. Some privileged members of the local population and government used accommodative methods which allowed the colonial presence to persist well after the nation gained its political independence.

Even if unintentional, these colonial actors assisted in creating the post-colonising narrative. When initially given sovereignty, the newly-minted states were not provided with the economic freedom necessary to wholly detach from their ‘colonial parents’ and thus continued to view themselves through the lens of reliance (Hodges, 1972). This reliance has woven its roots into the implementation of modern and current international development initiatives in Kenya (Nikkhah, & Redzuan 2010; Sahoo, 2013). The post-colonial, or neo-colonial, period that Kenya could be described as inhabiting today carries with it what Hodges (1972) described as cultural imperialism with regard to colonisation of the mind.

Kenya’s current dilemma with sexuality and young people may be attributed to the fact that the former methods and actors for explaining these processes are no longer available. The absence of grandparents and extended family, as well as the shunning of these responsibilities by parents, has led to the ‘collapse of the traditional mechanisms of socializing, controlling and checking sexual behaviour during adolescence’ (Kioli et al., 2012, p. 6). Without access to these mechanisms, people attempt to justify problematic views on sex and condone actions such as rape. A key justification for rape is marital problems. As Muchoki and Wandibba (2009) explained, rape may be committed under the pretence of numerous justifications, including conflict between the perpetrator and his spouse and lack of sex due to separation from or death of the perpetrator’s wife. Specifically, incestuous rape may be viewed as a form of punishment or torture for marital conflicts (Muchoki & Wandibba, 2009). Husbands desire to ‘punish’ their wives for problems arising in the marriage, such as infidelity, pending divorce, or separation. Other factors in causing these crimes were pornography; sociocultural practices (to show dominance, physical strength, and male honour); peer influence; and parental advice, or lack thereof, on the topic of sex.

Expounding upon the aforementioned history of capitalism and its influence on culture in Kenya, the conversion to socioeconomic needs being met through currency has only increased the likelihood of sex-related issues (the act of sex, abuse, violence, etc.) coming to the foreground. Hornsby (2013) framed this as a ‘story of endurance’:
A prime example of this notion was presented by Mojola (2014), who asserted:

Sex entitled a girl to make claims for gifts or money from a boy, thus changing the relationship in a substantive way. The main subject of quarrels in relationships for sex was over a boyfriend’s provision of money and gifts or the lack thereof. (p. 82)

This viewpoint of using sex as a means to financial gain was conveyed under one single premise: ‘young men’s financial lack and the subsequent short-term relationships’ were due, in large part, to females preferring males who would be able to provide them with money and gifts; females sought long-term relationships with the likelihood of receiving objects (money and gifts) over short-term relationships with males (within their same age demographic) who would not be able to provide these same luxuries (Mojola, 2014, p. 83). Delving further into this topic, Mojola (2014) explained how this belief system held by females, in fact, increased their likelihood of acquiring STDs (such as HIV), as men in higher age brackets had significantly higher acquisition rates of infection than those males belonging to the same age demographic as the girls.

Given the historical perspective of Ng’ang’a (1981) on the pre-colonial and colonial socioeconomic structures of Kenya, it can be clearly seen that divergent colonialism’s impact has caused the unravelling of the very social and economic fibres of the country. This idea is reflected in transactional relationships, which are created upon money/gifts in exchange for sex and, primarily, driven by modernity and consumption of goods; the reception of goods and romance go hand-in-hand (Mojola, 2014). The prevalence of these types of relationships has increased the likelihood of HIV contraction due to females not only getting married younger but using condoms less and being married to men from the age demographics most susceptible to HIV contraction (Mojola, 2014). Furthering these problems, these social conditions encourage females to engage in transactional relationships because other avenues of improving their status are not open to them (Mojola, 2014). Moreover, previously accepted cultural virtues, such as adolescent marriage and motherhood, are no longer pursued in some communities to the extent they once were; schooling and employment opportunities have become the new goals for females where such prospects are made more achievable (Mensch et al., 2001). However, female’s position in contemporary society are complicated by factors like gender inequity and limited economic or social opportunities that create unequal access and further stratification between
genders. In these cases, the likelihood of females dropping out of school for the path of motherhood are increased. While the expectations of females have begun a shift culturally/economically/socially, they still may choose their former gender roles in the face of pressing issues. This may account for why some school girls prefer the transactional relationships mentioned earlier.

These examples illustrate the connection between capitalism and mind colonisation. Through capitalism, there is the belief that people (females, especially) in the community would be afforded equal footing to improve their economic status. However, this is truer in theory than in practice. Inclusive of the creation of mind colonisation is the issue of young females being unable to complete school due to financial distress and pregnancy, both of which play major roles in their not completing school. With the prevalence of these situations, a reasonable thought for females to have was developed: why not try to eliminate the burden of unequal pay, lack of education, and restricted access to desirable things by associating myself with a man who will be able to provide these wants? This question was validated through a study by Mojola (2014) that collected quantitative and qualitative data on how economic, social, and cultural beliefs increased the sex-related vulnerabilities of young Kenyan females.

For young people in Kenya, the culture of silence was enhanced during the colonial period as it silenced traditional means of sex communication. In the post-colonial period, it has become progressively dangerous as silence increases risk-taking behaviours (which are exacerbated by exposure to foreign technologies that make access and exposure to sexual content more frequent) (Kimemia & Mugambi, 2016; Oladeji & Ayangunna, 2017). Young people become unable to ask questions they might have about sexual learning or exposure experiences; thus, they may adopt a ‘learn through doing’ attitude. This was evidenced in a study by Kimemia and Mugambi (2016), who conducted a descriptive survey with a sample comprising school-going youths, teachers, and education officers on the influences of electronic media on teenage pregnancies in a sub-county in Kenya. The authors concluded that media were the major influence on the occurrence of teenage pregnancy. Young people also indicated mobile phones and the internet as being major influencers on their sexual experimentation (Kimemia & Mugambi, 2016). Thus, technologies like mobile phones, exacerbates silences through a variety of interacting factors: conflict with cultural norms and religious values, ambivalence in how sex-related information is conveyed to young people in schools, and young people’s home lives or community contexts (Wanyonyi, 2014).
Understanding the culture of silence around sex-related issues is critical when working in the community development or CBPAR space, where collective action is often promoted through an assumption of a collective voice. The concepts of the culture of silence must be considered when exploring sexual dialogues in Kenya. Due to the taboo nature of the topic culturally, voices and agency are often constrained rather than encouraged, despite what participatory approaches would advocate (Janes, 2016; Moore-Gilbert, 2005). Thus, it is essential to interrogate the power relationships within which community members are represented and represent themselves, as will be explored in Chapter Eight. In highlighting the vulnerabilities produced within silences around sex-related issues, Mungai et al. (2014, p. 174) argued that culture should be viewed ‘as a source of strength’ when working with people to diminish these exposures. Generating a wider understanding of cultural contexts of sex-related issues will indicate where erosion of cultural norms and values occurs (Mungai et al., 2014). Thus, the baraza and its adaptation as a space for intergenerational sex-talk are a form of cultural capital that may enhance positive systems for relating, rather than introducing completely new ways of knowing.

It is imperative that the topic of identity insecurity, generated by these outside forces, as a result of international laws, policies, and declarations, be considered, if only briefly, as it has had significant implications for contemporary communities in post-colonial Kenya. Nabudere (2005) raised the question of viability with regard to implementing universal standards as denoted through international frameworks such as The Universal Declaration of Human Rights or The Convention on the Rights of the Child, which oppose and call for abolishment of highly valued cultural traditions and norms (e.g., early marriage and child rearing, FGM, wife inheritance). This is problematic for two reasons, the first being that an air of superiority tends to hint that Eurocentric cultural beliefs supersede those of African cultures, and the second being that negative connotations are attached to African identities as a result of their practices being re-framed from a Eurocentric lens. These two considerations underscore the ‘dark continent discourse’ which has framed surviving traditional practices as barbarous and the people on the continent as primitive—notions that demand interjection of moral, religious, and political standards (Amoko, 1999; Bratlinger, 1985). In the post-colonial period, after World War II, development programming became a means for these interjections and shaped contemporary aid initiatives as they are known today and have deeply altered the structures of Kenyan communities, especially in terms of relationships defined by dependency (Amutabi, 2005; 2013). As a result, a ‘why even try’ attitude was constructed in relation to epidemics such as HIV, which
were conceived as spiralling forces claiming more lives than could ever be feasibly saved. Or, paradoxically, discourses were shaped that represented Africans as in need of salvation, an endeavour only befitting of the ‘white man’ or ‘white liberator’ (Amoko, 1999; Jungar & Oinas, 2010; Macdonald, 2008; Quist-Adade & van Wyk, 2007). Enter the ‘white saviour’ that has driven the expansion of the international volunteering sector, where young people become temporarily and passionately engaged in ‘saving’ populations who are in the throes of social, economic, and political crises—environments that they are often ill-prepared to navigate (Nyawalo, 2016).

Contexts, especially cultural nuances, are often disregarded, and what transpires can be programming that is irrelevant to situations of communities, introduction of new ideologies that local populations are ill-equipped to understand and access, or notions of inferiority of practices or belief systems, all of which contribute to identity confusion amongst the local population. Contemporary Kenya has seen changes in terms of policy development concerning how to improve such issues through various approaches. Often these are enacted by organisations whose mandates have been influenced by foreign actors and global declarations for change. Thus, it is vital that policies consider how established elements of the local Kenyan culture intersect with internal or external post-colonising and neo-colonising forces that shape increasingly complex sexual learning climates. It is for this reasoning that key policies regarding SRH and adolescents recently developed in Kenya are explored in the next section.

4.2. Positive Developments: Sex-Related Programming and Policy

Thor Thorvardarson (2007) in his examination of these issues in Tanzania, pointed out that HIV/AIDS prevention programming carried out by NGOs is changing the sexual health landscape. Whilst emphasis on HIV/AIDS prevention is vital to improving overall sexual health outcomes in communities, focusing solely on its prevention as the main issue may cause the unintentional consequence of not providing holistic forms of education on sexual health. Kesterton and de Mello (2010) seconded this belief by claiming that there are programming disconnects generated by the level of funding directed toward HIV prevention in comparison to funds for SRH, for which the sex-related knowledge would be helpful in understanding vulnerable contexts as well as behaviours and how to avoid them. Correcting this issue may prove difficult, however. Thor Thorvardarson (2007) depicted how the donor-to-recipient hierarchy can create a ‘conflict of interest’ (p. 7). This is due to the nature of power associated
with donor funding, where—more often than not—donors hold power to determine their initiatives and how their funds will/should be dispersed, sometimes to the detriment of the people they are attempting to help (Karlan & Appel, 2011).

The extent of teachers’ knowledge with regard to sexual health issues as well as teachers’ comfort in teaching the subject impacts whether or not schools are places where young people can obtain accurate sexual health information. Whilst in 2010, Kenya introduced a reformulated primary school teacher training syllabus as a means of increasing confidence around sexuality teaching through upskilling their knowledge on comprehensive sex education (CSE) (UNESCO, 2010), several studies in recent years provided evidence that level of capacity and the culture of silence still inhibit teachers from teaching the subject (Kiragu, 2007; Kite, 2017; Sidze et al., 2017; Wanje et al., 2017). Compounding the problem of ensuring a strong sexual health landscape is maintained are the differences between the teachings of males/females. In a male-dominated society, for example, initiatives such as programmes catered for males only will hinder societal growth by creating a knowledge imbalance between the sexes. Thor Thorvardarson (2007) supported this claim by referencing that males were less likely than females to share their sexual knowledge with their partners. Interestingly, the new methods of creating women-only education groups may be serving to hinder effective progress for the same reasons as seen through teaching only the males.

A further problem hindering international initiatives is that of the involvement of differing generations and relatability (Thor Thorvardarson, 2007). Elders, who learned sexual health through different cultural processes (as explored previously in sections 4.2.1. and 4.2.2. of this chapter), view young people as being too influenced by the West and, understandably, are unable to relate to or teach them sexual health effectively. Undoubtedly, attempting to include these differing demographics, create a quality sexual health programme, and, in turn, improve the overall landscape, has proven to be rather difficult (if not impossible) within the context of current approaches. Considering SRH NGOs operate within the confines of their limited budgets, the methods used to reach different groups must be better managed. While compartmentalising these groups may be good, initially, these methods cannot be sustained for long for two primary reasons: there is usually not enough money to maintain these initiatives, and the information taught in the gender/age-specific spaces tends to allow for misperceptions of the information provided, while teachers with varying levels of comfortability may contribute to moralising discourses on issues related to sex (Kiragu, 2007; Thor Thorvardarson, 2007; Wanje et al., 2017). Thor Thorvardarson (2007) mentioned that during the beginning of the HIV/AIDS epidemic in
Tanzania, infected women were not referenced, as the media coverage was focused on homosexuals; as a result, women were vulnerable to this infection and blamed for its spread. Western media created a narrative calling women within the continent ‘black temptress [es]’ (Thor Thorvardarson, 2007, p. 11). The newly acquired information on HIV transmissions was integrated into gender-specific programming and, thus, painted a picture in which specific groups were assigned blame for the epidemic (an obvious misconception by the community and irresponsible act by those assigned with divulging educational information).

Further complicating these issues is the Kenyan government’s attempt to establish a guideline by which better SRH methods should be divulged. According to a joint mission investigation the MOH enacted The National Reproductive Health Strategy 2009–2015, which established “. . . 65 strategies, 31 outputs and 10 thematic areas . . . but there [was] virtually no reference to commodity security” (Mission, Lehman, Nzoya, & Phillipson, 2011, p. 18). Considering the severity of adequate SRH education within the country, this initiative provided a clear disservice to its constituents. As noted, the MOH articulated the problems of the community. However, there was no “. . . clear strategic RH framework which [laid] out the priority areas requiring support by partners” (Mission et al, 2011, p. 23). From this observation, the MOH of Kenya established a programme without teeth, identifying key issues but no clear-cut strategic framework.

For 2013, the projected population for Kenya was 41.8 million people. Of this number, 62% were aged 25 or younger and 43%, 14 or younger (MDGs, Status Report 2013). From this position, an emphasis on constructive health policies, especially for young people, is of utmost importance. Since the early 2000s with the induction of the MDGs, a number of key policies that included elements related to sexual health were put forth, especially in relation to HIV/AIDS. 2010 was a key year in the sexual health landscape of Kenya because the country’s constitution was amended to include SRH and ASRH (adolescent sexual reproductive health) (MOH, 2013). Positive changes flowed in light of this. Sidze et al. (2017) provided a list of Kenyan policy formations with respect to provision of sexual reproductive health information and services, especially regarding adolescents, during the years 2003 to 2015. This section of the review is focused on selected policies created from the years 2009 to 2016. The policies are assessed for what aspects point toward promoting more positive environments for young people to learn about and navigate their sexual health experiences. In addition, each of the selected policies is analysed to illuminate
gaps within the envisioned implementation, as well as their value in working with communities to generate their own solutions to sex-related issues.

**National School Health Policy (2009).** In a joint effort, the Ministry of Public Health and Sanitation and MOE in Kenya aimed for this policy to address eight important areas: values and life skills; gender issues; child rights, child protection and responsibilities; special needs, disability, and rehabilitation; water sanitation and hygiene; nutrition; disease prevention and control; and school infrastructure and environmental safety. Referencing the high percentage of citizens of school age, this initiative aimed to identify the key issues which were most likely to affect students. Specifically, sexual education and issues such as sexual exploitation of both groups of young adolescents were key aspects integrated into the policy’s framework.

This policy was established due to shortcomings on sex-related topics within four areas: national environment, school environment, teachers, and community. For example, on the national-level, there was mention of slow legislative/policy implementation, lack of resources, and lack of compartmentalised information on sex. In the school environment, there were missing gender-sensitive infrastructures as well as a deficiency in networking related to governmental and social stakeholders. The third group, teachers, were reported as ill-trained on gender issues. Finally, social, and cultural norms which maintained, if not enhanced, gender inequalities were viewed as problematic key issues to address with community members. Lack of sensitisation, with regard to gender issues, was also noted as a key area to address. This implementation plan was created to help reduce Kenya’s burden of disease. Contributions to this issue included lack of knowledge, lack of regular check-ups, and lack of an enabling health environment.

Sensitising targeted communities through information transmission, prevention, and control of preventable diseases; providing disease training for teachers; and increasing the community’s knowledge on these topics were promoted as key focus areas for future capacity building.

Aspects of the policy that focus on sex-related topics demonstrate that the MOE is making strides to convey the impact of sex-related health concerns on adolescent health within the country. Whilst gender and sex-related issues were an aspect of this policy, other areas of health took precedent (e.g., worms and malaria) as their effects are much more immediate.

**Kenya Adolescent Reproductive Health and Development (ARHD) Policy (2003).** This policy was created by the 6th Council of the National Council for Population and Development (NCPD) in 2003 and designed to address the adolescents of the country which, at the time of its
development, comprised over 25% of the national population. Areas of early pregnancy, school dropout, and STIs, such as HIV/AIDS, were topics of interest for this policy to address, as these factors led to risks to positive reproductive health for adolescents. From the policy, those identified as actors in this goal included youth, parents, teachers, community members, religious and political leaders, service providers, relevant institutions, and other stakeholders. According to the policy, resource management was to be conducted by the Ministry of Planning and National Development and the MOH with participation from all groups (NGOs, donor agencies, parents, young people, and communities). Additionally, policy monitoring and evaluation was to be performed by MOH and NCPD. The implementation process was assigned on two levels: national (with MOH and NCPD as the lead agencies) and district (involving district health management teams, NGOs, relevant governmental departments, and the private sector). Duties for these levels ranged from advocating policy implementation to reviewing/recommending changes, monitoring/advising the government on mobilisation and use of resources for implementation and undertaking activities which would aid in promoting adolescent health programmes. Finally, 10 government institutions (including the Ministry of Education, Science, and Technology to the Ministry of Labour and Human Resource Development) and eight non-government groups (comprising mass media and religious institutions and universities/colleges) were cited as groups that had assigned tasks for policy realisation (NCPD, 2003). Overall, the ARHD 2003 policy created a fully-encompassing framework for addressing and finding solutions to the pressing needs of Kenya’s growing young population, through an aggressive and multi-stakeholder approach. The integrated nature of the policy requires that actors on different levels communicate to ensure each of the multiple stakeholders involved in implementing the policy are working to improve the sexual health landscape for adolescents.

Despite the ambitions of the ARHD policy, an assessment report of this policy by the NCPD, Department of Reproductive Health (DRH) and Population Reference Bureau (PRB) in 2013 cited several areas of concern. These challenges were contributed to by a lack of ARHD policy awareness and limited leadership to the lack of resources and low levels of involvement by groups such as ‘youth’. Cultural practices and gender norms, religious practices and beliefs, migration, poverty, and unemployment were all cited as hindrances to establishing pertinent policy implementation (NCPD, DRH, & PRB, 2013). From these findings, increased policy awareness, strengthened leadership and implementation plans, improved resource service delivery, resource management, and an ensured monitoring and evaluation process were presented as methods to increase success for future ARHD Policy.
Kenya AIDS Indicator Survey 2012 (KAIS), Final Report 2014. A 530-page report, developed by the National AIDS and STI Control Programme (NASCOP), provides contextual data of HIV prevention programmes for adolescents. A key programme is Families Matter, where parents/guardians are given effective tools, such as communication topics, with the goals of reducing sexual risk behaviour and delaying sexual debut for adolescents. In all, there are six proposed strategies which aim to serve all age ranges of the adolescent demographic. These strategies engaged the Families Matter programme, as well as: Healthy Choices I, focusing on delaying sexual debut/abstinence/avoiding peer pressure; Healthy Choices II, practicing safer sex/condom use/communication skills; Shuga, a multi-media platform addressing sexual concurrency/condom use/transactional sex/etc.; G-Pange, a programme for/by young people to make healthy lifestyle choices; and Chill Club, a group aimed at making healthy lifestyle choices and facilitated by college-educated people and designed to encourage abstinence or delayed sexual debuts. The incorporation of talking points for parents and the use of several multimedia channels indicate that methods are being designed to cater to the needs of the target groups.

Conversely, abstinence and delaying sexual debut (for adolescents in the older age brackets) may not make full sense in the context of complex sexual learning and exposure environments. Efforts to provide relatable content to this group may not be realised because these endeavours do not seem to fully accept the sexual desires of young adults (McLaughlin et al., 2015). It is interesting to note that, in a lengthy report, sexual communication as it relates to adolescents was confined to one section of the document. Further to this, very little advice is given on effective—or possible—engagement of adolescents, in relation to HIV prevention. A potential remedy to this issue would be to expand on the current options already provided (use of information and communication technologies) and to ensure sex communication takes into consideration the current post-colonial context of Kenyan communities where traditional values intersect with values from other cultures globally.

National Adolescent Sexual and Reproductive Health Policy 2015. This policy was initiated to combat the growing changes in the demographics of young people, Kenya’s fastest growing population. Two key principles for this policy are the acknowledgment of the roles parents/guardians/communities have in ASRH and the inclusion of these young people in designing ASRH programmes. Specifically, the policy acknowledges that, given the high percentage of young adults under 20 years of age, these young adults should be incorporated into
government initiatives for both personal and national development. Overall, MOH (2015) aimed to re-visit this policy to assess and revise methods which were, initially, created through the ARHD Policy of 2003.

Within the preamble (section 2.1) (MOH, 2015), the policy noted how health for young people is affected by factors such as schoolgirls becoming pregnant and being unable to return to complete their schooling. Evidence provided notes that 13,000 females drop out of school annually due to early/unintended pregnancy. The report cites efforts to ensure these vulnerable females will be afforded the ability to complete schooling, post-pregnancy. There is a guideline for the departments and stakeholders who are to be held accountable for realising this new ASRH policy. However, in the section of this document (6.3.3) referring to those who will implement the policy, there is ambiguity about how this is to be accomplished. A layout of the roles of the government actors is provided, but there is no accompanying explanation as to how these initiatives will be implemented. Simply stating that the Ministry of Devolution and Planning, for example, is in charge of this portion of supporting policy advocacy is not enough to constitute effective societal aid. How will the Ministry advocate for these policies? While some vagueness in bureaucracy may be welcomed—so that specific departments do not become pigeonholed—there must, at the very least, be a basic understanding of how initiatives are to be designed and implemented.

**Mombasa County HIV & AIDS Strategic Plan (2016-2020).** The Mombasa County HIV & AIDS Strategic Plan (MCASP) offers several prime examples of how policy formation and implementation should be handled. This initiative proposes a county-based approach through review, refinement, and guidance of national plans (such as Kenya National AIDS Strategic Plan III (KNASP III) and Kenya AIDS Strategic Framework (KASF)). KNASP III is a national policy which acknowledged the need to incorporate county-based governance into responses on HIV/AIDS action plans (MCASP, p. 9). Similarly, KASF was created after KNASP III and designed as a framework for community-based institutions, in regard to creating plans and training sessions.

A county-based approach, with the incorporation of national policies, is ideal for creating cohesiveness amongst national policies on regional/county/community levels. The development of this strategic plan has benefitted from input of integral aspects of policy formation, including a review of KASF to model and guide; development of teams to review/draft MCASP; county and
national teams to aid in reviewing; and stakeholder forums. Noticeably, this policy—when compared to other initiatives—emphasises target groups which these programmes are designed to help, such as “persons living with HIV, County health team . . . representatives from persons with disabilities, youth groups, public and private sector . . . and adjoining local authorities” (MCASP, 2016-220, p. 10).

Compounding the potential success of this programme is the need to address risks for categories (i.e., social, cultural, financial) which are directly affected by HIV initiatives. For example, the social/cultural categories would include societal, cultural, or religious stigmas and intolerance which influence HIV programming (MCASP, 2016). In fact, pp. 35–44 provide ideal programme assessment by establishing a parallel between KASF objectives and the efforts being made (proposed) by MCASP; these are ideal for ensuring that local efforts do not stray too far from national/established goals. Yet another aspect of how this policy has the potential to succeed is providing the costs that MCASP will incur over the course of its lifespan; information regarding recommended actions, target groups, costs for these actions, and target dates for implementing these initiatives are provided to elaborate on the numerous areas this programme aims to reach (pp. 45–51). This is crucial in being able to create projects which local community stakeholders will be willing to support.

Taking all these policies into account, differences exist in terms of the emphasis each place on the sexual reproductive health of adolescents. Whilst these issues can, understandably, be viewed as less pressing than a life-threatening illness like malaria, sex-related issues that go unresolved can have consequences that make young people more vulnerable over time (Kimemia & Mugarini, 2016; Wanyonyi, 2014). Since the Kenyan education system is overburdened and underfinanced, alternative forms of education must be explored as proposed in this study through the use of traditional gathering spaces for dialogue on sex-talk. Taking into consideration new guiding policies and directions for the SRH and ADSRH whilst emphasising community-driven and -designed processes for change might allow consideration for sex education alternatives that transfer power to community members most affected. The evolution of mabaraza is explored in the next section. The ease with which these spaces have been moulded and re-moulded over time is an influential driver for adapting mabaraza as a tool for intergenerational sex-talk.
4.3. Mabaraza: Then and Now

As explored in Chapter One, the baraza has various forms; its origins can be traced back along the Tanzanian and Kenyan Coast, where it was representative of a range of meeting spaces (Loimeier, 2005). Mabaraza have existed in the East African region for many centuries, and the earliest usage of the term baraza on the Swahili Coast is linked to small benches outside homes during the Portuguese colonial era (beginning in 1505) (Kresse, 2007). These spaces were usually dominated by men, who congregated in the evening without women to conduct their ‘daily informal meetings’ (p. 56). Eventually, these gathering places extended to the broader community. These spaces were assumed to have been a part of Mombasa’s political structure, where the leaders (always male) formed each of the 12 main tribes of Kenya, dominated ruling order before the administration was colonised by the British in 1895 (Kresse, 2007). Tribal heads shared their policies with the elders who conveyed them through a baraza. Pre-colonial forms of mabaraza saw the gathering space as a means for addressing and finding solutions to community issues (Loimeier, 2005).

Post-independence, local governing structures adapted harambee. Harambee is a Swahili expression for ‘let’s all pull together’ (Ngau, 1987, p. 524). It can be found on the Kenyan coat of arms and was an indigenous notion of ‘self-help’ (Ngau, 1987, p. 524). The notion of ‘self-help’ referred to the unity of a community and their reliance on bringing together local resources to help one another rather than using external organisational or government support to meet their basic needs. Ngau (1987) noted that this help manifested in several forms, from cultivating land to growing crops for the people, helping a neighbour build a house, or coming together to weed or clear the bush. Harambee is a belief which translates across most tribal divisions within the country. Like mabaraza, harambee projects were typically voluntary. In addition, gender, clan affiliation, or age-specific divisions determined group organisation. Decisions eventuated out of informal dialogic exchange where negotiating consensus was required (Ngau, 1987).

Over time, harambee caused rivalries between members of communities and their leaders and caused delays to or destruction of social programmes. Chaos resulted amongst the newly formed class system of an independent Kenya, dismantling the societal goals of participation and empowerment upon which it was formed. Although harambee were traditionally community-driven initiatives, the overlay of control from government-designed rules experienced during this period dictated development goals aligning with national politics rather than community-
designed ones. The more politicised and commercialised these spaces became, the more that corruption, creation of rivals, and abandonment of projects were also amplified. This caused the government to stipulate more rules to regulate the space (Ngau, 1987). Due to issues of this nature, harambee were outlawed in 2003 (Waithima, 2012).

Instead, mabaraza became widely used in the political realm as a replacement for harambee meetings. Community members continue to gather to this day in mabaraza. Similar to various other facets of the social fabric, the baraza was not able to escape its colonial cast. At times, it has shifted its focus from a community-wide forum to enhance social welfare to a space for political debate, an arena where leaders would rally for public support, and a means to consolidate political leadership (Kresse, 2007). Naanyu and colleagues (2011) noted that either the chief, deputy-chief or a district officer often led mabaraza, as is a typical process for current local governments.

Kresse (2007) noted that until as recently as 1985, mabaraza were often a gathering of local wazee (intellectuals) and the baraza space was equated with a ‘Swahili University’ (p. 74). They can also be spaces where local traditional knowledge such as myths and fables can be shared. Kresse (2007) asserted that the baraza requires at least some trust, and thus it is not open to the public but directed at persons with shared interests, group memberships, or economic interests. In later years, this has shifted concerning invitation based on belonging to the same community. Its most common evolutionary form, the ‘chief’s mabaraza’, has been used for well over two decades. These mabaraza are only led by local leaders (district officer, chiefs, deputy-chiefs, or village elders or persons with high standing in the community). Mbithi (1974) as cited in Rasmusson (1975) reported a man’s reflection on the disempowerment and lack of transformative dialogue that occurred during a Chief’s baraza four decades ago:

The sub-chiefs baraza has usually been a forum for earnest discussion of plans and rectification of complaints, but the chief’s baraza is usually addressed only by recognized local leaders, and at the Divisional/District levels the only participation is to sit in the hot sun and clap when visiting dignitaries have finished lecturing in a strange language. (p. 272)

In testing adaptions of mabaraza for intergenerational dialogues, it was essential to avoid reproducing this disempowerment and forms of non-participation noted above. Endeavouring to do this involved acquiring an understanding around the traditional tenets of its processes. While our team relied on local expert knowledge of these processes as mabaraza adapted for the peoples
using them, I examined the limited available literature that had discussed mabaraza in any context possible.

Recent adaptations point towards the value of baraza as a programme evaluation tool. Naanyu et al. (2011) provided one of the first detailed studies of baraza as a tool for social health research in the context of Kenya. The authors drew similarities between mabaraza and FGs. To point out the value of the baraza over a focus group, the authors stated that it was an

... indigenous social process, is usually much larger (as many as 50 or more participants), and takes more than two hours to complete. ... the baraza methodology acknowledges the importance of social context and allows—or even promotes—social influences on participants in the event itself. Paying attention to social context is crucial because it has implications for interpretation, understanding, and application of data collection. (Naanyu et al., 2011, p. 17)

Emergence of latent themes, stimulation of narrative knowing, and the possibility of repetition along with its action-oriented nature were key advantages of using mabaraza as tools in health research where dialogues could be explored as a form of evaluating current programmes. The authors asserted that mabaraza would work best integrated alongside other methods.

Inui et al. (2009) used mabaraza dialogues as a means of gaining community member, patient, and programme staff perspectives on the Academic Model Providing Access to Healthcare (AMPATH) for an HIV programme in Western Kenya in 2006. Seven village health dialogues (mabaraza) were employed to elicit evaluative perspectives of two separate groups: those with leadership roles in the community (elders, chiefs, and community leaders) and traditional birth attendants, with 25–50 participants attending each baraza for 2–4 hours. A semi-structured discussion guide was used (see Appendix 1.3). While the authors noted that mabaraza have in the past been used as a forum for acquiring and disseminating health information, these processes were approached differently than was employed in the current research. The CBPAR project for my PhD emphasised Freire’s conception of dialogue, where topics come from the community and exchanges are participant-driven and mostly unstructured. However, as a tool for analysis of health programmes, several studies indicate that mabaraza processes are beneficial (Inui et al., 2009; Knopf et al., 2014).

Knopf et al., (2014) designed a study to evaluate ideas around a one-off community-level intervention to discourage concurrent sexual partners as a means of preventing infection with HIV. Mabaraza were used in conjunction with FGs to assess adults’ evaluative perspectives of
the intervention as being both acceptable and feasible. Kamanda et al. (2013) in their 5-year cohort CBPR project sought to develop a model of care and examine the effects of the caring environment on household socio-economic indicators and on the health and well-being (physical and mental) of orphaned and non-orphaned children in Western Kenya. To design such approaches, the researchers used a typical staged, iterative CBPR feedback loop, where they worked with the community to identify the problem in the first phase of their project. Mabaraza were employed by Kamanda et al. (2013) as a tool to assess community members’ ideas for the project, as well as their commitment to the study timeline. Those mabaraza were conducted as consultative sessions, with the elected community facilitator summarising what he or she understood about the research and then seeking whether or not community members agreed or disagreed. This enabled the team to do on-the-spot assessments of community members’ understanding of their research and to elaborate where necessary.

Gaining community perspectives on appropriate research protocols concerning informed consent and biomedical research was explored in a Western Kenyan study (Vreeman et al., 2012a). Through discussions with 108 community members, it was highlighted that they tended to expose themselves to harm during their research because of the benefits they might gain. Mabaraza were determined to be both ethical and useful processes for engaging community members, sensitising them to new project plans, and helping to ensure a more widespread understanding of the goals of research before consenting to participate. Vreeman et al. (2012b) further tested this idea to elicit Western Kenyan community member perspectives on vulnerable children’s participation in health research. Mabaraza processes were informative in evidencing parents as gatekeepers to participation where children’s consent was not required. In other studies, mabaraza were a means to conduct community sensitisation on specific issues (e.g., typhoid, malaria, HIV/AIDS, youths’ participation in HIV programmes as well as research with vulnerable populations) to enable community members to arrive at a space where they were comfortable taking part in research and the subsequent programmes that might later follow (Ernst et al., 2016; Ho et al., 2016; Mwakanenile, 2010; Naanyu, et al., 2011; Vreeman et al., 2012b). Where sensitisation was done in some studies, other research pointed toward using mabaraza as a means to engage from the ground up, before ever employing a specific programme (Angwenyi et al., 2014). This was problematic in our research. As an international researcher, I had to exercise the access channels dictated to me through the Kenyan Government formal ethical guidelines of the Ministry of Science, Education, and Technology, as detailed further in Chapter Five.
A study by Bauni (1994) on the quality of care in family planning in Kenya mentioned that participants from the study noted ‘Chief’s Baraza’ as one of the spaces where family planning information was acquired. However, no further details were provided to the extent such measures were carried out. This was similar to other studies that made mention of involving community members in health education through dialogues in mabaraza, but there were no specific details documented about the dynamics that unfolded within these spaces (Mwai, Njenga, & Barasa, 2016; Vedanthan et al., 2014). Lack of documentation of how dialogues transpire through mabaraza processes and what new information is gained about the community through these processes is a gap this study seeks to fill. Across all research studies where mabaraza were employed as a means of identifying community issues and gauging their commitments to change, the traditional gathering space was viewed as increasing potential for sustainable interventions to address key issues affecting the most vulnerable in the population (Kamanda et al., 2013). Therefore, based on the adaptations made to the process, in both the political and health sectors, it is not inconceivable that this could be taken further. The process could work for community members to not only raise their awareness of sex-related issues, but also adapt the process as a tool where healthier behaviour changes can be negotiated.

My review of the literature from the past 10 years highlighted that mabaraza have been used in a number of ways but have proven particularly useful in the evaluation of SSA programmes for HIV/AIDS prevention and treatment (Naanyu et al., 2011). While its strengths and weaknesses as a programme participatory evaluation tool have been assessed, its value as a tool for addressing ways to enact community-wide behaviour changes has not been explored. Naanyu et al. (2011) noted that use of baraza can ‘stimulate narrative knowing’ and it is worth investigating this further as a tool for dialogue in research and change in communities.

In tracing the evolution of mabaraza to its current usages, three elements are evident. First, mabaraza have the capacity to enhance participation if it stems from a place of Harambee values. Second, conscious raising is possible through engagement in the process. Finally, these spaces have the potential for the dialogues within to be dictated by community leaders or persons in power positions. The increasingly politicised and regulatory structures that came to shape these meetings in the past were particularly vital to understand, as one of the aims of my study was to work at revitalising traditional modes of communication and knowledge, but not at the risk of devising more silencing practices. The political element, which encourages change and requires a local facilitator, embodies indigenous values from which original mabaraza processes were
shaped. In addition, understanding how mabaraza are being successfully employed elsewhere in the Kenyan context for evaluating health programmes offered the positive potential for adapting the process as an intervention tool to foster intergenerational dialogues on sex-talk.

