

Spring 2005

What Do You See? Visualizations of Sexuality Among Young Women in Rijeka, Croatia

Annika Shore
SIT Study Abroad

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcollections.sit.edu/isp_collection

 Part of the [Feminist, Gender, and Sexuality Studies Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Shore, Annika, "What Do You See? Visualizations of Sexuality Among Young Women in Rijeka, Croatia" (2005). *Independent Study Project (ISP) Collection*. 471.

https://digitalcollections.sit.edu/isp_collection/471

This Unpublished Paper is brought to you for free and open access by the SIT Study Abroad at SIT Digital Collections. It has been accepted for inclusion in Independent Study Project (ISP) Collection by an authorized administrator of SIT Digital Collections. For more information, please contact digitalcollections@sit.edu.

What Do You See?
Visualizations of Sexuality Among Young Women in Rijeka,
Croatia

Annika Shore
School for International Training
The Balkans: Gender, Transformation, and Civil Society
Spring, 2005
Academic Director: Jill Benderly
ISP Advisor: Natasa Bijelic

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements.....	3
Introduction.....	4
Why Visualizations?.....	8
What is Sexuality?.....	9
Where and Who.....	10
Methodology.....	11
Discussion.....	13
The Workshop.....	13
Workshop #1: Setting a Foundation.....	14
The Circles.....	17
Visibility of Circles.....	24
Workshop #2: Gaining a Deeper Understanding.....	27
Workshop #3: Who Are We?.....	29
Workshop #4: What Do You Think?.....	35
Workshop #5: Putting it All Together.....	37
What We Made: The Pictures.....	38
Closure and Evaluation.....	42
Recommendations.....	44
Self Reflection.....	45
Appendices.....	51
Bibliography.....	62

Acknowledgements

I would firstly like to acknowledge and thank Jill Benderly, my academic director, for all of her support and remarkable enthusiasm and patience. I would also like to give my thanks to Goga, Mirna, and Lily at the SIT Office, for their incredible humor, energy, and generosity of spirit.

My sincerest thanks goes out to Natasa Bijelic, my advisor for this project. Her time, knowledge, and support were always incredibly useful and often a comfort. I feel lucky to have been able to work with her.

To Alen in Rijeka: None of this would have been possible without you. Thank you for everything.

And to the beautiful young women from my workshop: Your insight, humor, dedication, and friendship are what this paper is made of. You have my deepest gratitude and affection.

Introduction

Sexuality education for young people is something I have been passionate about for the past five years. My engagement with this topic has landed me in many different roles; I have been the educated, participating in workshops about multiple aspects of sexuality, as well as how to educate young people about it; I have been an educator, going into classrooms and conducting my own workshops and classes about sexuality and safer sex; an activist, leading student groups on my campus to do volunteer work around HIV/AIDS and hold positive sexuality campaigns, and most recently I have been a researcher, traveling to Kenya and Croatia trying to learn how young people in cultures other than my own experience sexuality, and how they learn about it.

The question foremost in my mind that I wanted to answer here in Croatia was “what does sexuality look like to young women here?” In order to answer this question, I conducted a three-week long sexuality workshop in Rijeka, Croatia, with a group of women aged 15 to 22. The workshop revolved around the aim to answer that question through the use of the participants’ own photography. This was to further understand the relationship between these girls’ own perceptions of sexuality, and the messages they are receiving through other avenues of society, such as school, family, and media.

Sexuality education is something that is becoming more and more important globally. The AIDS pandemic, the acknowledgement of young people as crucial leaders of social change, and conflicting global forces like the Bush Administration and the Media all place sexuality education in the spotlight. Croatia is not exempt from this trend.

At this point in time adolescent sexuality, and adolescent sexuality education is a point of contention in Croatia. Currently in Croatia,

“A family ethos which is based on traditional female and male roles and conservative attitudes toward gender and sexuality, reinforced through war, nationalism, and Catholic discourse in the last twelve years, and thus characterized by strong patriarchal values, has become part of the dominant conception.”¹

Therefore, this research, though important on a global level, is especially pertinent to Croatia’s position in history. Croatia is in the category of “post communist countries” which has been going through major transitions in the past two decades. Of these that influence how sexuality is viewed the role of the Catholic Church is primary. During the 1990’s there was a

“...revival of ethnonational identities. Since a historic national religion is one of the core ingredients of ethnonational identity, it comes as no surprise that in the countries in which nationalist conflicts took place during the 1990s, religion became an important ethnonational marker and one of the vehicles of social mobilization.”²

In this way, Croatia’s involvement in the wars of the 1990’s directly served to strengthen the role of the Church in its society. In fact, even after Tudjman died religiosity grew in Croatia. Religious education was introduced into public primary schools in 1994, and in secondary schools in 2000. Aleksander Stulhofer, co-editor of Sexuality and Gender in Postcommunist Eastern Europe and Russia, describes this addition as an act the new coalition government took because they... “wanted to start good relations with the Church which was very pro HDZ and pro Tudjman before, so it was a gesture of

¹ The Center for Education and Counseling of Women (CESI), “The Significance of Gender in the Attitudes and Sexual Behaviour of Croatian Adolescents” Report on the Findings of the “Urgently Claiming the Future: Focus on Gender for Safer Sexual Relationships” Research Project.

² Stulhofer, Aleksander and Sandfort, Theo, editors. Sexuality and gender in Postcommunist Eastern Europe and Russia. New York: The Hawthorn Press. p.6.

goodwill...”³ The implications of this are that the rise in religiosity in Croatia since the war is at least in part a political transition, not only a moral or cultural one. However, there is still the social impact;

“...the influence of the Church as the *ultimate moral authority* strengthened conservative viewpoints and policy initiatives, especially in discussions on abortion, sex education, homosexuality, gender roles, and family violence.”⁴

Just as the new government wanted to validate the point of view of the Catholic Church in Croatia, I wanted to validate, through my workshop, the point of view of the young people working to understand their own sexuality while under the influence of these forces beyond their control. It is obvious that Croatia is going through some confusing transitions. With the installation of a more liberal government at the same time as the rise of the Catholic Church, the forces acting upon how sexuality is treated in Croatia are complex. While it is true that

“In terms of some basic behavioral indicators Croatia is still slightly different from the rest of Europe, in the sense that on average the kids become sexually active slightly later than the rest of Europe. The average age is 17. Probably because it’s still a little bit more traditional, that is less permissive, environment than the rest...”⁵

Croatia also lies parallel to more Western countries when it comes to attitudes about tolerance and sexual freedom.⁶

These contradictions are coming to a head currently in Croatia, as there is a debate going on as to what sexuality education should be taught in schools. A committee was formed to evaluate and eventually recommend one of three programs to the government for implementation. The three programs range from conservative abstinence-

³ Stulhofer, Aleksander. Interview, April 24th.

⁴ Stulhofer, Aleksander and Sandfort, Theo, editors. Sexuality and gender in Postcommunist Eastern Europe and Russia. New York: The Hawthorn Press. p.7.

⁵ Stulhofer, Aleksander. Interview, April 24th.

⁶ See appendix

only education to comprehensive sexuality education with an emphasis on tolerance and self-discovery. The committee was supposed to choose a program for recommendation by April 1st, but still a verdict has not been reached. “I think that the committee is divided,” says Stulhofer.

So what does this mean for the young citizens of Croatia? Does the influence of the Church act as the lens through which they view sexuality? Or does the more global trend of liberality surrounding sexuality? This leads me to believe that there is no generalization that can be made about the state of sexuality in Croatia right now. In many ways Croatia’s situation of being in transition with newly gained independence parallels that of its adolescent residents. The notion of sexuality within this broader idea of transition is also important, as

The strengthening of the sexual industry as well as the over-sexualization of the media are both influential forces in the forming of sexual scripts for both male and female adolescents in Croatia. Furthermore, the lack of sexual education has resulted in an incomplete understanding of sexual behavior, under-developed communication skills and fragmented knowledge of sexual issues. For young people, this means a greater exposure to risky sexual behavior, unrealistic expectations and distorted view of one’s own sexuality.”⁷

My goal was to take a deeper look at these so called “distorted views” of particularly female adolescents’ sexuality, by giving the young women the opportunity to express these views themselves.

The role I played during my time in Rijeka was unlike any other I have experienced. I was always learning, always in a position to educate, and always thinking about how what I was hearing could impact my research. I wanted the participants of my

⁷ The Center for Education and Counseling of Women (CESI), “The Significance of Gender in the Attitudes and Sexual Behaviour of Croatian Adolescents” Report on the Findings of the “Urgently Claiming the Future: Focus on Gender for Safer Sexual Relationships” Research Project.

workshop to look at sexuality in a new way, and I found that as I tried to help them do that, I came to look at myself in a new way, as well.

Why “Visualizations”?

Croatia is no different when it comes to the images that bombard our young people surrounding sexuality. Surrounded by images of female sexuality designed to sell and manipulate, young women have not had the chance to develop their own ideas of what female sexuality looks like to them. What I was interested in while designing this project was not sexualized images *of* young females, but rather images of sexuality created *by* young females. The easiest place to find these sexualized images are in the magazines that fill the shelves of every stand and convenience store on the streets of Rijeka. In these magazines “Women...are the instruments and the goal of advertising. What is paradoxical is that the layout of these advertisements presupposes a male view.”⁸ Although it is not true that all photographers for these magazines are male, it is the assumption of the male gaze that is important; this assumption goes further to create this ubiquitous image of female sexuality that the women who read these magazines cannot escape. And these images help to “...frame our representations of the world and co-shape them.”⁹ The purpose of this study was to give young women the opportunity to create images of their own sexuality divorced from any consumerist or pop-culture intention. I wanted to fill in the spaces women’s magazines leave empty for young female sexuality, because so far

⁸ Hrzenjak, Majda. “The Bio-politics of the Body in Women’s MagazV.” Making Her Up; Women’s Magazines in Slovenia. Ljubljana: Peace Institute. 2002. p19.

⁹ Vendramin, Valerija. “The Culture of Femininity: Cosmo at Work.” Making Her Up; Women’s Magazines in Slovenia. Ljubljana: Peace Institute. 2002. p86.

