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2011-06-23
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The Role of Peer Educators in their Peers' Negotiation of Sexual Decisions:

A Wits University Case Study

A report on a research project presented to

The Discipline of Sociology

School of Social Sciences

Faculty of Humanities

University of the Witwatersrand

In partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree M.A (Health Sociology) by Coursework and Research Report

By

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May 2011

Abstract

This research report presents the research topic and the discussion and motivations behind the chosen subject area and case study selection relating to the research study of "how peer educators assist their peers in negotiating sexual decisions: a Wits University case study". The report will outline the literature review that was undertaken to develop the theoretical framework underpinning this project, which incorporated elements of behavioural change, social identity, knowledge dissemination and life-cycle theories. The research questions guiding the research project are then presented. The report goes on to assess the ways in which socialization sources and agents shift in influence and importance during different phases of social life. Following this, the details of the study will be outlined, including the methodology comprising research design, methods, sampling techniques used and ethical considerations involved in conducting this research project. The usefulness of diaries in capturing personal narratives when conducting informal peer education is discussed in this section. Next the findings arising from the data collection phase of this research project will be presented and analysed into four interrelated themes. These include "The social environment of student life at Wits University"; "Peer educators' social identity and its influence on informal peer education interactions in different contexts"; "Just Jokes- Icebreakers, Innuendo, Teasing, Tantalising and Talking- The influence of humour in informal peer education" and "The multi-dimensional continuum of discussion". Finally the conclusions and programmatic recommendations arising from this research study are given.