A re-introduction of systems of connectedness rather than the individualistic value systems exported through the imposition of colonialist structures aligns with social work values which merit working with people through their environments and thus the systems that have come to shape their lives (Mungai, Wairire & Rush, 2014). Approaching mabaraza dialogues in such a way that encourages relationships influenced by harambee and Ubuntu at the centre of the dynamics proposes a focus on cultural capital—‘sources of strength’—to be adapted in order to re-enforce positive systems for relating and understanding that previously underscored traditional lines of relating and reconciliation in Kenya’s pre-colonial era (Mungai et al., 2014, p. 174). Hence, mabaraza are traditional spaces where chances for traditional knowledge production and transfer are more likely. They have a long history in Kenya’s social fabric, making them recognisable meeting places; are clearly adaptable; and are cost-efficient, as they can be held about anywhere. These elements make mabaraza, as a core construct, a promising space for change in future sexual health programming at the grassroots.

4.4. Intergenerational Sex-Related Dialogues: Barriers to Communication in SSA

The purpose of this section of the review is not to provide detailed descriptions of how intergenerational sex-related communication has been investigated across SSA communities, as Oduran (2014) has previously achieved this in his succinct collection of literature highlighting gaps in its usage to strengthen communities. Instead, the goal here is to underline why integration of an intergenerational element is required in future programmes that have an educational sex-related component. In addition, barriers to sexual communication in the SSA context are examined through a discussion of past literature.

In the SSA context, using HIV/AIDS programming to examine intergenerational relationships should be considered. Oduaran (2014) argued that the epidemic has altered traditional intergenerational relationships in the region, where many children are left orphaned. As a result, the grandparents have stepped in as the primary caregivers, increasing the need to explore how these relationships unfold.
When examining literature about intergenerational dialogue on sex-related issues, only one Kenyan study was found. Conducted by McLaughlin et al., (2015), it was a qualitative study, for which data were gathered from eight primary schools, in six countries across Africa (Botswana, Ghana, Kenya, South Africa, Swaziland, and Tanzania) to understand if young people’s voices and knowledge, shared through dialogues over time, had the power to shift social and cultural attitudes with regards to sexuality education. Results in this article emphasised data arising from South Africa, Swaziland, and Tanzania. Across these three country-contexts within schools, results indicated that teachers harboured fears around throwing themselves into teaching an HIV/AIDS curriculum out of fear of repercussions from cultural or religious leaders as well as parents. However, over time and through dialogues, the authors found that relationships of trust between adults and children were fostered. Future recommendations emphasised the role of teachers in promoting sex-related dialogues, but also the possibility of extending this project and ownership outward to a variety of critical stakeholders. Despite the recommendations advocating for wider responsibility involving an increased variety of stakeholders, the population who engaged dialogues with each other in the McLaughlin et al. (2015) study were co-generational and not the operational definition for ‘intergenerational’ (or ‘generation-diverse’, more than two) as was the approach in my study.

Dialogue, as conceptualised through participation, is increasingly vital to sex-related behaviour change research, especially in the African context. This is due to the fact that the voices of those most significantly impacted by issues being researched are typically represented through the academic or institutional ‘other’. This person will, more often than not, come from a different cultural context or background of affluence, inherently bringing with him or her an entirely different set of knowledges through which he or she interprets the situation. Thus, dialogue becomes “... an alternative entry point to the biomedical model that offers a universal approach without attending to the local contexts and understanding of health” and its related issues (Muturi & Mwangi, 2011, p. 714).

Muturi and Mwangi (2011) endeavoured to collect the insights of older adults in Kenya to communicate best practices for constructing culturally relevant and sensitive health strategies related to HIV/AIDS. In discussing the contexts in which prevention strategies should take place, an elderly male participant noted the ability of mabaraza to foster learning between generations:
We want every politician and government official who holds a baraza to talk about AIDS . . . If they talk at these meetings they are talking to everyone: men, women, and children. People need to know that their leaders are concerned about it and they might start talking about it. (Male focus group participant, as cited in Muturi & Mwangi, p. 719)

These recommendations have been considered for their value on expanding to the broader context of all issues related to sex, including but not limited to HIV/AIDS in the Kenyan context. The authors argued that strategically expanding the focus of interventions to the entire community, rather than targeted (i.e., only males aged 20–25) and most vulnerable groups (i.e., youth, sex-workers) will result in an enhanced perception of risks, will help lower stigma surrounding such issues but primarily related to HIV/AIDS, and can engender positive advances in the behaviour change process (Muturi & Mwangi, 2011, p.720). Unfortunately, these practices, as is the case with most innovative working solutions arising out of community contexts, can only reach as far as they are endorsed at the local, national, and international levels for policy programming (Rolston, 2011).

Literature from the past 10 years focusing on sexual health information, education, and knowledge evidence culture as one of the most significant barriers to intergenerational communication on sex-related topics in the context of SSA (Bastien, Kajula, & Muhwezi, 2011; Cheney & Okwany, 2017; Jearey-Graham & Macleod, 2015; Jemmott et al., 2013; McLaughlin et al., 2015; Ngidi et al., 2016). This is due to the expectation that young people will respect their elders. Amzat and Razum (2018) stated this expectation results in a ‘cultural shyness’ which deters young people from initiating sex-related dialogues with persons from different generations. This is unfortunate, since where intergenerational dialoguing on sensitive issues, such as those related to sex, is present, traditional modes of communication can be maintained, communication can be fostered in culturally relevant ways, and attitudinal change is thought to be increasingly possible due to broader engagement over time (McLaughlin et al., 2015; Oduran, 2014; Svanemyr, Amin, Robles, & Green, 2015).

A wide variety of factors contribute to this shyness or silence around communication about sex-related issues across SSA. An extensive review of the literature on empirical research of parent–child modes of communication in SSA, published between 1980 and 2011, returned 23 pertinent articles that highlighted several factors as requirements and deterrents for engaging in dialogues in this context (Bastien et al., 2011). In conducting their review, the authors noted parental perceptions of child readiness to discuss sex-related topics, having the appropriate education and
tools (confidence, comfort, and skills) to discuss sex-related topics with their children were precursors to engaging in dialogue (Bastien et al., 2011; Poulsen et al., 2010). From the review, it was found that rural communities influenced greater parent–child communication on HIV/AIDS, but it was not disclosed as to why this was the case. Smaller family sizes (five persons or less), more time spent with parents, and positive conceptions that framed parents as holding this responsibility evidenced more frequent communication as well. The review also revealed that those affiliated closely with religion, especially Catholicism, were less likely to engage in communication about sex-related information. Disparities existed between countries, with some, such as Nigeria and South Africa, reporting that people having a higher socio-economic status engaged in more frequent communication about sex, where this was not the case in other countries like Tanzania. Studies reviewed showed that older students in their later years of secondary school had an increased likelihood of communicating with their parents about sex if the student had a partner or had previously tried alcohol. Mixed results were reported across the studies reviewed regarding the impact of gender on parent–child communication. However, it was noted that mothers were framed as the persons who engaged in sex dialogues most, but their communication was usually negative, through warnings or threats (Bastien et al., 2011).

Deterrents or barriers to parent–child communication across SSA countries in the Bastien et al. (2011) review highlighted the notion of sex being a culturally and religious taboo topic, that traditional communication did not occur between parent and child but between grandparent and a grandchild of the same sex, as indicated in Chapter One, as well as viewing these discussions as issues to be explored in sexual education classes at schools or in sex-related educational texts. In addition, especially in the case of Kenya, it was noted that parents had a firm belief that if sex was talked about more often, it increased their child’s chance of engaging in sex-related acts. Lack of time for such discussions due to other commitments, fear of physical punishment, starting an argument with parents, and having them perceive they were engaging in physical acts if they brought up the topic were perceived to be deterrents for young people engaging in dialogues with their parents. Situated within the current sexual health landscape of Kenya, where young people are the most vulnerable to HIV infection, the teen pregnancy rate is significantly high at 18% (96 out of every 1000 births), and 60% of sexually active young girls do not use contraceptives, the results from this review evidence a need to explore sex-related dialoguing between young people and adults to understand context-specific ways to reduce problematic sexual health outcomes and risk-taking behaviours of young people.
The deterrents and requirements for parent–child communication on sex across SSA noted in the Bastien et al. (2013) review were echoed in a later Ugandan study on adolescent–child sexual communication. Muhwezi et al. (2015) performed an exploratory study using FGs and key informant interviews with parents, adolescents, teachers, and school administrators on the topic. Their results add to the previous review by highlighting gender differences regarding men being less likely to ever communicate about sex, relationships, or contraceptives. The authors in this study highlighted that adolescent–parent dialogues were rare, and peers at school as well as mass media were denoted as primary sources of sexual information. Specific Kenyan studies that document parent-to-child communication about sex do exist, but do not account for exposure relationships that young people might have within the larger community (Crichton, Ibisomi & Gyimah, 2012; Kiragu, Obwaka, Odallo, & Van Hulzen, 1996; Namisi et al., 2009; Okigbo et al., 2015; Poulsen et al., 2010). Thus, parent-and-child communication may not be enough to safeguard against other community members’ lack of respect for sexual rights.

McLaughlin et al., (2012) proposed that young people should not be treated as innocents—it is known that they learn about sex, the sources through which they acquire information, and taboos that prevent them from having a discussion. However, acknowledging their agency in relation to engaging in sexual activities or exposure to sexual ideas was a call the authors highlighted; teaching and understanding are in tension with cultural norms that challenge teachers’ abilities to provide culturally relevant sex education without support from the wider community. This was a gap they noted required further investigation. It generated the question: what is required for greater emphasis to be placed on sex-related dialogues to ensure adolescents get more value out of the sex-related education they do receive while offering young people processes for breaking the culture of silence that exists around sex-related topics affecting them?

Wanyonyi (2014) noted that the culture of silence concerning sexuality had been exacerbated by religion, more specifically fundamentalist Christian donor-funded schools, and HIV programmes in Kenya. The author identified a division amongst Christian groups in Kenya on how and even if sex education should be taught due to its potential to conflict with values and beliefs. This produces further ambivalence in the implementation of government-instituted curricula. Wanyonyi (2014) suggested that young people’s understandings of sex-related ideas—their sex education—should be informed by a variety of stakeholders, including government programmes, church leaders, teachers, and parents. Recommendations for the Ministry of Education were made for more explicit implementation policies as well as the breadth of knowledge to be
covered concerning sex education and life skills programming. The author emphasised that the physical and biological components should be integrated alongside the mental and spiritual. Even if the implementation of the Life Skills Programme were strong, sex education gained through formal schooling would be constrained, as is the case with all education in Kenya. This is partly due to the fact that 47% of Kenyans “. . . live below the poverty line and are pre-occupied with survival rather than education” (ActionAid International Kenya, 2012, p. 14). Hence, investigating the adaptation of traditional spaces for intergenerational sex-talk might encourage each of the aforementioned components to be considered when designing sexual health interventions and education that are culturally relevant.

This overview of research on intergenerational sex-talk in the Kenyan context evidences that the focus of literature where sexual communication is examined, has been between rigidly defined groups (e.g., parent to young person, teacher to young students, church leaders to young people). Building on this body of knowledge, the current study seeks to examine intergenerational dialogues by extending it beyond two-way exchange to a wider intergenerational approach that brings together a variety of community contributors in one space, to dialogue on pertinent sex-related issues.

4.5. Pathways for Investigation

Tracing the development of norms, practices, and discourses that shape Kenya’s sexual health landscape substantiates that it’s social, cultural, economic, and political contexts present a myriad of challenges and opportunities to be navigated with caution when endeavouring to improve the sexual health landscape. Understanding how notions of sexuality and sexual communication have been reformed across each of the defined historical eras can aid research teams and those who participate in programme or project designs in better meeting the needs and demands of the community members with whom they work.

The research on the traditional gathering space, baraza, highlighted the gaps in previous literature in terms of the spaces being employed as an evaluation tool for health programming, and not for a tool to be shaped for change (i.e., the intervention), as is proposed in this study. As evidenced, a lack of current literature exists on intergenerational dialoguing about sex, especially when this concept is considered beyond two-way, parent-to-child, forms of communication related to sexual topics. The main barriers to sexual communication in SSA communities such as Kenya
were considered in shaping how our research team would collect data. Previous studies that noted a lack of multi-stakeholder interactions (i.e., those beyond parent to young person, teacher to young people) indicated this might be a key situation to simulate. This was in an effort to widen, as much as possible, the reach of initiatives, to ensure larger samples of community members affected by sex-related problems were engaged in finding solutions. It was also paramount to consider adults’ perceptions of young people’s readiness to contribute. Anticipating that this might be a concern for adults in the community, we spoke to young people separately to understand their learning experiences around and exposure to sexual issues (as discussed in Chapter Six). Finally, maintaining respect for elders was a cultural concern our team, and the young people with whom we worked in Cycle Two, wanted to uphold. Together, we explored new ways young people might consider representing themselves, which will be described further in succeeding chapters.

Improving intergenerational sex-talk within communities has not been widely studied using traditional spaces to initiate these dialogues. Thus, it was meaningful to examine the contextual experiences of young people’s sexual learning and exposure experiences to uncover if contexts at our research site were comparable with past literature on sex-related communication barriers (see Chapter Seven). To begin the task of contextualising the SHL of Mwakirunge, it was first necessary to train a local research team. This involved equipping a group of individuals from the local context with community-based research skills. In turn, these individuals shared their local knowledge to enhance lines of relating during access, relationship building, and data collection with community members. Learning that transpired as a result of negotiating access and training a local research team is elaborated on in the chapter to follow.
Chapter 5. Cycle One: Access and Training

The decision to conduct doctoral research through a CBPAR methodology was not only challenging with regards to the processes of working within community dynamics, but also in determining how I might present this work. Literature and theory are interlaced within the sections of each of the chapters to follow. However, the emphasis is on reporting on ways in which to work with community members to facilitate processes that can led to critical consciousness around sex-related issues and not a conventional, highly theorised presentation of findings. Instead, the next four chapter represent the approach “this is how CBPAR gets done abd this is what it looks like.”

For clarity purposes, and with the hope of providing a detailed guide to how our team arrived at adapting mabaraza as spaces for intergenerational sex-talk, each cycle of research is discussed in its own chapter. Each cycle of an AR project can be regarded as a cycle of learning (Kolb, 1984). As outlined in Chapters One and Two, this research study comprised four cycles:

- **Cycle One**: Access and Training
- **Cycle Two**: Working with Community Contributors
- **Cycle Three**: Adapting Mabaraza
- **Cycle Four**: Dissemination

The processes for enacting **Cycle One** (see Figure 6), introduced briefly in Chapter Two, as well as the insights gained through research skills training as a form of capacity building, are explored further in the current chapter. The complexity in accessing different groups of community contributors are outlined. Participant feedback and researcher journal excerpts are consolidated alongside descriptions of insights that emerged about the value of research training. Qualitative training participants developed the skills required of those who became a member of the research team— to listen to, and document experiences of, community contributors in the latter cycles of research.
Cycles Two, Three and Four (described in succeeding chapters) explore the data collected with community contributors on how sex-related knowledge was acquired, how such topics were discussed in mabaraza settings, and their future visions for changing problematic sex-related health outcomes in their community.

5.1. Access

The complex national and community structures, combined with a strong cultural environment in Coast province, warranted the need to be well-versed in customary practices. These insights were necessary in order to gain access to community contributors before carrying out the research. Figure 6 illustrates the differing points of access that were negotiated, before beginning data collection with young people and adults. The first point of access was obtaining ethical approval for the study from the UAHPEC (see Appendix 1.5). This involved attending to several key ethical considerations which were highlighted in the discussion of ethics in Chapter Five.
The second point of access to negotiate was Kenyan approval from the National Commission for Science, Technology, and Innovation (NASCOTI). Similar to the UAHPEC, the NASCOTI, which is a government body, ensures that all research conducted in Kenya is undertaken according to their identified ethical standards.

In negotiating access points three through five, I worked with the Programme Officer of our partner NGO to contact the Ministry of Education (MoEK) operating in the Kisauni district of Mombasa. Authorisation from the MoEK established the hierarchy we had to follow in order to reach young people in schools. First, we had to receive approval from the District Commissioner’s Office (DCO) Provincial Administration and then from the Security Ministry of the Kenyan government. The latter was an organisation who has authority over all matters pertaining to children (young people under 16 years of age). Approval from the DCO was essential because of my relationship with PANGO, and its physical location in the district, both being vital elements of ensuring our access to working with young people. Approval meant
permission to carry out activities in and out of school. In addition, all probing questions to begin conversations with young people and adults were reviewed for appropriateness and approved by the CICC, a Kenyan organisation of which all faiths, practiced in Mombasa County, are members.

Once the CICC deemed our questions appropriate, our team followed instructions from the MoEK. We liaised with the head of school and teachers to set convenient times so as not to disrupt normal class hours. However, before contacting the school, we were strongly advised to make our presence and intentions in the community known to the local Chief, our sixth point of access. Our seventh and eighth points of access were meeting with the Assistant Chief and Deputy Principal of the participating school. These meetings were necessary to discuss the level of commitment to our plan and the capacity for students, teachers, and community members outside the school, to engage in the project.

Access points nine through 11, before finally consulting adults and young people (access points 12-13) in the community about their willingness to participate, involved meetings with village elders, teachers at the participating school, and parents of the young persons invited to take part in the research. The research team conducted these meetings with village elders to gauge how their smaller villages could best be involved in the project. In addition, village elders helped mobilise community members to attend mabaraza. Similarly, the team had meetings with teachers to work out the most suitable times to work with young people. Finally, we organised a separate meeting with parents to both assess the level of support for young people’s engagement in sex-related discussions, and obtain informed consent required for some students’ participation, as they were minors. Time constraints created difficulties with both accessing and organising potential adult and youth contributors. These barriers took time and effective communication to overcome. The 13 points of access, as discussed above, were crucial to maintaining the ethicality of our research and harnessing community members’ support for our presence.

5.2. The Entry Process

Upon obtaining successful access to diverse groups in the community, PANGO’s Chief Programme Officer made contact via email or phone with key individuals from the community to coordinate face-to-face introductory meetings. From there, our team built relationships with key contacts from different contributor groups, whom we convened with before each entry, as per a
suggestion made by the ward Chief. These key contacts were: the ward Chief; an elder from one of the ward’s smaller villages; a boda-boda driver who was one of many out-of-school youths; and a female teacher as well as the deputy principal from the participating school.

The relationship with the deputy principal remained tense from start to finish, due to his scepticism for the research process and assumption that, because I was foreign, I owed him monetary compensation for his time. This tenseness complicated the entry process when, even after explaining the study did not wish to incentivise participation, he recurrently raised the issue of his compensation. As close as I was to the research process, metaphysically, this was an example of the delicate dance between myself and the community; of knowing when to lead and when to follow. In the moment, I was hurt by the distance created in the following interaction Kay, our local research team member, documented in her journal. However, upon reflection, I realised gaining distance can be important (Tuhiwai Smith, 1999). Taking a step back from the research was crucial to my learning:

Is it just me who simply and plainly doesn’t see or care about Laura and Mark (the Australian member of the research team) being White? I have seen White people all my life. I do enjoy aspects of their culture, but to me we are all HUMAN BEINGS!!! They live and eat just like Africans. So, what’s the big deal with Kenyans misbehaving when they see White people, for lack of a better term? Colours of skin may be different, but don’t we all live and breathe? We really do embarrass ourselves. It was disappointing for a deputy principal to feel worried when Laura was taking note of the time for our next meeting with the school (that she might have been writing something negative). Then afterwards, someone (the deputy principal) would ask for his benefits (some money)—how sad! Our kids need help and yet all people can think of are benefits for themselves. (Kay, Researcher journal excerpt, 05 March 2015)

In analysing this journal excerpt, I highlighted how Kay wrote “their culture”, noting the obvious difference between Mark, herself, and me. Moreover, the principal positioned our relationship in an ‘us’ versus ‘them’ dichotomy—characteristic of the insider-outsider relationship (Tuhiwai Smith, 1999). In situations where I was outright considered an outsider and a person’s interpretation of my value and worth to the research project was only in terms of how they would benefit from the relationship, I found my understanding of the relational process of community work being challenged. Through my constructivist epistemology my experiences influenced my views of community development. Fortunately, we formed other positive and mutually fruitful relationships throughout the entry process; especially in the case of the village elder, from a smaller community within the ward, who diligently assisted in community mobilisation throughout the research process.
5.3. Research Training as Capacity Building

Capacity buildings is very much a buzz word in the fields of CBPAR and, more widely, in community development practice. Cycle One involved training a CBPAR team and taking steps to increase access to the community contributors, as discussed in Chapter Three. The different points of access were detailed, and visually depicted, in a previous section of this chapter. The focus of this section is to review the steps taken to prepare a research team for fieldwork (accessing participants and documenting the experiences they share). The training produced valuable learning opportunities and insights into formulating our local research team. Capacity building regarding the development of PANGO volunteers’ research skills, who were active in Mwakirunge on a regular basis, created a space to discuss issues affecting community members, using a more critical lens. Israel et al., (2010) distinguished capacity building as a core principle of working with communities, as it ensures mutual benefit for all partners; especially, those in community-academic partnerships where the research should balance with action that produces benefits to the community. Having to decide who advanced through this capacity building proved a difficult step to navigate.

Healy (2001) asserted that capacity building is one of a few examples where CBPAR involves “. . . finding the most appropriate participatory ways to convince the ‘uneducated’ of the merits of our own educated convictions” (p. 98). Does the need for capacity building assume the absence of capacity, or, as Janes (2016) suggested, make assumptions that the community is somehow lacking “… the right capacity?” (p. 78). The answers to these questions were clear: research skills were required to undertake this project in a meaningful and ethical way. However, this could not occur without local knowledge experts to help me traverse the cultural norms, practices, and behaviours that became an essential element to fostering relationships within the research community. Thus, the ‘right capacity’ was lacking on both sides, making the relationship between myself, as principal researcher, and the research team members mutually advantageous. Learning research skills enabled training participants to assert their voices, share their local knowledge of the community, and, in the case of research team members, to take responsibility over direction of the project. The research team noted a sense of co-ownership over the ‘Creating Conversations’ project as well as their role, in regard to uncovering the necessary steps to implement sustainable processes for change.
5.4. Research Training

The community-based qualitative research skills training was the first significant amount of time I spent getting to know those who would, eventually, become core members of the research team for this study. Before commencing the research training, PANGO’s Chief Programme Officer formally welcomed Dr Kiragu-Kanayo and me. We welcomed the participants, immediately fostering a collaborative environment by encouraging introductions that included what they hoped to gain from participation in training, and an exciting personal fact about themselves. Dr Susan Kiragu-Kanayo introduced her background in research with young people across Africa, and Kenya, in particular, as well as the content to be covered across the three-day intensive training sessions and her rules for participation.

I communicated my research interests and intentions for wanting to work with community members; to shape safe spaces for sex-talk in Mwakirunge by partnering with PANGO. I shared facts I reviewed in the literature about the state of sex-related issues in Coast communities which aligned with some of the concerns communicated to PANGO during their assessment of community needs within Mwakirunge. I attempted to illustrate how academic literature conceptualises these communities and the need for additional community voice to bring more in-depth understanding and change to these representations. Since several of the training participants, who volunteered on behaviour change campaigns, were born, or raised in the ward, the group acknowledged sex-related issues as problematic and, thus, required deeper involvement from young people during the change process.

In each session, participants were encouraged to share their ideas and help lead exercises alongside Dr Kiragu-Kanayo, who facilitated the sessions. They volunteered for role play exercises to practise new research skills, and, in small groups, designed question guides, conducted interviews, and practised transcription. Each day of the training was less structured than the day before. This allowed participants to drive the process and feel empowered by it. Dr Kiragu-Kanayo and I ensured core concepts to CBPAR were explored through practical elements, such as practising active listening skills during mock interviews. By the third day of training, after completing homework of taking photos in their communities, participants presented the data they collected, analysed the photographs, and constructed narratives around key themes arising in their communities. In addition, the skills of moderating, translating, and observational note taking were refined in simulated baraza sessions.
A research training participant feedback form was issued at the end of the last day. It consisted of nine components which rated their experiences from strongly agree to strongly disagree. Additionally, the forms included six short answer questions where participants were encouraged to elaborate on their overall experience. From the thematic analysis of this feedback, two key insights emerged:

1) Embodied Empowerment

2) Appreciation for Research Processes

These insights confirmed that the training fostered valuable skills and was, overall, a positive experience. Participant feedback is integrated in this section to explain these insights in more detail.

**Embodied Empowerment.** All research training participants confirmed their involvement in the training as both positive and beneficial. Armed with new knowledge, tools to use the information, and a variety of ideas for points of interest in their own communities where research might be of value when trying to improve both SHL and other problematic circumstances, participants reflected on the training as an empowering experience. There was a collective assertion that participating in training strengthened critical thinking skills, confidence in ability, and interest in research, in general:

The most helpful things I learned today were how to appreciate the fact that a story, the stories of our community members, could be interpreted in so many ways. We need to start looking at the programs we run in the community to know if we are seeing all the different perspectives. I have learned to appreciate research as a complex process. (Research training participant, feedback form 5, 19)

It was interesting seeing how everyone blended in very well with our conversation even though we had very different career backgrounds and aspirations. The fact that participants were active in listening and sharing ideas was really good . . . Role-plays was a very practical way of laying out what we understood from the theory she gave us. To me, I felt that it was not all about practice but letting us appreciate our own ideas without being led through it. It improved my confidence and I started thinking beyond the box. (Kay, researcher journal, 26)

One of the most interesting things I learnt was coding and analysis. The ability to extract themes to make an entire research flow (create a story) was invaluable. (Research training participant, feedback form 1, 22)

The information and skills required for a community research approach were well elaborated on by the facilitator. (Research training participant, feedback form 2, 21)

It is so amazing that now I am able to stand still and conduct a research based on the community. (Research training participant, feedback form 3, 25)

The most helpful things I learned were transcription and analysing of data to be able to come up with a report of the research (based on homework in the second session). (Research training participant, feedback form 4, 23)
Participants, unanimously, requested for the sessions to be extended an additional week, but agreed that the training provided them with the capacity to begin working on their community action research projects.

**Appreciation for Research Processes.** Capacity building continued with selected members-who comprised our research team- for the weeks leading up to, and during, data collection. They participated in workshops on the following topics: a) how to conduct a literature review; b) self-confidence building; c) interviewing skills; d) practising reflection; e) and fostering partnerships to refine the newly acquired skills. Some of the research team members, and other training participants, were particularly fascinated with three aspects of the research process: 1) conducting a literature review search; 2) interview and observation skills; and 3) fostering partnerships/relationships. The quotes, presented in Table 5, explore participants’ thoughts on these three processes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Processes</th>
<th>Feedback Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Conducting a literature review search</td>
<td>Literature review can be very exhausting . . . no, it is!! Just when you think Google Scholar has or should have the answers for everything you type in, only then do you begin to appreciate dialogues in research (excerpts from transcript data) when you get adequate information. Some articles make you wonder whether research was really done or if someone just typed up their own ideas!!! (Research training participant, feedback form 12, 23)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interviewing and observation skills</td>
<td>Researchers should act like flies on the wall . . . even when we are not talking, we must be observing and taking note of what is going on. (Research training participant, feedback form 14, 25)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fostering partnerships/relationships</td>
<td>As always, we discuss the research together with the team and share personal feelings and remarks. I enjoy this part of our meetings, because then you do see and understand how people feel about the whole research (process). (Kay, researcher journal, 26)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5: Research training participant opinions on research process

These workshops highlighted the appreciation gained for different processes within research (e.g., conducting a literature review), the importance of being thorough and transparent when
communicating research results in writing, ways to foster stronger interpersonal relationships, as well as the incredible amount of effort required to ensure research project processes function like a well-oiled engine. Using their newly acquired skills, members of the research team took the lead in facilitating FGs and mabaraza. I occupied a supporting role setting up and greeting community contributors, recording equipment, and prompting ideas for questions when the team member translating explained an aspect of dialogue that necessitated further expansion. As Hacker (2013) noted, the research team proved invaluable in helping to understand the social and cultural contexts through which to interpret the meaning of data.

5.5. Local Knowledge Experts as Ready-Made Researchers

At the point of including the research team during Cycle One, the ‘Creating Conversations’ project was the epitome of the messiness attached to descriptions of CBPAR in the texts I had read to prepare myself before arriving in country. Despite the organised chaos connected to ensuring procedures were followed, the research team members were full of hopeful energy fostering the relationships that we were building with community members and each other. This enthusiasm spilled over into our team meetings where we began imagining the possibilities for change. Access and entry, despite the challenges faced initially, involved necessary protocols. This ensured ethical guidelines were adhered to during each cycle of the project and appropriate gatekeepers could hold our research team accountable to the agreements set out for working with community contributors from the ward.

Capacity building through research training was a powerful experience for myself and the research training participants alike. Dr Kiragu-Kanayo was able to translate knowledge into practice context by locating the complexity attached to research terminology and processes within Kenyan methalis—her first-hand accounts of conducting research locally—and an in-depth understanding of the SHL of Kenya. Each day of the training reinforced the idea ‘that we all have the capacity to be researchers in our own lives’. To drive this point home, the research training encouraged participants to remember that when we begin questioning how the world around us is being shaped, we become critically aware of both the injustices and beauty in its structures; we arrive at a space where better informed decisions can be made. While not all 18 participants from PANGO collected and analysed data for this research, acquiring these new skills encouraged future accountability. That is, to understand and question the necessity and viability of projects when engaging in upcoming plans with external organisations.
During **Cycle Two**, the skills and knowledge gained were necessary for our new local research team to begin gathering preliminary data to better understand the state of sex-related issues in Mwakirunge. Research skills are particularly valuable in a local NGO setting, such as PANGO, where external funders often initiate and guide the direction of projects to be carried out by NGO volunteers. Having the skills to assess if new project goals match up with the needs and wants of the community is vital in ensuring sustainability of future programmes. The first application of these new skills occurred in the next cycle. The research team collected data through a series of photo-journal interviews with young people and in FGs which included out-of-school youths, teachers, parents, PANGO volunteers, and elders from the community. Analysis of the themes that emerged from the first cycle of data collection (**Cycle Two**) were explored in-depth and are presented in the following chapter.
Chapter 6. Cycle Two: Working with Community Contributors

6.1. Process for Documenting Community Identified Sex-Related Issues

Sexual innocence is not the domain of young children but that which is wished upon them by some parents and other adults. (Kiragu, 2013, p.568)

In the previous chapter, Cycle One was discussed, which involved gaining approval to access different stakeholder groups in the community and training a local research team. The focus of this chapter is Cycle Two, as highlighted in Figure 8. This chapter evidences the research team interpretations of data from photo-journals, interviews, and FGs which were described in Chapter Three.

Figure 8: Cycle two: Working with community contributors

My account of these stories represents what Spivak (2013) would denote as a process of cultural translational—a multi-vocal presentation of conversations shared between myself, members of the research team, and community contributors—in Cycle Two of this study. To balance the power inherent in these lines of relating, adults and young people engaged separately with the research team to avoid the cultural taboo of discussing sex-related issues in front of elders.
without an invitation to do so. For both groups, this enabled a safe sharing space to identify sex-related issues most relevant to their experiences. The data analysed and presented here provided a strong foundation for our team to begin designing intergenerational sex-talk spaces. Our findings are indicators of how young people and adults communicate about sex separately and together, as well as how they are exposed to sexual content.

In Chapter Two, **Cycle Two** was described as the stage in the research where our team sought to gain a better understanding of sex-related issues, in the community context, in order to determine a starting point for initiating difficult conversations and adapting mabaraza for intergenerational sex-talk. To this end, data were gathered with both adults, out-of-school youths, young people from secondary school, and NGO workers. Due to the nature of varying power relations as a result of age, community position, and experience, our team predicted that, when in larger group contexts (i.e., mabaraza), the agency and voices of young people might remain more suppressed than we would hope. This assumption was accurate and resulted in a design whereby youths could use an alternate medium for expression which did not rely on direct verbal communication. This chapter will largely focus on young people’s stories that, eventually, became the springboard for initiating intergenerational sex-talk in mabaraza—**Cycle Three**, as will be detailed further in Chapter Seven.

In an effort to gather preliminary data to assess how best we could shape the baraza space, our team collected narratives through community-engaged discussions in photo-journal interviews and FGs. This entailed working with young people and adults, separately, to answer research questions which, in turn, allowed us to collect data on how learning and experiences of sex-related information transpired for both groups. In FGs with a variety of adult contributors in attendance, discussions addressed the approachability of adults, where they believed young people learn about sex, and how they believed sex education could be better taught. Adults were asked whether or not they had personally engaged in an intergenerational sex-talk. Adding to this, our research team welcomed contributors’ visions for optimal forms of sex education in the community. Finally, our research team shared Kenyan sex-related studies and statistics, concerning rates of adolescent pregnancy, early sexual debut, and venereal diseases among other topics to spark deeper conversations in the focus group settings. Adults were invited to share their thoughts on these findings, in regard to improving health outcomes, their own experiences or knowledge of sex-related content, as well as recommendations for negotiating conversations with young people in the future.
Youth contributors detailed their experiences and learning through capturing photos around their community and in sharing their narratives during photo-journal interviews. Young people also participated in co-gendered FGs. These sessions helped map out where young people in the community obtained or interacted with sex-related ideas, the types of messages they received, how they interpreted these messages, and their visions of sex-related education for their community in the future.

All of these activities provided a more detailed account of how sex is, or is not, spoken about in the community and the trickle-down effects it has on other issues, such as body agency, poverty, and gender and civic rights. Through our discussions, young people and adults identified silence, moralising educative practices, early exposure, lack of basic sexual health knowledge or understanding, and the need for an intergenerational space to talk, as pressing issues affecting young people and their families in Mwakirunge. Four key themes emerged during this cycle of data collection:

- “You Cannot Eat a Sweet with Its Paper”: Youth Conceptualisations of Sexual Health Knowledge and Practices
- Exposure Settings
- Sex as Currency
- Community Voices

These themes, and their sub-themes, are defined and unpacked in this chapter. It is important to note that themes are not mutually exclusive; rather, they are interwoven within the narratives of youths and adults to explain their experiences of sexual health information and discussion around related topics.

The young people’s experiences, summarised in this chapter, were extremely hard to write. At times, it was difficult to remove my social justice hat and resist the urge to pick up the phone to call the head programme officers of every NGO, operating in the area, for a candid conversation about their performance. I was constantly caught between trying to dissociate my privileged experience of growing up in a context where sex-related issues were still present—however, the contributing factors to the problem, as well as the solutions, were starkly different—and the rational space where I knew I had a specific role to uphold in the project dynamic. It was difficult
to avoid comparisons between successful sex-related interventions in the Global North context versus those that were lacking in Mwakirunge. Stuck in this paradoxical space, sharing the representations of young people’s experiences, as they were conveyed to our team, was an arduous task. In reading these accounts, there may be a sense that I have tried to shield the reader from the outrageousness and urgency, in terms of the vulnerability that confronts all the young people in the community, including those who did not actively take part in this research. This is the tension I had to navigate. An aim of the project was to strengthen young people’s agency and voice. Hence, I did not wish to subdue those elements by framing youths who participated in this research as “poor vulnerable young people”, as it would not reflect how they conveyed their positions to me. Nevertheless, it is important to acknowledge that these young people live within a milieu which may be regarded as victimising, depending on a person’s standpoint or lens through which the view such contextual problems. As flagrant as realities of young people are presented in this chapter, it is their norm. However, this is not to assume young people and all members of the larger community cannot imagine a scenario where the SHL might be improved; but it is imperative to acknowledge that a certain level of desensitisation, with regard to sex-related exposure, exists. Young peoples’ experiences of sexual learning and exposure, and adults’ opinions of them, are the focus of the remainder of this chapter.