“...what we have here in actual fact is nothing like female sexuality, but a sexuality that is directly related to the beauty industry and beauty as a marketable commodity.”¹⁰

This project focuses on aspects of female sexuality that *aren't* marketable, that aren't manipulated for the purpose of monetary gain. For, “...the female gender is not an absolute category, as these magazines try to convince us, but a historically, culturally, and individually variable one.”¹¹ The images produced by the participants of my workshop automatically honor the particular histories, cultures, and individual psyches of the photographers; indeed, the purpose of the photographs were to deepen each participants' own understanding of how she views sexuality around her, not to sell an image to somebody else.

What is Sexuality?

I firmly believe that

“Human sexuality develops from the moment of conception onward through all life stages. It is affected by all one experiences. It also affects and is affected by a person's heritage and the period in which she/he is born.”¹²

In order to honor this development I chose to use a model of sexuality called the Five Circles of Sexuality.¹³ These circles encompass the full range of human experience that may be connected to sexuality; *Sensuality, Intimacy, Sexual Identity, Sexual Health and Reproduction, and Sexualization*. Using this model allows us to broaden our understanding of sexuality; I wanted to move away from the idea that sexuality is just “anything to do with sex,” and is instead something that can be developed and celebrated

¹⁰ Vendramin, Valerija. “The Culture of Femininity: Cosmo at Work.” Making Her Up: Women's Magazines in Slovenia. Ljubljana: Peace Institute. 2002. p96.

¹¹ Eds. Making Her Up; Women's Magazines in Slovenia. Ljubljana: Peace Institute. 2002. p10.

¹² Chilman, Catherine S. “Promoting Healthy Adolescent Sexuality.” *Family Relations*, Vol.39, No. 2. (Apr., 1990) 123.

¹³ See appendix

through aspects of one's life that are not purely sexual. Using this model also provided a natural point of reference for the workshop; when referring to "sexuality" throughout the workshop sessions we could all look to the circles to provide us with a definition of what we were talking about.

Where and Who?

Rijeka is located in Northwestern Croatia on the Adriatic Sea; it is the largest port in Croatia, with a population of 150,000 people, and is one of the most progressive cities in the country. The participants of my workshop were all volunteers who were already involved in a program for youth called ASK and the youth organization created from ASK called Potencijal. Participants in ASK groups spend two years meeting weekly; their program is on the theme of "Moj zivot po mom izboru" ("my life by my choice") and spends time on youth issues such as "who am I and what do I want in my life?", "emotions and communication," and "sexuality." After completing these two years "graduates" of the ASK program can become involved in Potencijal¹⁴, which is run entirely by young people and holds weekend workshops on their own, around similar themes. Because of their involvement with ASK, each participant in my workshop had already been involved for at least two years in a program with similar, but broader, goals as mine. What this means is that the participants in my workshop were already used to a workshop/youth group situation, and had sexuality education already outside of the standard biology education they received in school.

¹⁴ see www.potencijal.hr

Indeed, my participants are what I would call exceptions to the context in which I placed them. They are informed, engaged, and actively wanting to learn more about themselves and their sexuality.

Methodology

This research was conducted from April 13th until May 11th, with 9 young women aged 15 to 22. It had three major components:

1. The workshop sessions, during which we did activities exploring what sexuality means on an abstract and personal level. These workshops were held in Potencijal's office space, and took place on April 17th, 20th, 28th, May 1st, and 5th. Each lasted approximately 1.5 to 2 hours. These workshops allowed me to gain the experience of creating and facilitating my own workshop, as well as gave us the opportunity to develop our own understanding of sexuality together as a group. This understanding of sexuality was necessary in order for the photography to be a success; we needed to know what we were taking pictures of before we could begin.
2. The interviews. Each participant was interviewed using a semi-structured interview format in the first two weeks about the experience of being in this workshop and taking the pictures, as well as about their personal histories with sexuality and sexuality education. The interviews were important for me to gain a clearer understanding of what previous experience my participants had had with sexuality education, and what their points of view were. Each interview took place in my kitchen, lasted approximately one hour, and

consisted of similar questions.¹⁵ One additional interview was conducted on April 24th with Aleksander Stulhofer, a sociology professor in Zagreb specializing in sexuality issues. This interview was conducted with the purpose of gaining a broader understanding of the context in which my participants are living.

3. The photographs. Each participant was given a disposable camera at the end of the first workshop on April 17th, with the assignment to photograph the aspects of sexuality we decided upon previously that evening. The cameras were due back to me by April 28th to be developed. I developed the majority of the photographs on April 29th. Some cameras were turned in late, and those were developed on the day they were handed to me. Doubles were made of each roll of film so that each participant received her photographs, while one copy remained with me. On May 1st it was decided that each participant would create their own page with their photographs, and write a description of what their photographs meant to them. Then at the following meeting the pages were combined into an album, creating our collective “visualization of sexuality.” At this workshop written evaluations were also handed out and completed.¹⁶

In order to ensure anonymity no names are used in this paper, and each participant was assigned a letter to represent her name.

These three aspects of my research were designed to give me the chance to observe my participants in workshop, as well as get to know them personally during

¹⁵ See appendix

¹⁶ see appendix

interviews and workshop sessions. The data I gathered from this was therefore qualitative. In order to ensure that my project was ethically sound each participant had to read and sign a consent form, informing them of their rights as participants, their anonymity, and what would happen with their photographs.¹⁷

Discussion

The Workshop

I designed this workshop based on the idea that sexuality is something that young women can learn about and experience in a positive way.

“Assuming there is at least some agreement that the promotion of healthy adolescent sexuality is desirable, what conditions are indicated to promote this growth? For the most part social and psychological theorists and researchers have not appreciated the subject from a positive point of view. Studies have been mostly directed to what is deemed problematic for adolescents, rather than what is healthy for them.”¹⁸

My goal was to have the workshop focus on what was healthy about sexuality, while still honoring the reality of negative experiences. Even if the subject matter was something the participants felt negatively about, the experience of being in the workshop and learning more about sexuality could be a positive, healthy one. For this workshop in particular I wanted us to gain a common understanding of what sexuality is, theoretically and personally, and how it is visible in our lives. In order to create the workshop I drew on my own past experiences participating in and conducting sexuality workshops, as well as my teaching experience in other subjects.

As it happened, there was a desire for a workshop such as mine. The majority of participants were attracted to the workshop because, as one participant told me, it was

¹⁷ see appendix

¹⁸ Chilman, Catherine S. “Promoting Healthy Adolescent Sexuality.” *Family Relations*, Vol.39, No. 2. (Apr., 1990) 125.

“...something new, and we can’t speak about sexuality anywhere. And this is a place where I can speak about it and I just wanted to try it, to see.”¹⁹ “...I thought it might be interesting and to learn more about myself. Each new experience I learn more about myself,”²⁰ another participant explained. Those were the two main reasons cited as to why the young women chose to participate in my workshop. They signed up for it knowing very little about it, just that there would be photography and discussion about sexuality. This drive to do something new, and to talk about sexuality and learn more about themselves was evident throughout the course of the workshop.

WORKSHOP #1²¹: Setting a Foundation

After the initial activities of checking in with each participant and setting ground rules and expectations, we did the first sexuality-related warm-up activity.

Each participant answered three questions: “If I were a touch, I would be...” “If I were a body part, I would be...”, and “If I were a food, I would be...” There were some common themes among their answers. Chocolate, hugs, and eyes were the most common answers. However, their reasons for choosing these varied. One participant said she would be a hug because it’s special, it’s not for everyone, while another said she would be a hug because it feels good and makes other people feel good. There was an emphasis on small touches, such as feet touching or hands accidentally brushing each other. The most striking thing about the explanations they gave for their answers was how unique or special they felt, or wanted to feel as individuals. Statements such as “I would be a small touch, like hands brushing because it is so special, but not for everyone,” were common.

¹⁹ P, Interview, April 28th

²⁰ V, Interview, April 27th

²¹ see appendix for complete descriptions of each activity

What was interesting about this is that though many of their answers were the same, they expressed the desire to be unique. There were also those singular answers, such as one participant said she would be goulash because she can eat it every day. This activity set the stage for talking about sexuality; it established the idea that not everybody is the same, and started us talking about aspects of sexuality such as bodies, touches, and tastes.

The following activity was to cut out pictures from magazines that reminded them of “sexuality,” without giving them any further information about sexuality. Although they were all dismayed that the magazines were new and had to be cut up, we spent a good twenty minutes sitting on the floor ripping out pictures. This activity was designed to introduce the idea of images of sexuality. Acknowledging the presence of images we see every day surrounding sexuality was important in order to start producing our own images.

They cut out pictures mostly of bodies, faces with looks suggesting sex, clothes, etc. When explaining the images they cut out, the word most often used was “sexy.” One participant even commented, “everything is ‘sexy’ today!” When I asked if they usually use that word when describing things, they all said no. The majority of pictures cut out were obviously intended to suggest the idea of sexual activity, such as a man and a woman kissing, or naked bodies pressed against each other. When explaining these pictures they mostly just said “this is so sexy, this is about sex,” or the like. Some participants, however, cut out pictures that meant something personally to them. One participant cut out a picture of two people dancing in a ballet; “dancing can be very intimate to me,” she said. One participant ripped out particular colors because “they are warm colors, like love.” This indicated that though the majority of pictures cut out about

“sexuality,” had particularly to do with “sex,” some participants had a broader definition in mind that encompassed ideas like love and intimacy.

One interesting aspect of their explanations was their positive attitude about the images. Some participants made comments which suggested dissatisfaction with the way women were portrayed in the advertisements. More often, however, when describing an advertisement showing something like two models gazing into each other’s eyes they would say “she’s looking at him, and they love each other, and it’s really nice...” Indeed,

“Women are not passive victims of media images, but they actively identify with them despite the ambivalence of their attitude towards media representations. On the one hand, they find them attractive and find pleasure in them, while on the other, they perceive them as a threat and means of subjugation.”²²

The participants of my workshop were positive about the images, but seemed to take them with a grain of salt. Later, when I asked them what they thought of the activities some participants even said that they don’t attach those images to sexuality any longer.

“...it is ok when you see how many magazines and how much they are filled with all those photographs and everything that reminds you of sexuality, but I don’t think that is something that can be related to us. Because I think that we are all so used to seeing those girls with nice bodies lying there being photographed. And that is something I wouldn’t put in sexuality. I would only put it in these advertisements. So I don’t see it anymore as sexuality.”²³

This statement implies a certain detachment that my participants felt from the images they are presented with in magazines.

The following activity was the most important for the entire workshop: I unveiled the Circles of Sexuality²⁴. I read aloud the definitions of Sensuality, Intimacy, Sexual

²² Hrzenjak, Majda. “The Bio-politics of the Body in Women’s Magazines.” Making Her Up; Women’s MagazV in Slovenia. Ljubljana: Peace Institute. 2002. p15.

²³ T, Interview April

²⁴ obtained from *Life Planning Education: Development Program for Youth*, Ch. 5. See www.advocatesforyouth.com

Identity, Sexual Health and Reproduction, and Sexualization, and then we brainstormed what types of things would go inside each circle. They felt very strongly that the circles were connected, and often when talking about something such as “body image” which, according to the technical definition, belongs in “sensuality,” they would say “no, but it goes in all the others too, because...” They embraced the definition that these circles proposed, even if each circle was not yet perfectly understood. They said things like “...you can’t be intimate with anybody else until you are intimate with yourself.” They were eager to emphasize the fluid nature of sexuality.

The circle that generated the most discussion was “sexualization.” Many participants were displeased with the negative connotations of the definition. They thought that sexualization did not always have to be a negative thing. However, when I asked where most of the pictures we ripped out earlier would belong, they said sexualization. Because the images we found in the magazines filled the “sexualization” circle, we decided that we would have our photographs focus on Intimacy and Sensuality, in order to balance out the images we are used to seeing.

Because these circles became the basis for our understanding of sexuality, it is important to understand how my participants saw each circle, and its role in the greater definition of “sexuality.”

The Circles

“Sexualization,” defined as “the use of sexuality to influence, control, or manipulate others,” was the circle that generated the most discomfort. When I later asked them about this some of the participants said that sexualization could be a negative thing like in the pictures, but not always. During the workshop, when we first talked about this

circle, they rejected the definition, because of its primarily negative connotations. As T said later, when I asked which circle she was least comfortable with, “Maybe sexualization, because it’s not something uncomfortable, but when you see the definition...manipulating others, you think ‘oh no I don’t manipulate others...’ but I think it’s something normal because as a human you will try to let your kind procreate.”²⁵ This idea that using sexuality to manipulate mostly as a procreation tool was how most of my participants chose to view sexualization, if they understood it at all. For most it was a new concept. “Sexualization, that was new for me,” said D. “Actually, we don’t use that word really. I haven’t really heard it.”²⁶

The more complex aspects of sexualization, such as rape and sexual harassment, were not things my participants chose to talk about. Connecting mild manipulations such as wearing “sexy” clothing to attract sexual partners to the more serious acts of sexualization was not something that any of my participants did. There are many possible reasons for this. I think that perhaps they wanted to focus on the positive parts of sexuality as much as I wanted them to have a positive experience learning about sexuality. It could be that sexualization as a concept was less familiar and therefore more challenging to talk about coherently. Another possibility is that each of my participants had spent a lot of time in their ASK group and in Potencijal engaging in self-reflection and self-discovery; when exploring their own sexuality they did not want to associate negative concepts like sexualization with their own identity.

²⁵ T, Interview April 27th

²⁶ D, Interview April 18th

“Sexual Identity” was the other circle cited as confusing or uncomfortable by some participants. Defined as “a development of a sense of who one is sexually, including a sense of maleness or femaleness,” this circle includes things like sexual orientation and gender roles. When interviewing participants, I spent time twice going over this circle and what it meant in more detail. Some of my participants had been in workshops about gender and sexual identity, but for those who had not, this circle was confusing. “I don’t know really what is that. I know sexual identity as, you know, homosexual or bisexual or something, I know about it. But sexual identity is not clear for me,” said P until we talked about it in more detail.

“I don’t know, sexual identity...I think its hard to define,” said V. When I asked if sexual identity was something talked a lot about with their friends, they said no, unlike some of the other circles. However, their attitudes about the content of this circle were very positive. Every participant interviewed expressed a positive attitude and acceptance toward homosexuality.

When I asked if there was anything she would change about her society concerning sexuality, one participant said “...this thing with homosexuality, I think that they have as much right to feel affection the same, and not have to think ‘oh what will people think of me’, and not get fired...”²⁷

P told a story of a transsexual she saw dancing:

yeah, I know one person, I don’t know her, but like around town. She was a man and now she’s a woman. And it’s so perfect for me. When I see her in some club when she dances, I can see her male’s hands. But she’s a woman...This is so amazing for me. I don’t know, I can accept this person. I think I can be friends with someone who is man or woman and something...Yes. Because they are brave.”²⁸

²⁷ D, Interview April 18th

²⁸ P, Interview April 28th

This “permissiveness” toward homosexuality often took the form of saying that they have friends or would have friends who are homosexual with no problems at all.

“ I think its ok. I have a friend that, we were good, and one year we were hanging out she told me she was in love with a girl and that’s really, like “wow, you could have told me earlier!” She said “I don’t know what you think about it,” and I was like “I only appreciate you more for telling me’ ... if a friend of mine is gay, he is still a friend of mine.”²⁹

One participant told of a friend of hers who is gay and his boyfriend, and described them as “...oh they’re so cute! They’re just like me and my boyfriend.”³⁰

Interestingly, they often expressed that homosexuality among women was much more acceptable to the general public than homosexuality among men.

It’s not so common in Rijeka, gay people don’t hold hands in public or anything. It’s not so strange when you see two girls together because before we all hold hands and kiss on the cheek. And when you see two boys it’s strange because nobody does that.³¹

This participant expressed remorse that “stupid people,” as she put it, don’t accept homosexual men being affectionate in public. In terms of how young women in Rijeka view sexuality, it was obvious they included homosexuality in their point of view. For my participants, they saw homosexuality in a positive light, and whether or not the rest of their peers did too, one could guess that it was at least in their sight.

“Sexual Health and Reproduction” was not something we spoke about in our workshop, as we chose to focus on Intimacy and Sensuality. “Attitudes and behaviors related to producing children, care and maintenance of the sex and reproductive organs, and health consequences of sexual behavior,” was something they had all learned about

²⁹ V, Interview April 27th

³⁰ L, Interview April 20th

³¹ L, Interview April 20th

in their ASK groups, and so I chose to focus all workshop activities on the other circles. However, this circle was cited as one of the most talked about, and the only one learned about in school, however minimally. The general attitude was that contraception and sexually transmitted diseases were something very important to know about, and this knowledge was highly valued. “which circle do you talk the most about with your friends?” I asked L. “Sexual Health and Reproduction...the diseases and contraception. Because my friend doesn’t use it, and I’m really nervous about it, and I’m always careful. She’s not so much...one is like this and the other stopped using. And I’m mad at them!”³² she said.

Practicing safer sex and passing on the knowledge they had gained from their ASK group to their peers was something my participants seemed to take for granted by the time I met them.

Sensuality, one of the circles we chose to focus on for our photography, was also one of the most popular circles. The notion of “awareness, acceptance of and comfort with one’s own body; physiological and psychological enjoyment of one’s own body and the bodies of others,” was incredibly appealing to my group. They wanted to indulge in this circle, they wanted to experience this circle to the fullest. “Maybe I like the most sensuality,” T said, “because I think it’s an art. It’s really an art of knowing and feeling and everything.” For our workshop sensuality became the combination of physical sensations and the emotions they incite. Sensuality as an “art,” as T put it became

³² L, Interview April 20th

eventually one of the most obvious themes in the photographs they took. Showing something physical with an emotional result was what we all wanted.

I asked Z, “which do you think of these circles feel the most personal to you?” “Sensuality,” she answered immediately. “Everything about it. I cannot just say something...for me it’s very important to, when someone is dear to me, it’s important for me to touch him, to hug him, to hold his hand or something like that. To show him that I really care about him or her or whatever.”

“Is that just in the romantic sense?” I asked.

“Friends and family also! It’s not just my partner or something. It’s friends and everyone that I care about.”³³

Exploring this circle through our photography and discussions was perhaps the most useful way of broadening our definition of sexuality. Z talking about needing to be affection with the people she cares about, whether it’s in a *sexual* way or not shows that her definition of sexuality includes all forms of affection and touch, not just those directly related to sex.

P, on the flip side, is in love, and sensuality for her plays an equally important but different role in her vision of sexuality. “Sensuality, everything is so sensual, when I want to be sensual everything is sensual. Everything, everything. I don’t know, his pants are so sensual for me. I don’t know, everything, everything...I’m crazy about this.”³⁴

Any physical manifestation of love seemed to lie in this circle of sensuality; hugging your best friend or the pants belonging to the man you are in love with included. Love itself, however, belonged in the intimacy circle.

³³ Z, Interview April 21st

³⁴ P, Interview April 28th

Intimacy was the circle that lay in the foreground of all the others. “The ability and need to experience emotional closeness to another human being and have it returned,” was the concept my participants were most comfortable with. Intimacy most often came up in terms of friendship or family relationships. When asked which circle she talks the most about, one participant said

“Intimacy. Now I talk with my mom and my brother, now. But with friends only with two or three close friends I talk about it. For me it’s very private and I don’t want to share with just anybody.”³⁵

Intimacy encompassed for my participants all of the bonding they do with their close friends. Talking about their romantic relationships with their best friends came up just as often when talking about intimacy as the romantic relationships themselves did. As V said, “Intimacy. Yeah. I like to have REALLY good friends. Being loved and being loved in return...I really love friends, we care about each other.”³⁶ The idea that intimacy, as a part of sexuality, was something that could be experienced joyfully outside of a sexual relationship was a concept my participants were really enthusiastic about.