6.2. Theme One: “You Cannot Eat a Sweet with Its Paper” —Young People’s Conceptualisations of Sexual Knowledge and Practices

I chose “You Cannot Eat a Sweet with Its Paper” as the title of the first theme emerging from the data because it represented both dangerous and deficit sexual knowledge understood by the youth participant group. The quote came from a young person trying to describe how one cannot have sex with a condom and experience pleasure simultaneously. Understanding young people’s conceptualisations of sexual health information is extremely important as a base for any plan to shape safe spaces for sex-talk and augmenting sexual reproductive health programmes for young people (Embleton et al., 2016). A variety of factors influenced how young people conceptualised these ideas. The first was lack of practical understanding of basic sexual knowledge. The second factor, the way in which sexual information was delivered and from whom, enhanced this lack of understanding. This was often in the form of moralising sex education via different routes (e.g., parents or teachers). In addition, judgements of character were often made based on morality and influenced by socialised gender roles. Each of these factors was alluded to in the collection of discussions our team had with young people in the community.
To better understand young people’s conceptualisations of sexual knowledge and practices, the stories shared are grouped in the following two sub-themes: 1) Views on risk-taking behaviours; and, 2) Sex, love, and morality. These themes vividly demonstrate that young people have more exposure to sex than most would assume, which is consistent with results from other studies across Kenya (Cobbett et al., 2013; Mclaughlin et al., 2012; 2015; Wanyonyi, 2014). The extent to how often this knowledge was factually inaccurate indicated a strong need for increased levels of holistic and dedicated sexual education of young people in these communities. In exploring each of these themes, we hoped to support a platform for young people to share their experiences and voices on how they know, and come to understand, sex-related issues. In specific instances, adult perspectives are placed alongside those of young people to demonstrate the contrasts and similarities in beliefs surrounding sex-related issues in their communities.

### 6.2.1 Views on Risky Sexual Behaviours

Findings indicate conflicted ideas between what young people have been taught or believe and accurate health information. In several instances, the knowledge young people displayed about sex was erroneous—the best examples of misinformation and misunderstanding were noted in contraception discussions. In addition, young people from the community, who participated in this study, conceptualised health knowledge in terms of risks to their bodies, their partners, or those who chose to engage in sexual acts. Data from the photo-journals and interviews are integrated here. As stated in Chapter Four, 23 young people created photo-journals. However, due to time constraints, only 18 (nine girls, nine boys) were able to complete the photo-journal interview. Young people’s assumptions about risks and contraceptive use are storied under the following two sub-themes and discussed in the succeeding sub-sections: 1) Misunderstandings of sex-related risks and knowledge; and, 2) Views and understandings on using contraceptives. Together, young people’s conceptualisations of sexual knowledge and practices represent the intersectionalities between normalised social behaviours, socialised gender roles, stigma, vulnerability and sexual risk-taking knowledge, behaviours, and attitudes perpetuated by the silent spaces in which they are formed.

#### 6.2.1.1 Misunderstanding of Sex-Related Risks and Knowledge

This sub-theme relates to the sexual misinformation that young people shared during our interactions. Discussion of inaccurate sexual health information directly related to dangers
associated with sex. Thus, fear became a common way to interpret ideas about sex-related knowledge and practices. In reviewing the data collected with youths, it was evident that they conceptualised ideas about sex in an increasingly negative way because of how they received information or experienced learning. The verbal descriptors used by young people and adults, to convey their understandings and experiences, suggested there was a negative discourse about sexual topics in the community. The words and phrases used during data collection, when youths and adults talked to our team about sex, are shown in Table 6, to illustrate the negative undertones, present in conversations about sex. The descriptors are listed in order as they appeared in the data.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Young Peoples’ Descriptors of Sex</th>
<th>Adults’ Descriptors of Sex</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Addiction</td>
<td>Activity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prostitute</td>
<td>Bad situations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pregnancy</td>
<td>Worldly Pleasure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activity</td>
<td>Taboo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bad habit</td>
<td>“Carrying out evils”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Danger</td>
<td>Earthly Pleasure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Infected</td>
<td>Irresponsible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“The Thing”</td>
<td>Evils</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dirty</td>
<td>Menace</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disease</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fornication</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Leads to a bad life”</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Shameful</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sickness</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Sin</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Stupid things”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taboo</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unclean</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Cheap</td>
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<td>Vulgar</td>
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</table>

Table 6: Young peoples’ and adults’ descriptors of sex

The descriptors listed above reiterate findings from other studies across SSA, indicating a moralising discourse around talking, teaching, and learning about sex-related information (McLaughling et al., 2012). Scholars such as Germain (as cited in Muturi, 2005), Leclerc-Madlala (2001), and Ahlberg et al. (2001), who have explored the “culture of silence” associated with sex, stressed that this silence is perpetuated by the fears generated through negative ways of representing sex in conversation. They posit that this culture of silence prevents meaningful understandings of context and creates obstacles to sustainable change. Throughout the data, there were limited examples that demonstrated conversations surrounding sex were approached in
positive ways (however, positive, and accurate framing of knowledge on condoms is explored in a later sub-section of this theme). Young people used each of the descriptors when conveying their understandings of engaging in sexual acts, having discussions about the activity, referring to someone who has already had sex, or when explaining how adults or teachers teach about sex-related topics. Adults in FGs used the descriptors noted in Table 6. when they described talking to young people about sex-related issues, warning youth against engaging in early sex, and when referring to the topic in a conversational setting, such as the focus group. The terms used by adults had an overly negative connotation, which helped explain the reasons why young people perceived sex as an evil vice or did not wish to ask their parents questions about sex. These descriptors bring fear and, in turn, branding of peers who have already—whether by choice, force, or exploitation—engaged in situations involving sex. Sex represented through a negative discourse contributed to the silence surrounding such discussions.

Inability to control feelings was viewed as a precursor to engaging in risky-sexual behaviours. In terms of remaining virgins until they married, many of the boys in FGs and photo-journal interviews indicated that this would be impossible, due to being unable to control their urges or ‘high feelings’. This was shown through Erik’s statement in his photo-journal interview:

A boy cannot remain a virgin because if they hear their friends are doing sexual intercourse they will also feel like doing it (Erik, age 17, photo-journal interview)

Girls agreed that this was the case:

If the boy has sex once, he will be addicted to sex (Flame, age 16, photo-journal interview)

However, the students noted that girls, too, were unable to control their feelings, in certain situations. In discussing going on a date as being risky, Abigale stated:

When a boy touches or kisses you, you may end having the feelings and doing things you never wanted to do because when a boy touches and kisses you it can lead to sex. Maybe you are a virgin and were keeping it for your husband. Now it will be odd when you will be like that you know [referring to the first time a girl has sex with a husband] (Abigale, age 16, photo-journal interview)

Similarly, Flame felt having sex, even once, would be a downward spiral into the poverty cycle:

Going on a date in adolescence is wrong because their feelings will be high pressure. . . I might get addicted to sex and become pregnant, drop out of school, and maybe forced to marry (Flame, age 16, photo-journal interview)

Other accounts shared by young people reflected these feelings of how engaging in sex posed a risk to failing out of school.
Young people noted that they often shared information and experiences between friends, subsequently exacerbating the problem of sharing inaccurate health information, which can lead to uninformed and, potentially, unsafe sexual risk-taking behaviours. In our focus group with young people, one student asked the question “What is the effect of condoms?” and another student chimed in to provide the answer:

Can I answer you please? The effects of the condoms are to me, that I know, the condom normally contains certain oils, which can stay in the stomach. It can infect the stomach. That’s why when you see some women with the big stomach, then it means they like using condoms. That’s why their stomach is very big. That is the oil, which is sticking there, under here [points to the vagina] (Bas, age 16, co-gender youth focus group)

This answer indicates misunderstanding around the biological structure of the human body, the materials used in the creation of condoms, as well as the physical effects that condoms can have on the body. Where some young people shared an accurate piece of information related to risk-taking behaviours, it was, typically, followed by an inaccurate statement, as demonstrated in a conversation with this student:

Yes, I understand the risks of having sex at a young age because it can lead to early pregnancies, STIs or becoming HIV-positive (Bunsen Burner, age 16, photo-journal interview)

Evidencing that she had some knowledge of the risks, this discussion was followed by a question about whether or not people should use condoms, as protection from those risks. The student responded:

No. Condoms can create a stomach disease and they attract bad manners. Better for a girl and boy to wait instead of doing sex all the time (Bunsen Burner, age 16, photo-journal interview)

Other risks reported by students concerned those associated with contracting diseases. The following responses are three of several which demonstrated how young people’s perceptions of risk were often associated with disease or infection:

There are risks of having sex at a young age because one can get a disease like cancer (Respecter, age 19, photo-journal interview)
If you sleep with a girlfriend you may end up getting diseases such as STIs and regret (Lion, age 16, photo-journal interview)
There are no shortcuts. If you are having sex and you are using those preventions, there are still those diseases you cannot prevent (Fenwick, age 16, photo-journal interview)

These responses initiated the need to have a conversation about contraceptives in order to explore the extent of young people’s knowledge. Before explaining the meaning of contraception and the different types available, in a co-gender focus group setting, young people were asked to share some of the forms of protection they were aware of and how each worked. Out of the 18 students
present, and despite their recognition of the condom in pictures throughout a presentation during our FGs, only one student expressed knowing other forms of contraception. This might indicate a lack of general understanding around the word, which many students acknowledged freely:

**Researcher:** It is mainly the women’s responsibility to ensure that contraception is used regularly?
**Cool Girl:** Not sure because I do not know what it means.

When the Kiswahili alternative “Je mnaelewa mbinu za kupanga uzazi?” [“I understand how to use contraceptives?”] was used, some students nodded their heads, acknowledging understanding of the term. We noted that several international development organisations—which implement short-term educational projects in Kenya—do so in English and employ translators where Kiswahili might be the most common language used in a particular community. However, some terminology does not always translate easily in the local language, making it easy for misinterpretation to occur. This, in turn, may create disparities in comprehensive understanding of important health concepts. Thus, it is important to discuss community-relevant topics before designing programme materials.\(^5\) In a further discussion, young people revealed they knew a limited amount of information about alternative forms of contraception to the condom. After a female student described the morning after pill, as the only form of contraception of which she was aware, other students acknowledged that they had been exposed to the idea.

**Bibito:** I think as to me contraception is, contraception is the, are such medicine. For example, you have slept with a boy as a girl, as young as I am, you go to a chemist you buy those [makes hand gestures], I know some other name to call it [using her hands to demonstrate what it looks like], you go to chemists and can take a small thing, so that you do not conceive. That’s what I understand about contraception.
**Researcher:** Okay. So, pills that you take [making small circular hand gestures]?
**Bibito:** Yes, yes!
**Researcher:** … after you have sex?
**Bibito:** Yes!

When the focus group was questioned on whether they had also heard of the morning after pill, as a method of contraception, 12 out of 18 young people nodded their heads in agreement. It is important to note that this agreement could be a result of the unequal power between myself, as the adult, as well as researcher, and the young people. Thus, despite young people mentioning condoms throughout interviews, youths demonstrated a lack of knowledge around what constitutes viable or safe forms of contraception. In addition, across the 18-young people who participated in the photo-journal interviews, their knowledge surrounding sex—despite a few

\(^5\) This is a finding that requires further exploration as it involves issues that relate to cross-examination of material delivered by other organisations and issues of translation, which are beyond the scope of this study.
accurate statements about the condom (e.g., a protective measure)—other contradictory responses indicated a large disparity in knowledge. For example, in the co-gender focus group, only one of 18 could accurately define the purpose of a condom. Regardless of having seen condoms in real life or understanding that they can be used during sexual acts, only three out of the total students who took part in the photo-journal interviews, and only two students in the co-gender focus group, were confident in their abilities to use a condom.

In interpreting and understanding risks associated with sex at a young age, and practicing safer sexual behaviours (e.g., using a condom, ensuring all parties are consensual), a myriad of unfounded risks surfaced. Young people noted factors such as contracting cancer, condoms preventing pregnancy (but not STDs or HIV/AIDS), and condoms being lined with pig oils—which violate religious beliefs—and using force to engage in sex in order to convey love, as some of the risks related to engaging in sex. It is clear that these youths had a wide range of conceptions surrounding the risks associated with sex, all of which are, inherently, negative. The negative, positive, and mixed views and understandings, on using contraceptives conveyed by young people, are explored further in the next section.

6.2.1.2 Views and Understandings on Using Contraceptives

Young people in the community conceptualised the purchase and use of condoms through the lens of judgement. The experiences, opinions, and understandings young people—especially those across the African continent—have related to sex, in terms of contraceptives (particularly condoms) has been well documented, both quantitatively and qualitatively (Bauni & Jarabi, 2000; Erulkar, Ettyang, Onoka, Nyagah, & Muyonga, 2004; Muturi, 2005). These studies evidence that condom usage is perceived as embarrassing. Most times, ideas around using condoms are not in line with religious values or are associated with social deviance of the young person buying or using the contraceptives. These studies suggest a cultural resistance to condom use; ideas which are echoed in the stories to follow. In this section, each young person’s account touches on the negative, mixed, and positive views, and understandings associated with using contraceptives. This sub-theme refers to judgements made about the character of those purchasing or using condoms. Negative, positive, and mixed portrayals of condoms and their use will be presented in this sub-theme.
Negative views and understandings of contraceptives. Young people described using contraceptives as bad, harmful, and dangerous. “Disagree. It is not good to use condoms”, Fenwick said, firmly, during her photo-journal interview, when asked her thoughts on the use of condoms while in a relationship. Our team would come to find that many of the youths shared this notion, as an overly negative view on contraceptive use was present in the experiences they shared. Potentially harmful effects of using the condom were described by a few students in their photo-journal interviews:

No, do not use condoms because they can cause some effects on the uterus, the part where the baby is kept (Bunsen Burner, age 16, photo-journal interview)

This evidenced the perceived damage to reproductive organs through condom usage. Another student claimed using condoms was pointless because, even if you did, you could still end up getting a disease:

Sometimes you can use condoms but you can end up getting diseases. I don’t think it is the right option to take (Abigale, age 16, photo-journal interview)

While Abigale’s statement was accurate, in terms of condoms not being 100% effective, as protection against disease, she still viewed their usage in a negative light, evidencing that she was afraid but not why. The use of condoms was also negatively associated with a lack of trust in a relationship, as shown in the following quotes:

You can’t use the condom when you love and trust your partner when you’re having sex (Respecter, age 19, photo-journal interview)
If she asks you to wear a condom that girl doesn’t trust you (Mflame, age 16, photo-journal interview)
I agree. If a girl asks him to wear the condom she does not trust the man because she thinks he has more girls than her (Erik, age 17, photo-journal interview)

When students elaborated on these responses, they usually linked trust to marriage. It was viewed as a sign of mistrust to use family planning within a marriage, where many young people communicated that an individual will have children when God allows. These beliefs intersect with ideas detailed further in the next sub-section of this theme.

Positive views and understandings of contraceptives. Those young people who portrayed using condoms in a positive light, usually referenced its value as a protective method against pregnancy or STDs. As Flame noted in her photo-journal interview “When you have sex without a condom you will not prevent anything”. Several young people expanded on what would be prevented in utilising the condom:
For example, if you have a girlfriend and you want to have sex with her and you don’t want her to be pregnant, you have to use a condom (Lion, age 16, photo-journal interview).

Other young people referred to condoms as a “barrier against HIV” or a “method of family planning”. Those who portrayed condoms in a mixed light framed the idea of buying a condom as being a normal act to protect oneself, but also something that should only be spoken about between partners. This example highlights the taboo nature of talking about sex openly in this community:

Buying a condom is not shameful. It is a secret between you and your partner (Flame, age 16, photo-journal interview).

In the majority of spaces, the paradoxical nature of understanding the need for condoms as protection, but not wanting to defy cultural values, contributes to silence around the issue.

Mixed views and understandings of contraceptives. Mixed understandings around the ways in which condoms could act as protection were presented:

Condoms can prevent pregnancy but cannot prevent getting disease like Syphilis, Herpes, and HIV (Cactus, age 16, photo-journal interview)

While parts of this statement are accurate, when probed further the student could not explain his full understanding around the role of condoms in preventing STDs and viral transmissions that can cause disease, but still maintained that condoms have benefits while lacking other capabilities. The research team noted that in several cases when discussing using contraceptives with youths, they would employ nervous laughter and avoid answering any direct question, would answer quickly with a negative portrayal, or explicitly and firmly state they did not know the answer because they do not use condoms. Their responses indicated that certain negative narratives exist around using contraceptive especially at their ages. Where it was the case that some young people genuinely had no answer for the question, others may have avoided or portrayed contraceptives negatively since their views and understandings could be perceived as reflective of their identities. Thus, to avoid judgement they subscribed to social norms related to contraceptives.

6.2.2 Sex, Love, and Morality

Sex education discussions in Kenya—and more broadly, all of East Africa—are often framed within moralising discourses (Coults, 2017). Judgemental and moralising sex education was a recurring theme in young people’s stories of experience and exposure to sex-related ideas in
Similar to other literature (Jolly, 2007; Mizzi, 2008; Philpott, Knerr, & Boydell, 2006), often the idea of the “pleasure” or “desire” aspect of sex, in sex-related educational activities and discussions with young people, was removed. For example, the majority of students (12) who participated in the photo-journal interviews believed that you should be in love with a partner before having sex with them (four were unsure and one disagreed). Instead, young people’s ways of talking about sex were, usually, in relation to biology, culture, religion, or in upholding good moral character, as in this example, which focuses on the need to be married before it is morally right for partners to have sex:

Nowadays we have a lot of diseases like HIV. So, if they sleep together they can . . . maybe they don’t know each other, who is infected with HIV or what. No, you should not have sex until you go to the doctor [to know yourself] agree, and then they can marry each other (Kangaroo, age 15, co-gender youth focus group)

Kangaroo’s quote suggested that she only perceived having sex as a good thing, if it was inside a marriage. The tendency to discuss sex, within the context of biological factors, or steady, long-lasting relationships was not always representative of how young people were exposed to sex-related ideas in this community (as discussed in the later sections of this chapter). This discourse contributed to both the growing number of questions young people had, in relation to sex, and, also, the judgement they believed would occur, if they posed sex-related questions to adults. The intersection of ideas of love, sex, and morality are present in the following two sub-sections of this theme: 1) Socialised gender roles and heteronormativity; and, 2) Ruined bodies.

### 6.2.2.1 Socialised Gender Roles and Heteronormativity

The topics explored in this sub-section evidence the lack of knowledge about gender rights and body agency, which, whether passed on from elders or a commonplace ideology in the community, may perpetuate unhealthy sexual behaviours. Data from the photo-journal interviews suggested gender inequalities were present in our conversations with both youth and adults from the communities, and specific ideas about what constituted a normal gendered role were presented. What young people perceived to be normalised gender roles became apparent, when

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6 Gender inequalities, in relation to sex in East African communities, are vastly explored in the literature with similar findings evidencing the impact of gender-related factors on young peoples’ and adults’ conceptualisations or exposures to sex-related ideas and experiences (Adamczyk & Greif, 2011; Jolly, 2010; Milligan, 2014; Namasivayam et al., 2012; Njue, Voeten, Allhberg, 2011; Sia et al., 2013; and Wamoyi et al. 2011).
young people’s knowledge conflicted with their cultural values (e.g., sex as a goal for reproduction).

God’s plans are for people to multiply. So, when the women use those family planning methods they will be going against God’s commands (Flame, age 16, photo-journal interview)

Flame’s notion of ‘going against God’ suggested that use of family planning methods was abnormal and immoral. Challenges to normalised roles were also presented during conversations about same-sex couples:

No, because I can’t see how a man, I mean a gay, a man and a man having sex with each other will bring them any benefit because a girl and man can end up having a baby, but a girl and a girl they can’t (Abigale, age 16, photo-journal interview)

Another boy referenced biology as a reason for why intimate relationships have to be male-female:

A boy and a boy have the same organs and there will be no pregnancies (Mflame, age 16, photo-journal interview)

Youths conceptualisations of normalised relationships between men and women may have been socialised through established community norms, where any non-male-female relationship is considered immoral. This train of thought coincides with Kenyan laws that mark being openly homosexual, or practicing activities perceived to be homosexual, as illegal. These constitutional laws are remnants of British colonial penal codes but have been updated to illegalise same-sex marriages and are punishable with a fine or jail sentences spanning 7-14 years (Mucherah, Owino, & McCoy, 2016). Where Mflame presented his beliefs matter-of-factly and based on biological structures, the idea that relationships are only possible between males and females was conveyed elsewhere with passion and conviction. An NGO worker we interviewed elaborated on this idea:

These things [talks about sex] bring about confusion. For example, when we are asked to sign approval of gayism [sic], such a thing is very difficult to engage the community in decision-making that is a dream. And the African tradition does not allow that at all, and even in the religious holy books is not indicated somewhere that it is allowed . . . Anything that will be accepted and liked by the community members it has to be of benefit to them and not a downfall. There are programmes such as that which cannot be accepted and others like early marriage will cause some misunderstanding and they won’t agree on it because it is common practice. So, anything that is planned for the community it should involve the community members from the beginning and make the agreements together with them. But for example, you go to the community and start talking about gayism [sic] is when you will get to understand that this is not a Western (place) but Africa because it’s something that Africans hate. But our government and the other worldwide governments we don’t understand, because these people (gay people) are everywhere and we cannot do anything to them, but it is something that is so painful and I will never ever agree on it till I die. (Abdul, focus group with partner NGO volunteers)
The NGO volunteer had adopted an unwavering stance that intimate relationships could only morally exist, if they were heterosexual. Another youth connected these ideas to being wrong, according to her culture:

According to our culture, as Mijikenda, it’s not allowed for people of the same sex to have a relationship (Respecter, age, 19, photo-journal interview)

Taking such a firm stance aligns with social norms, as homosexuality remains, predominantly, hidden. This presents problematic positions and identity negotiations, for those persons in the community identifying as a member of the LGBTQ+ community. The intersection between religion, gender, culture, and morality highlights a difficult obstacle in trying to shape intergenerational processes for dialogues about sex; other issues that intersect across these lines (such as gender conflicted persons) may need to be discussed.

Ownership is a concept aligned with the socialised gender roles that young people conceptualised. Some girls and boys we interviewed felt it was, sometimes, necessary to force a girl to have sex with a boy, if, for example, spiritually, his soul admired the girl, she was already his wife, or if he was mad at her. It was also deemed justifiable, by some young people, for a boy to hit a girl, if he perceived her to be acting inappropriately with other males, if she was disobedient, or if he needed sex, as suggested by this young girl:

Sometimes I agree that a boy can hit a girl when he needs sex. Especially when a girl refuses only because she is on her menses (Respecter, age, 19, photo-journal interview)

This suggests ownership of the female body by her partner. Similar answers indicated such ownership once a couple was married, as shown through this response to whether it was, sometimes, justifiable for a boy to hit a girl:

No because the girl is not his wife but still his girlfriend (Bunsen Burner, age 16, photo-journal interview)

Some youth outwardly disagreed, giving statements such as this student:

It is NOT right because a woman was not born to be a drum (ChaCha, age 16, photo-journal interview)

The accounts presented, reflect how basic knowledge of gender rights, alongside knowledge of rights in sexual relationships, differed among the youth population. This indicates gender-rights is an important area to be addressed by community leaders and change makers. However, distinguishing the best arena in which to tackle these issues is difficult, as youth acquire sexual knowledge in a variety of spaces, which is illustrated further in later sections of this chapter.
6.2.2.2 Ruined Bodies

Ruined bodies emerged as a theme encompassing ideas related to those who endanger their own bodies or those whose bodies are spoiled through engaging in sexual acts. Often, the notion of being “ruined” was connected to judgement of a person as having bad morals. For example, during our photo-journal interviews, when discussing whether or not a young boy will respect a girl if she had sex with him, seven girls, and five boys out of the total 18 students, who completed the interviews, agreed there would be a lack of respect afterwards. This lack of respect was, usually, associated with a person without good character. One young girl’s reasoning for agreeing highlighted this belief:

The boy will not respect the girl. For example, if I go for an outing with my boyfriend or any other place, if it’s the first time, If I have sex with him, he will see me as being so cheap (Cool Girl, age 16, photo-journal interview)

In discussing this statement, Cool Girl focused on the damage to the young girl’s character while another student noted that both the boy and the girl had a role to play in spoiling their character:

When they have sex with one another they will not be role models to the other kids (Mflame, age 16, photo-journal interview)

This was one of several examples where young people mentioned stigma or immorality, attached to those persons engaging in sex-related acts. These moral stigmas, as explored in Chapter Two, contribute to silent spaces and perpetuate further questions about STDs by limiting people’s willingness to seek out deeper understanding of such topics (Carrasco, Arias, & Figueroa, 2017; Nyblade et al., 2003). Cool Girl explained further, if a girl finds out a boy has been tested and has an STI or disease, then she will immediately lose respect for him:

When they get tested and find they are positive, girls just refuse them because they are infected (Cool Girl, age 16, photo-journal interview)

This was the only example of how males could suffer carrying the stigma of “ruined bodies”, whereas female-reported experiences of being “ruined” were much more expansive. Misunderstandings between STDs and chronic diseases caused by viruses—such as HIV—generated stigma around bodies as a source of infection, or judgements of a person’s character. This form of social stigma causes people to associate those who engage in sex-related acts to groups, typically, framed as immoral (e.g., sex-workers, homosexuals, etc.), as was the case for the youth in this study (Carrasco, Arias, & Figueroa, 2017). In a discussion of her embarrassment, a young girl stated avoidance of social stigma as her reasoning for abstaining for purchasing condoms:
I would be too embarrassed to buy. Anywhere you go and buy those condoms, they, people like us, might see a girl like me with a condom. If they know I am not married, then they will start calling names like prostitute (Abigale, age 16, photo-journal interview)

Abigale also referenced her fear of experiencing social stigma, from giving in to peer pressure to have sex:

Boys when you don’t agree to have sex with them they will have hatred inside them. They will end up telling rumours to people that you are a prostitute and may end up saying bad, bad, things about you (Abigale, age 16, photo-journal interview)

Where Abigale was fearful of being judged, another student explained how he would judge a girl he was not married to for having sex with him:

When you have sex with her, you will not marry her because you know her inside out. There is nothing new (Mflame, age 16, photo-journal interview)

This suggested that if a young girl has sex before marriage—under any circumstance, such as by choice or rape—she is somehow less valuable. These conversations were followed by a statement about it being acceptable for boys and girls, who were in love with each other, to have sexual intercourse, so as to gauge if their perspectives changed once a committed relationship was present. Of the 18 students who took part in photo-journal interviews, 11 firmly disagreed, while three were undecided. One student posited:

No, is it NOT okay because the boy will ruin the girl (Kangaroo, age 15, co-gender youth focus group).

The responses that disagreed with this statement were formed through the intersectionality of the religious value of marriage, the cultural understanding that you should be married before having sex, and ideas about maintaining a moral identity. Conceptualising those bodies who have engaged in sexual acts is problematic for a number of reasons: it generates stigma around those who have already participated in such acts outside of marriage, even if they have taken safety precautions (e.g., used condoms); it silences those who have experienced sex through unjust acts, such as rape, for fear of being shamed; and, it creates guilt for those who feel an affiliation to cultural and religious values existing in the community, for not living up to the standards of good moral character.

6.3. Theme Two: Exposure Settings

In understanding the extent of young people’s sexual knowledge, it is crucial to recognise where these ideas come from. Throughout the analysis of photo-journal interviews, several key spaces were identified by young people as primary sources of knowledge related to sex. These were
juxtaposed against adult-perceived youth sources of sex-related knowledge from focus group data, which evidenced that young people are exposed to this information through more networks than adults originally assumed. Adult’s perceptions against youth-identified sources of sex-related knowledge are contained within the table below and listed in order of prominence in which the stories shared, with the most frequently stated first. Interestingly, both adults and young people noted exposure to sexual knowledge/content through a parental discussion setting as the least prevalent of all sources mentioned. Among the most popular spaces as noted by youth were guesthouses, peer-to-peer conversations, local video kiosks, cell phones, and food stalls.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Adult-Perceived Youths Sources of Sex-Related Knowledge</th>
<th>Youth-Identified Sources for Sex-Related Knowledge</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Entertainment spots (Discos)</td>
<td>Guesthouses</td>
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<tr>
<td>Television and radio</td>
<td>Gatherings/conversations with peers</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gatherings/conversations with peers</td>
<td>Video kiosks</td>
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<td>Siblings</td>
<td>Cell phones and internet</td>
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<td>Parents in home</td>
<td>The bushes</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Kibanda (Food Stalls)</td>
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<td>Discos</td>
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<td>Common pathways/walk ways</td>
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<td>School classrooms and courtyards</td>
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<td>Local Medical Clinics/Hospitals</td>
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<td>Local pubs</td>
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<td>Parents in home through discussion and engagement</td>
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Table 7: Adult-perceived versus youth-identified sources of sex-related knowledge

These exposure sites have been categorised under two broad sub-settings: 1) Communal Spaces and Gatherings, and 2) Domestic Dwellings, which will be unpacked further in the subsequent sections.

6.3.1 Communal Spaces and Gatherings

Several community spaces and gatherings were identified as formative to young people’s experience and understanding of sex in their community. Guesthouses were noted by most youth as a space where they might pass and witness a sexual act about to take place, or where they had heard stories from friends about their experience inside. One youth stated:

This place is where my friends do sex. This place is like a guesthouse. He does sex on a bed with more than one girl. He is affected by syphilis and still does this bad habit [sex]. (Kennedy, age 16, photo-journal interview)
Another youth captured a guesthouse and described the activities that take place there in further detail.

A guesthouse is a place where people who are visitors who have come from a certain place to get rest because they have nowhere to stay or sleep—sometimes in a private house. This is something that affects society. Some say the guesthouse is a place where people do sexual intercourse, so whenever someone gets in a guesthouse people say that they are going to do sex . . . that affects society and the children. (Superwoman, Age 14, photo-journal interview)

In elaborating on this photo description in the interview, Superwoman shared that children staying in these houses with their parents were often exposed to these activities by either being present in an adjacent room or outside playing and witnessing different people coming and going. Similar to a guest house, one youth captured a photo of a house to which one did not choose to go there to have sex, but where youth were taken and violated:
In this photo, there was a man who built this house and when he died a member of his family took it and rented it to some men. These men were drug traffickers, so a time came and the man decided to take some pupils including two girls and two boys and started (talking with them and asking them to come around). One day those drug traffickers decided to rape the girls . . . because when they come from school they walk in groups, so if a case like that happens, one of the pupils can report.

(Cactus, age 16, photo-journal interview)

Figure 11: House for drugs and rape (Cactus, 2015, March)

In contrast to exposure without choice, several young people mentioned sneaking into video kiosks to learn more about sex through watching pornographic films:

This is a place where people go and see some pictures . . . Like pornographic pictures. The person in charge of the place is DJ X. Some people go there to waste their time. They go there at 5:00 a.m. and stay there until night . . . When that picture is shown they go do an example to their girlfriends or show these actions to other people (Smart Boy, age 16, photo-journal interview)

Figure 12: Video kiosk (Smart Boy, 2015, March)
Smart Boy described in detail how youth would go to the back of the building, sit on the ground, and roll up the flaps of the structure to observe the film without being noticed. Similar views were shared in several of the young people’s photos and interviews:

This is a place where films are on different CDs that are normally shown there . . . let’s say there are big boys and there are girls. There are bad videos such as those for pornography played. Small children see those bad films of pornography then they normally have the mood to practise, to see whether it’s true or what (Lion, age 16, photo-journal interview)

After hearing this story, our research team was intrigued to know more about young people’s exposure to sex-related content through pornography. In one of our co-gender FGs with young people in school, I posed the question, “How many of you have viewed pornography?” While this garnered some laughs, one boy shyly said, “I have, madam, but only for five minutes”. I made it clear that I was not concerned if they had done it for five seconds, minutes, or hours, but asked them to raise their hands if they had viewed pornography at all and 13 of the 18 hands went up. Phones, kiosks, television, and Internet on computers were stated as access points for viewing pornography. Some students had clearly engaged in viewing more thoroughly as they recounted graphic details of the videos to myself and the group:

I have also watched another pornography. Madam, this question has been bothering me for months. Why when a girl and a boy are in the process of doing sex does she normally spills some sweetness? I mean she normally feels so much that the boy goes as far as telling the girl to urinate. Because the girl feels so much sweetness that she feels like urinating but she can’t urinate. What is that? (Bas, co-gender focus group with youth in school)

This was one of several graphic questions students openly acknowledged had been on their minds for a while that resulted from watching pornographic videos and was deemed as one of their only avenues for finding answers was discussing questions with their peers. Peer-to-peer conversation and education was the next site of exposure explored. Young people coming to greater awareness of sexual practices by being encouraged to engage in “the act” with friends were noted as instances where they could role-play what they witnessed from these videos.

Someone may be interested (romantically) in his or her friend. The friend may be having sex yet you do not. Your friend will insist you have sex and because he or she is your friend you won’t make him sad. You will agree (to have sex with them) and you will be addicted to it. At the end of the day he or she will get AIDS. (Bunsen Burner, age 16, photo-journal interview)

Learning through peers in this way was common. School classrooms and courtyards were also central to where youth acquired information about sex-related topics through their peers. Five of the females who participated in the photo-journal interviews discussed interactions in the school setting with female peers who had already begun exploring sexual practices or teenage mothers
as key informants to their sex-related knowledge. A youth contributor took the photo featured below during a discussion with her friend at school who was pregnant at the time (the image has been blurred to protect the student’s identity).

![Image of a pregnant youth sitting at her desk]

Figure 13: Early pregnancy (Flame, 2015, March)

I decided to take this photograph so that I can learn something from this girl and tell other girls about early marriage. She was in school when she sat on her desk, she can’t stay comfortable, at times she feels she is alone . . . when it is break time she is not comfortable. The other pupils don’t love her. The girl didn’t know the effects of early sex. If she did, she wouldn’t have engaged in sex and other girls learn about early pregnancy from her. This photo has advantages and disadvantages in that when you engage in sex while still in school you will learn more about the effects of sex and they want to know more about it. (Flame, age 16, photo-journal interview)

Flame detailed further the advantages and disadvantages highlighted in the original journal transcription during the interview. While engaging in early sex was seen as a benefit to improving sex-related knowledge, isolation from and sometimes stigmatisation by peers were noted as disadvantages.

The local medical clinic and dispensary was another exposure site described by youth as a place in the community where information could be acquired about sex. One youth stated:

Okay. The clinic relates to sex because the doctors at the clinic complain about the abortion of pregnancies. There are some students in this school; they sleep with a boy and they end up getting pregnant. They go there, at that clinic and abort their pregnancy. (Anto, age 14, photo-journal interview)
This conversation and photo evidence that youth are aware of facilities they could access if they wanted medical attention without understanding the gravity of a procedure such as an abortion (a convoluted issue with social, cultural, religious, and personal ramifications that youths may not fully grasp at this stage).