“Intimacy is to love myself and my body. I learn about MY intimacy, my intimacy. And of course intimacy is now sharing everything. Not only hugging and kissing it’s, I don’t know, to speak with someone or to eat together or something. It’s intimacy. Now I can say that. I didn’t know about it before these workshops,”³⁷

said P when I asked her one thing she’s learned about the circles. This was one of the most obvious and effective ways that “sexuality” as a concept became more accessible. By attaching intimacy with friends and family and with your own body to the overarching concept of “sexuality” makes “sexuality” something that everybody can do well, so to

³⁵ M, Interview, April 18th

³⁶ V, Interview April 27th

³⁷ P, Interview April 28th

speak. If “sexuality” is something that is only attached to sex, it is far too exclusive. Every participant in this workshop, whether they are sexually active or not, whether they consider themselves comfortable with their sexual identity or not, had experienced intimacy in some way. Connecting those experiences to the theme of “sexuality” lets everyone into the sexuality club, essentially.

Visibility of the Circles

In order to understand how these young women “visualize” sexuality, I asked each of them if they thought that “sexuality” was visible in their lives, and if it was, how? I asked them this after we had already discussed the five circles, so they could answer in terms of each circle. I will mention here only those circles most often discussed in terms of visibility.

Intimacy was the circle which we spoke about the most in terms of visibility. Some participants definitely thought that intimacy was visible in their lives. Two participants talked about intimacy in terms of their parents. “I see intimacy between my parents,” one participant said. “When they work together at, I don’t know, when Mom irons and my father looks at her. I can see intimacy in everything between him and her.”³⁸ Another said “Well, intimacy. When my parents hug or kiss or cuddle, it’s cute.”³⁹ Familial intimacy seemed to be the most easy to see. When discussing possible ideas for photography Z and L told about seeing a grandfather holding his sleeping grandson, and the intimacy between them. Other participants, however, thought that intimacy by the very nature of its definition was not visible; As T put it,

³⁸ P, Interview April 28th

³⁹ B, Interview April 27th

“intimacy, well I don’t see it. You can get that it is there, but you don’t see it. Because when I see two people whispering something in their ear, it is intimacy between them, but I don’t know what it is.”⁴⁰

Likewise, when I asked L, who is in love with her boyfriend, if intimacy was visible she said “you can see it if they are showing it, but not all. You can’t show love. I’m sitting here, but I’m not showing love.”⁴¹ This idea of being able to see love came up several times. Mostly we all agreed that perhaps you could guess if it is there, but you can’t really *see* it. M didn’t think it was visible at all; when I asked her which aspects of sexuality weren’t visible, she said “Something like deep love, feelings, closeness with somebody. I’ve never seen pictures in magazines for which I can say that ‘oh, I see two people and they are very close’-- for me they are just advertisements.”⁴²

The question of whether intimacy was truly visible came up often in conversations about photography. So often participants would come to me and say “oh I had a great idea for a photograph!” and describe an intimate moment they witnessed between two people, or experienced themselves. They would go on to explain that if they had taken the photograph it would have ruined the intimacy of the moment, thereby counteracting the purpose of the photograph to begin with. It also seemed that “true” intimacy was more visible among family members than others; perhaps this has to do with depth of feeling, or permanence. There is no correct answer to that question, but it was a trend in our conversations that when intimacy was visible, it was among family members or people who were in love, not just friends. Intimacy in friendship was expressed more often as something one felt, but could not always see. I think this brings up the question of truth; is “true” intimacy something that only exists unseen? This

⁴⁰ T, Interview April 27th

⁴¹ L, Interview April 20th

⁴² M, Interview April 18th

question was a theme in our conversations, but we came to no conclusions as to the answer.

Sexualization was the second circle which came up most often in terms of visibility. "...you can see sexualization. When you go out you can see women usually manipulate with their sexuality. They use it to get something."⁴³ The way people use their sexuality came up as easily visible because it included overt behavior and choices, such as the clothing one chooses to wear.

"Sexualization, you can see it everywhere. And I think we do it without thinking ...some things that you do, you don't have to think about it--somebody sitting next to you that you like so you start acting differently. And maybe it becomes obvious, maybe not, to the other person, but I think that's the way you show it."⁴⁴

This circle seemed visible in that it encompassed any behavior people adopted to get what they wanted in terms of sexuality. This circle came up often in terms of "going out" and how they and their friends behave when "out." This led to the question of "where is sexuality most visible?" There seemed a huge difference between what was visible in the home or at school and what was visible "out," which presumably meant clubs and parties. Unfortunately we did not have enough time to focus on this question, but its implications are interesting for this project.

Sensuality was visible mostly in terms of physical affection. When asked which was the most visible circle, Z said

Definitely sensuality...my mother and me we are always hugging each other or kissing or something. With my brother I do it sometimes, and with my father too. It's normal for me, we don't hold back. And with my friends also, and on the street, I'm looking at people and most people are holding each other, or holding hands...it doesn't matter if they're friends or what. It's all around me.⁴⁵

⁴³ Z, Interview April 21st

⁴⁴ T, Interview April 27th

⁴⁵ Z, Interview April 21st

This description applies to the most literal aspects of Sensuality; the physical comfort with bodies, and touching. Others took a more symbolic meaning of sensuality; T described seeing two leaves growing away from each other, and described where they touched as “very tender, very sensual.”

The other circles of Sexual Identity and Sexual Health and Reproduction came up less often, and with various answers as to whether they were visible. Generally it was agreed that they were not other than the idea of them as portrayed on television. For example, watching a television show in which there are homosexual characters brings Sexual Identity into view, but this did not seem as legitimately visible as the other circles because each individual’s sexual identity is not visible. Sexual Health and Reproduction also was “visible” in a symbolic sense because there are advertisements for contraception and the like; but in the form of visible images in every day life, it was less visible than the other circles. Also, many participants said that you cannot tell the sexual health status of the people around you, so in that way this circle was not visible.

Its important to remember that for this project we chose to focus specifically on intimacy and sensuality, so in one way my participants were being asked to see these circles more than the others. If we had chosen to focus on sexual identity and sexual health and reproduction perhaps these circles would have seemed more visible than the others.

Workshop #2: Gaining a Deeper Understanding

Our warm-up activity after checking in was to fill out slips of paper with the phrase “One thing I used to think about sexuality was...” and “One thing I think about

sexuality now is..." Again the goal of this was to help us become more comfortable sharing with each other, and to recognize similarities and differences among the group. Their answers were marvelous and varied; only two people wrote the same thing for one of the prompts, which was "One thing I think about sexuality now is that people can fall in love more than once." Other similarities included thoughts they used to have about their parents, such as that they never had sex after having children. Discussing our past and current ideas about sexuality was a great way to start the workshop; participants discovered that others had similar ideas as they did, and also it opened up issues like homosexuality, when some participants answered with statements like "One thing I used to think about sexuality was that sex was right just between man and woman."

The main activity for the evening was designed to gain a deeper understanding of Sensuality and Intimacy, which were the two concepts we decided to photograph. The group was split in half and each given one of the circles to teach the other group about. The Sensuality group wrote a spoken-word poem accompanied by backup singers. The poem went as follows:

My reflection in the mirror
Reminds me of you. I see all the kisses you left on me.
When I fantasize about you
My whole body starts to sweat
And I want to feel you under my hands,
Skin on Skin
When your lips touch mine
Passion starts to grow
When your lips touch mine
I know you're the one I want.

The poem included all of the aspects of Sensuality that we had discussed: body image, skin hunger, fantasy, and desire. Their poem taught the group that all the aspects of Sensuality can be combined into one "voice," so to speak. One interesting thing about

this poem is that the speaker and the subject are completely anonymous; the speaker's gender is unknown, as is the "you" he or she is thinking about. This poem therefore could encompass anybody's experience of sensuality, not just a heterosexual female's, for example. To me this indicated a certain openness and inclusionary quality that my participants had.

The intimacy performed a short skit. They stood in a line and one girl said "share," and handed a paper to the next girl, who said "I love" and gave the next girl a hug who said "I take risks" and tapped the next girl on the shoulder to be her friend, which worked. Then V made a statement about sharing and loving and taking risks as part of creating relationships, emotional or sexual.

Each group then had to give at least five suggestions for how to photograph their concept.

This workshop consisted mostly of laughter and talking, which was beneficial for the group in some ways, because we all got to know each other better, but we did not learn a lot of new things about sexuality. However, the participants later said that having to teach somebody about Intimacy and Sensuality was difficult, and forced them to think about what they really were. This workshop served mostly to help us all become more comfortable with the ideas of sensuality and intimacy and the idea of photographing them; the more we worked with these ideas the more we understood what they meant to us.

Workshop #3: Who Are We?

The opening question slips for this workshop said "I enjoy my body most when..." and "I enjoy my body least when..." Participants' answers had several themes; three participants wrote that they enjoyed their bodies least when they had their period or

had PMS. The others wrote about going shopping and not finding something that fit, or not liking the way their bodies looked in fitting room mirrors. They wrote that they enjoyed their bodies most when they were with other people, such as having sex or spending time with their boyfriend, or taking a shower with someone. They also wrote that they enjoyed their bodies most during private moments, like taking a bath or a shower, or sipping tea on a sunny day. Only one participant wrote directly about having sex; this, along with the balance of shared and private enjoyments of their bodies, that my participants had a fairly balanced experience of enjoyment of their own bodies. When they read the prompt they did not immediately jump to sexual situations; they thought of their bodies in other terms as well.

The main activity for this workshop was called “Sexuality Mapping.” Each participant had to draw a map, starting at birth, leading to where they are now in their lives, and leaving room at the end for the future. They were to illustrate or describe with words key “landmarks” in their lives in terms of their personal sexuality. At the end they projected into the future to show what they wanted for themselves, or what they thought their future could look like. They silently completed this activity and then we sat in a circle on the floor and shared our maps.

Although each map contained unique and personal experiences, there were some common themes as to what participants chose to put on their maps.

The most general theme was that of “first times.” The first time pornographic magazines or sexual scenes on television were seen was one theme, occurring usually between the ages of four and twelve. First kisses were a huge theme. For some participants the “first kiss” was when they were small children, between the ages of 4 and 10, and happened

with a friend. Then the “first real kiss” came later with a boyfriend. The first time they got their period, the first time they masturbated, and the first time they had sex. Almost all participants put these on their maps.

Another theme was not just a singular event, but an ongoing occurrence in their lives, which was “talking with friends.” In fact, during interviews my participants talked at length about how much they learned about sexuality by talking with their friends about it.

“When somebody has a boyfriend and we go to some café and we talk about that boyfriend, and then the second friend, and on and on...”⁴⁶ one participant explained.

Another went on to say,

“We talk about boyfriends, what we’ve done, what we haven’t done, how do you think that is if none of us done it, I heard that she did it, that he did it, I read that it’s like this...we share information that we have experienced and also that we heard somewhere or saw somewhere.”⁴⁷

Communicating with their female friends was a significant marker for every participant in my workshop, and contributed greatly to their development and understanding of sexuality. Communication was something they didn’t speak expressly about, but when asked with whom they spoke the most about sexuality, they all said friends. Others said their boyfriends, and some said parents. Friends who are male did not enter into the picture nearly as much. As L said, “I have guy friends but we are not so close. I have it, but we are a girl group.”⁴⁸ Being able to share experience and learn from their female friends is an integral part of these young women’s development, and in many ways the workshop itself took that form.

⁴⁶ M, Interview April 18th

⁴⁷ L, Interview April 20th

⁴⁸ L, Interview April 20th

Two participants in interviews spoke about learning the most about sexuality from the experience of having a sexual partner. When asked when she learned the most about sexuality, P said “Now, with my boyfriend...how I feel when I’m with him. How I feel my sexuality with him.”⁴⁹ This indicated that she learned by experience, essentially. Learning about sexuality as she experienced herself as a sexual being. T also learned the most about sexuality through the experience of falling in love and having a sexual partner:

“...I can see that when I was 15, 14 it didn’t matter to me the real relationship, it didn’t matter to me how much it means to me now. But I don’t think that’s sexuality, it was maybe just experimenting, and wasn’t really something important. But after that I had a relationship that last for two years, with a girl, and that’s when I started to...my first emotions, first sexual experiences and everything. And I start to see myself as a person who has to start thinking about her body, her way she acts and that life, you know...”⁵⁰

My participants constantly drew on their personal experiences during all of our workshops and conversations. Learning by experience is important at any stage of life; these young women had an incredible capacity to reflect on their experiences, and learn from them. Perhaps being in so many workshops which ask them to do that helped, too.

Because of course there were “The workshops,” as one participant wrote on her map. Two participants put my workshop and ASK workshops and groups on their maps, but every participant talked about them when I asked where they learned the most about sexuality. On the maps, they wrote “seeing others perspectives and opinions, learning more about others sexuality and your own,” and “This workshop helped me to know more about sensuality and more about being proud of my body.” About ASK, one participant explained how it has the effect of providing

⁴⁹ P, Interview April 28th

⁵⁰ T, Interview April 27th

“...a bigger perspective of sexuality, because you see that there are other perspectives of sexuality, and I think then learning about other cultures and their view of sexuality your views are getting wider and you’re more comfortable with your own sexuality.”⁵¹

Actively learning in a workshop setting about sexuality not only helped them broaden their perspectives, but was also influential in how they felt about themselves, and their bodies. One conversation I had with a participant who used to feel bad about her body, and how boys at school teased her about her body shows how ASK groups can help develop a healthy sense of one’s own sexuality:

First those workshops that I was going to in ASK, those workshops I changed my opinion. Because if they don’t like it it’s not my problem it’s their problem if they don’t like it...because I like it.

Me: being in the group helped you feel better?

Yes, and to think about my emotions and everything about me. And then I started to feel better about myself...⁵²

If these workshops had such a positive effect on the development of a healthy self image and a depth of knowledge about sexuality for my participants, it seems pertinent and timely now that the time has come to think about what sexuality education shall be taught in schools. Interestingly enough, absolutely nobody included school sexuality education on her map.

One interesting inclusion in their maps was the “first time I kissed a girl.” Four out of the six participants at the workshop that day included this on their maps. For some kissing other girls was not necessarily a sexual act; “I have nothing against it, kissing a girl, because sometimes when I really kissed a girl it was with my really good friend. It was an act of friendship.”⁵³ For others it was an indication that they were open to sexual experiences with other women, or had them already. Three participants included in their

⁵¹ Z, Interview April 21st

⁵² B, Interview April 27

⁵³ V, Interview April 27

hypothetical futures “sex with a girl.” They said it was something they wanted to try at least once. One participant, not present for this activity, had already had a long-term relationship with another girl. Their openness to experimentation and the possibility of relationships with women was surprising; they appeared entirely unafraid of that possibility, and even eager to see what it would be like. The participant who had been in love with a girl previously told me

“That’s the thing that troubles me now, because I’m all confused about what I really want, what I don’t want. It’s not that I want to have a sexual orientation that’s fixed...I don’t fall in love with sex but with a person.”⁵⁴

The participants in my workshop embraced the idea of loving a person, not a gender. Many of them agreed that, hypothetically, “... every girl can have an affair with a girl.”⁵⁵ Needless to say, not all participants wanted to engage in relationships, sex, or kissing with other women. But we talked openly and freely about it, and the fact that even those who had never tried it before put it in their futures was interesting. Keeping in mind that these are young women who have thought about and discussed sexuality before, what does this mean about this population of young women who have participated in these empowerment and sexuality workshops?

Stulhofer indicated that young women talk more about sex, and currently have more opportunities to evolve into more open beings, in terms of their sexuality. “From the women’s standpoint there’s this huge liberation in being finally legitimized as a sexual being, which is recent,”⁵⁶ he said. Perhaps this “liberation” of sorts manifests itself for some young women in the openness to sexual and romantic experiences with other women, without the fear so associated with “homosexuality.”

⁵⁴ T, Interview April 27

⁵⁵ T, Interview April 27

⁵⁶ Stulhofer, Aleksander, Interview April 24th

For their futures, every participant included something about continuing to grow as a “sexually intelligent person,” as two participants put it. Several included marriage and pregnancy, but not until much later. Mostly they emphasized the desire to continue learning about their own sexuality and becoming more open to new experiences. Though Croatian youth are supposedly living in a more “traditional” society, my participants seemed to me to be living on the cutting edge of that transition. These young women are the leaders of what Croatia is becoming.

Telling personal stories proved to be the most valuable aspect of this workshop. Prior to this day we had talked mainly about sexuality in the abstract, and they began to say that they wanted to share more personally. The power of telling their stories and connecting all we had learned to their own past experiences really cemented all we had learned.

My group sat on the floor, talking about very personal issues and asking questions like “what do you think about when you masturbate?” This was the workshop that I feel cemented our group as a unit, and helped us become more open than we had been before with one another.

Workshop #4: What Do You Think?

This workshop could not be executed as planned because the participant with the keys to the office was absent. However, nobody wanted to go home so we conducted the workshop at a nearby café. We sat around a table, sipping our sodas, and did one of the activities I had planned, which was a spectrum game.

I proposed the following statements for them to agree or disagree with:

Oral sex performed on a man is more risky in terms of HIV infection than oral sex performed on a woman.

It is just as easy for girls to have orgasms as it is for boys.

It is easier for two girls to experience intimacy with each other than for two boys.
There is no place for sexuality in religion.
“Losing your virginity” happens when intercourse occurs for the first time.
It is possible to enjoy my body as much when I am alone as when I am with somebody else.

The one surprising conversation we had was about the first statement, which sparked a small educational session about the four fluids that can transmit HIV. None of the participants could remember all four, and did not know that semen had a higher concentration of the HIV virus than vaginal secretions. The discussions we had about the other statements were all very lively, and everyone had something to say.

“It is just as easy for girls to have orgasms as it is for boys.”: They all said false at first. They thought it was harder because of psychological impact, and how girls need “more” than boys physically to have an orgasm. We talked about how physiologically girls can have more orgasms in a shorter period of time than men, but they still thought it wasn’t as easy. B thought it was.

“It is easier for two girls to experience intimacy with each other than for two boys.”: They thought everybody had to be taken individually, and who one individual, boy or girl, can become intimate with is entirely subjective.

“There is no place for sexuality in religion.”: They thought false, but also that religion doesn’t make room for sexuality in its doctrine. But they talked about how sexuality is part of everybody, part of living and breathing and for some people so is religion, so there must be space. Then they talked about how Catholicism doesn’t make room for positive sexuality. Z talked about how to the Church “every birth is a gift” but a child conceived through artificial insemination is considered a “thing” and she made a face indicating disgust with the Church for stating this opinion. L talked about how the baby of a rape is considered “a gift,” but then said “...not like it doesn’t remind you

every day what happened to you...” This reminded me that there are broader social contexts concerning the war that we had not at all discussed. The impact of things like rape in the lives of Croatian young women, and young women throughout this entire region, was not something I had taken into consideration when creating my workshop.

“‘Losing your virginity’ happens when intercourse occurs for the first time.” They had a lot of passion about all this. They kept talking about the hymen, and how losing your virginity is not attached to when it breaks. “It all depends on what virginity means to you,” L said. They agreed that you lose your virginity when you have your first intense emotional and sexual experience; essentially when you decide that you’ve lost it.

“It is possible to enjoy my body as much alone as I do with other people.”: They avidly agreed. “Its better to be alone than in bad company,” Z quoted.

The opinions they expressed during this activity struck me as remarkably “progressive.” At times I played devil’s advocate and said that even though it was desirable for us to take each issue as entirely subjective, such as issues like intimacy between men, there are at times appropriate times to take societal pressure into consideration. They understood that, but seemed more passionate about eradicating negative social influences than learning about them. This activity showed me how my participants could look at each person’s sexuality individually.

Workshop #5: Putting it All Together

This workshop took place in my apartment, sitting around my kitchen table with snacks because all we did was put together our album of photographs, and explain them to each other. Each participant had taken their photographs home and assembled them on a piece of paper in some creative, aesthetically pleasing way. We went around in a circle

and showed what each participant made, and explained the photographs. Then we made a cover for the album, titled it “Our VOIS (Visualization of Intimacy & Sensuality)” and congratulated ourselves on making something wonderful!

What We Made: THE PICTURES

“No representation can ‘capture’ woman unless a woman identifies with that image in one way or another...”⁵⁷

The images that came out of this project “capture” our group in a sense; they are images of what my participants see as sensual, or intimate in the world around them. Just as with the Sexuality Maps, there are some themes in the images that were produced.