The connection to the land and nature in the rural surroundings were strong points of reference for the young people to discuss their understandings, exposure, and experience with sex. Nature is something that is so deeply embedded into the lives of these youths and adults, as they are a community of farmers as well as Mijikenda tribesmen. Mijikenda’s connections to lush forests surrounding their traditional spiritual abodes (Kayas) are key to their identities. Some young people used nature metaphors as a means of legitimising the taboo topics associated with sex. They normalised discussions around the topic by connecting it to examples from nature. Youth noted several open and natural spaces as exposure sites for learning and engaging in sex. They were as follows:

This coconut tree really spoiled some girls and boys because they normally come to waste their time doing some bad things, I mean sex. Forgetting that they are very young and also (having sex) may lead to some very bad diseases such as HIV/AIDS and early pregnancies. (Bunsen Burner, age 15, photo-journal)
Another youth discussed the bush, which surrounds the entire community, as a common site of exposure in terms of it being a space for practice:

A bush is the easiest and most local place around whereby girls and boys from the community involve themselves in several acts, knowing that nobody is seeing them (Mr Decimal, age 16, Photo-journal)

While Mr. Decimal was adamant that this was a secluded location to experiment, other youth noted that even young children could witness live sex in walking on common pathways through and around the bush. Paths for walking home were noted as space for exploitation and violation of their rights:

This path is a narrow way in which so many people use to pass through it. In this path, you see through this camera, it’s our nearby path which most of the students pass when they are going to school or even returning home. Most of the time there is a policeman who comes and pretends to
watch over the path, but he always comes for one mission, to come and lie to the students [bribing them] with sweets and money to have sex with him. Many people always say that this man is living with HIV and wants to transfer this disease to the students. (Antelope, age 17, photo-journal interview)

In this example, it is apparent that the very people hired to safeguard youths against exposure to multiple vulnerabilities become the ones enacting them. From these stories, a question arises: who watches these watchmen? Other young people also referenced the bush and common pathways as sites of exposure where risky sex without condoms, sexual game play, rape, and drug experimentation occur. These were also listed as common activities that occur during and after discos.

Disco is a place where people celebrate and enjoy themselves, while doing unclean things e.g., sex. During celebrating, people were finding the hidden places for doing sex . . . most people were mainly
carrying condoms to prevent them from transmitting HIV/AIDS. Because once you go there your mind is always on sex. (Kennedy, age 16, photo-journal)

This particular youth had more knowledge about the benefits of using a condom but still understood sex-related acts to be negative and addictive.

Other gathering spaces, including local pubs or spaces set up for consumption of alcohol, were also described as sites of exposure:

To be sincerely honest, this is a place where people go and drink alcohol. If they take the alcohol, their normal function of the body is affected. You will find a person there just does things that are funny, in front of ladies and gentlemen. They could do things that are not normal, like having sex in an open area. So, there are small children passing and they see those things. (Lion, age 16, photo-journal interview)

As evident from the few fragments of experiences documented here, there are a wide range of communal gathering spaces in which youth are exposed to sex-related content.

6.3.2 Domestic Dwellings

Family homes were discussed in passing as spaces where youth developed ideas about sex. One female student described learning about the “dangers” of condoms through a story she heard when staying in her father’s home in Malindi, a town north of Mombasa on Kenya’s coast:

Madam, the condom, it is the strangest story I have ever heard about it, at my father’s place in Malindi. There was a girl who used a condom, apparently the condom went inside the stomach. So, it took the girl to go to Coast General [the hospital] to be operated for the condom to be taken out. So, the condoms are not 100% because some of them have holes. If you do the force [group laughs] it busts. And if you do not [voice trails off and another begins speaking]. (Bibito, age 19, co-gender youth in school focus group)
In this case, Bibito described discussion in her father’s home as a realm for learning. Other youth described specific homes in the community as sites where they gained further knowledge about sex-related topics:

In this photograph, there is a small house and in that small house we can say that most of our villagers use it as a place where they can hide themselves when they are doing the activity (Maximum Boy, age 16, photo-journal interview)

This shared sexual space is a house youth described as a place where adults and youth alike, for a small fee, could rent and use the space for sex. The stories shared about this particular house and other domestic dwellings were indicative of community awareness in terms of prominence of such spaces and their subsequent activities, but also the silence attached. Silence around sex-related violence in domestic dwellings was an issue touched on by one student:

The girl in this photo goes by the name “Girl X”, and is in form one at the moment. It happened that last year her mother had travelled and left her with the dad and her siblings. One night, while the mother was still away, the dad approached and forced her to take off her clothes in a hurry. Failure to that (he threatened), he would strike a knife on her body until death. On hearing this, the girl had no other option than going on as per commands. So, it cost her revealing the naked body to her dad. The dad went forward saying she should hide the story from everyone and not dare tell it to her mother.

Two months later, in the middle of the night, the girl wandered out of the house for a short call (telephone call) behind the house. The mother was inside in their room asleep. The father was still awake. When he heard the door being opened he knew it was “Girl X”. So, he opened his bedroom door quietly and walked towards the toilet where he believed she had gone. With a knife in hand while approaching the toilet, “Girl X” saw him, was shocked and frightened. She started shouting; the dad got hold of her and blocked the mouth. He told the girl to stop screaming or else he would kill her. The girl kept quiet as the dad put more strength on blocking her mouth. She was forced to take off her clothes and the dad raped her repeatedly and impregnated her.

It came time to whereby she could not hold the crying and took the step to report the matter to counsellors. The father was put under arrest and sentenced to years in prison. “Girl X” gave birth to
This story presented a harsh message that a young person does not have to look far from their domestic dwelling to be exposed to the effects of sex and power. The story shared by this young girl is mirrored in research from a study on gender-based conducted by Federation of Women Lawyers Kenya (FIDA-K) that used a domestic violence survey (2017). One portion of the study noted that in the context of poverty, low-socioeconomic domestic environments, in which men were often jobless, left idle, and took up abusing local brews, were likely to perpetrate sexual molestation of their children, irrespective of gender, who was left in their care.

6.4. Theme Three: Sex as Currency

Commercial sex as it pertains to increased risk for HIV is an extensively documented relationship in scholarly literature (Hampanda, 2013). In Kenya, despite being illegal, selling sex dominates in urban areas such as Mombasa where sex-work attracts local and international tourists alike. These types’ transactions have filtered into smaller rural areas, where sex can be seen as a commodity to achieve elevation out of poverty. The top of selling sex was brought to our team’s attention for the first time in an informal co-gender focus group with young people we initiated to occupy their time while waiting for individual photo-journal interviews. Bahati, a 14-year-old contributor, made the following comment: “These two girls behave like vans. Maybe today she has one driver and tomorrow has another driver. She is doing sex as a job”. The concept was reflected in several stories young people shared connecting their understanding of practising sex as a means of financial elevation. Two primary ideas contributed to the theme of sex as currency: 1) bodies as business and 2) chakula (food). These sub-themes will be unpacked further with examples from both photo-journal interviews and FGs with young people.

6.4.1 Bodies as Business

The Kenyan NACC (2016) indicated imbalances of power between those paying for, and those performing sex-related acts, involved variable condom use across Mombasa County, increasing exposure to sex-related risks (e.g., HIV infection and STIs). In sharing their exposure experiences, young people described bodies, especially young female bodies, as a business. In their descriptions, young people reported that exchanging sexual favours for monetary or material gain was a business some young people chose, while others were forced into it by their
guardians. The following two descriptions highlight the element of poverty as being the primary reason for this occurring:

Money can lead to sex. For example, if a girl in her family is poor, she can be convinced to do sex so that she can get money for her expenses. Even some of the parents allow their children to have sex so that they can get money. They take the bodies of their children as a business. (Kangaroo, age 15, co-gender youth focus group)

Most girls involve themselves in sexual acts due to lack of some basic needs. This has really affected most of the girls in our community due to lack of self-awareness (Mr Decimal, age 16, photo-journal)

One male student placed further blame on females who engage in such acts, arguing that men do not deserve the culpability often attributed to them by community members:

What I think is that the state of the economy plays a role in this issue. Especially to women and how they can make ends meet. Women are ready to sell their bodies just to make ends meet. Sometimes men can be accused but during such situations the woman is the one to be blamed. This can also cause squabbles in the society. Plus, such practices bring about acts of prostitution. (Male, co-gender youth in school focus group)

This raises the point that both males and females need to be engaged together, to renounce blame and begin changing the problematic structural factors at the core of issues related to sex. It is worth emphasising that the accounts shared within this section point toward an increasingly vulnerable position of young girls to sex-related issues than their male counterparts. This may, in fact, be a case, or an issue of non-disclosure in an effort to maintain the cultural representation of what is means to be male in rural Kenyan communities. Engaging in sexual acts as a means to elevate oneself out of poverty was further explained during a photo-journal interview with one female youth participant. Her photo description was a blunt and vivid testament to the lives of many young women in the area near the Mwakirunge dumpsite

Figure 21: The fate of the girl child (Cool Girl, 2015, March)
There was a girl who lived in a house. It relates to sex because of the surrounding place that the girl child lived. The girl child could not stay at her house because the parents are poor and cannot take care of her needs. So, she went out, looked for money from other people, where she associated herself with sex at an early age. She kept doing it up to date; she has never come home. In fact, she does not want to go back because of the poor conditions of the home and parents cannot take care of her needs . . . When I look at the photo I learn about sex through the life of the girl and the surroundings that made her involve herself into sex at an early age. (Cool Girl, age 16, photo-journal interview)

Poverty reoccurred in youth narratives repeatedly, highlighting the importance placed on money for elevation in society:

![Image of money](image)

**Figure 22: Time is money (Erik, 2015, March)**

Okay I took a photo of money. For example, if a girl at their home has poverty now she can have sex with the man so that she can get money for daily bread . . . Before they get the money, they go for sex, and some of them are forced by their parents. If for example the girl’s mother works in a pub, the mother ends up giving her girl so that she can get money because at that place where people come to enjoy (alcohol, music, etc.) she can take her child so that people talk to her (and pay money for her services). (Erik, age 17, photo-journal interview)

Mwakirunge is in an interesting situation where tradition is in constant intersection with urban and foreign influences from nearby Mombasa. Elevation in regard to monetary or material gains was a goal prompted by desire to access a position in this contemporary space. Several youth shared ideas about young girls accepting gifts such as food, clothes, candy, cell phones, and jewellery in exchange for sexual favours:

So many girls are deceived by men they are bought things and then they fall pregnant at an early age and they are forced into early marriage. I took it (the photograph) in this school because girls in this school are usually given phones and cameras by men. (Fenwick, age 16, photo-journal interview)

Abigale shared a story of a friend who became pregnant and could no longer afford the fees to stay enrolled in school, so she used her body to obtain money:
She doesn’t go to school because the parents don’t have money to pay for the school fees now. She had a boyfriend or a father (she had a baby). Sometimes she isn’t at home for many days in a week now because she ends up sleeping with the man just to get money. (Abigale, age 16, photo-journal interview)

In her photo-journal interview, Flame framed the act of engaging in sex for money as sometimes being a result of force:

Sometimes the boy’s soul has just admired the girl. If the boy loves the girl, he will force her by giving her some money and some presents (Flame, age 16, photo-journal interview)

Throughout the journals and interviews, other youths shared similar incidents. As one girl notes,

Men need more intercourse than women. They have money and for a girl, they do not have. So, men use their money to get us to have sex. (Cool Girl, age 16, photo-journal interview)

In framing the issue, choice and agency seemed to be absent when the offer of monetary or material gain were present. It is clear from these quotes that young people’s bodies are used, both by themselves and others (e.g., parents, men in the community, etc.) as businesses to acquire new material goods, such as cell phones or contribute to food for the household. Food as a key sub-theme that signals sex as currency will be discussed next.

6.4.2 Chakula

Chakula, Kiswahili for food, was a notion that youth related to sex time and time again throughout data collection. Several youths connected a kibanda (food stall) in their community and the want for chakula to sex:

This kibanda is really exposing some girls and boys, most are students. They go there to eat and kiss each other, which unfortunately leads to sex. Most of the time they go back home in the late hours while their parents really complain about their behaviours. Lastly, the girl or boy may end up falling in early pregnancies or getting HIV/AIDS. (Edward, age 15, photo-journal interview)

In probing further, despite Edward’s understanding acts of intimacy (i.e., kissing) as automatically resulting in sex, his line of thinking was representative of what he and other students witnessed happening to several young people who spent significant amounts of time in this space. Another youth further specified events that take place near the kibanda:
This young person elaborated on the associated risks with transactions of sex for food which included: unintended pregnancy; forced sex; occurs in a setting where drug exposure, and thus, addiction are possible; dropping out of school resulting in loss of education, adding to the number of those without formal education in the ward; enacted stigmatisation from peers; contracting HIV; and loss of connection with parents, as young people who trade sex for food after school often return to their home at late hours causing turbulence between guardians and the young person. The dense description of this space highlights the harsh realities that young people in poverty are exposed to regularly. It evidences direct implications of exposure to early sexual debut and risky sex (in terms of the nature of power in these relationships and the young people’s ability to negotiate protection when they do engage in sex for alternative methods of payment for the food). Another young person continued to link poverty, food, and sex:

In my investigation, I have found that food relates to sex. Nowadays many people always go to school without having anything to eat. This leads to sex. You shall find (in our community) that many young ladies are always being picked by strangers and are brought food. These days there is
nothing for free and after that (receiving and eating the food), they have sex and this may lead to getting the disease known as HIV/AIDS. (Antelope, age 14, photo-journal interview)

It is evident from each of the sub-themes (bodies as business and chakula) that sex-related issues are embedded in a range social factors linked to poverty (access to employment, parental style and presence, geographical location of household, and economic opportunities in the area), which are both a cause and consequence of young people engaging in and learning about sex.

6.5. Theme Four: Community Voices

One of the most significant aspects of this research was uncovering a way forward for sex-talk that the community members could shape and embrace, and that would hopefully become a sustainable endeavour. Community action research, in and of itself, can not only reveal the questions of community members, but also provide the space for answers to emerge from the people most affected. Our team discovered that both youths and adults had more ideas for moving forward. The findings presented here have largely come from FGs held with various stakeholder groups, as described in Chapter Four. From their visions of how sex-related problems in the community could be approached in the future, four sub-themes emerged: 1) Silent spaces; 2) Shaping mabaraza for sex-talk; 3) Initiating change; and 4) Incentive challenges.

6.5.1 Silent Spaces

This theme encompasses reasons why intergenerational conversations about sex are infrequent in the community. Some of the findings here align with others discussed previously in the chapter, such as lack of accurate health information and cultural taboos, while placing an emphasis on why these silent spaces around sex-related issues persist. Several members of the community noted the lack accurate health information across the generations, and even NGO volunteers acknowledged they required more training before working with community members on sex-related topics. Young people noted that lack of knowledge might be a key reason why parents do not attempt conversations with them:

Some parents might have little knowledge concerning sexual matters so they find it hard talking about it. (Female, co-gender youth in school focus group)

This barrier to conversation has left young people with many unanswered questions. Similarly, openness to the topic was viewed as another challenge facing the community:
I think based on how the community views it, they believe it is something private. So, it shouldn’t be talked about openly. (Mr Cheese, teacher focus group)

Some young people perceived challenges to sex-talks as being situation dependent. As one youth noted:

A friend is much easier to talk to. In such setting, it can be tricky because nobody is familiar with one other so they tend to be shy. (Female, co-gender youths in school focus group)

In another case, this openness barrier was perceived to be a problem of enculturation:

It is dependent on the upbringing of the child. If at all the child was brought up in an environment whereby openness was minimal, then that child will bring up his or her kids the same way. (Male, co-gender youths in school focus group)

Due to this upbringing, judgemental ideas about how sex-talks take place were related to traditional gender roles and recognised as a factor that enhanced silent spaces:

Tradition contributes to these sex issues because in an African setting, women cannot speak about such things in the presence of gentlemen and vice versa. This is because whichever gender the person will be harshly judged. This is how strongly it [traditional gender roles] impacts on sex-related issues which to some extent this is a negative angle. (Male, co-gender youths in school focus group)

When sex and culture meet, taboo often overrides the ability to talk. Judgements are made on the content that might be explored when sex is the topic of conversations, as this teacher described:

Someone who has gone to school like me, maybe you tell me that you want me to attend a certain seminar, I will know that the seminar is very important for me because I value education. But around here the locals, most of them that you’ll see, sex is the thing that has led them to poverty, that is the reason. Now if you tell them that we want to have a talk about sex, they will just assume it’s about intercourse. They will think that the conversation might not be something apart from that. So, they won’t come, that is also another result. (Mrs She, focus group with teachers)

Cultural ideas around sex also enhanced the fear of engaging in conversations on the topic, as one youth noted:

The difficulty in talking about sex is enhanced by the cultural dynamics because people will start saying this person [someone trying to discuss sexual topics] is a fugitive and is spoiling the kids! So, the culture is why we don’t get much into talking about it. (Female out-of-school youth, focus group with community adults and out-of-school youths)

In addition, culture as a barrier arose in our focus group discussions as a reason contributing to silent spaces and the challenges faced when engaging both genders in the same space, as evidenced by the following interaction between two teachers:

**Mr. Cheese:** When talking to them [young people], the burden is how they view it, like it’s not easy to talk to them when they are of both gender, it should be the same boys together and same girls together.

**Mr. W:** Maybe it’s a cultural issue from their homes, the way they are brought up [Mr. Cheese nods in agreement]. They believe that sex is a taboo topic still in African societies. So, they are not so open to speak up. Unless you separate them, but then you really have to be very close to them, so
they can open up about sex issues. Otherwise they just look at you, they smile, and they laugh. But if you segregate them, at least you can get some input. (Focus group with teachers)

As the conversation developed, these two teachers were sceptical of even testing such a co-gender space. They assumed that longstanding relationships must be in place to restrict the fear young people experience when discussing sex-related topics. At this stage, teachers were unaware of the co-gender FGs we had previously conducted with young people that unearthed deep and fruitful discussions around young people’s experiences in relation to sex-related topics. However, some young people who participated in the focus group claimed:

Some parents believe that such talks do not exist these days and that tradition restricts them. (Male, co-gender youths in school focus group)

Upon probing further, the same student stated that young people in the community were not as restricted by the culture as the generation before them. On breaking the silence to allow sex-talks to occur, teachers acknowledged that more education was needed for all. One teacher stated:

I think the community is supposed to be informed about the importance of the sex education to the young people [the fact that young people want sex education]. First of all, they [the community adults] should get the information, so that when we talk about it, they take it positive [it becomes less taboo]. (Miss K, teacher focus group)

Miss K. elaborated on the types of settings this education might occur in; this was first time the idea of mentorship was brought up in conversation. Overall, the idea of adapting a baraza for sex-talk was taken positively, as the participants saw it as necessary to fill the current gaps in the community. This was reiterated at the end of our focus group session with teachers when a female teacher said:

Yes, I can say yes to this space, because at home there is no space to talk about it, about true understandings of sex or activities that may lead there (Miss Social Studies, teacher focus group)

In calling for a notion to move forward with shaping spaces for sex-talk, one father of an in-school youth asserted that despite the silence around such discussions, it was time to try to break it down. He stated:

Well times have change unlike old times. It is easier now talking about it than it was back then. Moreover, irrespective of the age issue, this is a responsibility to be carried out. One cannot keep quiet over it [sex]. It would be dangerous since today's children tend to mature earlier than was the case in our generation where children matured much later at a ripe age. (Male parent, focus group with parents of in-school youths)

His conviction was echoed in statements by other parents, teachers, and young people that called for putting an end to silent spaces and focusing on the need to talk.
6.5.2 Suggestions for Adapting Mabaraza for Dialogue on Sex-Talk

The different community contributor groups made a number of suggestions for adapting mabaraza. Our conversations during interviews and FGs highlighted that community contributors had different idea around most suitable composition of mabaraza for sex-talk. The following section explores the debate over co-gender spaces versus gender-specific spaces. These mixed views, when considered against literature that previously highlighted the value of gender-specific spaces (Naanyu et al., 2011), led to our choice to test both gender-specific and co-gender adaptations of mabaraza.

Those advocating for co-gender spaces felt they were a solution to move one step closer to tackling sex-related problems that were not sustainably engaged in the past. The perspective of one of our partner NGO volunteers seemed to summarise this call best:

I think one way of solving this issue is involving both or all affected parties. Last time we were tackling this issue about the boda-boda [motorists] guys [and their enacting sexual injustices on the young people in the community]. The boda-boda guys were there [in one group] and then we talk to the school kids [at a separate time] and tell them all the right things [how they should behave]. If we talk to the kids they will get the information but how about the boda-boda guys? You know, maybe these kids have issues like poverty. We tell them “when you do sex at a young age you experience problems” but then we have not yet solved the poverty aspect. Then the boda-boda guys come and lure the girls with money or offer of a ride—you see they go back to it because they don’t understand the situation from both sides. If we bring them together, at the same place and tell them the right thing, we are going to get somewhere. (Male, focus group with partner NGO volunteers)

Another out-of-school young person agreed with the coming together of both genders. He suggested that mentorship spaces be developed to focus on educating both genders about the sexual rights of the female and the male. This out-of-school youth envisioned coming together in one space to develop a better understanding of each other:

First of all, we should bring the youths together, both boys and girls. We should talk to them about sexuality, more than the act but their rights. That is when they will understand the side effects of trying what is in the videos they see, what happens at those discos they attend. We cannot lose focus, we have to go together as a group. Long ago there were no discos. Even women never used to put on their tops and it was normal, no fuss, but nowadays we don’t see that. We see girls putting on clothes that are somehow naked. (Male out-of-school youth, focus group with adults and out-of-school youths)

Here the young man was saying that people should be educated more on their sexual rights, rather than the act of sex itself. He was suggesting that when communities were more traditional and clothing not a necessity, people could walk in the nude with no problems. Now sexualisation of the female body through videos (i.e., music videos, pornographic videos they access through
their phones) has resulted in girls wearing what culturally is considered indecent clothing. He viewed these as young girls actively exposing their bodies to men. The out-of-school-youth revealed that this put them (males in the community) at risk while the girls/women, and the men they expose themselves to, still do not understand their own sexual rights. This account aligns with existing social attitudes documented in other Kenyan studies that framed women as inviting rape to occur (Muchoki & Wandibba, 2009).

This was in contrast to the ideas of different community contributors who deemed gender-specific spaces necessary, at least in the early stages of trying to create a sustainable space for intergenerational sex-talk. Community members offered the following ideas around separation to avoid judgement:

As for us women, we shall be more open if secluded from the gentlemen because we are afraid of being judged. (Female youth, co-gender in-school youths focus group)

This was evidently the case as when a few female students in the group were being vocal on the topics discussed, a male student commented on her comfort level:

Madam, I can say that she is so comfortable in talking these things with you because she is doing them [laughter from group]. (Male, co-gender youths focus group)

The research team was quick to mitigate this judgement. A team member reminded the boy that based on stories shared, knowing about sex was not always a direct result of participating in related acts, but often through the various routes of exposure in the community. In line with cultural tradition, one father highlighted the existence of gender-specific responsibilities for engaging in sex-related discussions:

Speaking to young people, I as a parent and the father of the homestead, take responsibility in talking to the male children concerning the ever-evolving way of life and how change is ever taking place. I also speak out about the diseases that are a menace to humankind. I also make it a point to elaborate on the importance of education and advise them to stay away from worldly pleasures [sex]. Concerning the female child, I leave that responsibility to my wife. (Father, focus group with parents of in-school youths)

While a mother in the focus group agreed with the previous sentiments, she also was open to the idea of co-gender spaces:

There is the possibility of both parents sitting down with their children and holding a family discussion about sex. (Mother, focus group with parents of in-school youths)

This view of merging both genders in one setting was perceived in some instances as counter-productive to the challenging male-dominated culture that exists in the community and country.
In a focus group with parents of young people in school, one father attributed characteristics of being male versus female to the fact that girls are generally less talkative because of their naturally shy nature:

Female children tend to talk less because they have lower comfort levels to open up (father, focus group with parents of in-school youths)

This was confirmed in another fragment from an out-of-school youth sharing their want to discuss with a person of a different gender, but the challenge faced in doing so:

The problem with coming together as two genders, while needed is also difficult. For example, on my side, if I find a lady caught up in a problem on her way home and it happens that I decide to help her, I might be accused later of raping her, when the only intention I had was helping. That is a challenge when it comes to men in our community. Also, for the most part, you cannot even have a conversation with a female child because some people look at it as wrong, like she cannot be spoken to about such things. Only when I am a community facilitator like you [points to a research team member] can I be allowed to discuss with them. (Male out-of-school youths, focus group with adults and out-of-school youths)

This male pointed to the privilege our team possessed as researchers. As a researcher, we had the ability to bring up topics that others culturally or socially feel prohibited from addressing. Based on these mixed visions for adapting mabaraza for intergenerational sex-talk, and as supported by the literature in Chapter Two, it was only fitting that our team test each scenario offered up by the community. This involved designing an independent female, male, and co-gender mabaraza to be tested in Cycle Three of this project.

6.5.3 Initiating Change

“Who should be responsible for these mentorship spaces? Go on, do not be shy—tell me who?” This question was posed by Kay, a member of our research team, with a smile, a boatload of confidence, and conviction. “The design, the implementation, mobilising community members to attend—what does that look like? You say you want these spaces, but now tell me about the details?” She commanded the crowd each time she asked these questions, received a range of responses along with potential challenges to change. For example, a teacher reflected on the need for adults to understand sex-related information first before engaging young people in such discussions:

There is a way we need to first approach their parents because anytime they hear about sex education they think we want to teach their kids how to have sex. We must first approach them, inform them on everything we do about sex education, then they will first be able to understand it, and allow their kids to be free to talk about it. (Mr Cheese, teacher focus group)
This quote represents a further challenge, in that silence—especially around young people’s conversations about sex—was amplified due to this surveillance of knowledge by adults. In an alternate perspective, a female teacher asserted that sex-talks should be widespread, but be rooted first within the family:

> Education starts at home, it starts with the parents, the guardians, some of the community and the school may be part of the curriculum (female teacher, focus group with teachers)

Several adults across the different FGs echoed this sentiment, but extra emphasis was placed on the parental role as being vital:

> Since these are our kids, it is advisable that we face them without fear and as a result it will bring them closer to us (Father, focus group with adults in community)

This father was elaborating on the point that despite culture and the associated fears of feeling embarrassed or judged when discussing sex-related issues due to the taboo nature of the topic, it is a necessity. Where other community contributors did not regard intergenerational spaces as a necessity, they did consider gender-specific, age divided spaces where men engage with boys and women with girls, respectively. These mixed standpoints on initiating changed were very reflective of the difficult positions’ community members seemed to be negotiating between silent spaces and the desire to resolve sex-related issues in the community.

### 6.5.4 Incentive Challenges

The few quotes provided in this short sub-section on community voices, are examples of the dependency syndrome our research team was up against. It is necessary to introduce community contributors’ voices around incentives, as it became a core challenge to consider while adapting mabaraza for sex-talk. During our various interactions, community contributors were invited to share their perspectives on why mobilisation for such spaces might be challenging to the process of initiating change. These conversations were prompted by the research team facilitator, who had dealt directly with blunt requests for reimbursement at the beginning of each of our data collection sessions. Community contributor responses suggested a dependency discourse where some contributor’s assumptions were concerned, as expectations that monetary reimbursement for participation would occur, was a motivating factor for taking part that was mentioned numerous times. In discussing mobilisation for mabaraza on such a sensitive topic, both young people and adults considered the baraza space, as offered by the research team in these initial interviews, as challenging because it would not be led by a government official. One youth contributor elaborated on this:
In most cases, people associate such meetings and gatherings with government since they are held by government representatives such as chiefs and elders. Most ignore if not the case. (Male, focus group with adults and out-of-school youths)

The lack of affiliation with government or international NGOs which the participant referred to in this quote usually means compensation would not be provided (as was the case in this research) and thus attendance would be low. This was an ethical issue surrounding compensation detailed in Chapter Four and one that is explored further in Chapter Six in terms of incentivised communities. This challenge was also linked to poverty and incentives:

I think when we look at our community and find that even as a parent of kids in the school, we want them to come . . . maybe early in this term, they had a meeting with the Red Cross, they were coming to talk about the issue about how . . . I think it was to find out about the economic environment, so most parents wanted them to come, because after the meeting most of them started going, but when they were told that at the end of it you will get something small, the following day you will find that parents were here very early, as early as seven, because they knew that at the end of the day they will be given at least some topping, at least to leave here having a taste of pilau and chili in our mouths. So that was what led them to attend, so poverty contributes, they only come because they know they are being motivated [by food or money]. (Female teacher, focus group with teachers)

This challenge is not the fault of community members however; as it is important to acknowledge that the concept of “time is money” is extremely relevant to all communities. Even in the Global North people value their time. While they might not spend the day participating in research in exchange for lunch, incentives in the form of vouchers or stipends are included in a lot of research to encourage participation, especially in studies that entail multiple engagements. However, the labour-intensive lives of these community members, extremely vulnerable to the effects of poverty, enhance this expectation. Tasks of cooking and travelling to and from places take significantly longer than for those in urbanised sites. In addition, the agricultural nature of the ward meant that jobs were physically demanding. Choosing between education and survival in many instances, was not really a choice at all:

Also, I think to some extent, it starts with poverty because these people they live hand to mouth . . . So, you call them for a meeting but they still have to do other duties so they can get whatever they need to eat for that day. To them, it’s a battle. (Male teacher, focus group with teachers)

Probing further, one of the research team members asked “Say we have got all the money in the world and we organise a baraza for which everyone will be paid to attend. Do you think they would just be turning up for the money? Or do you think that they did come along, got reimbursed, that they would actually benefit from that knowledge and would participate?” Six out of the six teachers in attendance agreed that the majority would be turning up for money, but one was optimistic that they might retain knowledge. Our research team member internally battled from an ethical standpoint, but as described in Chapter Three under sub-section 3.6.3.4,
we agreed we would be doing more harm than good if people were not intrinsically motivated to attend mabaraza. An out-of-school youth highlighted the need to access individual agency combined with external support:

In my opinion, change is within us and with us, but we also need guidance and motivation as well as mobilisation. I believe change can occur (male out-of-school youth, focus group with adults and out-of-school youths)

Following this statement, members of the focus group asserted that payment for their time was particularly motivating as they would have used that time making some money for the family. Dependency also emerged in terms of when contributors were asked about how they could make changes to the community. One male volunteer from our partner NGO felt a specific set of guidelines should be produced for working in a non-stigmatising manner in the community.

Laura: That is a really good point. So where do you think those questions and guidelines should come from?
Male Volunteer: You should create them.

This was one of many instances where in our conversation, NGO volunteers, despite informing community members about the need for a solution to come from them, deferred to our expertise. The power held by members of our research team as the responsible authority for inviting them to participate in the conversation, created a sense of our investment in the issue as we shared the hours of research required before being able to move with research on the ground. While we expressed that our generating the solutions would be unethical to the methodological process we followed in our work, generating buy-in around a community-driven approach, despite their acknowledgment of these issues as important, was presented as a challenge we would encounter. This explicated that silence exists even around their own ideas. Within the scope of their lives these issues were problematic but normalised. Thus, our research team’s investment in dismantling them warranted that we should also be the ones to arrive at a solution. This silence is due in part to the fact, that the projects these NGO volunteers usually implement are initially developed and funded by external organisations (as is typical across most countries), with specific targets and holding the majority of power.

These quotes were associated with a lack of education at each stakeholder level, parent’s fear of fostering exploration into sexual matters, stigma placed on youth for participating in sex-related discussions as well as ideas that do not conform to cultural norms, and ultimately the cycle of poverty in which sex-related problems transpire and are exacerbated. In as much as parents suggested seminars as spaces for youths to learn about sex, in our focus group with parents, they
unanimously agreed that organisations should be responsible for organising and bringing young people to these seminars.

6.6. Tools to Talk: A Contextual Model for Interpreting Sexual Learning and Exposure Experiences

Much silence makes a powerful noise.
African Proverb

This proverb reminds us that it is important to pay attention to what is occurring in systems for constructing and understanding knowledge embedded in silent spaces. The vulnerabilities through which ideas and behaviours around sex-related topics are produced, and reproduced, suggest community contributors, especially young people, had several interactions with sex-related issues. Some experiences garnered a sense of urgency around why dialogues for change were necessary, in order to develop greater sexual risk and health awareness and responses for navigating such issues. However, this sense of urgency was not fully espoused by community contributors until they engaged in critical dialogues around young people’s storyboards presented in mabaraza. Evident from young people’s conceptualisations of their experiences and exposures, was the fact that their knowledge had been constructed through and held within a space of silence, adding to the imperative to test mabaraza.

Arnfred (2004) challenged the benefit of the culture of silence as a concept for understanding SLCs. First, she asserted that the concept runs the risk of homogeneity, lumping all silence together. The second risk noted would be assuming that all silences are a result of inability to access one’s agency. To appease these assumptions, the author suggested to focus on identifying “. . . different types of silence” (Arnfred, 2004, p. 75). As highlighted in Chapter Four, during the colonial period, traditional routes of sexual communication diminished—ideas about sex and sexuality, along with the importance of becoming a sexually responsible adult, were forced into silent spaces. Over time, these silences, through loss of traditions, were fortified. With the introduction of neo-colonising elements such as access to sexualised content (e.g., pornography, content on mobiles, internet and at video kiosks), as well as transactional sexual behaviours as a means to elevate oneself out of poverty becoming popularised, sex-related silences grew increasingly dangerous as exposure became more common. As researchers analysing the contributions that young people and adults shared in this initial stage of data collection, “What is being said in the silences?”
In sharing their stories, it was apparent that young community contributors in particular, inhabited locations of silence. The silences they experienced were representative of internal conflicts in terms of several factors: having specific knowledge about sex–related topics they come to understand through different types of experiences (e.g., SLCs, peer-to-peer interactions, intergenerational interactions, and witness to sexual content via media, or live sex in different community settings); as well as conflicts with their cultural or religious values and beliefs. Inability to discuss these experiences has resulted in an internalisation of ideas, and the learn-by-doing attitude. These findings agree with past evidenced from across Kenya, where young people often learn about sex-related topics through practice (Maticka-Tyndale et al., 2007). However, this method of learning is flawed for a number of reasons, including: unnecessary exposure to STDs; unplanned pregnancy; imbalanced sexual power relationships; and inaccuracy in knowledge. Ultimately, more questions arise through experience at this young age, but the problem of discussing potential answers and new pathways for creating positive health behaviours remain limited.

A common process surfaced when our team probed deeper to understand the silences surrounding sex-talk in the community. Whether the participant was a youth or an adult, the inability to discuss sex-related information openly prompted unanswered questions (e.g., what is contraception? Are condoms dangerous? Who should one contact to ask further questions about sex-related information learned in school? How can one know if the sex-related information learned from peers is accurate?). This ended with participants inhabiting a space of silence because of lack of tools to talk [T2T]. These echoed findings of other studies in Kenya, Tanzania, and South Africa where parents and other adults avoided discussing issues related to sex with their children because they felt they lacked the appropriate language to do so (McLaughlin et al., 2012). From our research team’s understanding, T2T are those that enable and encourage open and non-judgemental dialogue.

They encompass the availability of and access to resources for accurate health knowledge terminology, spaces for dialogues to occur, and tolerance for different experiences (i.e., occupying different locations of power in the community) that may give diverse understandings to the same topic. Therefore, a lack of T2T resulted in the silent spaces and the elements of questions, time, judgements, fears, and shyness, produced in and by such spaces. An inability to address issues related to sex efficiently through answering new and old questions, or incapacity
to set aside time for dialogue without judgement, might lead individuals—especially young people—to feel afraid of posing questions in the future. In avoiding attending to these elements, a sense of shyness might develop around unanswered questions and concerns. This can result in an individual remaining in the space of silence where their original concerns were formed, more may cultivate, and ultimately the issues will sustain.

The data constructed in **Cycle Two** could be understood through a funnel-shaped process existing inside a system, the SHL (represented by the black circle the funnel sits within in Figure 24). This system includes the different SLCs of young people, where understanding sex-related knowledge is defined (and perpetuated) by the culture of silence, as described previously in Chapter Four. Our research team created a contextual model, termed “the funnel of silence”, that was grounded in the data, which illustrates the elements stifling the T2T required to engage in intergenerational sex-talk.