The first common thread in the body of photographs was pictures of loved ones, or pictures with loved ones in them. One participant took a photograph of her mother sitting silhouetted in front of a window, drinking a cup of coffee. This picture was intended to capture the intimate moment she shares with her mother every morning when they drink their coffee together. Many participants included a picture of their best friend, and often explained that these pictures spoke for themselves. One participant took a picture of her boyfriend as he kissed her stomach. This photograph represents both intimacy and sensuality; the physical sensation of the kiss belonging to sensuality, and the affectionate nature of a stomach-kiss from the boy she loves belonging to intimacy. Then of course there were several pictures of participants with their boyfriends, hugging or laughing. They described these pictures as self-explanatory. Two participants included photographs they had taken in their pasts in Our VOIS; V added a picture of she and her sister draped over each other on a bed, laughing, and T included her favorite picture of her ex-girlfriend because “she was the first person I was really in love with.” These

⁵⁷ Hrzenjak, Majda. “The Bio-politics of the Body in Women’s MagazV.” Making Her Up; Women’s MagazV in Slovenia. Ljubljana: Peace Institute. 2002. p15.

pictures were the most literal and the most personal; pictures of sexual partners understandably represent “sexuality,” and pictures of people they love like parents or best friends can be easily understood as belonging in the Intimacy Circle. Interestingly, these pictures did not make up the majority. L even said “yeah I didn’t want to take pictures of my boyfriend, because there are other more interesting things...” They were eager to explore the more symbolic images they could see around them.

Pictures of strangers, or friends at a distance also came up often. Pictures of people experiencing an “intimate moment” with just themselves were taken. This is interesting because I think my participants wanted to capture the idea of being intimate with oneself, not just with other people. It’s difficult to take a picture of yourself experiencing that, however, so pictures of other people filled that role. A picture of a man standing alone by the sea, and one of an older gentleman knitting as he fished were the two most obvious examples of this.

Participants took pictures of families; a man and his daughter sitting by the sea, a grandmother watching her granddaughter play, two little girl sisters playing in a park. These pictures represent that familial intimacy that kept coming up. These pictures capture the presumption of intimacy, rather than intimacy that was experienced by the participants themselves. This is important because it shows the empathetic value of photography. Even if intimacy is something that, once seen, disappears, it is possible to attach a visual to it. Perhaps they took pictures of people experiencing what looked like an intimacy they had experienced. In this way they were looking around them and projecting their own experiences onto the experiences of the people they saw, which is what was necessary in order to *see* an abstract concept like intimacy or sensuality.

Participants took pictures of their pets, representing either the love and intimacy humans can feel with animals, the pleasing feeling of petting a soft animal for sensuality, or the “animal nature” of human sexuality as presented by pictures P took of animals at the zoo.

Isolated body parts were another theme. P took a picture of her friend’s hand, because “she has the most sensual hands.” Up close pictures of two hands holding each other, of bare legs, of eyes, and most interestingly, of feet. These pictures that were taken up close symbolize intimacy in and of themselves, because they were taken up close. The pictures of bare body parts, like arms or hands or legs, represent the physical “flesh” part of sensuality. Interestingly, feet were one of the most common themes, representing intimacy. This can be connected to the first activity we did in the first workshop, when many participants mentioned the natural small touches of feet as something special and intimate. Pictures of feet captured the idea of unintentional closeness, and therefore could capture some of the more organic and pure meanings of intimacy that could not be captured when the subject knew that a picture was being taken.

The next level of symbolism that is apparent in the photographs are the pictures of inanimate objects, that have particular meaning for the participant who took the picture. P took a picture of her perfume, because, as she wrote, it is “the most sensual perfume for me now.” There are pictures of people’s rooms at home where private, intimate moments occur, of stuffed animals whose texture feels good, and of candles, all of which apply to sensuality. It was apparent that intimacy and sensuality lie in the meaning we attach to them; there is not just an objective definition. The picture of P’s perfume represented sensuality for P. Were someone to look at that picture without her explanation, sensuality

would not be what came to mind. The things themselves are not intimate, or sensual, it is our understanding of intimacy and sensuality that gives them those qualities. Other pictures were of objects simulating human experiences. One beautiful photograph of two train tracks coming together and then parting reminded the participant who took the picture of an intimate touch between people. Another picture showed two dandelions in a field growing close together. “They were the only two, and they were so close...” the photographer explained, when asked about the picture. This idea linked intimacy with isolation. In one way or another, when intimacy was visible it was when the object of the photograph was isolated physically, or when the experience the subjects were having seemingly separated them from their surroundings.

The last theme was pictures of nature. These were abundant; Pictures of trees intended to “photograph the beauty of spring.” Pictures of the sky, of flowers, of meadows, clouds, and the sea. These pictures brought the vastness of beauty into the images. Often it was hard to pin down why they belonged to intimacy or sensuality; in general they were images that made the photographer *feel* something, and those feelings applied to intimacy and sensuality. One up-close picture of a spring bud growing represents growth and tenderness, all aspects of sensuality for the participant who took the picture. Participants took the majority of these pictures after the rains had stopped, and once the sun came out again. This notion that sexuality is most visible in Springtime is almost a toss-back to the age-old theme of spring as the season of fertility.

It’s interesting to note that there were no negative images in the bunch. None of the participants took photographs of loneliness or sadness, no photographs appeared of negative sexual images. We made no rules as to what the photographs should be about, it

was entirely subjective for each participant. But what we produced was a book of joyful sensuality and intimacy; only the positive side appeared. This is not to say that my participants do not see the negative in the world around them, but they only chose to photograph the images they saw of positive emotions and experiences.

Although the idea of “going out” often came up in conversations about sexuality, nobody took pictures of themselves getting dressed up to go out, or looking “sexy.” This implies to me that the notion of intimacy and sensuality was not connected to their “going out” culture. Perhaps if we had focused on sexualization these photographs would have been very different.

The body of photographs that we produced showed me that my participants’ definitions of sensuality and intimacy were broad and textured. Sensuality and intimacy were the common thread that brought together seemingly random images. Eyes are now connected to trees, a bottle of perfume to the sneakers your best friend wears.

Closure and Evaluation

There were many challenges involved in this workshop, on my part and for the participants as well. The largest frustration all of us felt was that there was not enough time. When I asked what the hardest part of taking the photographs was the majority of participants said they did not have enough time to take pictures. Participants also expressed a desire to meet for more workshops; “It would be better if we met more often,” wrote one participant in her evaluation, “but I know it was a bit difficult because we all had lots of obligations.” It was widely felt that we did not have enough time to go as deep as we would have liked into the concept of Sexuality, nor was there enough time to take the photographs. No participant took their entire roll of film. Participants also said

that it was difficult finding the right things to take pictures of. They often said that they had great ideas for photographs, but could not actually take the picture. More time would have helped with this. The process of taking the pictures, however, was often cited as one of the the most interesting and fun parts of the workshop, despite the difficulty we experienced in actually executing the idea. “My favorite part was taking pictures of sensuality and intimacy around us,” one participant wrote. Others made comments that they wanted to use this idea of photography in other aspects of their lives, or to suggest it for future workshops.

As far as the workshop activities, participants were extremely positive in their evaluations. The least favorite activity was the skit activity from the second workshop. I agree that this activity, though filled with laughter, did not bring anything new to our minds. In retrospect it was one of the most boring and redundant activities.

Favorite activities were most often the Sexuality Mapping, and the opening prompts. In general, participants said that what they got out of the workshop was some more theoretical knowledge in the form of the Circles. One participant wrote that what she got out of the workshop was “...the circles of sexuality—they were new for me, and they are important for realizing sexuality so I’m glad that I’ve learned that.” Mostly, however, participants said that they gained a deeper understanding of sexuality for their lives; “Now sexuality is everything for me. Everything. The way I’m sitting there, everything, the way I’m thinking,” P told me with a huge grin. Hearing this was exceptionally heartwarming, as were many of their other comments. “I’ve learned how important everybody’s sexuality is in everyday life,” wrote one participant. Another participant said that she learned “something I didn’t know about sexuality in general, and

about me and mine.” “The best thing was that I got the insight about how others view sexuality,” another wrote.

Perhaps one of the most gratifying aspects of the workshop was just getting to spend time together and make new friends. When I announced that this was our last workshop they all refused, and we agreed to meet as usual the following Sunday, just for a “goodbye workshop.” On the evaluation sheets, when I gave space for any comments they had for me, every one of them wrote something like “come visit us again!”

Recommendations

My first recommendation for those thinking about conducting their own sexuality workshop is to know who your participants are before you design the workshop. Know their ages, their past experiences with sexuality education, etc. I came into this having designed a workshop for American high school students, because that is all that I knew how to do. This became problematic for me as a facilitator because I was constantly second-guessing my choice of activities, because I had no idea as to the needs of my participants.

My second recommendation is to allow time for “miscellaneous cultural occurrences,” such as smoke breaks during the workshop, and your participants going off on tangents in a language you don’t understand. In general, each activity took about half again as much time as I originally allotted. Which leads me to my next recommendation, which is to Prioritize. Make sure you know what you want your participants to leave the workshop knowing, and just do that activity first.

My last recommendation in terms of this workshop is to find funding for it, or have participants bring their own cameras. This would alleviate the pain of paying for the cameras and development, and also increase the quality of the photographs.

As for the future implications of this study, I have several suggestions. A deeper analysis of the photographs in the context of each participant's personal histories could provide insight into why certain participants produced certain photographs. I initially intended on conducting a second set of interviews after the photographs were developed to gain a deeper insight as to what participants thought about their own photographs, but unfortunately we ran out of time.

My largest suggestion is to conduct a similar study with young men. As gender is now a more highlighted social concept in Croatia, doing a comparative study with boys and girls in this manner could be truly instructive.

Self Reflection

When I stepped off the bus in Rijeka for the first time I thought I would find myself in a familiar role. I would be the mature young woman who knew all about sexuality, and how to teach it. I would be a role model for the participants of my workshop, and they would see me as, if not an authority, someone who knew what she was doing. The workshop would provide the perfect environment for learning and self-discovery for the participants, and I would get to look at what I did as something good, and beautiful. In other words, I would be the perfect educator. I would feel like I used to feel in high school when I was a peer educator going into middle schools and teaching about HIV.

As it happened, it was not what I knew already that provided me with the depth of learning that I experienced in Rijeka. It was the questions that came out of this experience. About sexuality, about sexuality education, about who I am and who I was as a facilitator. I was immediately thrust out of the comfortable space I had made inside myself as an educator.

The first question that came up was “What am I DOING?” The first day I arrived I went to meet the young people from Potencijal at their weekly meeting. The women in the group were going to be in my workshop; I immediately realized that my experience was not going to be what it was in high school. I sat there as they talked rapidly in Croatian, laughing and hugging each other, going through their business. They were friends, they were my age, and they had already had sexuality education. I was incredibly humbled; what was I doing there? How could I really expect to give them something that they didn’t already have? As I wrote the following day, “I just hope that when I get in there and am in my facilitator mode I can get back in my “I’m an adult who is in control and older than you with lots of experience so just by my sheer power of confidence you are made open and comfortable” zone.” At that point I was still trying to turn myself back into what I had been in other circumstances. What eventually became necessary was a complete re-evaluation of my role.

Throughout my days in Rijeka I spent time outside of workshop with the women in my group; we went out for coffee, made dinner in my apartment, took long walks, and talked about our lives every day. My position as distanced authority figure was non-existent; at first this made me uncomfortable. I didn’t know if I was being “appropriate” as a researcher, and my confidence that what we were doing in workshop was educational

was dwindling. I realize now that what I had to offer is the same as what they offered me: understanding and friendship with someone new, with someone from a foreign place, and the opportunity to explore and learn about sexuality together. I'm glad I realize this now, but during each workshop that was hard to remember. Things challenged my facilitator role that I never thought of before.

The most obvious challenge was language. The women in my workshop are all fluent in English. However, I realize now that there is more to language than just words. There are cultural references and jokes, that as a facilitator it is important to be able to use. Those were taken away from me. Things I would say in the US to get a group to stop talking and pay attention would not have worked here. The tricks to get people under control by making them laugh or taking a tone don't work as well when they are speaking a language I don't speak. At times during the workshops the group would break off into Croatian (at my explicit permission, I wanted them to express themselves however they felt comfortable), but of course that put me in the position of an outsider. I didn't know what they were saying so I couldn't seize control of the conversation. This did not create tensions, it was just interesting for me to realize how much a difference speaking the same language can make. The other important thought I had connected to language was that because they were constantly translating in their heads from Croatian I never knew EXACTLY what they meant. This is interesting because certain words have certain connotations in English that make a huge difference in the context of talking about sexuality. "Normal," for example. When they said that in my workshop did it have the same connotation as it does in the US? Or are they just picking the best translation (for

my benefit) for a word that doesn't have that connotation? I never really understood the cultural significance of language until I had to work in this context.

The next question that came about was "Who even AM I?" I would not exactly call this culture-shock, but maybe something like it. I felt unqualified to do a workshop about personal issues with a group of people about whom I knew nothing, and who seemingly had the same qualifications as I did. This was my first time conducting this workshop. I chose to create and implement a culturally sensitive workshop in a culture to which I did not belong. Why did I choose to do that? If nothing else, this strange realization made me laugh at myself every day. I could feel myself stepping down off of my high horse and actually looking at the people around me, wondering what it was they wanted and needed from a workshop like this. I think it's hard to ask a question if you already think you know the answer. I came into Rijeka thinking I already knew the answer. And I'm leaving Rijeka still asking the question, which I think now is the best possible result. I was forced to put my own experiences aside and just listen to these people, my new friends. I thought I came here to challenge them, and that task became my biggest challenge. In the end, I think we all were stepping up to the plate and challenging ourselves. They by signing up for a workshop conducted entirely in English by an American they had never met before. And me by signing up to conduct this workshop with Croatians I had never met before. We were equals in this process, and it seems odd to me now that this was surprising.

The third question, and the one that I think will sustain my work in the future was, "What IS it about sexuality, anyway?" This first came to me during my interview with Z, in which she said she wanted to do my workshop because sexuality was something she

was always interested in working on. “If it’s something we are always working on, what is it about sexuality that challenges us so much?” We sat at my kitchen table, sipped our orange juice, and thought silently for a moment. And then we began to laugh because neither of us had any idea. “You’re always working on that and you will always work on that. Your whole life,”⁵⁸ she said. Why sexuality? Once all the obvious questions have been answered, what fuels us to continue “working” on sexuality issues? Hypothetically, if in a hundred years, all of the limits and taboo qualities of sexuality were gone, would there still be this wonder and energy at it? I talked a little bit with Stulhofer about this; he thinks yes, and so do I. He thinks because

“in adolescence sexuality is the basis around building, constructing your identity. First of all, identity of not being a child anymore, and then to a grown up...and then especially in the case of women. For different reasons, I think what makes it so special is that you feel that things are changing in your sexual experiences. You feel things you haven’t felt before, simply by becoming more open, more relaxed and more trusting, there are new colors, new qualities of pleasure that you experience. And I think this is partially the reason for the fascination, because it progresses, it evolves.”⁵⁹

This conversation totally inspired me. I felt that what I had chosen so far as my life work was something attached to a miracle; a timeless evolution of self-discovery. And to experience this self-discovery with other people, in cultures all over the world, and find the places we meet and where we are different...what could be more joyful?! This conversation helped me loosen up and let the workshop become whatever it wanted to become. There was no fixed answer I was leading them towards.

Becoming friends with these young women was the most valuable experience I had during my month in Rijeka. Laughing with them, cooking with them, talking about relationships and sex, as well as intimacy and sensuality and sexuality theory, ...it was

⁵⁸ Z, Interview, April 21st.

⁵⁹ Stulhofer, Aleksander. Interview, April 24th.

these friendships that helped me jump across the culture differences, not the desire to be an “objective researcher.” I thought that being objective and acknowledging cultural differences was what it took to erase their significance. But it’s the opposite. Being open enough to encompass their significance within something as subjective as friendship is what it took for me. Of course, I am still confused about this in terms of doing research. As my time here went on and I was becoming friends with these young women, and conducting interviews, our interactions became more organic than professional. But I fear now that our mutual desire to become better friends colored the ideas we expressed. For example, I realized that when interviewing B and I told a story about watching shows with negative images of homosexuality in them with Ivan and Beba...and I said that I hated how those images were always so negative. Which is a totally biased thing to say, and showed my values surrounding homosexuality. And B agreed, but would she have if I hadn’t said that first? What would she have said if I had just asked what she thought about homosexuality without showing her what I thought? It is more important to me that they are putting themselves out there for me, and I am asking them to be themselves and be honest with me, so shouldn’t I do the same for them? Shouldn’t the goal be to do that with everyone?

I struggle the most now with trying to honor these friendships, and the experience I have had here in Rijeka. If I were to do this again, I would not choose to write a formal research paper. I would stay longer, write more, and tell more of each woman’s story. This project, this paper, could not possibly do justice to what these young women have shared with me. I only hope that at least a portion of my gratitude and respect comes across in what I have written here.

Appendix A

Chart obtained from:

Stulhofer, Aleksander and Sandfort, Theo, editors. Sexuality and gender in Postcommunist Eastern Europe and Russia. New York: The Hawthorn Press. p.15.

Appendix B

QuickTime™ and a
TIFF (Uncompressed) decompressor
are needed to see this picture.

Appendix C

List of Interviews:

D, age 18, fourth year of high school, Interviewed April 18th.
M, age 19, first year of university, Interviewed April 18th
L, age 19, first year of university, Interviewed April 20th
Z, age 22, third year of university, Interviewed April 21st
Aleksander Stulhofer, professor, Interviewed April 24th
V, age 15, second year of high school, Interviewed April 27th
T, age 18, fourth year of high school, Interviewed April 27th
B, age 18, fourth year of high school, Interviewed April 27th
P, age 18, fourth year in high school, Interviewed April 28th

Questions asked in each interview*:

1. Name, age, year in school
2. What attracted you to this workshop?
3. Quick evaluation of the workshop: what was your favorite activity we have done? What was your least favorite? What would you change? What have you learned?
4. How is it for you being a young woman in Rijeka? In your family? In school?
5. Where did you learn the most about sexuality in your past? What did you learn?
6. Which of the five circles are you the most comfortable with, and why?
7. Which of the five circles are you the least comfortable with, and why?
8. Who do you talk to the most about sexuality? Which aspects of sexuality?
9. Are there aspects of your society that make you very comfortable with your own sexuality? Uncomfortable? Is there anything you would change about your society?
10. Is sexuality something that is visible in your life?
11. What is the hardest part of taking the photographs? What is the easiest part?
12. How is it for you having a foreigner come and do this workshop only in English?

*Each interview was conducted in a semi-structured format, and was more of a conversation. Many follow-up questions were asked according to the direction each conversation took.

Appendix D
Evaluation Time!

Please evaluate the following components of this workshop:

1. The workshop as a whole.
 - a) What were your favorite aspects of the workshop? What did you get out of it? Did you learn anything?

 - b) What were your least favorite aspects of the workshop? What do you wish had been different, or changed for the future?

2. Workshop #1
 - a) introductory activity: “If you were a taste, touch, body part...”

 - b) cutting out pictures of magazines

 - c) Circles of Sexuality discussion

3. Workshop #2

a) introductory activity: “One thing I used to think about sexuality/one thing I think now...”

b) Sketches about Sensuality and Intimacy

4. Workshop #3

a) Introductory activity: “I enjoy my body most when/ I enjoy my body least when...”

b) Sexuality Mapping and discussion

5. Photography: please comment on how it was for you to take these pictures. Was it difficult? Did you feel you had enough information about sexuality to take the pictures? What did you like/dislike about this aspect of the workshop?

6. General comments for me:

Appendix E

Consent Form

My name is Annika Shore, and I am a student for the School for International Training Study Abroad Program on the Balkans. My independent study project is entitled “What Do You See? Visualizations of Sexuality in Rijeka, Croatia.” This is a research study of female youth’s perceptions of sexuality, through the use of photography, personal interviews, and workshop participation. The end result of this project will be an academic paper, as well as a creative photography project created by the participants of the workshop.