![Figure 24: Sexual learning climates contributing to reproduction of sex-related silences](image)

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This funnel of silence may create new silences when a young person encounters one, or a combination of the elements featured in the funnel as a result of their SLC. These elements offer recurring themes that expand on the silences related to sexual communication between different generations of adults and young people. This model was used to help the research team make sense of the data, in terms of the key generative themes that informed initial discussions for mabaraza in Cycle Three. The core elements of questions, time, judgements, fear, and shyness through which silences are created and reproduced, enabled the research team to work with young people to highlight the stories they felt were most important to carry forward in mabaraza discussions, explored in further detail in the next iterative cycle of the CBPAR project.

6.7. Moving Towards an Intergenerational Dialogic Space

When the team debriefed with the Chief Programme officer of PANGO, we shared our uncertainty about moving forward. Together with the challenges put forth by the community, limited resources in terms of funding, but more importantly, time to achieve change, and considering all the vulnerabilities that emerged from the data, the team felt a little discouraged. After sharing the team’s feelings, I spoke to him privately about my doubts and concerns around community member motivation as well as commitment to change. He raised his hand to silence me. With a smile he said, “My friend, by crawling a child learns to stand. The same is true of those in the community”. I had to remember what the research team members said when we started this, “going far means moving together”. I repeated this a few times to myself throughout this process. He reminded me that consolidating the findings as we had, illustrated the grand narrative of sexual learning and exposure experiences in the community. “Change takes time. Despite being aware of these situations, rarely are there opportunities to critically think about them in this community. Collecting these stories were the first important action, Laura. Now this information smacks them in the face. It is up to them to move with it”. Evidently, his wisdom was sound. Supporting community members in this first step of sharing their experiences did lead to some critical reflection and new perspectives on the situation. The mabaraza dialogues presented in the next chapter, highlight community member’s willingness to explore these ideas more in depth. As individuals and groups, the accounts shared within the current chapter, were representative of Freire’s conception of ‘generative themes’, to be used as a springboard for dialogue in mabaraza.
Young people’s stories shared during the ‘Creating Conversations’ project, and presented in this chapter, were representative of how they wanted to portray their experiences in mabaraza. These were their voices. With power dynamics at play, many of the young people felt unsafe about personally sharing their stories in mabaraza, though they wanted to be heard. Despite this roadblock to dialogue, young people identified that they wanted to share their experiences of gathering and testing knowledge about sex. With a new lens for reading community experiences related to sexual learning and exposure, we focused on the elements in the funnel of silence model. Those stories, highlighted by young people, as most urgently contributing to, and reproducing silences within, the system for coming to understand sex-related ideas, became the generative themes to explore in mabaraza. Since they had spent time documenting and describing their experiences in a non-verbal medium (the photo-journals), the research team put forth the idea of sharing the photos and subsequent stories attached as a starting point for dialogue in mabaraza. During the photo-journal interview, our team discussed with young people how they envisioned such a presentation. Young people chose which photographs they most wanted to share and the order in which they would have them presented. This resulted in the storyboards as described in Chapter Three under section 3.5.2 the photo-voice method. These storyboards initiated a form of reciprocal intergenerational dialogue that explored each element of “the funnel of silence” within the context of a specific SLC but did not require the verbalisation by young people. This protected their identities, while still strengthening their sense of agency. What unfolded as a result of fostering this intergenerational dialogue is the focus of the next chapter, through a discussion of Cycle Three: Adapting Mabaraza.
Chapter 7. Cycle Three: Adapting Mabaraza

7.1. Tracing Our Steps of Learning for Change

Herr and Anderson (2005) asserted that “. . . unlike traditional research, action research produces knowledge grounded in local realities that is also useful to local participants” (p.98). The wider understanding of sex-related community issues in the Mwakirunge context, gained in Cycle Two of the ‘Creating Conversations’ project, was confronting for those who did not have prior opportunity to reflect upon the severity of these problems in the ward. This newly formed perspective of their local reality, developed further through the intergenerational dialogues described in Cycle Three (see Figure 25), became a large part of the action generated from the research. This progressed community contributor perspective evidences meaningful instances of psychological, social, and collective transformation. These transformations were necessary to assess, before considering future implementation of mabaraza as safe spaces for intergenerational sex-talk in Cycle Four, elaborated on in Chapter Eight.

The viability of adapting mabaraza for intergenerational sex-talk spaces is considered through components of Tuhiwai Smith’s (1999) Indigenous Research Agenda which assesses the use of these spaces as an effective decolonising approach to working with communities. In the first half of the chapter, I explore processes for carrying out Cycle Three, which included the processes for adapting mabaraza under the advices of PANGO’s Chief Programme Officer, the Mwakirunge Chief, and Village Elder. The goals were to reduce, or prepare to manage, the relations of power that, inevitably, arose. Research team decision-making, prior to, and during, implementation is also included. Processes for the formation of storyboards (designed from young people’s photo-journals) used to initiate mabaraza dialogues, and the learning that emerged through our research team observations, are also unpacked.

The second half of the chapter presents an analysis of the key themes that surfaced in mabaraza dialogues. The themes reflected narratives related to cultural erosion (both separate and linked to gendered attitudes toward sex-related issues), reliance, encroachment of neo-colonising elements, as well as how silences, relating to each of the aforementioned concepts, persist and are reproduced. Within the analysis, the collective learning—across all three mabaraza adapted and
tested as a space for intergenerational sex-talk during **Cycle Three**—is assessed through a post-colonial theoretical lens. This analysis emphasised intersecting cultural and societal power structures that served to constrain voice, sustain sex-related problems, and in other instances break the silences in order to begin dialogues for change.

![Figure 25: Cycle three: Adapting mabaraza](image)

The succeeding sections focus on the research team’s exploration of primary goal two in the research (understand how to adapt mabaraza for content and context) and its subsequent secondary goals, as set out in section 1.4 of this dissertation. The different sections, focusing on either processes for conducting mabaraza or data analysis, throughout this chapter, highlight meaningful insights about content to be explored in mabaraza dialogues, as well as the contexts to anticipate before and during each baraza. Problems with post-colonial identities of young people in the community are revealed (including the relationship between personal and cultural identity, related to sex) and its implications on sexual communication in the current problematic SHL.
7.2. Processes for Adapting and Conducting Mabaraza and Adaptations

As discussed in Chapter Four, mabaraza evolved out of male-dominated spaces for congregation and has almost always retained this domination in its later iterations. Thus, adapting mabaraza to ensure females and young people were given equitable opportunities to be active in the dialogues was important, as per the goals of this research. Mabaraza are useful spaces for dialogues as they are widely recognisable across the culture of the community. The beauty of the baraza is that it has taken on many shapes throughout its most recent history and, thus, was conceived as a highly adaptable space for sex-related dialogue. For each baraza we held, a typical format was followed, as outlined in the steps to follow.

**Step 1:** Planning sessions with the team to outline the implementation strategy, which included how best to incorporate findings from Cycle Two, or from a previous baraza, after the first was tested. To encourage multiple voices within mabaraza spaces, our research team drew on literature that documented a centuries old indigenous social process of the First Nations peoples in Canada (the sharing circle) when we were deciding how to adapt mabaraza for sex-talk. Sharing circles are viewed as safe spaces for democratic equal exchange opportunities that play a significant role in the process of healing, in addition to fostering connectedness, awareness, knowledge exchange, and comprehension (Ghelani, 2010). This indigenous social process is defined by a set of protocols which includes the guiding rule that one person speaks, and the others listen, travelling around the circle, sharing one by one (Ghelani, 2010). While this process did not characterise all mabaraza, the team did draw on this strategy, when the pause in dialogue seemed unwavering during this cycle of data collection (i.e., Cycle Three).

**Step 2:** Registration details including name, age, level of education, tribe, religious affiliation, if any, and, occupations were taken. This was conducted through dialogic processes, where one local member of the research team moved from person to person to gather demographic details.

**Step 3:** Where typically the chief or district officer would share the agenda for the baraza, for which community members would be informed in advance of the meeting(s), a village elder led the welcome, followed by a reading of the oral script which, by remaining in the space, indicated informed consent. This was succeeded by self-introductions of the research team, including our intentions in the community, in both Kiswahili and English. In addition, all dialogues that
transpired in mabaraza were spoken in language of the speaker, a feature that dates back to pre-colonial sex-talk, where educational processes were carried out in local languages (Kiragu, 2007).

**Step 4:** The village elder present gave a non-specific blessing. After giving blessings to the space and hope for a fruitful discussion, the elder, then turned the process over to Kay, a member of our research team who facilitated mabaraza dialogues. For our female only baraza, this was adjusted because we did not want the presence of an esteemed male from the community to alter the direction of our dialogues. Instead, Kay shared the agenda, read the oral consent script, and, after consensus was reached to begin the discussions, she welcomed one of the elderly women in attendance to share her words of blessings before commencing discussion.

**Step 5:** Kay invited the community contributors to share a little about themselves.

**Step 6:** Kay facilitated a discussion on acknowledging the difficulties of talking in a group space (co-gender space where necessary) and encouraged community contributors to champion each other to share their experiences and opinions. While interruptions were not discouraged, as the aim was to foster a natural dialogue, the research facilitator encouraged members of the group to do so in a respectful manner.

**Step 7:** Leading questions and sharing of storyboards/a short film (in the final dissemination baraza, discussed in *Cycle Four*, Chapter Eight) by our research team facilitator, Kay. As stated at the conclusion of *Cycle Two*, Chapter Six, storyboards developed by the young people were used as the springboard for conversation in each baraza. This arts-informed approach to dialogue was successful in fostering the intergenerational sex-related dialogues, analysed in latter sections of this chapter.

As Amzat and Razum (2018) noted, cultural notions can pose a dialogic paralysis between young people and adults where sensitive issues, such as those pertaining to sex, are considered taboo and youths are expected to practice respect in front of their elders. This was an unavoidable situation in this community’s context. Thus, in an effort to ensure young people had the opportunity to share their experiences, the youth contributors advised the team on the photos and stories, which were the greatest representations of their experiences, to be shared in the mabaraza. This enabled enough distance for young people to remain respectful, but also
prompted dialogue around their experiences, especially where adults encouraged them to speak in the space. While this did not remove full control from adults over young people’s agency, the process remained in line with cultural values for respectful conduct.

The structure of mabaraza processes were meant to be decolonising. Thus, Kay tried to pose questions using the storyboards whereby she could encourage imagining, envisioning, or discovering, as noted in Chapter Three (Duarte & Belarde-Lewis, 2015). For example, “How do these photographs change your understanding of sex-related issues in the community? What can we learn as young people, as adults, sharing their similar experiences of learning and exposure to sex-related ideas?” were questions connected to imagining or making space for new knowledge. Whereas “How do you see or want your future to look?” and “Does this idea better your community?” focused on envisioning and discovering, respectively.

**Step 8:** Responses and interaction amongst community contributors about sex-related issues. To access more voices, Kay handed around one of the recording devices. She weaved in and around people talking, encouragingly but not forcefully, asking them to share the device with each other. This differed from a traditional baraza setting, where leaders in the community would speak about the issues on the agenda and the persons in attendance could respond to questions, but dialogues would, predominately, occur between community elite and the more outspoken members of the community (Loimeier, 2005).

**Step 9:** A discussion around suggested action plans to resolve issues in the future. The dynamics that unfolded during these parts of the dialogues were documented in the journal of one of our research team members, later typed up, and, finally, shared with each team member during the following meeting.

**Step 10:** A discussion to reach consensus on a date for the next baraza. This was achieved with the assistance of a village elder who suggested times that worked around other community gatherings.

**Step 11:** Closing remarks from myself and one other research team member, and a non-specific blessing from a village elder.
A further exploration of the dialogues, carried out through the aforementioned steps for implementing mabaraza, are discussed in greater detail within the chapter. The dynamics of these discussions highlight the challenges and possibilities for changing problematic, sex-related outcomes in the community. In the next section, key research team observations across implementation of the different baraza are shared.

7.3. Key Research Team Observations

After each baraza, our team met to conduct a debrief. This process entailed sharing any observations made about group dynamics, including power imbalances or resistance to engage in conversation. Five key observations were made during each mabaraza:

1) Across all mabaraza, women took longer to begin actively contributing to dialogues than men. We attributed this to the normalised gender codes in the community—where males have a dominance established in conversation and women abide by established gender codes—whereby it is not considered decorous to speak openly on such taboo topics, especially in front of the opposite sex. This was an anticipated challenge that Kay mitigated by addressing women first, when spring boarding a dialogue topic, or by handing the recorder to them directly, and, thus, giving them the ‘stage’.

2) Young people in school contributed less vocally than any of the other community contributors. However, while the facilitator shared the storyboard, the young people wore curious expressions gauging how their stories, or those of their age-mates, would be received by others in attendance. As a team, we determined that, overall, young people’s silence was a limitation to baraza as a method because their shyness could be perceived as an inability to access or exercise their agency. One team member disagreed, as he described their expression as “hopeful caution”, waiting for an adult to directly question them on their experiences. Through further dialoguing, it became apparent that adults may have avoided this move to communicate, as they previously declared a lack of T2T (during FGs in Cycle Two and initial mabaraza testing sessions).

3) Since I and the only other foreigner on our team “struggled for self-expression” (Vanner, 2015, p. 7) due to language barriers, we had the opportunity to witness our local research team members navigate the in-between spaces of researchers and insiders with shared
experiences to those of community members. At times, this resulted in their domination of parts of the dialogue, where they felt compelled to insert their similar lived experiences. While this might be perceived as researchers leading the dialogue direction, it more often than not contributed to its richness.

4) When the main Village Elder partner spoke, there was a clear sense of power—but not in an oppressive manner. The community members hung on his every word. This was valuable, as he demonstrated a strong commitment to the ‘Creating Conversations’ project and a willingness to be a strategic ally in any future stages of any projects.

5) All researchers noted that elements of true dialogic processes surfaced during each baraza. These included laughing, clapping, sighing, shocked gasping, scolding as a form of encouragement to speak, defensiveness with regard to current practices for communicating, and enthusiastic proclamations for change.

Each of these key observations provided meaningful insight into shaping spaces with the community for the future.

7.4. A Critical Post-Colonial Analysis of Mabaraza Dialogues

Through post-colonialism, power is exported and forced. Tyson (2011, p. 247) noted that a “... culture that colonises our consciousness doesn’t have to come from a foreign country. It can exist within the borders of our own nation”. Understanding its forms and effects enables community action researchers to listen to, and work with, community contributors, in order to both name these forces and attempt to deconstruct them. In adapting mabaraza, I utilised elements of Tuhiwai Smith’s (1999) indigenous research agenda, to better shape the questions for the post-colonial analysis applied to this work.7 Tuhiwai Smith (1999) conceptualised indigenous peoples as “moving through various states of being” (p. 116). She denoted these states as survival, recovery, development, and self-determination, and viewed them as fluid positions. In addition, within these states of being were four processes: 1) healing, 2) mobilisation, 3) transformation, 4) transformation.

7 Refer to Linda Tuhiwai Smith’s (1999) Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples (p. 115-118) for a detailed description and depiction of how these concepts fit within the Polynesian metaphor of the ocean tides. While a Kenyan Indigenous perspective cannot be described through the same metaphor, the states of being are relevant to those community collaborators in this research moved through.
and 4) decolonisation. In adapting mabaraza, a Frierian notion of transformative education was shaped. Thus, in my post-colonial analysis of mabaraza, as spaces for intergenerational sex-talk, I focused on the elements of transformation at the psychological, social, political, economic, and collective levels. These arenas of transformation helped to clarify where community contributors were, and needed to go, in terms of decolonising their minds and actions to reach a space where they may want to take full ownership of future sex-related projects, themselves. The five categories shaping transformation, as delineated by Tuhiwai Smith (1999, p. 117), were framed as part of ‘an indigenous research agenda’ but, primarily, for the insider researcher. I designed my own questions for these categories, based on my outsider positioning, to analyse the experiences of insiders to the problem. These included:

- Psychological: How do community members represent themselves in relation to the problem? Do they feel powerless or powerful, in regard to sex-related issues? How do they convey their agency?
- Social: What elements of community members’ environment, and relationships within them, do they view as contributing to the problematic landscape surrounding sex-related issues?
- Political: How do community members assess the effectiveness of sex-related programmes or educational methods in their community? What and whose interests are being served?
- Economic: How are the availability of economic resources (i.e., access to knowledge, access to health services, access to funding for projects) affecting either the experiences of sex-related issues or the sustainability of initiatives that address them?
- Collective Change: What are community members’ perceptions of the capacity for change to problematic sex-related issues, and what do they perceive to be their role?

The notion of community members ‘travelling through these states of being’ was true to the manifestation of hybridity shaping structures for understanding and communicating about sex-related issues. Since community members were responsible for driving the direction of this project, it was essential that I make an effort to analyse their stories while taking into consideration the indigenous Kenyan perspective. In exploring answers to these guiding

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8 Throughout this dissertation, there are multiple mentions of the word ‘indigenous’ in relation to Kenyan knowledge, experience, and tradition. The decision to use this term was influenced by the academic literature I consulted to understand my positionality—especially in terms of working cross-culturally—as well as a lack of theoretical material to understand how to work within Kenyan tradition. However, those who would identify as
questions, this section of the chapter demonstrates the coming to critical awareness by some of the community members to the urgency of sex-related problems in the community, and the need for dialogic spaces, such as mabaraza.

These conversations reflect only the beginnings of the possibilities for dialogues. As recommended in past studies, where baraza were used in different ways, it was deemed the space, with its dialogic processes, should be held repeatedly. Muturi (2005) asserted that—for communication about prevention of sex-related problems in Kenya—to improve, programmes and their interventions must move beyond “... disseminating health messages using popular media or enhancing people’s compliance with medical programs” (p. 78). Instead, there should be a space for discussion on how to increase understanding of messages that are communicated and, with whom, sex-related education should transpire or be championed in communities. I expanded on the concept of hybridity, further, as it came to me, during an analysis of the data, and not as a core construct I entered the space to examine. Instead, I formulated hybridisation of the SHL, as a concept, during my post-colonial analysis of data from Cycles 2-4, and after my fieldwork completed. Despite the usage of the concept not being pre-empted before entering the field, it is an idea that can accurately explain the complexities in the SHL of this community.

Four pertinent themes emerged from mabaraza dialogues:

- Cultural Erosion
- Dot-Com Era
- Reliance
- Staging Change: The Question of Transformation?

These themes are explored in depth, in the sub-sections to follow.
7.4.1 Cultural Erosion

Ignoring a discussion of the power within gender structures that are in a post-colonial community, like Mwakirunge, where neo-colonising influences are at play, would be detrimental to a post-colonial analysis of power imbalances. Development agencies, such as KINGO and PANGO, have organisational cultures that both deliver resources for action and place constraints on individual agency (Foster & Bochner, 2008). With regard to the SHL of Mwakirunge, often, by no choice of their own, these organisations push the narratives of their donors, as they depend on international donor/funding bodies, whose agendas have been shaped through contemporary ideologies of the Global North. This has been recurring, since the surge in international development programmes began to centre women—their rights, thoughts, and experiences—at the core of their initiatives. Years of building this discourse has produced a dominant narrative of unapologetically supporting women, which men highlighted as a source of tension. Women in the community, who, at the time of this research, participated in empowerment spaces would return home and, in some cases, had earned more money than their husbands for that day; thus, making the husband feel belittled, in the sense that his employment was not needed, and, in other cases, neglected by the organisations that came with the goal of improving community circumstances. This led men to ask: “Why are we being left out?” Men perceived this growing disconnect as the result of empowerment trainings that, unapologetically, supported women. Men expressed that failing to include them in sessions on empowerment was counter-intuitive to the very development of the trainings for women; especially, if the goal was for both genders to experience and foster equality, in relation to each other. Several men agreed that their wives returned home from trainings to be more demanding in terms of finances. However, in other scenarios, such as discussions how to educate or inform their child’s behaviours, women failed to dialogue and remained voiceless, as was the case in several points of our female-specific baraza. In this way, INGOs reshaped the othered or wamaskini narrative from women to men, rather than enabling both genders to achieve spaces of mutual respect. A note for future programme design was that, at times, focusing on specific groups in the community can serve to further marginalise others. Male community members have expressed that if organisations can support empowerment forums for women, then they should also integrate men. Not just to be champions for the women, but also including them together, as a group, which is demonstrated in the following dialogue except:

**Male:** I think organisations should have the aim of empowering everyone; not the women and girls only. They should come with the aim of educating even the men, too.
Male: Yes, let’s all sit together and discuss on this. For example, we are here having our discussion, they’re also discussion on their own; there will be no progress because of different groups. (Male, male baraza)

Many community members agreed with these statements, saying that not involving both genders in empowerment or educational training created several trickle-down effects, including verbal and physical abuse. Lorber (2008) asserted that all people perform gender “. . . because not to do so is to be shamed as unmanly or unwomanly” (p. 533). As noted in the dialogue, inability to perform a normalised gender role—when men referenced women’s empowerment trainings hosted by KINGO—was perceived as reducing their hierarchical foothold. In these cases, this destabilised positioning, or identity insecurity, caused tension, potential fuel for sexual rights violations (Muchoki & Wandibba, 2009). The literature notes that males who are threatened by loss of power, are disposed to acts of sexual violence in their domestic environments. These acts are, especially, prevalent when women are no longer the ‘other’ validating the man’s gender which was apparent in this man’s statements:

Due to poverty, mothers have to go looking for firewood. They sell it to make a few shillings to put food on the table. In the same vein, the father can go hustling and turn up with nothing. Women are the backbone of our families. These situations lead to problems. What do we do? We are not (the men) able to be a source of income. (Male, male baraza)

Further creating a tear in the cultural fabric, gendered structures and the system of poverty directly impact the cultural erosion of the SHL. Women from the community receive education around why their lives are important, why others should respect their thoughts and bodies, as well as they should forge viable positions in society. However, because the men they interact with daily, whether on the way home from school, riding a boda-boda, or, simply, at home, do not receive the same education through these programmes, the new knowledge women had the opportunity to engage with, is neither valued nor respected. Thus, dialogues do not occur between the sexes. When organisation like KINGO come in and incentivise women to participate in empowerment opportunities, without including men, cycles of violence are only perpetuated.

In the male baraza, men cited an increase in jobs as a future remedy for ending rape, with little explanation to support this belief. However, investigations within SSA countries highlighted a potential reasoning for this proposition. A study conducted by Niehaus (2005) expanded on connections between rape and economic instability for males living in the South African province of Limpopo. In this location, women became employed at a higher rate than men (a 14-year direct inverse correlation for employment rate between the genders was noted) and, as a result, created was a diminishing sense of masculinity. This loss was attributed to higher acts of
sexual violence instituted by men (Niehaus, 2005). Employment was therefore tied to men’s sense of worth to their family and community. With no viable methods to show their worth, sexual violence against women became a channel to express dominance and masculinity. Silberschmidt (2004) noted that men in Kenya and Tanzania, experienced depression, due to economic marginalisation, where they often resorted to alcohol abuse and macho attitudes, which, lead to instances of aggression or physical violence against women. This offers a potential explanation of the feelings shared by men in mabaraza. Thus, males in these communities—who have been perpetuating violence, abuse, disrespect, and disempowerment—may continue to do so because they are excluded.

It is a good initiative to, unapologetically, support women, especially in places where they are perpetually undervalued and underrepresented. However, community contributors explained that by supporting women-only spaces, in ways that exclude men from the conversation or opportunities to receive the same support networks, serves only to widen the divide already existing between genders in these rural communities. In many ways, this approach negates any women’s empowerment that can take place. Our research team is, in no way, concluding women cannot be empowered without men. However, in this particular community, under the myriad of challenging variables that shape how people live their lives, strategies employed to uplift women are, in fact, neglecting and creating resentment amongst many in the male population. These men want the same opportunity to engage with education about respecting gender, bodies, and women’s opinions. Men want access to the same resources and guidance (education, training, funding) to form networks women have been supported in building that strive to shape stronger communities. If men are continually excluded, by default, how can they be expected to change their thinking around what women deserve, especially with regard to sexual rights? Or, further, how can this not lead to viewing women in a negative way?

In writing of the colonial period in Kenya, Courville’s (1993) point about women occupying the head of household role, as a mother, gave women their limited social standing. These values persist today in this Mijikendan community, as not producing children is considered shameful and continues to be a method how women gain status through marriage. In the context of the dialogues, this is problematic for two reasons. Having women’s most important roles being child bearing and martial duties limits their independence, while contributing to cases of adolescent teen pregnancy becoming more acceptable. Secondly, organisations that focus on the empowerment of women only, create a problematic gender dynamic that does not account for the
male identity insecurities that result. It is important to note that patriarchal roles cannot continue to be pushed as the main factor, and, certainly, not the singular reasoning behind poverty, gender imbalances, and sex-related problems. The lens needs widening, starting with programmes or projects that involve process for embedding and interrogating gendered structures within their contexts.

Another source of obvious cultural loss was the dissolved pre-colonial sex education processes that had not been restored after independence; although, many community members recalled the traditions. The following dialogue evidenced loss of cultural educational processes. Examining this dialogue, in comparison to the pre-colonial Mijikenda norms and practices surrounding sex-talk highlighted in Chapter Four, it is evident that sex is being taught or viewed as a simple act, in and of itself, and not as an educational process which is vital to the growth and connectedness of community-sustained health:

> My contribution regarding our culture and customs is that males sit with grandparents and discuss or learn about sex, the same is true for girls. But to date, these forums are no longer there and this has contributed to teen pregnancy. Lack of these forums is dangerous for us. (Male, male baraza)

With clear lack of spaces to communicate, there are few meaningful routes for community members to, effectively address the myriad of sex-related challenges that present themselves in culturally erosive forms. Thus, making situations such as gender division and vulnerable exposure to sexual violations more dangerous than they would be in a different context. Here, both sexes are getting the short end of the stick. Males and females, of all ages, are merely existing in a third space, in which they do not have the tools (e.g., coping strategies) to accept their new roles (e.g., gender role shifts as a result of NGO programming). Without a solid means of negotiating ways forward, vulnerabilities will persist and, possibly, worsen.

What good is power, if you do not know how to wield it? Men, for the most part, have not had to bite their tongues. Whether that is right or wrong is irrelevant; that is simply how it has been. Women, typically, assumed their subordinate roles and ‘operated’ behind the scenes. How is either sex supposed to cope with their new roles, if there was no transition period? This is a shock to the enculturated mentalities—the ways of knowing, sustained over multiple generations. It could be perceived that male community contributors characterise NGO programming—set to empower women only—as a neo-colonising force, stunting their potential for positive social transformation. Contrastingly, from females’ perspectives these programmes could be perceived as exponentially improving their position within the community, through enhancing their
agency—which could, in turn, lead to positive social transformation to their sexual agency. Hence, it is imperative to understand the dangerous environments that have been constructed, as a result of these programmes, along with the encroachment of innovative technologies that are changing the SHL of this community—explored in the next sub-section.

Cultural representation of gender roles associated with the maintenance of morality sits in a perplexing space, where cultural erosion is occurring through interactions between foreign and local ideas. Oluga, Kiragu, Mohamed, and Walli (2010), in reference to students, asserted that the project of raising critical consciousness is a necessary and delicate one, in relation to sexuality education. It has equal potential to maintain the virtue of indigenous ways of knowing or, alternatively, to generate resistance through humiliation, if approached in a top-down manner that frames local knowledge as naïve or unintelligible. This speaks to the need of having in-depth contextual understanding of problematic sex-related issues, before designing interventions to change them. In shaping future educational opportunities around sex-related issues, the authors recommended that spaces which foster critical consciousness be facilitated by “... an open-minded insider to local culture” (Oluga et al., 2010, p. 376). This proved difficult in the mabaraza setting, where young people felt pressure to maintain gender roles. Young people, when prompted to speak up, put forth the claim that they did not engage in “the activity”:

Kay: Okay young girl, what did your mother tell you about sex? Are you feeling shy?
Female Seven: Please speak up young girl, we are interested in hearing what you have to say.
Female Six: speak up because it is your age that gets involved in sex and you don’t want to talk about it.
Female Youth Eight: Maybe she does not get involved in sex.
Female Youth Two: Yes. I don’t do that. [Laughter amongst the ladies including the young girl]
(Female Baraza)
Kay: Maybe you don’t do it but maybe your friends do? What might they speak about? Because education can take place not only at home or in school, but even by the wayside.
Female Youth Three: While you are with your age-mates, you teach them not to follow the bad ways. (Female Baraza)

This quote was laden with imbalances of power between Kay, our baraza facilitator who prompted conversation, and the younger and older generations of females. In this case, younger females in the group resisted the blame by remaining silent, and those who did speak up, denied their associations with any behaviours considered deviant. Thus, young girls opted to represent themselves in a moral position, upholding socially acceptable identities in front of their elders. From an etic standpoint, this was perceived as a form of resistance to partaking in the dialogue. Rationale for these actions was to create distance between themselves and the dominant discourse of sex—conceptualised as ‘evils’ or ‘dangerous’ for example—or separating
themselves from the sex-related issue, and, thus, providing security against possible judgements from their peers and elders. Brown, Shoveller, Chabot and LaMontagne (2013) acknowledged that young people resist, similar to those who participated in the above mabaraza dialogue, as a means of taking control over their identities and, accordingly, how others perceive them. The maintenance of culturally accepted gender roles against the current erosion of culture is dangerous, as it leaves young people in a space between exposures to new sexual knowledge and the need to hide these experiences for fear of being judged.

Fear, judgment, and shyness were key elements from the funnel of silence that hindered open sexual communication, where there was a pressure to project positive gender roles, with regard to sex. In addition, several of the adults, despite young people previously sharing they were rarely engaged in a sex-talk with an elder or parent, represented themselves as exceptions to the lack of parental-child communication about sexual issues in the community.

I, as an elder, believe we parents do a lot; we educate our children…If I see wrongs, I tell them what they are doing outside will not benefit them. When you go to school, do what you are supposed to do: study. I tell them having sex now will benefit them at all. Remember, we are giving you the opportunity to study. Forget about sex until you finish school. They say boys and girls sex it is your responsibility to use a condom with sex. How can you use a condom when you aren’t even old enough to think of having a wife? I warn you young people, forget about sex to be successful. (Male Elder, Male baraza)

This morally educative way of conveying how one should handle sex causes more silences amongst young people because sex has become treated as a zero-sum game (Kiragu, 2007). Adults expressed youths cannot have both education and pleasure, which may be the cause for lack of desire to speak about the topic. Another man acknowledged he, too, educated his children on sex; his contribution to the dialogue also evidenced a moralising discourse and a narrow view of sex-related education topics:

In my house, I always tell my children about sex in this way. That if they get involved in sex at an early age, it will ruin their life because they cannot do two things at the same time. If in school, finish it first, and then you can have sex. Apart from that, I have not sat my family down to have sex-talk. (Male, Male baraza)

Wanje et al. (2017) attributed parents’ need to push young people’s sex lives out of the realm of adolescence until education is gained to a lack of a sexual health discourse. Confining young people’s sexualities to moral representations is interpreted as a means to salvage remnants of colonial-shaped understandings of sex culture, and the varied roles people of different ages have within it. The contributions, presented in these dialogues, evidenced that cultural erosion, and
fear of it, is implicit to the current hybridising context of Mwakirunge, creating dangerous environments for young people’s sexual learning and exposure.

7.4.2 Dot-Com Era

The “Dot-com Era” was a theme that appeared across all three mabaraza, in Cycle Three. Adults, especially elders in the community, avowed that the encroachment of foreign (national and international) commodities and ideals, such as mobile phones and access to the internet, accompanied new sets of knowledges. These new ways of knowing intersect and, at times, come into conflict with local values, which were regarded as problematic for adults, especially in cases where cultural erosion was striking. However, it is within this third space that young people navigate and negotiate their sexual realities, which aligned with findings from other research on youths’ sexual exposure routes (Kimemia & Mugambi, 2016).

Cultural erosion was referenced as a by-product of the dot-com era. In many instances throughout the dialogues, adults expressed the futility of discussions with young people, whose sexual content access they could no longer control, as shown here in this quote:

We may say the youth don’t know. You see these cell phones. If you took most youth cell phones, they would have sexual content on them. I may refuse to talk to them about sex, however, from their mobiles, they can access pornography. My sister, don’t you know that pornography can be accessed using the mobile? Most of the youth have mobiles and those without a phone, their friends show them these sexual videos. Once you see them, you become aroused. (Male, male baraza)

In this example, the man expresses powerlessness in face of technological access by young people. From previous accounts of grandparents teaching children, technology has replaced their role. Further, several participants in the dialogues agreed there was a decreased likelihood for adults to speak with young people about questions they may have after seeing these videos. In essence, technology has become the grandparents, responsible for delivery of information. However, feedback is not available. Young people no longer have the support person they can ask their questions to, or be given information by, as represented in this quote:

Some parents see their young children—even in class 4—having a mobile and the parent does not question where they got it from. The youths involve themselves on sex issues through mobiles and the parents do not question this (Male, male baraza)

From this statement, the male has explained how the dot-com era entails more than the technology, itself. Citing young people having phones which their parents do not question (and, presumably, unable to afford), creates further conflict between generations, where material and
monetary elevations are an imperative for younger generations. This is linked to the transactional sex narratives shared in Chapter Six and literature that highlights young people’s affixations on new forms of wealth, for which they may trade sex for goods (Mojola, 2014). In the co-gender baraza, young people were silent, while adults actively attributed youths’ dangerous sexual habits as symptoms of the dot-com era:

I am speaking as an ambassador to our children. We are in the “dot com” era. This is what is ruining our children. I will start with the dressing. In the earlier/past generations, it was impossible to see someone dressed in seductive clothes. This is now happening and is the cause of teen pregnancy. A girl will be scantily dressed and I will be sexually aroused. In the parents’ context, we discuss these issues but we cannot force our children. I have spoken to my child six or seven times but the behaviour is still there. These “dot.com” habits are contributing to early marriages. As a parent, I may have warned my child on certain issues. However, due to peer pressure, such as someone from Nairobi coming to visit and influencing my child and, then, my child influencing her friends (in the community), these children become different people with new systems. If she is dressed in a ‘leso’, so will they, and the boys in the area will be aroused. The dressing has also contributed to the rape cases. (Male, co-gender baraza)

This dialogue excerpt evidences a loss of lines of relating, in particular, across intergenerational relationships because, as similarly noted by Altman (2001), “… members of particular groups have more in common across national and continental boundaries than they do with others in their own geographically defined societies” in hybridising context (p. 87). In this part of the dialogue, there was an inability to recognise technology as being only one part of a larger problem, and a blatant disregard for the people perpetrating sexual rights violations, such as rape. The man indicated resignation in the belief that sex-related problems in the community could be addressed and reversed—an incapacity for collective transformation. The contributors’ excerpt could be interpreted through culture as an excuse to fault what is happening on the newer generation’s code of dress. Blaming a cultural shift in dress, as a cause of rape, is making excuses for those who perpetuate such crimes. Choosing to blame this aspect of culture is outright ignorant of the fact that people in the community have not had proper exposure or education on feelings associated with sex and desire, a commonality found in other studies (McLaughlin et al., 2015; Mizzi, 2008). Is it right to rape someone just because you feel sexually aroused? This is a prime example of uninformed social constructions held amongst some community members.