Each participant in this workshop will be asked to:

- Participate fully in each workshop session, which will take place twice a week for approximately 1.5 hours each;
- Take photographs with the provided camera according to the themes agreed upon in the workshop, and submit the camera to me to be developed.
- Conduct at least one individual interview with me throughout the course of the workshop to analyze photographs, evaluate the workshop, etc.

Each participant has the right to not answer any questions they do not feel comfortable answering during the individual interviews.

Each participant has the right to choose who gets to see the photographs taken. Only myself and the photographer will have ownership of all photographs. Participants will get to choose which photographs are shown and shared with other members of the workshop, as well as which photographs I share with my colleagues and academic advisor.

Each participant will be kept completely anonymous; no names will be used in the materials I produce.

I plan to submit the independent study paper to my advisor Natasa Bijelic, academic director Jill Benderly, and potentially to publish it on the SIT website and elsewhere.

If you would like a copy of this study, please provide me with your address and I will send you a copy when it is complete.

Thank you for your participation in my project, and in the workshop. If you agree to all the terms listed above and would like to be a participant in my workshop, please sign below.

Participant signature/date

Researcher signature/date

Appendix F

Workshop Activities (activities listed here are only the activities we actually did in workshop time, not all the activities I had planned):

Workshop #1

Goals:

To become comfortable working together as a group

To understand the circles of sexuality

To understand how photography/images can play a role in helping us understand sexuality

Materials:

Cameras

Magazines

Tape

Flip Chart or Poster board

Activity 1 (10 minutes): Check In.

Go around in a circle, each participant gets to say how they are doing, what is on their mind, etc.

Activity 2 (10 minutes): Warmup

Hand out little notecards with the statements “If I were a touch, I would be...” “If I were a body part, I would be...” and “If I were a food, I would be...” Then collect the papers, scramble them, and hand them back out. Each participant reads aloud the notecard they received and we guess whose it is.

Activity 3 (10): Ground Rules and expectations

-Brainstorm what is needed for this workshop (ex: listening, respect, sharing, etc.) and what is desired for this workshop (fun, learning, laughter, etc.)

-everyone agrees to ground rules and signs the paper, which goes up on the wall.

-hand out sticky notes and ask each participant to write down three things they want to take out of the workshop, and three things they bring to the workshop (ex: I want to take out new friends, I bring in enthusiasm). A volunteer collects the stickies and puts them on the flip chart paper and reads them aloud.

Short Break

Activity 3 (60 minutes): Images of Sexuality

-I hand out lots of popular magazines. We have 20 minutes to look through them and cut out all of the images that are related to sexuality, as we see it. At this point no definitions of sexuality have been given; any picture from the magazine that reminds us of sexuality should be cut out. After going through all the magazines, we look at our stack of pictures.

Questions: Why these pictures? Are they all the same? What are the different types of sexuality that came up? Can we categorize them? What would we label these categories?

-I take out the Circles of Sexuality Chart, labeled with “Sensuality,” “Sexualization,” “Intimacy,” “Sexual Identity,” Sexual Health and Reproduction,” and their definitions,

but the circles remain empty. Brainstorm what goes in the circles (ex: caring and sharing in “intimacy,” intercourse in “sexual and reproductive health”...)

-Tape our pictures into the circles.

Questions: Where do most of the pictures end up? Why is that? Do the images we see in magazines and on tv fully represent our sexualities? What role does the photographer play in the photographs?

Conclusion (20 minutes): Hand our Cameras, pick circle

-Which circle do we want to focus on?

-create list of questions our photos could answer

(ex: “Sensuality”...what does my body desire? What do I desire for my body? Etc.)

-hand out cameras, make appointments for interviews, say vidimo se!

Workshop #2:

Goals:

To become more comfortable with one another as a group

To obtain more ideas for how to photograph Intimacy and Sensuality

To gain a deeper understanding of what Intimacy and Sensuality are

Materials:

Notecards

Pens

Activity 1 (5 minutes): Check In

Activity 2 (10 minutes) Warmup Activity

-hand out notecards with the statements “One thing I used to think about sexuality was...” and “One thing I think about sexuality now is...” on them. Give participants time to fill them out.

-Participants then get up and mingle, sharing what they wrote and form groups of similar statements (ex: two participants who had the statement “I think that you can fall in love more than once...” sit together) Go around and each group shares.

Activity 3 (25 minutes): Sensuality and Intimacy Skit

-split the group in half. Give one group a piece of paper with the “intimacy” circle on it, complete with definition, etc. Give the other group a piece of paper with the “sensuality” circle on it. Each group must teach the other about their circle in some creative way. A song, a skit, an interpretive dance. Anything to help the other group understand what that word really means. Each group must also brainstorm five ideas of images one could photograph related to their circle, to share with the other group.

-Give participants time to create their “lesson,” and bring the group back together to perform.

Smoke Break

Activity 4 (20 minutes): Wrap-up and Photography Assignment

- What did you learn today?
- What questions do we still have about how to take pictures of Intimacy and Sensuality
- Go through scheduling more interviews, schedule the next workshop, create deadline for turning in cameras.

Workshop #3

Goals:

- To become more comfortable together as a group
- To gain insight as to our own development in terms of sexuality
- To relate what we have learned about sexuality to our own pasts and futures

Materials:

- Notecards
- Pens
- Larger construction paper
- Markers, crayons, etc.

Activity 1 (5 minutes): Check In

Activity 2 (10 minutes) Warmup Activity

- pass out notecards with the statements “I enjoy my body least when...” and “I enjoy my body most when...” on them. Give participants time to fill them out.
- Scramble the notecards, pass them out, read aloud, discuss.

Activity 3 (60 minutes or more): Sexuality Mapping

- Explain that we are going to draw a map of our lives in terms of sexuality. The main question is “how did I get here?” Explain it in terms of giving somebody directions as to how you became the sexual being you are now. Leave space at the end of the map, representing the future. Include things that haven’t happened yet (What do you want to see in your future? What are you afraid you might see?) Possible things to include: three positive sexual experiences, three negative, three influential people, etc. Experiences that helped you learn about sexuality, experiences that were confusing, etc. First times, etc. Hand out large pieces of paper, put art supplies in the middle of the floor. Participants make themselves comfortable around the room. This is a silent activity, no talking while participants draw their maps.

Smoke Break

- Come together, sit in a circle on the floor. Each participant goes around and gets to explain their maps. Nobody talks while each person explains, but at the end the participant may allow questions or not, depending on her comfort.
- This activity usually takes a long time, as people get to tell their personal stories.

Activity 4 (five minutes): Wrap up

- What did we learn today?
- Say one thing you appreciated about hearing other people’s stories.
- go through scheduling for next workshop

Workshop #4 (this workshop could not be conducted as usual. Therefore this does not have a formal structure like the others)

We were in a café for this workshop, and so all we did was discuss the following statements:

Oral sex performed on a man is more risky in terms of HIV infection than oral sex performed on a woman.

It is just as easy for girls to have orgasms as it is for boys.

It is easier for two girls to experience intimacy with each other than for two boys.

There is no place for sexuality in religion.

“Losing your virginity” happens when intercourse occurs for the first time.

It is possible to enjoy my body as much when I am alone as when I am with somebody else.

Other possible statements for discussion could be:

Sexuality is something that’s part of our lives only when we are young

There is a correct age to have sex for the first time

Any attraction to a member of the same sex is a sign of homosexuality

Boys masturbate more than girls

Sex should only occur between two people who are in love

Boys experience the same emotions as girls the first time they have sex

Love at first sight is possible

Virginity is something negative

Discussion follow-up questions:

Which statements did we agree/disagree about? Why do you think that is?

Which statements and opinions surprised you?

Did you learn anything new, about yourself or your community?

-Hand out photographs, give assignment to arrange them in a creative way, so that the next time we come together we can put them together into an album.

Workshop #5

Goals:

Enjoy our last workshop together!

Produce an album of our collective photographs

Learn about each other’s “visualizations” of intimacy and sensuality

Materials:

Paper

Pens

Tape

Glue

String

Activity 1 (5 minutes): check in

Activity 2 (10 minutes): Fill out Evaluations

-hand out an evaluation form to each participant and make them fill it out right then.

Activity 2 (15 minutes): Comments

-Each participant puts the page of their photographs up on the wall next to a blank sheet of paper. Ask the participants to walk around the room looking at the different pages and photographs. Comment on the blank sheet of paper. Things to keep in mind: What are the themes you see in everybody's photographs? Are there any images that strike you as particularly interesting or surprising?

Activity 3 (20 minutes): Explaining Photographs

Each participant collects their page from off the wall, with the comments. Go around in a circle letting each participant explain their photographs.

Activity 4 (as long as it takes): making the album!

Collect the pages, make a cover for the album, and tie it all together. Spend the rest of the workshop talking, snacking, enjoying each other!

Bibliography

Chilman, Catherine S. "Promoting Healthy Adolescent Sexuality." *Family Relations*, Vol.39, No. 2. (Apr., 1990).

Hrzenjak, Majda. "The Bio-politics of the Body in Women's Magazines." Making Her Up; Women's MagazV in Slovenia. Ljubljana: Peace Institute. 2002.

Life Planning Education: Development Program for Youth, Ch. 5. from www.advocatesforyouth.org

Stulhofer, Aleksander and Sandfort, Theo, editors. Sexuality and Gender in Postcommunist Eastern Europe and Russia. New York: The Hawthorn Press.

The Center for Education and Counseling of Women (CESI), "The Significance of Gender in the Attitudes and Sexual Behaviour of Croatian Adolescents" Report on the Findings of the "Urgently Claiming the Future: Focus on Gender for Safer Sexual Relationships" Research Project.

Vendramin, Valerija. "The Culture of Femininity: Cosmo at Work." Making Her Up; Women's MagazV in Slovenia. Ljubljana: Peace Institute. 2002.

Other Resources Include:

www.advocatesforyouth.org
www.familyplanning.org/pages/familyteen.html
www.ippf.org
www.itsyoursexlife.com
www.teenwire.com
www.sexualityandu.ca