Overall, the “dot-com” era included not only technology but, even, the practices or beliefs of the millennial generation. Elders, and other adult contributors, stated that exposure to risqué content that idealised sexualisation, was observed more regularly. Hence, young people mimicked these representations as exhibited in the following quote:
Leave alone the notion of children learning from home because their parents have sex. These things called “dot.com” is what has brought problems to us. Things like mobile phones. As you walk past a place and the children are using phones to watch these things. They are concentrating so hard on the phones that they do not even hear you coming. Even very small kids are watching these things. This information is everywhere; they will just dial and watch everything from A to Z. This “dot.com” has brought a lot of bad things. We warned that www-dot-com will come and spoil our lives; it is here and our lives are really bad . . . The problem is in the phones. You will see children with big phones, even you cannot afford! These things are spoiling our lives and the more inventions arising, the more society continues to become rotten. Next, you will see people having sex by the road, the way things are going. (Male, Co-gender baraza)

This quote is not just about the technological encroachment on their community. It reiterates previous expressions of disconnectedness, or loss of unity, between the generations. Further, this male evoked a strong belief that this downward trend will only continue and the gap between the generations will, probably, widen. In terms of neo-colonising elements, pornography enhances the danger of young people exposing themselves to situations where they have no place to ask questions and, thus, find out for themselves. This relates to Bhabha’s (1991) description that the “. . . borderline culture of hybridity is a powerful and creative ‘third space’ through which ‘newness enters the world’, subverting the authority of the dominant discourse” (p. 116). In this case, young people in the community are negotiating their own cultural identities related to sexual norms and behaviours, and are unrecognisable to the previous generations whose communication, learning, and exposure experiences were very different. In continuing our dialogue, community members and our research team tried to reach a position of resolution.

Psychologically, the adult or elder generations expressed powerlessness against the technological innovations to which younger generations have easy access. These new encroachments created a space whereby younger generations began to negotiate their understandings within the SHL; adults’ roles have, in effect, been replaced and, thus, they experience less control over young peoples’ lives. Building on, and expediting, this loss of control, technology has offered an emancipatory route, through which young people are able to access their sexual desires. However, the current SLC is not conducive to translating these foreign sex-related ideas. Whilst access to technology was noted to enhance young people’s feelings of agency over their sexual lives—at the expense of adult regulation—this newfound liberation does not come without risk potentials. Adults viewed the dot-com era as one of the most significant sex-related problems in the ward. However, for young people, it was a route to access knowledge. Desire to regulate young people’s sexualities and their learnings, with respect to such topics, was thoroughly explored in previous literature, as noted by Chikocore, Nystrom, Lindmark, and Ahlberg (2013). Despite adults’ desire for regulation of young people’s bodies and behaviours, after thorough and
thoughtful engagements with young people’s accounts through storyboard sessions in mabaraza, community members arrived at a resolve. The groups agreed that discussion spaces were necessary to alleviate the increased risk that technological exposure channels posed. Adapting mabaraza was conceived as a valuable space to expose the problems technology creates, but also a safe space for young people to come to an understanding on sex-related topics (through discussions of storyboards). These suggestions for change are further expounded in the later part of this chapter. However, before arriving at a collective description for proposed change, dependency relationships that have been incentivised and disrupt pathways for change must be discussed.

7.4.3 Reliance

Dependency generated through international aid programmes is widely theorised as problematic in various contexts across the globe (Nikkhah, & Redzuan 2010; Sahoo, 2013). In the case of Kenya, and other SSA countries, aid organisations are deeply embedded in the structural access to education and health care services that interact with foreign knowledges (Amutabi, 2013; Kesterton & de Mello 2010; Thor Thorvardarson, 2007). In rural Kenyan communities, locals lead labour-intensive lives, while coming into contact with Global North influences that place a greater value on material and financial capital than traditional trade economies or processes, such as harambee. Reliance on programmes where participation is garnered through offer of incentives (i.e., money, clothing, food, etc.,) has become widely popularised and problematic, in trying to create sustainable community-driven change (Amutabi, 2013). Challenges between implementing interventions that align with community wants and needs are well documented in literature related to development programmes in the African context (Mhango, 2017). This was also a theme perpetuated by KINGO members, whom we held a final focus group with about possibilities of baraza as an intervention for intergenerational sex-talk. While these conversations occurred outside testing mabaraza, they are important to include here—alongside community member dialogues—as they directly affect how requests for resourcing activities may relate to how future interventions might be met. Reliance narratives that emerged out of dialogues indicated dependent relationships, which are crucial to interrogate, when attempting to create decolonised approaches to sex-related communication projects with this community.

Amongst the community members who dialogueed in mabaraza, poverty was central to their narratives surrounding sex, as they discussed the theme “bodies as business”, described in
Chapter Seven. While several community contributors viewed having a stable source of income as a fast route, and first-step, to undoing problematic sex-related issues, reliance on stipends from aid organisations was an easier option. Community members shunned their responsibilities through fatalistic notions that something, or someone, would, eventually, fix the problems, as evidenced through the following dialogue excerpt from the co-gender baraza:

Male 22: I think if you have any other way of telling us these things, please do. If you feel there is a way to explain more to us, we are okay with that.
Male 18: If you could tell us how to follow plans A, B, C and D, maybe that could help us find a solution. (Co-gender baraza)

This portion of dialogue is an example of reliance through community members wanting the answers for their issues to be provided to them—this was a common act across all mabaraza. Current and past programmes, it may be argued, created these dependencies through incentives. Reliance on external organisations was often not conceived as valuable for the knowledge that could be gained, but for the incentives that might accompany attendance. A contributor in the male baraza reiterated this notion, during discussion around health programming:

I think we African are backwards, because some people just came here today because they heard wazungus (white people) have come, assuming they have come with money. If they knew there was no money, they would not have come. (Male, Male baraza)

Evidencing that even if problematic issues and urgent responses, such as those related to sex, are made resoundingly apparent, desire to resolve the issue will go unmet, if there is no tangible incentive for community members to receive. Whilst men, by and large, contributed to progressive dialogues, reliance in the female baraza was a key contributor to the initial high attendance level. However, as noted by only 22 females being left at the end of the baraza, many seemed to be unwilling to speak or elaborate on storyboards of young person’s accounts being shared, without being given an incentive. The current SHL will only worsen, if community members refuse to acknowledge and work on these areas of concern without, first, receiving material incentives to do so, and not of their own volition. Unfortunately, reliance has become a way of life for many people in the community because they do not feel like their actions are bearing any results:

For now, you can provide us with a solution because most of these cases are never solved. You spend a lot of fare going to the hearings (for violations of sexual rights) until you give up. At times, it is there (a CBO who deals with sexual rights violations) children that have caused these things (rape, teen pregnancy). You will never get justice. Not even a single person in Mwakirunge has been convicted or had any action taken against them. The cases remain unsolved. (Male youth, Co-gender baraza)
This represented reliance as a result of genuine loss of agency. There was no giving up of their faculties, accessing agency did not seem to be an option for this person anymore. Failed past programming, resulting in little-to-no change, caused this community member to ask for our research team’s assistance; reliance seemed to stem from a place of helplessness.

In speaking with KINGO employees, dismissal of reliance, surfaced in our conversation:

**KINGO is a rights-based organisation. If you are planning to keep people for more than two to three hours, like for a meeting that will extend beyond lunch time, of course, we will go back to the office and have a cup of tea. It’s only fair and right that you ensure they have lunch, or compensate them with something small . . . It’s not that we are developing a dependency syndrome. But for us it’s very clear. If we have called you for a meeting, you might come from the furthest ends. We understand you use transport and that sometimes money may not be, so they walk a long distance. When you give money to that person who is poor, they will debate if they should use the money on transport, or walk and use it for food for their children. It will not only be lunch for them but for the whole family. That I want to say, maybe your approach is wrong. (KINGO employee, dissemination focus group)**

Through this employee’s comments, there is clear contradiction in what KINGO says the organisation is attempting to accomplish, and what is actually transpiring, when we take community contributor dialogues into account. While it is important to state that I am not framing KINGO as the oppressor, repercussions of how they operate within the community may construct oppressive situations; where residents of the ward consider weighing performing agency, in face of sex-related and other problems, over silence, in order to access gains. KINGO, in the previous excerpt, stated that it was not the organisation’s intention to create a dependency syndrome, but incentives are part and parcel of their participatory operations. Moreover, our research team shared, during the dissemination focus group with KINGO, that community members noted this reliance, too. Yet, even if unintentional, the organisation did not acknowledge their role in shaping this dichotomy. Gatwiri and Mumbi (2016, p. 14) stated that this “. . . silence is dangerous since it instils a double-mind within the oppressor enabling him to validate his own actions as not harmful . . .” (Gatwiri & Mumbi, p. 14). In this context, the KINGO relationship in the community resembles a dog chasing its tail. In spite of the participatory appraisals they perform to understand community need, KINGO is pre-empting results through incentivising participation.

Reliance on external organisations for compensation, in the forms of food, money, or material goods, may discourage community members from accessing or exercising their agency, when questions related to sexual health or other issues arise, for the fear they might not be compensated. This is wilful rejection, or resistance to exercising individual agency. This idea
relates to Kenyan authors, who explored women using silence as a bargaining chip to combat the patriarchal injustices they faced (Gatwiri & Mumbi, 2016). This is using silence as a form of power (Hollander & Einwohner, 2004); when the individual understands there is more to be gained in accommodating external organisations, such as KINGO, rather than expressing their concerns, due to understanding the consequences of choosing the alternative. In discussing ability to decolonise one’s mind, Graham Hingangaroa Smith (1997) argued that individuals must acknowledge the roles they play in their own oppression. He stated:

Those who are marginalised and disempowered, in attempting to convince those with power and control, (those at the ‘centre’), of the merits of what ‘we’ have to say, are more susceptible to having to ‘play the game’ and conforming to the dominant agenda and in doing so, also forming and contributing to our own oppression. (p. 48)

Considering this quote, in the Kenyan context of how barriers to discussing and dealing with sex-related issues are constructed, it is easier to relinquish, or pass off, responsibility, in the face of programmes that are not entirely community-driven, either intentionally or unintentionally. This places a greater emphasis on the harsh realities of sex-related circumstances of learning and exposure, to actively deal with dismantling its problematic effects in the community. Without acknowledging their own role in their oppression—to gain heightened critical consciousness around the dependency systems that influence their experiences related to sex—decolonising community contributors’ minds to create sustainable change was not always promising.

7.4.4 Staging Change: The Question of Transformation?

In conceptualising the development of conscientization, Freire (1994) acknowledged this process as a “... dialectical movement back and forth between consciousness and the world” (p. 89). In the process of realising critical awareness through dialogue, community members weaved in and out of this space; in some moments, fully embracing how foreign or external influences impact negatively on sexual exposure and amplify the silences related to sexual communication. In other instances, where resistance was present, some community members could more clearly envision their presence within a complex dynamic, between the local and the neo-colonising, and, further, their role in its change. These dialogues are described in this section.

As a starting point for change, young people and the elder generations viewed T2T as necessary first stages toward change. Concerns around ability to communicate effectively, and to access agency, were viewed as imperative to address through gender-divided mentorship spaces. During the male baraza, contributors envisioned a staged process for creating sustainable
intergenerational sex-talk spaces, that would encourage those who could not access and exercise their agency to gain the capacity to do so in an environment among similar age-sets and genders, as shared here:

**Youth 10:** In mentorship forums, parents, and us youth, should have a joint session because, like myself, I cannot start talking to my dad on sexual issues and telling him what I am up to. I hope you understand what I am saying.

**Youth 7:** I think the boys and girls from this area need to be brought together and educated on sex issues. Next, both parents. Finally, a session for the whole community.

**Elder Male:** In regard to holding forums for adults and youths, let it not be a one-off. Come another day and enlighten us!

**Male 17:** Yes, anyone can do it, as long as the person has had proper education. Even if it’s me, I have had the proper education, so that when I come to educate people and they ask questions, I will have the right answers to their questions. (Male baraza)

It was important that the community projects pioneer empowering approaches, to encourage the participation of a broad range of individuals, groups, and institutions in all stages and levels of responses. However, some community members created a difficult task by being unwilling to identify the most pertinent needs, in terms of the subject being addressed in new programmes. In reference to accessing, sharing, and challenging new knowledge, contributors from Mwakirunge and surrounding areas identified young people as a prime starting point to begin enacting positive changes, such as helping to open up safe spaces for sex talk. Engaging young people in service development helps ensure the service is well-used and trusted, as evidenced in an excerpt from the following conversation:

**Karen:** Okay, So, if I may ask what do you think is the importance of having this type of education in your community?

**Female 30:** If you want these youths who can educate the women, you will find them, but you first have to teach them so that they can come and teach us.

**Female 20:** Yes. We still need you to teach us so that we can in turn teach the other women. For example, if I am living with another woman like my mother, yes, she will teach me, but it will be hard for another woman to teach me these things easily. I think first you teach an individual who will be able to teach the rest of the women more easily as she now has the proper knowledge about these issues do you understand me? (Female baraza)

Based on community convictions, the young people in Mwakirunge can be the ones to champion for safe sex measures and open discussion in their own community, if properly trained and guided through the process. However, in order to support this community in such a process, its members need to provide their own solution and take up leadership, if they wish to create safe spaces themselves. Only then can organisations help generate sustainable impacts through helping to facilitate the process of decision-making, and support, in terms of resources (education and training). This, in turn, gives the community back their power, instead of it remaining with the organisations or influential people in the society. During a co-gender baraza, the crowd
reiterated these sentiments, when speaking about the ability of both youths or adults, to step up and be trained as community facilitators:

Yes! They are there! Just bring them over to these meetings teach them and in turn they can teach us women. (Crowd, Co-Gender Baraza)

In the all-female baraza, women from both generations, also built on the idea of being trained in sex-related education, in order to become educators within smaller groups in their community:

**Female 18:** I think we need proper education because when you talk about sex right now this is totally different from what we know in the olden days. Back then in our culture there were no Sexually transmitted diseases the only common one was gonorrhoea but in today society there is AIDS and many others. We need to be sensitized and not once but twice. Then after the sensitization you can now call the grown-up men and women. Later the men and boys can have their own forum after that we can all come together but do not mix all of us together at first there will be a lot of disagreements amongst ourselves.

**Researcher 2:** So, what you’re are saying you cannot all attend a meeting as fathers, mothers and the youth and discuss your problems as one family?

**Crowd of Women and Girls:** We can it is possible for us to all be mixed together.

**Researcher 1:** Okay, if it is possible how many times would you recommend we have this meetings in these spaces the reason as to why I am asking this is because as Kwacha we have done our research and seen you’re still not satisfied with our sensitization why I am saying that is because we had a forum with young women in Mirimani and from our findings it was clear that you people want sensitization many times.

**Adult Female 5:** Yes! I agree with you if you could come many times and people get to hear what you have to say and if you say it several times it will stick in our heads. If it is alright you come many times and sensitize us about these issues even if you hold seminars at the chief’s offices just call us and wherever we will be, we will make an effort and come so that we can learn and it sticks in our heads. We hope our children will be here to hear though children of today are not easy to educate so we do not know who they will listen to. Whether it is the chief, or people form Kwacha or we their parents who live with them at home.

**Adult Female 2:** I think we have done our part in educating them [the youth] and they [the youth] still do the same things. Maybe if we get to go to these seminars [mabaraza] you can really expound on what we are supposed to tell them and how we are supposed to say it.

From their concerns, it was clear more training needs to occur. This means frequency of training, educational material engaged, and relevancy to community issues, need to be enhanced. All genders and age groups should be given the opportunity to participate in such trainings. Opening up spaces (even if they are separate) for different generations to receive and explore new knowledge, will increase overall uptake of healthier behaviours and more informed decisions.

Lack of education, appropriate channels to educate, and differences in generations—among other traits—were all reasons for fostering mabaraza settings. Another reason for mabaraza settings is the future of young people in the community. In the female baraza, this vision initiated a fruitful dialogue of change:

**Female 2:** We want our children to go to school and get educated
Female 16: Yes, as parents, we don’t know what to exactly tell our children. They are getting pregnant all the time; we don’t know what to tell them. Whose role, is it? Is it the father’s or mother’s and what do we teach them? We would like to know.

Female 18: I think we need proper education because when you talk about sex right now, this is totally different from what we knew in the olden days.

Female 5: I agree. We hope our children will be here to hear. Though, children of today are not easy to educate, so we do not know who they will listen to, but this (baraza) is an option. (Female baraza)

The desire for education, acknowledgement of an altered SLC, and changes around sexual communication were pertinent in this conversation but was matched with confusion about how to move forward. Taking this information forward into other mabaraza we asked how these concerns might be addressed. This led to dialogues which indicated a need for strategic alliances in connecting to awareness around health care agencies—as well as district offices responsible for other facilities in the community (i.e., dumpsite management)—where further sex-related vulnerabilities, alongside additional problem behaviours that create unrest in the community, are commonplace. Having strategic alliance partners helps bridge the gap between understanding and knowledge related to sexual content, as well as widens the extent of how far an organisations services reach (Tajik & Minkler, 2006). One elder hinted toward this possibility to dialogue with and across different people and groups in mabaraza:

This forum should not be a one day affair with only us. Maybe other organisations with similar goals can come. With time, you will see [pointing at the research team] the difference, and they will be active in discussion. Let us agree in this meeting the next time you will come back we have another, co-gender forum, they will be prepared! (Elder, male baraza).

While frequency of meetings was important, so, too, was the potential for strategic alliances:

We would wish for you people to come and even if you will involve people from KINGO to come over and we help each other out. If you know of other leaders out there you can also come with them so we can help each other to brainstorm and get ideas on what to do and help our kids from getting early pregnancies and instead we want our children to go to school and get educated. (Female, female baraza)

This woman’s plea for support from external community sources shows reliance on outside information and people to foster change. However, her desire for change, education, and better lives for children shows that an internal drive exists—a necessary component to take steps towards addressing sex related issues that currently pose challenges to quality of life for youth and their families. Often, community members accepted KINGO as being politically and socially powerful and, thus, valuable for change creation. However, they still acknowledged their individual and collective positions, as members of the community, to create change. Some community contributors, who want to learn, believed in the importance of information helping change their lives and attitudes:
Mostly we are just expectant but we really don’t know why we have been asked to attend but we expect to learn something from this discussion if we know something the better if not we learn something new. (Female, co-gender baraza)

Insofar as it is only humane that people be provided for reimbursement for food and transport back home, if it remains the only motivation for people in the community, then lasting positive changes have little chance to blossom. Seeing value beyond monetary and material gains encourages openness to receive knowledge and, potentially, to gains on a larger scale, due to increased awareness of sex-related issues, education, and, eventually, safer sexual behaviours. In this way, community contributors framed INGOs and NGOs as valuable partners in alleviating their economic oppression. Contributors also expressed respect for these organisations and the work they did in the community, especially in reference to PANGO and KINGO—the largest organisations in the area. This community respect was the essence of Ubuntu. In the same way those in the community can seek strategic partnerships to address their issues, we, as researchers, should be cognisant of trying to understand if community members see our partnership as strategically beneficial for them, too. In other instances, NGOs, as strategic alliances, were portrayed as inefficient:

[In speaking about rape and the need to change the community’s situation] There are those people in the community who say that it is someone else’s child, so let her be. These are some of the misconceptions that we have in our brains, which need to be eroded. It is because they (the community members who would not take action against rape if it is not their child) do not have knowledge about these issues and even when a meeting is called pertaining the same agenda, they do not show and things remain the same. We as parents, as adults, should be united on the issues that affect our children. Let us all wake up, both adults and the elders, so that we can find a way forward in this predicament. (Woman, co-gender baraza)

Across the dialogues, a suggestion requested by contributors, was that of multi-stakeholder formatting. That is, members suggested holding forums for each group separately—such as with: elders and adults; youths out-of-school; young people in school; and, with different genders. Further details exploring future implementation possibilities are discussed in Cycle Four: Dissemination that follows in the next chapter.

7.5. Knots on a Rope

Kamba hukatika pabovu . . . a rope breaks where it is rotten.
Kiswahili methali

In an effort to understand the cultural contexts of community contributors more comprehensively, I carried out further investigation in to the main tribe and its sub-tribes of
people in the ward. During my exploration, I learned that in Mijikenda culture, Kaya, or sacred forests, are held in high regard. Within these forests are ritual huts that house important cultural elements, such as secret objects, in addition to being spaces where cultural processes are lived out. To explicate the importance of these huts, only one person may enter and sit at a given time: an appointed Elder. Considering the significance, the Mijikenda peoples attach to these locations, prominence is placed on the items selected for their construction. The kitoja, thatch grass, comprise the walls, while the poles for the huts may only be of Myama trees, or Mkone. Finally, the ropes used are of Mkone or Morya bark, and all construction materials for the huts are procured within the Kaya themselves. Communal construction of these huts is inherent to major Kaya ceremonies (The National Museums of Kenya, 2008).

When building, one must pay attention to the integrity of the items being used. These huts will stand only as long as their components remain intact. The kitoja and hut poles must be strong enough to provide the structure the ability to stand. However, it is the rope that binds everything together. Without quality rope, the hut will, assuredly, collapse. Similarly, the rope cannot have knots, as they create the weakest points, putting pressure on its fibres and stresses the structure. From this vantage, imagine the Kaya to be Mwakirunge, the ritual huts, its SHL, the poles and thatch grass as its people, and the rope as the equilibrium which allows for community members to operate in unity. In this context, consider knots on the rope to be those strains which are hindrances to a positive SHL and SLCs within the community, as illustrated in Figure. 26.

These issues would include: risky sexual behaviours; reliance; silences; lack of space for critical consciousness; technological encroachments; maintenance of acceptable identities; and sites of sexual learning and exposure that increase vulnerabilities. If knots are entangled in the rope, the viability of the hut to remain standing is marginal, at best. For this reason, untangling the knots and straightening the rope is of utmost importance, as it ensures the stability of the ritual hut—the same is true for a strong and healthy SHL for the people of Mwakirunge. Just as materials for the ritual huts are sourced from within the Kaya, so too, must community problems be addressed from within.
Mwakirunge is a post-colonial environment in a hybridising context, where external forces influencing the community can be interpreted as neo-colonising. In this sense, these forces erode the cultural values and beliefs of adults and older generations, and, in the process, shape a complex third space in which young people are simultaneously navigating their sexual identities and vulnerabilities. Multiple sexual discourses, from the pre-colonial era until the time of this data collection, deepened and influence these knots for the community.

Untangling the rope means reaching critical awareness to address sex-related problems. Being able to do so means community members are now in the process of decolonisation of the mind. However, it is essential to remember that this must be a continual process because the external neo-colonising and hybridising forces will, persistently, impact on their community, as it currently exists in a third space. As with any knot, especially one that has been tied very tightly, untangling usually requires time and effort, and is not done on the first try. Many times, the knot is strained on certain fibres, before the knot can be completely removed. Even in reaching a critical
awareness around urgency to address community sex-related issues, which was achieved through this work, our research team witnessed growing tensions during mabaraza when young people’s story boards were presented. For some in attendance, this situation was very confronting and uncomfortable because of their affiliations. Perceiving the sexual health landscape as a rope, it is hard to know which part of the rope is the starting or the end point. If we keep this analogy in mind, the focus should then be on the knots—changing the sex-related issues one by one—instead of all at once. If we focus on staging how we addressed each of the issues contributing to the wider problematic sexual health landscape, giving each knot the time and effort required, the rope, or the sexual health landscape, becomes stronger. In addition, the community contributors can remain more focused on the manageable task at hand. If you have a dozen knots on a rope, that are well-established, our tendencies, as human beings, are to give up after a few tries at untangling. You may untie four knots but then get tired, frustrated, and, ultimately, put the rope down. Wanting to see an end result often debilitates our motivations, when a task proves particularly taxing.

If we ignore the ends completely, focus on the individual knots, and conceive it as a process of wanting the rope to be straight and strong, it does not matter where the start or end is, only that the rope returns to its strengthened state; limiting immediate expectations, and, thus, likelihood of failure and subsequently defeatism. However, even in conceptualising addressing problems in this staged way, it is vital to acknowledge that some people are more privileged than others to have the time to dedicate even a small amount of time to a staged project. Herein lies the challenge to these safe sex-talk spaces being truly adopted. The lives of community contributors from Mwakirunge are very labour-intensive. For them to devote even a small amount of time to untangling part of the rope would assume a higher motivation, and, thus, critical awareness around the urgency of interrogating and addressing sex-related issues.
Chapter 8. Cycle Four: Dissemination

8.1. What Do We Do with These Findings?

“Which way do we go? What do we do with these findings? There are so many things the community can begin addressing, if they choose to adopt and adapt mabaraza for sex-talks”. In one of our remaining meetings, before the co-gender dissemination mabaraza of initial findings across the ‘Creating Conversations’ project, Wendy, a local member of the research team, raised these questions—the very same ones I was internally struggling with at the time. In my view, the process of dissemination in a CBPAR project represents a fine line between remaining respectful, ethical, and representing the voices of participants (as it is attached to the epistemic privilege of the researcher) and causing enough disruptions to raise critical awareness that can become a catalyst for change. This chapter reports on the process and analysis of findings from Cycle Four. The research team considered how all parts of the data across the different cycles came together, to assess both the viability, and sustainability, of the baraza as an intergenerational sex-talk space, in the future.

Figure 27: Cycle four: Dissemination

In Cycle Four, as illustrated in Figure 27, dissemination was carried out through two ‘dissemination baraza’, described in Chapter Two. At these mabaraza, our research team, and one
of the village elder who was a key partner in mobilisation, welcomed all community contributors, including those who did not have the opportunity (for a variety of circumstances) to share their narratives, during our data collection cycles. The baraza included discussions on directions for staged changes (including mentorship, gender-specific spaces, and access to accurate knowledge and opportunities to discuss this content, highlighted during Cycle Three) that work toward sustainable changes, with regard to improving the SHL of the ward. In this chapter, these suggestions are discussed, alongside key quotes that emerged from conversations in our final co-gender dissemination mabaraza.

In disseminating the findings, community contributors reiterated a number of challenges to adapting mabaraza for sex-talk; the second section of this chapter explores these findings. Following this, I detail the current state of the project, make recommendations for future possibilities of adopting, and adapting, traditional spaces for dialogues, as sustainable spaces for intergenerational sex-talk, and highlight the potential to investigate other indigenous social processes, in different contexts, as conversational change spaces related to topics sensitive in nature.

### 8.2. Challenges to Uptake of Mabaraza as Spaces for Intergenerational Dialogues on Sex-Talk

When it comes to improving their circumstances, communities know best. But, without, first, acknowledging problems exist, silences around sex-related issues remain the status quo. Adapting a traditional East African space for dialogue (the baraza), to improve the SHL of Mwakirunge, presents itself as a step toward successfully achieving critical engagement through dialogues on community-identified pertinent issues.

Findings indicated that specific relational structures governed power inequities, which constrained sex-related conversations in the community. These included culture, socialised gender roles, as well as morally accepted identities related to sexual expression that enhanced the silences reflected in traditional community norms. These structures of relations were also rooted in colonial elements, but re-emerged in neo-colonialist forms (dependency shaped through NGO programming incentives; hybrid society formation, through interaction of taboo notions of sex; and, new routes of sexual exposure such as technologies that expose young people to new vulnerabilities).
Adapting mabaraza for intergenerational sex-talk proved that such dialogues are plausible and effective in generating debate on how problematic sex-related outcomes gain consensus around ways forward, to remedy risky attitudes and behaviours. In addition, it encouraged wider acknowledgement that critical issues related to sex, not only exist in the community, but also require attention, at both an individual and collective level. Our team outlined specific community, programme, and national-level challenges to uptake of mabaraza intergenerational sex-talk. The following sub-sections discuss these challenges.

8.2.1 Community Level Challenges

Community level challenges were obstacles to overcome before mabaraza processes could be engaged in the future, as a sustainable space for dialogue. These challenges were also considered in light of the contributors’ recommendations for sessions where they could gain the T2T.

I think most of the time when things go wrong we sit down and try to solve. However, at times we put systems into place but some parents go ahead and oppose it. Some even say “why are you concerned about my kid’s affairs? Are you the one feeding him or her?” This situation becomes tricky because we are trying to solve issues and some are opposing it. This kills the morale of the rest of the team. Hence, people start retracting one by one, and the situation is never solved, it escalates. Here, in our society, some girls like asking for free things like, “buy me chips, and buy me that”; a man will start wooing her slowing by buying her those things. When he asks for a sexual favour, she will easily give in, since he has been treating her well. We should endeavour in making sure our children do not idle around and ask for such favours. We should know where our children are at all times—have they attended school? How sure are we that they went? If we keep saying and not taking action against this, blame occurs, and this will perpetuate chaos amongst us. As a result, we will split into two groups and start a blame game. The child will take advantage of us and take us as fools if we continue to argue. This teen pregnancy is still ongoing to date (Male, dissemination baraza)

While this man referenced the individual roles community members could take in collective sexual health problems, inability to see beyond the challenge of the cycle poverty, and trapped within it, posed the most significant community level challenge. Further, this emphasised the need to approach sex-related issues from a multi-stakeholder, multi-sectoral approach to generate sustainable change. Seven supplementary community challenges, pronounced during dissemination, are enucleated in the following sub-sections.

8.2.1.1 Low Priority of Sex-Related Programmes in the Community

While external organisations working in the community identify the need to address for sex-related issues, they do not perceive these issues to be most pertinent. In the case of PANGO,
greater emphasis has been placed on governance-related programmes that instil knowledge around civic engagement, to prevent further political radicalisation through violence affiliated with groups, such as Al-Shabaab.

8.2.1.2 Lack of Stable and Supportive Organisational Partnerships Focusing on Sex-Related Issues

The second community level challenge is connected to the first. While community members were willing to take on the project themselves, they wished for NGO/INGO partnerships to train these ‘champions of knowledge’ to coordinate educational sessions in a culturally relatable manner. The dominant INGO operating in Mwakirunge ward, in a country strategy 2012-2017 paper, outlines the rights-based approach they employ, explains their organisational developmental objectives, and details their reasonings behind targeting certain populations. With regard to ending poverty, and the injustices associated with it, including those related to gender, and subsequently sexual issues, the organisation described their approach in a publicly available document:

“...a complex and non-linear process, which relies on the passion, vision and commitment of people working together across borders, social groups, and experiences. It is the people that make change happen! (KINGO, 2012, p. 23)

While this is a novel approach, a closer examination of their unique identity and programme approaches identified the target populations for their programmes were defined by three specific categories. The first being, people living in poverty and exclusion, which they defined as “...small scale farmers, People Living with HIV/AIDS, landless groups, pastoralists, urban slum dwellers and indigenous communities...” as well as “community based organizations and other civil society organizations committed to fighting poverty and injustice using the rights based approach” (KINGO, 2012, p. 24). The second category of persons targeted for these interventions depicted KINGO’s unapologetic support for women among the aforementioned exclusion groups. Young people and children comprised their final support category, with whom they apply human rights-based approach. The organisation stated one of their core aims for working with vulnerable women is to help them engage in decision-making processes that affect their lives (KINGO, 2012). Stronger consideration on part of KINGO for how they will achieve this, once women return to their domestic environments, needs clearer articulation in future strategies. One such avenue to accomplish this could entail encouraging men to be involved in these processes, to champion women in their empowerment. To be completely explicit, this is not arguing that men should be responsible for women’s empowerment. Rather, strategies for relationship
building should be enacted frequently, to foster positive associations between genders as opposed to the resistant attitudes’ men noted in mabaraza upon women’s return to the home environment from their empowerment training workshops and seminar. Whilst the organisation gives an outright acknowledgment of their awareness that targeting specific groups (i.e., women) to support in communities are likely to be associated with conflict, they do not detail how they safeguard or manage such conflict if it transpires at home. Their current strategy only references partnerships with state and non-state actors that endorses:

Policy and practice that is sensitive to conflict and promotes peace and stability. Internally, we will ensure that our processes, systems and procedures are applied in a conflict sensitive manner to effectively manage the diverse views and political orientations of our staff and partners to ensure that we will all contribute to the mission priorities. (KINGO, 2012)

In stating that they will endeavour to hold their workers and practices more accountable, I advise that the INGO takes into deeper consideration the opinions and attitudes of different groups of from the communities they work within. They can still remain committed to directing their support and programme outcomes at specific groups. However, a better grasp of contextual ideas, informing problems experienced by their target population, would be a valuable asset to more effective and, wide-reaching, programme development. Though unsuccessful in engaging KINGO during fieldwork (not for lack of trying), or as long-term partners in the project, in the dissemination FG held with its employees, one of them identified the value in our findings for community programmes by acknowledging “It’s something that we are taking home”. Despite non-commitment to a partnership with the ‘Creating Conversations’ project, KINGO offered hope, by its members stating they would be open to considering community contributors accounts, that emerged from the data, into their future gender programming.

8.2.1.3 Lack of Support from District Chief

Adding to partnership challenges was the absence of the District Chief (during the period we conducted research) at mabaraza. After our initial meetings with him, where he welcomed us to the community and expressed support for the project, the team arranged several follow-up meetings that never materialised. At times, our team arrived at the meeting and had to meet with a Deputy Chief, who, while acknowledging sex-related problems as an issue for the ward, also made no further effort to have association with the ‘Creating Conversations’ project. To him, such a discussion on a widespread level would remain a difficult issue to overcome, due to the culture barrier. Whilst this lack of engagement was a challenge, considering Kenya’s colonial past and that the hierarchial structure of the local government involves the chief at the top, his
absence might have strengthened what transpired in baraza dialogues by removing a level of power we had actually anticipated. Instead, the chief helped us plan dates for mabaraza, without sharing that there were budgetary and other NGO meetings he would be attending, instead. While the alternative meetings were, presumably, more pressing for him to attend, he could have made our team aware, so as to decrease the already challenging situation of garnering participation.

8.2.1.4 Cultural Taboos

Sex-related topics of discussion remain taboo among certain groups. Most people attending mabaraza agreed that, despite culture, the issues raised, and their potential solutions, need to continue to be addressed. However, some contributors, still felt this issue would remain a challenge:

All the things are due to lack of knowledge to the society member. Culture has contributed very much, as it restricts openness and talks between parent and children. For example, a daughter is to the mother and a son to the father. They are told lots of things on education but there is no time where they are taught sexual education. These talks are rare because educating the children on sex will entice them. (Male, Dissemination baraza)

This demonstrated that the need to for sexual communication and education with young people was understood as relevant, but culture presented a difficult roadblock to, effectively, achieve this goal. KINGO staff echoed concerns of cultural taboos being a barrier, especially in cases where males and females sat together for conversation, positioned it as a challenge difficult to overcome:

Yes, culture is a barrier because you know they are socialized and trying to change (in regard to women opening up in forums) is extremely difficult. In our cases, women run their own issues. We train . . . and women run and sit. Only women, and all from Mwakirunge, will be able to open up to one another. These women may see new faces and, because they are unsure of where their information is going, may find it difficult to open up. (KINGO Employee, Dissemination focus group)

Another KINGO employee, who envisioned the amalgamation of different age-sets and genders as unfathomable, mirrored this sentiment:

I’ll tell you, sincerely, if you come and sit with us and ask about sex issues, the community will just look at you. For us, culturally, sex is not to be spoken about. Especially if the question is coming from a youth to an older woman. In African culture, we look at youths and elders as our daughters and mothers. Would you expect your daughter to ask you about sex or expect her to give an answer on the topic? (KINGO Employee, Dissemination focus group)

Rejecting passivity in thought is paramount, and fostering active critical engagement—with knowledge production and exchange—becomes a necessary tool to move forward, as informed participants in the world. The goal of decolonising the mind becomes, not the absence of our
mind interacting with foreign ideas, but the absence of being passive receptors of knowledge. If KIN G0 staff responsible for programme delivery (i.e., knowledge production) are unwilling to, assertively, address challenges accompanying cultural taboos, this may make it increasingly difficult for community members, who are reliant on the organisation, to solve sex-related issues. This implies that the authoritative schemas through which, knowledge is built and shared, must change. Meaning, the type of knowledge explored, examined, and built upon should continue to arise from the community in true CBPAR spirit. However, space should be made to critically reflect upon deeply entrenched beliefs that may be causing the community more harm than good. This was the approach applied within this project, when considering how to improve dynamics between contributors that came together in mabaraza, in order to decolonise the mind to drive changes around sex-related learning and exposure.

8.2.1.5 Balancing Community Need

As the community know mabaraza as forums for raising and settling issues, the dialogues brought out other problems afflicting the welfare of the community: health, sanitation, and environmental waste management at the dumpsite. However, poverty and its elimination are considered essential to relieving sex-related burdens in the community; evidenced by one man’s decree on the situation:

Do you have an idea what the biggest problem is? Poverty. We men are jobless and our children have needs. They need a few shillings to buy snacks over break (from school). People take advantage of these children, and lure them with money for sexual favours. We are poor and lacking employment. If the government can create employment for us, these problems will decline. (Male, Co-gender baraza)

While these dialogues are incredibly relevant to the future health outcomes of community members, these topics were unsolvable, within the scope of this study. However, community members expressed a heightened sense of critical awareness to how complicated the SHL of the community is; they recognised that sex-related issues entail much more than just sexual acts (e.g., government, family life, educational discussions, poverty, and food availability). This resulted in their acknowledgment that it would truly ‘take a village’ to combat current and future problems in the SHL. In order to mediate some of these challenges, secondary, but interconnected with sexual issues, the team shared them with PANGO and KINGO. Our team also encouraged contributors to reiterate these challenges to their local leaders, who were responsible for liaising with institutions to access resources, to work at remedying these deep-seated barriers to change.
8.2.1.6 Lack of Time and Motivation

Not all community members can give up time in the future to access mentorship to gain T2T or, at the time data were collected, could not commit significantly to the project. The concept of ‘time equals money equals food’ and justification for the adoption of rights-based approaches, which provide community members compensation for their attendance, attributed to this mentality:

I think community members are people living in extreme poverty, and they do not have their daily meals. If you want to stick them down for a number of hours, they will not be able to engage into other activities that will give them food. Obviously, they will demand for this right. So, I think that is one of the key reasons why people are asking for a lot of money. Then, there have been a lot of programmes in the NGO world that have created many expectations for money; they are pumping a lot of money into communities, giving people money to attend programmes, meetings, and certain associations. This has really kind of painted a very bad mind set. I think KINGO’s approach has really made people believe that it’s their own issues and they need to address their own issues. So, we are just there to facilitate, but that poverty level is a challenge. (Male KINGO employee, Dissemination focus group with KINGO)

Whilst this narrative also contrasts those in mabaraza, where contributors referenced incentives as part of KINGO’s approach, this employee was not oblivious to what an NGO presence can do to a community, in terms of shifting their values.

A method proposed to mitigate this challenge was creating ‘champions of knowledge’ from the community. These champions could share their newly acquired sex-related knowledge and skills, through mabaraza processes, as a means of placing the educational information into dialogue, thus, grounding the ideas in community member experiences. However, this proposal included a challenge; lack of motivation to participate in educational dialogues was described in the dissemination baraza dialogue initiated by a youth in her late twenties:

Female Youth Seven: Self-realisation or I do not know how to put it. Suppose you have gone for the training with KINGO, when you come back, or if it is my friend who has come back with the skills, it is usually a hard time to gather the fellow women or community members because they have too much despise (jealously that they did not get that specific opportunity to attend) and ignorance (not caring to know). If we continue with that thought we should not attend any training, then there is a problem somewhere. If your fellow calls you, and you do not attend, how are you going to know what was taught? You would continue being the same person with limited skills. If a person comes back from training should we follow them to their homes? Or should they go door to door to educate others on the things they have learnt? Here, in Mwakirunge, there is much lagging behind and laziness, when invited to meetings and forums, we do not attend. The only question asked is “What will I benefit from that meeting?” . . . some people say, ‘No, I won’t leave my work or what I am doing just to listen to someone’s mother’. This attitude contributes very much to reasons why we aren’t progressing. But if we change our minds and learn to listen to whatever is occurring in these educational spots, then most of us would be educated. Don’t they know there is a meeting going on? (Gesture to the rest of the community in that moment)

Kay: They are aware.

Woman Four: You see. If we call a meeting and know that it is someone’s mother or sister speaking (referencing any member of the community), we do not attend. So how are we going to know about
things that we need to discuss and be taught? This is why most things do not move. We have put negative thoughts on different people, therefore unity is low. If we remove this thought from our minds, we would move a step further. If we continue with this spirit that we have right now, then no progress is going to be made; the early pregnancy cases shall be on the same peak, rape cases shall still rise in numbers, our community will lose focus. Maybe I have learned something in the course of attending a mentorship training or education seminar, of which is very important . . . whatever I may have been taught might be the game changer to your life situation. I call you, but you do not show up. Then is this disaster really going to end?

**Man Five:** I think that this has been said very right. If you call your fellow parent maybe she might not come or not listen to you completely. It is supposed to be that if one goes out for education, representation matters . . . Sometimes someone teaches the others to leave these issues yet they themselves do it.

**Woman Six:** No, let me respond to that. Because do you go to church?

**Man Five:** Yes, of course.

**Woman Six:** and at church, those things the pastor delivers, are they his thoughts or are they things he has been taught?

**Man Five:** They are some he has been taught while others are just lies.

**Crowd:** (laughter).

**Woman Five:** When you go to church are you going to listen to what he says or are you going to follow his actions?

**Male Youth Four:** Now there (he points at the lady speaking as if she has hit the nail on the head)

**Female Youth Five:** You would listen to whatever he would say.

**Woman Five:** Whatever I would say, even if there are bad habits at my homestead, kindly listen to the things I have to say. Do not look at my personality, listen to the voice of lesson that has come to your homestead, and listen to the message. If it would mislead you then it would have been a lie, but if whatever I have told you is the truth and if you follow, the next time you will attend those meeting and mentorship and the episodes (i.e., rape, teen pregnancies, risky sexual exposures, and acts) will reduce, and let me then drown in my mischievous behaviour. But if you do not, you will continue lagging behind, while others are making progressive developments. So, you should follow the lessons you are taught, and not the lessons you see.

**Male Youth Four:** Okay. I have heard.

Lack of motivation to take up educational opportunities, in addition to the need to adopt a “do as I say, not as I do” attitude, proved challenging. This excerpt was expanded on in different parts of our dialogues. Several times, people referenced the need to foster unity as a necessary step for change. To accomplish this, it was essential that those attending mentorship trainings, where they gain T2T or discuss pertinent sex-related issues, share what they learned with other members of the community.

### 8.2.1.7 Increase Visibility and Availability of Social and Legal Supports for Sex-Related Injustices

Many topics, such as issues of rape, (e.g., the photo-journal story of incestuous rape shared by Respector in Chapter Seven) call for community members to have access to legal and socially supportive services; not only those who enjoy positions of privilege. Our team noted educational sessions about how to access and use these services, and the importance of holding such institutions accountable, as an aspect that could easily be built into civic engagement programmes that currently exist.
8.2.2 Programme Level Challenges

Weak partnership promises characterised challenges at the programme-level. This was due to limited funding resources and weighing the ‘Creating Conversations’ project against other PANGO opportunities that brought funding to the organisation. The succeeding sub-sections elaborate on these challenges.

8.2.2.1 Lack of Strong Collaborative Relationships

Despite requiring approval from district and MOE levels to initiate research activities, members of institutions that perform gatekeeping activities in the community for the MOE leader of the ward at the time—ranging from chief programme officers from NGOs and INGOs—ignored our invitations. While INGO members did not respond to our invitation to attend mabaraza, they did acknowledge, in our FG meeting, that they embraced the methods we used and would even ‘steal the language in the report we shared’ to frame future initiatives:

And, if I may, I would like to borrow from the wording of the report you sent us. You know ‘conversation’, it’s a good word to use because it does not mean that the discussion cannot reach the level where you can have different sets of people talking about sex (KINGO Employee, Dissemination focus group)

While a KINGO representative did attend our team’s dissemination of Cycle Two results with our partner NGO volunteers, and promised to bring the information back to discuss a potential partnership with their programming officers, this partnership never came to fruition. This networking gap negatively impacted community members by slowing their ability to move with ideas for mentorship spaces, which they decided would be the first steps in gaining T2T. In absence of an educational partner for mentorship working to address sex-related issues decelerated. External organisation’s, such as KINGO, funded PANGO’s projects. Thus, strong collaboration was necessary. Though mentorship varied between 2016 and early 2017, strong partnership promises for these initiatives were lacking until late in 2017. This topic, the current state of the project, is explored in section 8.3 of the chapter.

8.2.2.2 Lack of Financial Capital

Similar to projects conducted through NGOs in the past—usually on short-term grants—lack of financial capital placed constraints on available time to adequately engage sex-related issues (i.e., seeing them solved from start to finish). However, a greater level of critical awareness around young people’s sexual learning and exposure experiences was raised. Projects like this one,
which seek to engage intergenerational, co-gendered, and larger groups of people, require fostering a sense of urgency and critical awareness amongst community members. However, taking full ownership of the project remains difficult since contributors require compensation for time taken away from their labour-intensive lives. Our funding timeline restricted our capacity to assess if contributors would continue to engage critically with sex-related issues, which was entirely dependent on taking community recommended steps toward change (i.e., mentorship spaces). Lack of financial capital also affected the research team’s ability to continue assessments of contextual issues relating to sex, as documented in **Cycle Two.**

Following these challenges is the lack of commitment due to financial trials on the part of PANGO. Despite showing commitment throughout the data collection stages of the project, PANGO directs their volunteer ‘person power’ toward funded projects that allow them to receive enough funding to cover operational costs (e.g., electricity, transport costs for volunteers to and from engagement sites, stipends for appreciation and recognition of volunteers and participants contributions). Educational training of NGO volunteers—to aid in implementing and sustaining mentorship for youths and adults—requires long-term sponsorship.

### 8.2.3 National-Level Challenges

Only one major national-level challenge to uptake of mabaraza for intergenerational sex-talk was identified since mabaraza successfully aligned with the national policies outlined in Chapter Four, concerning SRH, ASRH and ASRHD. These include:

- multi-stakeholder approach;
- community-identified knowledge to shape future implementation stages of projects;
- build capacity through better positions of being able to define problems and interrogate them in their contexts;
- approach methods for dialogue creation in meaningful community-designed ways (e.g., storyboards);
- and, foster T2T through adult-specific mentorship spaces, while also communicating with young people on sex-related issues through increased talking points.

Where there are gaps in policy tenets outlined in Chapter Four, our research team tried to fill by, first, detailing a plan to implement change with multiple community contributors that involved education to gain a common language and comfort level. Secondly, there was a call in the MCSAP (2016) policy to address different categories of risks (social, cultural, financial). Developing a contextual model of current problems with community members, to better analyse
how risks transpire and affect different groups, was a step in the right direction to improve sex-related issues that intersect with each category as achieved in Cycles Two and Three of mabaraza.

Despite mabaraza satisfying the tenets of the national-level policies, inadequate usage of school environments as optimal spaces to gain T2T were delineated as the most significant national-level challenge. Every school created culturally-centred life skills education in every school was conceived as a means of remedying this problem. Upscaling of monitoring and evaluation of the current life skills education programme across Kenya should be mandatory. Consistently monitoring life skills education successes and assessing its effectiveness nationwide—in promoting culturally relevant understandings of sexual experiences, routes of exposure, sex-positive education, T2T, as well as health services and how to access them—would ensure youths have avenues to decipher their sex-related experiences. For example, persons involved in life skills curriculum design could ensure that issues such as early marriages, socialised gendered roles, and taboos around contraceptive use for both sexes could be placed in historical contexts. It would be useful to promote understanding of how these practices or ideas have developed as culturally (e.g., the ancient development of condoms using pig intestines—the use of which conflicts with the Islamic beliefs and values of many Kenyans, who use this as reasoning for not using contraceptives, despite availability of latex or polyurethane versions contemporarily used). Contextualising sexual education, understanding its socio-cultural genesis, is essential to the processes of decolonising how sex-related issues are addressed (Wane, 2009).

Despite the challenges laid out here, collaboration positively and progressively impacted the way dialogue around sex, sexuality, and sex education is beginning to be more actively discussed in the community. Using these ideas, some of the collaborators, those who raised their critical consciousness, and continued to engage even after my time in the field, moved toward creating a community more informed about sex, sexuality, and best practices for communicating their experiences. This resulted in a plan of action involving mentorship workshops that provided a platform to foster best practices for dealing with social problems related to sex.

8.3. Current State of Project

Stoecker (2012) described CBPAR as “. . . a social change project of which the research is one piece” (p.102). The action that continues after data are collected and analysed is paramount to
changing problematic circumstances around sex-related issues. At the time of my exit from the community, I was confronted with the ethical negotiation of the questions “What do I do about what we found? How do I proceed forward?” This is a significant ethical issue, inherent in CBPAR, in the developmental contexts I am writing about. I was in a quasi-compromised position, in the sense that I had high level of engagement with community contributors and they now had a renewed understanding of what is not, and should be, happening in the context of sex-related issues in their community. Ultimately, it was in their hands to act on this newly acquired understanding. As the researcher, I was in the position of where I had to work out what to do about that—what would be realistically helpful input from me, in their driving this project forward?

The current state of the project would no be possible without the collective and individual efforts of the community who engaged this work. As of September 2017, a programme officer (a KINGO employee frustrated with progression of projects in the community where our CBPAR project initiated) from a new partner NGO—denoted from this point forward as NPANGO—was in contact with a local member of our 2015 research team. NPANGO is an organisation for international volunteers that works in a variety of areas, ranging from building projects, sports education, medical and healthcare to HIV/AIDS awareness and outreach. The programme officer agreed to partner with the community members who participated in the ‘Creating Conversations’ project, through linking their international volunteer programme to the findings related to mabaraza and sexual issues from our study. In conjunction with a member of our local research team, I have been working with the programme officer to develop training materials addressing the culture of silence related to sex. A concern with NPANGO programming was that it did not provide medical, health, or field-specific interested volunteers with enough structure in their four-week itineraries. The current idea is to work the contextual findings into cross-cultural programmes, where the overseas volunteers will partner with members from the community to engage in dialogues for change by first discussing in group mentorship sessions, topics related to formal sexual health (where the overseas volunteer will have the opportunity to share their knowledge or training), and gender trainings. In this sense, NPANGO wants to encourage two-way knowledge exchanges through local and international cultural sharing. Sessions will run with both young people and adult, gender-specific groups, building off their ideas to foster T2T before moving into intergenerational and co-gender mabaraza. Adding to this, changing the relationship of reliance was an important starting point for shaping sustainable mabaraza for sex-talk. Discussions have occurred about potential avenues for altering this relationship, and
fostering a sense of “Kenyan community power” into the cross-cultural sharing component. To achieve this, community members would, first, learn the history around sexual norms, beliefs, and practices in Kenya, how they shifted in varying contexts, and, then, make meaning around what these aspects represent in their current lives. This exercise helps in aspects of cultural renewal and preservation, as well as development of critical awareness, in relation to foreign forces that will continue to shift the SHL.

Breakout or carousel sessions (typically used for evaluation) will be adapted in these sessions, a recommendation stemming from our conversation with KINGO, who indicated that this proved to be a successful form of engagement with the community on different topics. Carousel sessions are a type of brainstorming in community action research where the larger groups separate into smaller sections and are given a specified amount of time to share inputs. These inputs might reflect a specific topic related to a central question or proposed idea to implement (e.g., How should the issue of young girls using their bodies for material or financial gain be addressed?) (Russell, Lester, & Smith, 2017). Each group will be assigned a role (e.g., NGO workers, the Chief and local council in the community, parents, teachers, youth etc.), and will be instructed to document their ideas. When the time finishes, each group will rotate to the next station, where they explore a different perspective of the central issues, until there has been equal opportunity to explore ideas in each station. This process will encourage individual participation as each member of the smaller group will be able to contribute their ideas by writing or drawing on the chart, protecting, to an extent, their anonymity from the larger group. The final stage of such a session would involve a larger group dialogue, simulating practice for mabaraza, but also to offer the opportunity to question, share experiences, and learn from one another.

After establishing mentorship spaces along with common T2T, a future goal would be to launch mabaraza at the end of each volunteer intake. This process begins with gender-specific intergenerational baraza, as recommended by community contributors, and, eventually, a co-gender intergenerational dialogue if the community still considers this a viable and beneficial option. Enacting these larger dialogic processes will enable community contributors to put their learning into practice, to reassess, as the wider community, what remains the most pertinent sex-related issues. In CBPAR fashion, this feedback loop will be consistent to ensure accountability, confirm best practices are employed, and that the project is working toward processes of full autonomy—fostering ‘champions of knowledge’—to actively dismantle sex-related challenges in the community.
8.4. Future Possibilities with Traditional Spaces for Dialogue

In future research that tests mabaraza as sustainable tools for intergenerational sex-talk, I would advise researchers to always consider the intersection of contexts (e.g., gender, social, economic) and power that impact how dialogues transpire. For example, our male-specific baraza was led by Kay, a female facilitator from our team, as other research team members were keen to learn from her experience engaging crowds and not yet ready to assume the role, led our male-specific baraza. However, re-testing this male-specific space with a male facilitator would likely yield different and intriguing results.

Taking a closer look at flaws with how sex-related issues are currently being addressed in rural Kenyan communities, it is imperative to consider that some features of programming might be unintentionally (and indeed, as is the case of Mwakirunge) widening the gender gap between power in households, rather than bridging it. The MOH in Kenya, while continuing to promote and progress the status of women in their target initiatives, must also consider the answers to the following questions: What are the roles of men in sexual reproductive and sexuality rights issues? How are men included in initiatives where opportunities to foster respect for women’s rights, whilst also being exposed to accurate health information, can flourish? In order to acknowledge their shared roles in improving the SHL, the MOH might also consider increasingly inclusive practices for targeting men and women together. Encouraging men to be ‘champions’ for women to access and use their voices in spaces for dialogue might also revive their sense of purpose being absolved, through current shifting gender roles associated with women-specific empowerment initiatives, as seen in Mwakirunge.

After testing mabaraza and considering how to mitigate challenges to collaboration and implementation, I first investigated if there were other countries with an indigenous social process for dialogue. Secondly, I looked at WHO specific data for sexual health indicators, to assess if problems related to the SHL of a range of countries were similar to that of Kenya. These differing spaces could, potentially, serve as culturally relevant forms of decolonised sexual education, or communication forums, to addresses sex-related issues—data which warrants further exploration, but is outside the scope of this study.

A search across different countries returned 11 that had traditional gathering spaces, which function as indigenous social processes for dialogue. Where Kenya and Tanzania both employ
mabaraza, South Africa has two separate indigenous social processes specific to its different regions. The first were indaba, which are part of Zulu culture in Kwazulu Natal, and the second were imbizo or lekgotha, in the Eastern Cape. Zimbabwe has padare, where usos y custombres originate in Oaxaca, Mexico and are known as community assemblies in Peru and Nigeria. In Ghana, these processes are known as district assemblies, and to the First Nations peoples of Canada, as sharing circles. The sub-continent of India also has two spaces in different regions—manji in Punjab, and addaa in West Bengal. Finally, in New Zealand are Hui, part of the social fabric of traditional Māori culture. Of the 11 countries, only two (New Zealand and Canada) have ever tested these processes as tools for dialoguing about sex-related issues, but never as intergenerational spaces for community-specific sex-talk (Barnes, 2010; Ghelani, 2010; Green & Waiti, 2014; Riches, 2011). Future research might observe the viability of adapting these traditional spaces as tools for dialoguing on sex-related or other sensitive issues in the communities which exercise them.

Another study identified and exported the idea of sharing circles to the context of Myanmar and provides evidence that spaces like sharing circles, and, thus baraza, are useful methods for working with community members in psychosocial interventions, and their tenets, or principals, behind the space might be transferrable to contexts outside their country of origin (Vukovich & Mitchell, 2015). One of the New Zealand studies (Barnes, 2010) employed a one-off Hui, as a form of stakeholder engagement, for capacity building through fostering knowledge around the primary prevention of sexual violence. The report produced shared that contributors to the project called for Māori-specific spaces, with a focus on culturally-specific contexts and content. This builds on the recommendation to investigate Hui as space for dialoguing on sex-related issues affecting Māori, and young Māori, specifically. In addition, the learning from this project might inform practitioners in other contexts, where the spaces might, fruitfully, explore how to address sexual-health issues amongst indigenous (and potentially other) youth populations in those countries.

### 8.5. Value Added

It is important to communicate challenges in CBPAR, to understand how to improve the next cycle of a project; in this case, a better understanding of where the rope is most taught and at risk of breaking. After dissemination, the research team considered Wallerstein, Oetzel, Duran, and Tafoya’s (2008, p. 372) question what was “... the added value of CBPR to the research itself
and to producing outcomes?” The combination of iterative cycles that allowed for immediate adaptation to design and responsiveness to community need, the cultural relevance of baraza as a method to collect data and dialogue change, with an emphasis on a community-driven process, made CBPAR the optimal methodological approach to test intergenerational sex-talk in traditional spaces for dialogue. In applying this approach, the ‘Creating Conversations’ project achieved several successes:

- The formulation of active mentorship spaces, for different groups, that have occurred several times throughout the past two years since first collecting data through PANGO initiatives.

- Through mentorship sessions, one of the local research team members and NPANGO are working toward cultural renewal of the ‘collective concept of self’ through gaining a common language for young people and different groups of adults to engage in sexual communication. Where young people’s experiences, questions, and desires related to sex are not muted, but discussed, in terms of readiness and responsibility.

- In its current state, the research team and NPANGO are working toward mabaraza for intergenerational sex-talk. This is pertinent, as shaping these as sustainable spaces for dialogue, where different age sets and genders will have an opportunity to communicate on sex-related issues together, in a space that encourages power neutrality and championing of diverse voices.

The research team, NPANGO, and active community members are hopeful for the potential of changes to structures of relations (e.g., gendered, cultural, social) that currently enhance silences, while, simultaneously, increasing sex-related vulnerabilities. While these are steps in the right direction, disclosing challenges faced—over a focus on emphasising the successes of the ‘Creating Conversations’ project—proved a more useful learning process for our team in Cycle Four. Denoting the roadblocks distinguished which parts of the rope were most taught and, thus, at greatest risk for breakage. Deciding to untangle the more workable knots first were viewed as a slackening of the rope; setting smaller goals felt more manageable, increasing the impetus to act, even if at a slow rate.
Chapter 9. Repeat After Me: “What I Know Now I Could Not Have Known Then”

Findings from this study support previous evidence that issues relating to sex will affect all members of a Kenyan community, especially young people, at some stage in their lives. These may be: early pregnancy; STIs/STDs; sexual violence; losing a friend or family member to AIDS or, alternatively, a family member or friend living with HIV; witnessing live sex on the walk home from school; or having a friend whose mother spends multiple nights with different men to ensure her daughter has food to eat the next day. While the solutions to such issues are widely explored, within the context of international development programmes in Kenya, few studies document examples of intergenerational communication on sex-talk. Furthermore, the studies that do exist tend to focus on two-way, parent-to-child communication. While valuable, this communication represents only one form of sex-talk, or route for acquiring knowledge, and does not account for the sexual realities of young people whose exposures are informed by, and with, a variety of community members. Arguably, while playing a role in shaping their attitudes and behaviours, parents may not be the most involved persons shaping their child’s sexual learning and exposure experiences. Findings and analysis from this study demonstrated that the adaptation of the baraza, a traditional East African gathering space, proved to be a viable option—in spite of challenges—for a sustainable community-wide process, to foster intergenerational dialogues on sex-talk that are more in line with young people’s sexual realities.

Due to the nature of CBPAR, where the goal is to see the action component through, planning continues even after the study’s question are answered. In our case, designing ways to assuage the challenges, determined in Cycle Four, remains a delicate exercise in slowly untangling the rope. Even after withdrawing my presence, as a doctoral researcher, planning is still in full force to address the identified community-needs alongside the research team, community members, and new organisational partners. Despite its challenges, with respect to culture and context, baraza—as an adapted traditional gathering space for sex-talk—represents a culturally-relevant starting point to foster critical consciousness on sex-related issues by which young people in the community are most implicated. It is from these culturally-relevant, applicable, community-suggested adaptations of these spaces for dialogue, that indigenous-non-indigenous research or organisational partnerships for change should be constructed. This final chapter takes the reader
through my deductions from this work informed by a diverse set of individuals. These included dialogues had with community contributors and the research team. Additionally, I reached my conclusions via input from supervisors, who supported me through documenting the research project within a dissertation, and myself—as I navigated the successes and challenges of becoming doctorate in a CBPAR context. My conclusions to this work are three-fold: a conclusion to the research; temporary conclusions to my researcher positionality; and my final comments on conclusions to a chapter in an ongoing project.

9.1. Conclusions to the Research: Insights Gained from the Creating Conversations Project

The four-cycle project resulted in valuable suggested pathways for change for community members to consider. Decolonisation of the mind, gained through problem identification and contextualisation, created a necessary step for exercising one’s agency with respect to sex-related problems affecting their life, or the lives of their fellow community members. Secondly, mabaraza, adapted for culture and changing contexts warrants a viable space for intergenerational sex-talk, if its strengths and limitations are acknowledged and alleviated. The relationships built throughout this work evidenced meaningful insights into indigenous-non-indigenous research partnerships to improve lines of relating when approaching projects in the future. Finally, a post-colonial analysis that interrogated the multiplicity of the current community context, at the time of this study, offered powerful images for why issues on the SHL of this community will continue to require urgent multi-stakeholder and multi-sectoral responses. I explore conclusions concerning these insights across the next five sub-sections.

9.1.1 What the Data Tell Me: Iterative Project Designs for Decolonisation of the Mind

Assuming that individuals have the ability to decolonise their minds is a dubious starting point for any community programme or project. Especially, one focused on sex-related issues in a Kenyan rural community, where a culture of silence is endemic. Achieving decolonisation of the mind requires individuals do the mental work to raise their critical consciousness, with regard to structures from their environment that impact their thoughts and actions. In community health programming, the project of mind decolonisation requires space (mental and physical) to interact with different conceptualisations of sexual health. This will enable community members to call
into question both traditional and foreign ways of knowing—related to sexuality—in order to reconstruct an informed position in addressing problematic sexual health outcomes in their hybrid community contexts. However, as past programming has evidenced, targeting specific groups in the population (i.e., women-only) for empowerment training, gender-based violence education, and micro-finance projects—all issues inextricably linked to poverty and sex-related issues—may unintentionally produce more harm than good. Programme approaches targeting specific groups achieve individual-level change, where imbalanced power structures and oppressive consciousness remain intact. Lack of spaces for participants to exercise new found empowerment and knowledge about these issues induces harmful effects in the domestic environments of individual community members, as some contributors shared in dialogues. Hence, we recognised the importance of exploring intergenerational dialogues on sex—involving both genders—to provide an analysis of solutions that are increasingly holistic approaches for addressing sex-related community challenges.

Despite the challenges noted in previous chapters, to create such safe spaces, decolonisation of the mind, with regard to oppressive community and programme structures, is both a useful and worthy goal to aim for when designing a community change project. At each iterative step, interrogation of how the project can improve circumstances thrusted participants closer to reaching critical awareness. Maintaining a state of critical awareness, in relation to sex-related issues, is the ultimate goal for the future of this project. This type of consciousness is imperative for sexual health behaviour programmes to induce means of exploring cultural ways of knowing and their potential effects on health outcomes (Olugu et al., 2010). Critical thinking will encourage community members to challenge the culture of silence on sex-related, where problems and risks, exist and flourish. This approach, built into the foundations of programmes and projects, would encourage different stakeholders (programme facilitators, funding partners, community members and contributors) to hold themselves accountable for the methods they enact. Programme organisers should ask: Do our programmes encourage community members to create space for local values and beliefs by envisioning, discovering, and, finally imagining their ideas as operating in spaces for change (Duarte & Belarde-Lewis, 2015)? Discovering dialogues of sustainability that existed, with regard to possibilities for change (explored in Chapter Six), can and will be used to ground interventions and educational efforts in ways that interrogate these notions. Designing programmes in this line offers the possibility of achieving decolonisation of the mind. With this, community members can look forward, with a critical eye, as they engage with external partners to improve the overall well-being of the community.
9.1.2 **Mabaraza as Viable Spaces to Change Problematic Community Sexual Health Outcomes**

This research contributes another community-focused example to endorse the need for increased attention to improving how sexuality or life skills education, both in and out of school are addressed at the broader community level. An emphasis should be placed on culturally-relevant possibilities for community-wide dialogues, where issues can be raised, questioned, and addressed, to form educational changes from the ground up. Further, the CBPAR staged-project design offered evidence that, although motivation and community buy-in take time, having strong local indigenous partners (e.g., community contributors and a committed research team) who can share findings, both formally and informally, can eventuate into adopting steps to reach project goals. With funding providing opportunities for educational resources to support community members’ visions for mentorship to develop T2T, mabaraza increased possibilities for enhancing sex-related health outcomes.

This project intended to create change, however small, for, with, and by the community members engaged. Their contributions of their rich participation offered an in-depth understanding of problematic sex-related issues occurring in the ward. The project highlighted issues that disproportionality affect young people—the population with the highest vulnerabilities. Adapting mabaraza simulated the dynamics of intergenerational sex-talk with community contributors. These spaces uncovered possibilities to become more powerful tools for dialogue.

Several positives were gained in this research. In addition to the partnership currently taking shape, the dialogues of resistance in mabaraza evidenced challenges that still exist for intergenerational dialogue on sex-talk to be a commonplace process for sex-related issues in the community (lack of T2T, the need for stable and consistent provision of resources to encourage community champions to emerge). Furthermore, a particular challenge remains for young people’s capacity to actively access, and act on, their agency, in spaces where cultural age-set rules are at play. Nevertheless, photo-voice storyboards and a short-film, designed from accounts of young people’s exposure and learning experiences, were key factors to ensure sharing of their stories, which reflect a milieu that is far from ideal. The post-colonial analysis conveyed that understanding the factors required for dialogues to transpire provides promising starting points to working towards mabaraza as sustainable spaces where a broader group of stakeholders can participate together for change. Aligning with the guiding principles of MCASP 2016-2020,
outlined in Chapter Four, a sustainable programme that functions to improve, with the goal of eliminating sex-related problems, must employ a multi-sectoral approach. This must start with the experiences and inputs of affected community members, so as to better comprehend the scope of their vulnerabilities. Mabaraza can deepen communication and understanding of how sex-related learning exposures can occur or change, is a promising initiative at the community-level sector.

9.1.3 Strengths and Limitations of the Study

As in any research, this study has both strengths and limitations. Past studies assessed mabaraza as valuable in consultative stages, programme evaluations, or as tools for dissemination of results. This study builds on the strengths of the baraza method, as it is the only study that has documented the adaptation, testing, and arrival at solutions for adapting mabaraza for intergenerational sex-talk. In addition, the depiction of parallel processes of documenting research and carrying out an action project, serves as a valuable model for future doctoral students navigating the windy waters of CBPAR research. This dissertation offers potential clarification of CBPAR field-specific concepts, through descriptions of how they unfold within the messiness of reality, inherent in the learning process. Identifying this potential, it was apparent from the outset that limited funding resources would constrain the longevity of research training as capacity building that we would be able to undertake and might possibly limit motivation to participate in mabaraza. This lack of funding was also perceived as a deterrent to those in positions of status to attend, which the team later observed to be a benefit, as less power imbalances had to be accounted for, which enhanced the safety of the space.

Despite the strong rapport the research team fostered with community members, and their ability to moderate the process, social desirability bias (participants giving responses they believe others will favour or support) may have been present because of the taboo nature of topics discussed in mabaraza. Providing gender-specific mentorship spaces to gain T2T, in the future, increases community members’ comfort level with the issues, as they gain a common language to participate in dialogues more actively.

It is essential to note that both young people and adults, who agreed to join the study as community collaborators, may have expressed different opinions and experiences than those who did not attend. Even though we did our best to engage broadly with the population, reaching all
those who met the criteria for collaboration, across the ward, was an impossible task within the scope of one PhD. However, a more well-funded study, with increased resources for the team, would be best served by including multiple gender-specific mabaraza, before testing co-gender mabaraza. This would allow participants to gain increased comfortability in becoming conversational on such a sensitive topic.

9.1.4 Challenges and Opportunities for Indigenous – Non-Indigenous Research Partnerships

In explaining the research to our newly formed team at the outset of this research, we had a group discussion on the importance of local knowledge experts framing issues requiring investigation and identifying possibilities for change. During the conversation, Kay responded to my take on working with local communities, positioning them as the experts in their experiences, “Yes I agree. The one who wears the shoes knows where they pinch best”. The other team members nodded in agreement, finally recognising the goal of having this conversation. Framing themselves as experts was a challenging conception for community members to own because of the incentivised structure of attending consultation about new programmes, receiving a meal, transport fare, or a t-shirt for their contributions; their involvement in actual processes for implementation were either directed or minimal. Challenging community members to ask themselves “What is my role in changing the problematic health outcomes occurring here?” whether they saw themselves as having an important role or not, asked them to turn the critique inward.

Despite these challenges, community-allied, non-indigenous change partners in research can play a valuable role in disseminating findings that clearly demonstrate the contextual environment in which sex-related problematic health outcomes transpire. This can be accomplished through distributing reports comprising local knowledge, produced with participants, through research about sex-related issues, to appropriate gatekeepers of change at the local, national, and international levels. Embracing interaction between indigenous and foreign ways of knowing acknowledges the complex landscape of sexual health in Kenya, as it exists today. Currently, the country is a collection of communities at different stages of the hybridising process, on route to becoming hybrid (Tuttle, 2015); interaction between traditional and foreign is commonplace but their systems for a harmonious merger are not always clear cut or viable. Acknowledging the value both local and foreign inputs add to the understanding of sex-related problems offers
potential for better practices in creating space for more holistic approaches to addressing and combatting SRH/ARHD issues. However, because of the history of research and programmes that fail to maintain sustainable outcomes, we—researchers and stakeholders outside those most affected and afflicted by such issues—must be careful that, when connecting with communities, we do not, in turn, erase (i.e., cultures, histories, voices) (Denzin & Giardina, 2016). The final argument for the ‘Creating Conversations’ project is explored in the next section, where I answer the question: What does a hybrid SHL resemble in present and future tense Kenya?

9.1.5 The Question of Hybridity

There is a reason that oral traditions and story-telling have survived and expanded across numerous forums throughout history. Sharing our experiences, or what can be learned from the experiences of others, is a foundational component to how we, as societies, develop. The community members from Mwakirunge, who contributed to the ‘Creating Conversations’ project, are in a third space, with regard to the SHL. For young people, both local and foreign elements play a role in how they understand as well as experience sexual learning and exposure. Therefore, it is not one or the other but a fusion of both (Hussain, 2018).

In sharing their experiences around sexual learning and exposure, as well as hindrances to communication, contributors were able to collectively identify a specific moment of tension in their community’s history, as well as the urgency and suggestions for improving the future SHL.

Community members are in a hybridising context that has the potential to be both destructive and constructive. Destructive in the sense that, if the community remains dormant in their interrogation of the multiple silences, sex-related vulnerabilities risk becoming increasingly common, as new, foreign channels of exposure continue to be introduced; new questions arise and remain unaddressed. In addition, further cultural erosion phases out meaningful ways of knowing during the negotiation process within the third space. Monitoring potential for cultural loss, as occurred in the transition from the pre-colonial to post-colonial eras, would involve reviving cultural ways of knowing around sexual communication that work alongside the contemporary context. The setting of the community is not yet fully hybrid, but its members carry out their lives, perform their identities, and acquire knowledge in increasingly hybridising contexts. The generational gaps need to be bridged by negotiating new lines of relating, in terms
of sexual communication, that are cost-effective and easily instituted as part of community member’s daily lives.

In an honours thesis on hybridity and development in Kenya, for which one component focused on health, Tuttle (2015) stated, in reference to the current Western informed development contexts:

If allowed to mutate, I claim that hybrids have the potential to make a huge difference in finding systems that work in the developing world by combining what works in Western systems and what works in indigenous ones to create a hybrid that is uniquely suited to address local problems (p.6)

At first analysis, wearing my social justice hat, these were similar ideas running through my mind, when entering the community. I wanted to run to the top of the very steep hill before reaching the school and the Chief’s camp (office and grounds where Chief’s Baraza are held) in Mwakirunge and exclaim “You just need to work better together! PANGO, KINGO, and community members have so much to share with each other”. While this is not, entirely, untrue, I feel it was a simplistic assumption. The answer seemed so obvious, even in the first weeks. But, through the privilege of occupying space in the lives of people in this community, the solutions to sex-related issues no longer seemed as linear or easy. Now, I would argue, firmly, that a sustainable solution, especially with regard to SRH, ADRH, and problems affecting the wider SHL, while it may be supported by external partners, must arise from motivations of community members, and from them alone. Since colonising and neo-colonising forces shaped the current economic contexts of Kenya, and NGO programming is largely funded through external donors, this money needs to be re-invested into projects fostering social entrepreneurship, critical consciousness, and unity of all community members for them to untie the knots themselves, with minimal imposition from non-indigenous actors. I am not suggesting we negate difference, I am suggesting that the quintessence hybrid would represent cohesiveness between intersecting cultures. This position is underscored by the notion of Ubuntu or harambee; differences are recognised as points for learning and even welcomed, when mutually beneficial relationships can be fostered. Currently achieving this type of hybrid is implausible in the context but highlights the need to preserve cultural resources that have potential to enhance new ways of tackling problems (Kompridis, 2005).

At minimum, there should be training for actors working both inside organisations and alongside community members on researching problems. This training will create responsibility for all members and allow for better sourcing of resources, connecting community to health query
services, reporting rights violations, and accessing accurate and culturally relevant health knowledge. In addition, training would entail gathering evidenced-based data/stories about the context, as accomplished in this study. Thus, organisations and their programme agendas would be co-constructed with communities, if community members identified the issues afflicting them and had the opportunity to contextualise their experiences in relation to such problems. This could be accomplished through gathering information about the specifics of the situation from as many community members to reach data saturation. Adding to this, sharing community member’s accounts in safe and meaningful ways (e.g., storyboards for dialogue), is necessary for them to note. Furthermore, NGOs should consider enlisting the help of experts in both local cultural and research-indigenous partnerships, to ensure that values and ideas from foreign cultures do not negatively impact on the norms, practices, behaviours, and identities of community members. In this sense, NGOs can be strategic allies with community members, supporting them in locating resources, and accessing information and services, in the process of building new tools for change.

9.2. Working and Living the “In-Between” Spaces: Temporary Conclusions to a Research Identity

Christina Hughes and Malcolm Tight (2013) critically examined the metaphor of the doctorate as a ‘journey’ (p.765). They presented a beautiful reminder that, while there are commonalities across people’s experiences of gaining a doctorate degree, generalising the experience, as a journey, risks disqualifying “...its capacity to convey what might be specific, and socially or experientially significant...” (p. 765). Additionally, the authors elected a different term be associated with the doctoral experience: work. Hence, my reasoning for providing a summary of the tremendous amount of work that shapes a CBPAR project to be considered for a doctorate. This should not be perceived as self-adulating, but as a consideration for future doctoral candidates who wish to become deeply absorbed by a context, while also endeavouring to understand and care for those living within it. By this, I mean establish ways to hear and speak about the needs of the marginalised, and assist in locating avenues for resourcing, if possible. Do not confuse this with a ‘white saviour complex’ or a position of imposition (Nyawalo, 2016); I mean hearing a person’s wants and needs whilst, genuinely, caring how they will be met. Endeavouring to know someone in this way, to work with groups of community members, is to exercise the spirit of Utu or Ubuntu, a philosophy that should be seriously
considered as foundational to the field of social work within community development, where programmes are shaped for, with, and by community members (Mungai et al., 2014). Through interrogating what constituted the ‘work’ that went into being a doctoral student, several key aspects surfaced including managing time as work, building relationships as work, speaking as work, writing as work, and teaching as work. However, here, I chose to conceptualise four definitions of the ‘work’ required of me, as a doctoral student doing a CBPAR project, that have, unequivocally, shaped my “in-between” positioning:

1) Thinking as work
2) Practicing cultural humility as work
3) Developing my researcher identity as work
4) Letting go as work

It is my hope that the description of these four types of work, which went into conducting the ‘Creating Conversations’ CBPAR project considered for this doctorate, will encourage other researchers—veteran or novice—to reflect deeper on their own positioning within their work and the communities they partner with.

9.2.1 Thinking as Work

By this, I mean the “thinking about our thinking” aspect, creating the connections, sourcing the material, summarising, re-presenting, re-imagineing through writing. Even when you are not working on the thesis, you are thinking about working on the thesis. This is an inescapable commonality of anyone committed to the doctorate process, but doing CBPAR feels like an intensified version, especially in the cross-cultural space between myself and the participants.

To elaborate on this intensity, the academic documentation of the CBPAR project generated a specific tension for me, throughout my work as a doctoral student. While my layering through interpretation of community member stories, their dialogues with each other, and the research team, was unavoidable, the ways in which I shared them—and how their experiences might be read through a lens they could not fully identify with—was troublesome. Through dialogue, the community members actively named their worlds, in relation to the sex-related issues occurring in Mwakirunge, and their role, or lack thereof, in the problem. I have done my best to share our team’s translations in a way that maintained the richness and authenticity of their Coast Kenyan experiences, whilst having to use some concepts and categorisations derived, shaped, or at the very least, pushed in Western academic settings. Throughout the writing of this work, I returned
to Spivak’s (1988) question of “can the subaltern speak?” and Said’s (1978) notion that foreigners often construct binaries between ‘the Westerener and the Other’ that evidence inferiority. Balance in the writing around my understanding of the context of sex-related issues, and the stories shared with me, was particularly challenging. It was a tension carefully navigated to expound the relationships that can hinder or enhance how to tackle sex-related problems.

9.2.2 Practicing Cultural Humility as Work

Cultural humility is not just a research term to be understood, employed, or its uses justified, only once in a study. Becoming culturally competent and having humility is an everyday job, tied to our prejudices and privileges. Wallerstein and Duran (2006) encouraged researchers in the participatory field to consider accessing strategies that interrogate our privileges, in order to balance the accompanying power. This involved several processes during my fieldwork.

The first endeavour I engaged in, as an outsider to the community, and a first-time community-action researcher, was to be extremely honest around what Tervalon and Murray-Garcia (1988) defined as the normalisation of not knowing—“...being flexible and humble enough...” to admit when you “...truly do not know” (p. 119). I regularly exercised this practice with the research team. After our team coding sessions in (Cycle Two), I compiled emerging themes, and laid my interpretations alongside, as an analysis (represented in Chapter Six). Next, I left the team with this analysis for two weeks before we reconvened in a team meeting, where they shared their judgments of my analysis as dependable, and which areas needed further reconsideration. This was a confronting process, that left me returning to Spivak’s (1988) reminder that, for post-colonial thinkers, “...their privilege is their loss” (p. 287). In this case, my privilege made me blind to some cultural interactions and performances of identity in imbalanced power situations; instances I could not have understood, without my research team member’s local expertise.

Since this was a multi-lingual study (e.g., English, Kiswahili, and variations of its Bantu cousins) there were many instances that had the potential to be “...characterized by a struggle for the researcher and researched to understand each other” (Vanner, 2015, p. 7). However, community members received the option to speak in the language they felt most comfortable, as Kay, our research team member (and one of our local knowledge experts) could understand and translate the different Mijikenda dialects, due to her affiliation with the tribe. As a result of this, the
“struggle for self-expression” became more my burden to carry, than the community members’, as it typically might, in a similar study approached from a different methodological positioning (Vanner, 2015, p. 7). This is not to say community members did not struggle in terms of the identity they chose to perform. At times, they projected an identity they thought I would perceive as desirable (as noted in Chapter Seven). This was ideal, particularly in Cycles Three and Four of the project, where the focus shifted from my presence as a researcher to community member enthusiasm toward taking ownership of guiding future processes. Adding to this, I became comfortable with me ‘in-betweenness’ because, in many ways, especially in relation to their positions in the SRH, community members were negotiating identities in their own in-between spaces.

Compounding the notions of ‘normalising not knowing’ and a multi-lingual arena, I constantly reflected on the cultural knowledge shared with me by my fellow research team members during our first meetings. In these sharing sessions, co-learning was the focus (Tervalon & Murray-Garica, 1998). Together, we discovered our differences, but more surprisingly, our similarities around how we viewed working with community members and NGOs, along with how we viewed sex-related issues as being central to several poor health outcomes in rural communities. This co-learning was, and continues to be, a constant process we frequently engage in as we work together for best ways forward.

9.2.3 Developing my Researcher Identity as Work

Townsend (n. d.) in his article “Why Write about Action Research?” claimed that writing action research forces us to understand our role, as participants in the process. This idea was accurate for the development of my researcher perspective throughout this work. To conclude my positionality at this stage, preparing the thesis for submission, and sharing my new analysis with the team and community, I need to touch on the concepts of distance and closeness, which were imperative in arriving at my current researcher identity. Distance is a significant concept that requires in-depth consideration in CBPAR. The researcher has to recognise that a fine line exists between distance and closeness throughout the unfolding processes of CBPAR. Distance, after engaging deeply with the messy processes inherent to action research, and, evidently, most research with people, is necessary to see the forest for the trees. However, at some point, one has to regain the closeness to engage critically with the findings and the goals for action. As a doctoral researcher, my emotional and academic investments in the project were high; thus,
maintaining appropriate distance was a difficult task. Tuhiwai Smith (1999) acknowledged that researchers must know when to say ‘no’ and when to take a step back. This is akin to Ubuntu, coming to understand one’s place in relation to others. Thus—perhaps most significant to my researcher development—was letting go of the belief I would love every moment of this work. Accepting that I knew I was not the answer to any of those questions, was more difficult than I, initially, assumed.

These difficulties became more vivid in negotiating my researcher positionalities, throughout. I let go of the initial identity I had envisioned for myself of what a community action researcher “should” think and practise and stepped into my own version of this character. I say should in quotations because depending on one’s viewpoint of what defines a particular form of action research, ideas for practise could vary significantly. During my intense internal ping pong match along the insider-outsider research continuum while conducting fieldwork, I, at first, had a need to avoid influence on how community members chose to interact with me. I struggled to find my footing. However, in interrogating my position multiple times, I came to recognise being an outsider to the community as something that has unavoidable influence, as my connectedness increased through the partnership. I found myself on opposite sides of the continuum and all the spaces in between, at times. Where I plotted myself along the outside-insider continuum, or the distance I perceived between myself and others in the research, was, and remains in a state of flux. Being aware of which hat to wear is key to the type of relationship you are working within and the task you are working to complete. To avoid reproducing unfavourable discourses or perpetuating systems of dominance, I was reflective when speaking, writing, and listening. Constantly addressing and reassessing my positionality served to maintain balance between the responsibilities of principal researcher, friend, student, educator, community development worker, and outsider.

Despite often having an unsettling feeling, when analysing my right to work in the indigenous space and place, I eventually acknowledged I was a part of the narrative. I hope the following analogy of CBPAR, being like a piece of workable clay, helps other novice community-based participatory action researchers work through their negotiations of right to space and place. Imagine you have a bit of clay in your hand, rolled up, and shaped into a cylinder. Your presence is the grip. You have to decide how firmly you want to hold that grip. Do you hold it just light enough, where there is very little imprint of your hand? Or do you want to squeeze so firmly that every single line of the fingerprint is seen, if not breaking the cylindrical shape completely? This
is a crucial difference in AR from traditional approaches of qualitative research, where the researcher likely has a wide range of control over the guiding processes. Much of the time with the CBPAR project, even though I may have been holding it very lightly, cautiously—sometimes, in my mind, I felt like I was holding it so tightly that I endangered breaking the whole thing. However, embracing the spirit of Ubuntu I eventually had to come to terms with the fact that some portion of my fingers would lay across the clay; that a symbiotic relationship was both natural and possible. I urge those wanting to take up this line of inquiry to consider deeply, in advance, the role they will play. Once you pick up the clay, it is too late. The type of mark left is what matters most.

9.2.4 Letting Go as Work

Letting go completely, having helped set something in motion but not being a member of the community, seems an impossible task to execute in its entirety. In line with continuing my reflexivity throughout, this section reflects the processes involved in letting go. In many ways, I think that I have been letting go since I started shaping the question for my PhD—letting go of old ideas as I take on new ones. Letting go was an exercise I had to become familiar with, fast. My presence was not always welcomed, my voice not always heard. How I envisioned the project unfolding often left me surprised at its development, throughout each iterative cycle. I think a good mantra for any community-based participatory action researcher, especially the novice ones, is to let go the need to control all facets of the process and remember to repeat “what I know now, I could not have known then”.

Community members had to, and must continue to, challenge themselves to notions of accountability and internal motivations for change to decolonise their minds. This is essential to move forward in the most meaningful ways for them. I also engaged in the project of decolonising the mind (Wane, 2009; wa Thiong’o, 1994) throughout this work by exploring Spivak’s project of unlearning my learning (Danius, Jonsson, & Spivak, 1993). For me, this involved transforming what I once understood, letting it go, being open to new ways of knowing, and acknowledging the possibility that my stance on sex-related issues in the community might change. An excerpt from my research journal, written as pseudo-poetry during fieldwork for this study, highlights the transformation I reference. By including this excerpt, I invite a return to my proposal to consider the positionality of a community-based participatory action researcher as a
‘position of possibilities’. I, also, return to Diversi and Moreria’s (2009) ‘in-betweener’ identity that I aligned myself with in Chapter One:

The space between scholarship and personal relationship
The line is thin in this work.
I stand on either side—
between building relationships and documenting them;
between listening to stories and interpreting them as data;
between weighing the rewarding moments against the challenging ones;
between carrying my unearned privileges while simultaneously working to unlearn it.

Those in-between spaces where I initially felt so unsettled—
between insider and outside, are now the spaces where I catch my breath:
Like spreading my arms out, the feeling I am flying, on the back of the boda-boda ride after a long
day, I am laughing so hard at Kay, who is singing loudly along to the music booming out of her
mobile; “it’s our theme song” I say, thinking whatever the lyrics were had been well suited to what
we learned or needed that day.
Those types of moments, the in-between spaces where I catch my breath,
between gathering knowledge and understanding it;
the spaces used for thinking and experiencing are the spaces in this work where I now feel most at
home. (Laura, Researcher journal, August 18, 2015)

This excerpt serves as a summary of what I learned through embracing the in-between spaces and
the possibilities for positionalities. Doing so, allowed me to feel complete comfort in living
inside, and outside, the in-between.

9.2.5 Worth the Work

The work I engaged in my doctorate was specific, in the sense that it required me to be a better
version of myself than I was, prior to moving to Kenya in early 2015. More explicitly, I had to
challenge myself to culturally know and understand in ways contradistinctive from my concept
of normal. I learned the importance of practicing patience—rather, the work put into practicing
patience—for a researcher when living amongst, and working with, a cultural community that, at
times, was highly discrepant from my own. It is vital, not to necessarily heed the lessons I share
here, but to remember to pay attention to the lessons that transpire from experiences as a CBPAR
researcher—they are challenging and rewarding. Researchers might find that the emotions
attached from living them can blow all at once. Researchers should pay attention to the in-
between spaces where they need to catch their breath, the moments operate between are key areas where, as researchers, we need to devote more work.

In the beginning of this dissertation, I introduced an identity I aligned myself with, the in-between identity, as a position of confusion but, also, possibilities. I resolve it here as the optimal space for possibilities to learn. Being confused just means you have not put in the work, yet. Accordingly, I encourage researchers to embrace the in-between spaces, listening when moments of learning present themselves as calls to put in the work.

9.3. Untangling the Rope Together: Conclusions to an On-Going Project

In summary, this dissertation indicates the significant challenges, and possibilities, of exploring an East African traditional space for dialogue in Kenya, as a viable tool to foster intergenerational dialogues on sex-talk. Researchers, community development practitioners, and those who might influence the shaping of educational or sexual health policies, must turn their gazes inward, to the programmes and policies that might be reproducing neo-colonising notions of reliance, gender inequalities, and systems of social organisation. This shift in focus will promote thoughtful consideration of the ways in which our projects do not encourage, or allow, individuals to be their own agents of change. To accomplish this requires a deeper understanding of the cultural and social contexts, through which sexual learning and exposure experiences continue. This understanding must encompass comprehension of the influences shaping norms, beliefs, practices, and behaviours within increasingly hybridising contexts. Gathering contextual data from community contributors that evidence their experiences of, and ideas for changing, problematic sex-related issues is essential. This will be helpful, in order to interrogate elements constraining the voices of the people who continue to be affected by sex-related problems the most—young people in rural Coast Kenyan communities. The decolonising approach, tested in the ‘Creating Conversations’ project (exploring dialogue as a means for changing the current problematic SHL), as an option for working with contributors in determining a sustainable pathway forward, albeit slow, has a promising future for the rural community that was the focus of this research. This project intended to create change, however small, for, with, and by the community members engaged. Their accounts, presented in this dissertation offered an in-depth understanding of problematic sex-related issues occurring in the ward, and community member ideas of how to deal with them.
While working with community contributors, the goal was to uncover answers to sex-related issues, but in fact, generated more questions. In agreement with country-wide, and Coast province statistics, the young people in this study, were identified as intensely vulnerable regarding their understandings of sex-related ideas, as well as their routes of sex-related exposure. Creators and facilitators of future sex-related programming, which seek to enhance circumstances afflicting youth partners, must ensure they involve local experts in these processes, while considering answers to the following questions: In new projects, are young people being framed as vulnerable and essential to place at the centre of planning, but, in actuality left out, due to gatekeepers? What are the gaps surrounding the context in which sex-related issues are occurring? This includes considering multiple voices, rather than a collective voice, to gain a broader scope on how sex-related matters impact members of a community. Finally, as strategic alliance partners, those who work with communities, should abolish the mentality of “How can, or will we, fix the problem?” and, instead, start asking, “How are we making it more difficult, for members of the local community we work with to be agents of change for themselves?” Interrogating approaches to practice examining their neo-colonising potential, will be a crucial factor in determining external organisations’ value as strategic allies.

While the findings around sexual health knowledge and experiences, as well as dialoguing about these topics, are specific to this community, the learning gathered through the process of working through each cycle of the ‘Creating Conversations’ project are transferable. For example, many indigenous ways of knowing are grounded in the relational (Duarte & Belarde-Lewis, 2015; Tuhiwai Smith, 1999). Relation to family, collectivist ideas of community, connection to nature and spirit, tolerance, and welcoming opportunities for listening to, and building understanding around, the significance of these relationships, are all imperative considerations, in order to have the right to situate ourselves, as outside researchers, in a position to work productively with insiders. Reviving the notions of unity akin to the philosophies of the ‘collective concept of self”, harambee, utu, and Ubuntu, are extremely relevant to neo-colonising contexts, which have the potential to absolve many positive aspects of a culture—identities notwithstanding—that are crucial to the preservation of indigenous histories and communities. In reconstructing bonds of unity through dialogue—by this I mean actively listening to how experiences, in relation to sex are constructed in their community—members of Mwakirunge will better understand or relate to one another. In addition to this, relating in this way initiates possibilities for moving forward together in sharing and maintaining their history, while constructing themselves into a new one.
The need to re-establish a societal connection is not a new notion in relation to research with indigenous populations (Taumaunu, 2014). The baraza serves as a good starting point to attempt to rebuild this connectedness. It is imperative that community members recognise the importance of cultural traditions. Abolishing the ones that are harmful, but also for arriving at a critical awareness to the forces in their community which may, actually, be, and evidently are, placing young people in positions of vulnerability. If community members understand these neo-colonising forces, and the dangerous maintenance of gender roles and codes that serve to undermine equality, which they can do by identifying these problems, staging change becomes possible (Wane, 2009). Through the catalyst for change-dialoguing about problematic issues—community members can reach an understanding, and eventually a decolonised state of mind. This eventual state would mean that community members are aware of the forces shaping the structures within which they live, and how they may be disruptive if accommodated, or adopted, inappropriately. Staging change through dialogue would, perhaps, enable community members to be more perceptive in their identification, and interrogation, of future sex-related problems and other issues, in order to not risk a colonisation of their culture or minds, as has occurred in Kenya’s history.

Finally, Freire (1970) asserted that true learning requires partnership in the educational process. This is true for CBPAR, where the effectiveness of practise is dependent on how collaborators are able to work together. Forming relationships, and building better pre-existing ones, are at the core of what I have advocated throughout this work, and for future research with rural communities where INGOs/NGOs, or other external institutions, are operating and possibly, contributing to the maintenance of (either intentionally, or unintentionally), post-colonising states of being. The interest of community contributors and partners, who continue to explore how the findings from this research incorporate into future programming, evidence the success of CBPAR and its iterative cycles in the identification of knots on the rope of the problematic SHL. Working at their own pace, through staged change processes, community contributors need to now untangle the problems they identified, in order to generate a strong and straight rope—a pathway to sustainable change for the SHL. Doing so ensures community-identified directions for the context are followed and met.
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Appendices
1.1 Semi-Structured Photo-Journal Interview Guide

- What photographs would you like to discuss today?
- Can you tell me a little more about what is happening in this photograph?
- Do you know if other children your age learn about sex in the same way?
- Could you tell me if you ever talk to anyone about sex?
- Do you feel free or comfortable when you are talking to this person about sex?
- Are you the person who starts the conversation about sex?
- Are there any reasons you feel uncomfortable talking to adults about sex?
- Do you feel better/more comfortable about sexual issues when you talk about it?
- What are some reasons you have, or you know others have, for not wanting to discuss sexual topics?
- Are there any topics you feel you are not allowed to talk about when having these discussions about sex? What are they – and why?

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statements</th>
<th>Answer:</th>
<th>Reason for Answer:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I believe it’s all right for unmarried boys and girls to kwenda juu ya tarehe (to go on a date)</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Not Sure</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I believe it’s all right for boys and girls to kiss hug and touch each other.</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Not Sure</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I believe there is nothing wrong with unmarried boys and girls having sexual intercourse if they love each other.</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Not Sure</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>I think that sometimes a boy has to force a girl to have sex if he loves her.</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Not Sure</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Disagree</td>
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<tr>
<td>A boy will not respect a girl who agrees to have sex with him.</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Not Sure</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Most girls who have sex before marriage regret it afterwards.</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Not Sure</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Most boys who have sex before marriage regret it afterwards.</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Not Sure</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A boy and a girl should have sex before they become kushiriki (engaged) to see whether they are suited to each other.</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Not Sure</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I believe that girls should remain virgins until they marry.</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Not Sure</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I believe that boys should remain virgins until they marry.</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Not Sure</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statement</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>Agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------</td>
<td>-------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It’s all right for boys and girls to have sex with each other provided that they use methods to stop pregnancy.</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>Not Sure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am confident that I can insist on condom use every time I have sex.</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>Not Sure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is mainly the woman’s responsibility to ensure that contraception is used regularly.</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>Not Sure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I think that you should be in love with someone before having sex with him or her.</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>Not Sure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel that I know how to use a condom properly.</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>Not Sure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel I understand any risks of having sex at a young age.</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>Not Sure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men need sex more frequently than do women</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>Not Sure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is sometimes justifiable for a boy to hit his girlfriend.</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>Not Sure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If a girl suggested using condoms to her partner, it would mean that she didn’t trust him.</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>Not Sure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It would be too embarrassing for someone like me to buy or obtain condoms</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>Not Sure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Condoms are suitable for steady, loving relationships</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>Not Sure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Having a relationship with some one of the same sex is acceptable</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>Not Sure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Young people can still have relationships without being sexual</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>Not Sure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How many of your friends have had sexual intercourse? Would you say many, some, a few, or none</td>
<td>Many</td>
<td>Some</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Questions adapted from a study under the WHO by Cleland, Ingham, & Stone 2001).
• On a scale of 1 to 10 how would you rate the education you receive about sex in school? 10 being you feel extremely informed, and 1 being you learn nothing about sex?
• Would you like to see more sex education? If yes, where? (for example, in the school, at home, in the community)
• What are some topics you would like to learn more about in the future related to sex?
• Do you think you have enough education to make healthier or safer decisions if sexual situation arise?

This study has been approved by the UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND HUMAN PARTICIPANTS ETHICS COMMITTEE ON 11-Dec-2014 for (3) years. Reference number 013285
1.2 Semi-Structured Interview/Focus Group Guide
(ADULTS and YOUNG PEOPLE OUT-OF-SCHOOL)

Topic 1: Approachability of Adults

- How would you describe your communication with young people generally?
- Are there any topics about sex that you would feel comfortable discussing with young people?

Topic 2: Sex Education/Communication

- Have any of you ever discussed sex related topics with young people?
- Where do you believe young people learn about sex?
- Who do you think should be the primary educator or sexual communicator with young people?

Topic 3: Understanding Sex Education and Sexual Communication

Focus group exercise: Share with the groups the results of several Kenyan studies/statistics rates of unwanted pregnancy and venereal diseases, etc.), followed by these questions:

- When you hear this, what is your initial reaction?
- How knowledgeable do you feel talking about correct terms for body parts and their functions?
- What do you think will make conversations about sex easier/more natural between young people and adults?

Topic 4: Future Sex Education and Sexual Communication Programming

- Who should be involved in sex-related education or communication with young people?
- What topics should be discussed in conversations or taught in programmes?
- Do you have suggestions for ways in which we can insert these conversations more often in the educational system or through traditional ways?

This study has been approved by the UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND HUMAN PARTICIPANTS ETHICS COMMITTEE ON 11-Dec-2014 for (3) years. Reference number 013285
1.3 Discussion Guide for Mabaraza

This guide served to highlight the key topics that emerged from the findings of the photo-journal interviews with young people, and focus group discussions with adults in Cycle Two of the project.

The following are a broad overview of topics discussed:

- Types of sex education and sexual communication in the community.
- Predominant views of sex/sexuality in the community of both members of adults’ groups in the community and young people.
- Routes for sexual communication and acquiring sexual and sexual health knowledge.
- Having discussions about sexual freedom versus sexual health.
- Barriers to sexual communication and suggestions for alleviating them.
- Community members envisioning of their roles in changing the sexual health landscape.
- Community member ideas for communicating about urgent sexual issues while still maintaining the values of the culture without muting the voice of individuals?
- Can we use these spaces for future sex education delivery/sexual communication? What other purposes do these spaces serve for enhancing the sexual health landscape? How would you further adapt the space?

This study has been approved by the UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND HUMAN PARTICIPANTS ETHICS COMMITTEE ON 11-Dec-2014 for (3) years. Reference number 013285
1.4 Oral Consent Script for Baraza

I am a doctoral student at The University of Auckland in New Zealand. I, along with PANGO’s research team, are testing if adapting traditional mabaraza can be a tool to enhance sex-related communication between youths and adults (parents, teachers, community leader, elders, and out-of-school youths, people who work in the community) to improve the sexual health landscape of the community. Your participation in this baraza is your own choice. You have an information sheet about this baraza, and some of you have consented on behalf of your child.

If you agree to participate you will be encouraged to share your opinions and ideas in the group discussions to follow. In order to do so, we ask that you please follow the rules for conduct in the baraza covered by the village elder during your invitation to the session. Members of the research team will open up the discussion with some topics about sex communication, learning experiences and exposure, that young people in the community shared with us in the second cycle of this project. You can respond to these topics in a manner you feel comfortable. This will take about one hour of your time but we encourage you to share as much as you wish.

All information from this baraza will be audio as well as video-recorded. Your privacy is important to me. Only the researcher and research team will view these recordings, and any document produced for the research will have your name and identity removed. To ensure confidentiality, no information will be collected that can link any of you back to your comments made within this space. However, due to the discussion-based nature of the study, it will not be possible to remove the information you have shared prior to the point you decide to leave the baraza, but we will be unable to identify what you say in the baraza space. If you wish, a summarized version of the findings can be emailed or posted to you after the study has concluded—if you put your email or postal address in the provided box at the research team table.

If you have any question after the baraza is finished, you may go to the research table and ask them directly or take a sheet of paper with our contact information to get in touch in another way. If you have any questions or concerns related to sexual health trained counsellors are also present and welcome your questions.

If you wish to participate please take your seat, or if you do not wish to continue, we ask that you leave the auditorium and remain outside for the duration of the session.

Thank-you

This study has been approved by the UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND HUMAN PARTICIPANTS ETHICS COMMITTEE ON 11-Dec-2014 for (3) years. Reference number 013285
1.5 UAHPEC Approval Letter

Office of the Vice-Chancellor
Finance, Ethics and Compliance

UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND HUMAN PARTICIPANTS ETHICS COMMITTEE (UAHPEC)

11-Dec-2014

MEMORANDUM TO:
Assoc Prof Christa Fouche
Counselling, HumServ & SocWrk

Re: Application for Ethics Approval (Our Ref. 013285): Approved

The Committee considered your application for ethics approval for your project entitled Creating Conversations: Using Community-Based Participatory Action Research to Develop a Platform for Sex Talk in Coast, Kenya.

We are pleased to inform you that ethics approval is granted for a period of three years.

The expiry date for this approval is 11-Dec-2017.

If the project changes significantly, you are required to submit a new application to UAHPEC for further consideration.

If you have obtained funding other than from UniServices, send a copy of this approval letter to the Research Office, at ro-awards@auckland.ac.nz. For UniServices contracts, send a copy of the approval letter to the Contract Manager, UniServices.

In order that an up-to-date record can be maintained, you are requested to notify UAHPEC once your project is completed.

The Chair and the members of UAHPEC would be happy to discuss general matters relating to ethics approval. If you wish to do so, please contact the UAHPEC Ethics Administrators at ro-ethics@auckland.ac.nz in the first instance.

Please quote reference number: 013285 on all communication with the UAHPEC regarding this application.

(This is a computer generated letter. No signature required.)

UAHPEC Administrators
University of Auckland Human Participants Ethics Committee

cc: Head of Department / School, Counselling, HumServ & SocWrk
Dr Allen Bartley
1.6 Partnership Documents

List of Partnership Documents for ‘Community Conversations’ Project:

1. Initial Contact Letter with PANGO
2. PANGO Support Letter
3. MOEK Permission to Access Schools
4. Office of the President Permission to Access Schools and Communities
CREATING CONVERSATIONS: USING COMMUNITY-BASED PARTICIPATORY ACTION RESEARCH TO DEVELOP A PLATFORM FOR SEX TALK IN COAST, KENYA

Researcher: Laura Ann Chubb

INITIAL CONTACT LETTER (PROGRAM MANAGER OF PANGO, COAST REGION, KENYA, )

Hujambo Kasena,

It was a pleasure working with you and the youth at PANGO during data collection for my Master’s project in 2011. As you know, I am currently a PhD candidate in education at the University of Auckland, Faculty of Education in New Zealand. I am studying under the co-supervision of Dr. Christa Fouché and Dr. Allen Bartley. I recently received my Master’s in Kinesiology (The Social and Cultural Aspects of Physical Activity and Health) from Memorial University in Canada, and would love the opportunity to collaborate with your organization again as part of my PhD research.

As discussed with you over the last few months, I wish to work with your organization alongside the community and with a research team, to design a proposed strategy, rooted in the needs and wants of the community, to improve the delivery of sex education and cultivate effective communication about sex. In order to do this, I want to partner with PANGO’s community sex education project and potentially collect data from the photo-journals that public secondary school enrolled youth have created. With the help of the organization, I would like to create a team of individuals to participate in research skills training, data collection, some analysis and dissemination of results to the community. I would also ask that you help find members for an advisory group (such as health care workers, teachers, religious and tribal leaders) to act as representatives of the community to ensure the project maintains cultural sensitivity. In addition, I would like to have access to your networks (particularly Coast secondary schools) to recruit parents who may be interested in being a part of the adult focus groups. Using a community-based participatory action research model, combined with a narrative inquiry methodology, I will aim to assess the use of a ‘conversational space’ (the Kiswahili baraza) for discussions between youth and adults about sex.

The information gained from this research will allow community members to work together to devise new strategies for teaching sex education. Through testing the baraza space, there is potential to re-infuse cultural tradition back into how sex education is delivered. The results from the study have the potential to inform the implementation of sex education in both public schools and the communities across Coast, Kenya.

As our relationship conducting research together in 2011 was so successful, I was hoping to take you up on your generous offer to collaborate once again. I hope you will assist me in engaging the appropriate contacts, discussing the primary concerns and needs of the target community for the research, and assembling a representative research team. As always I am available via social media, Skype, via email, or by phone. I would love the chance to discuss this very worthwhile project with you in greater detail. If you have any questions, or would
like to learn more about the research, please do not hesitate to contact me or the supervisor for my proposed research at any time:

**Researcher:** Laura Chubb Email: lchu796@aucklanduni.ac.nz, Phone: +64(0)2716894671

**Supervisor:** Dr. Christa Fouche Email: l.c.fouche@auckland.ac.nz, Phone: +64(0)937317599, extension 486481

Thank you again for taking the project into consideration! I know you have several projects you are working on at the moment. !

Asante Sana,

Laura Chubb!!
01 July 2014

RE: LETTER OF SUPPORT FOR PHD RESEARCHER LAURA CHUBB

To whom it may concern:

I am writing this letter in support of the PhD Candidate at the University of Auckland, Laura Chubb, and her proposed study **Creating Conversations: Using Community-Based Participatory Action Research to Develop a Platform for Sex Talk in Coast, Kenya.** Specifically, [PANGO] is committed to the success of this study and believes that testing how traditional mabaraza spaces can be adapted to improve the delivery of sex education in public secondary schools and our communities will help give more insight into the unwanted teenage pregnancy concerns and high levels of STIs/venereal diseases present in our communities. Our organization believes that through exploring these spaces as tools for improving communication about sex related topics between youths and adults will be invaluable to our communities.

[PANGO] is familiar with the plans for this study and wants to support this effort by assisting the researcher in making contact with both youth and adult participants. In addition, we will help the researcher in gaining access to a wide variety of suitable contacts to participate as part of the research team for the community action throughout the study. As well, I will aid in discussing the study with potential participants, provide viable contacts for a translator to assist in the study and provide an area in [PANGO] offices where focus groups with adults can be held in privacy.

In conclusion, [PANGO] is fully committed to the sustained success of the proposed study in collaboration with the researcher, Laura Chubb, and the Faculty of Education at the University of Auckland. Thank you for your consideration and we look forward to working with Laura Chubb to ensure her study is carried out successfully.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

Program Officer,

[Name]

[Position]

[Institution]
Ref No. EDU/KIS/1/14/32

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

Am in receipt of a copy of your request to introduce a life skills program in schools through the District Commissioners office. We do appreciate the gesture as it will positively impact the youth.

However, be advised that you will need to submit your programs to the office as well as liaise with the headteachers and agree on the most suitable time. The program should not interfere with normal classroom learning and teaching.

In case you need further help please liaise with our office

MARY W. KANYORO
DISTRICT EDUCATION OFFICER
KISAUNI DISTRICT

cc.
District Commissioner
Kisauni District
OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT
PROVINCIAL ADMINISTRATION AND INTERNAL SECURITY

Telegrams: "DISTRICTER" KISA
Telephone: Kisauni; 041-2012877
Email: dc_10kisauni@yahoo.com

DISTRICT COMMISSIONER'S OFFICE
KISAUNI DISTRICT
P.O BOX 28-80122
KISAUNI

DATE: 15TH JANUARY, 2013

Program Officer
P.O. Box 3666
MOMBASA

RE: REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CARRY OUT ACTIVITIES BOTH IN AND OUT OF SCHOOL IN MOMBASA COUNTY

Reference is made to your letter dated 10th January 2013 on the above subject matter.

This office has no objection and you can conduct these activities.

However you are advised to report to the District Education Officer, Kisauni District before embarking on the activities.

W. A. NGAIRA
FOR: DISTRICT COMMISSIONER
KISAUNI DISTRICT

Copy to
The District Education Officer
KISAUNI DISTRICT