

https://dspace.org/

Female agency in action: an examination of interactions in an online 'love and relationships' discussion forum

Cresswell, Catherine

2015-09-03
http://hdl.handle.net/10539/18421

Downloaded from a DSpace repository. https://dspace.org/

Abstract

This project examined the discursive and interactional processes by which female participants present and discuss their romantic relationships in the 'Love and Relationships' MXit forum on the South African Non-Governmental Organisation, HIVSA's, hi4LIFE mobile phone-based project. In doing so, it was possible to explore some of the norms and 'taken-for-granted' practices of romantic relationships that the participants describe, which offer insight into present research into adolescent experiences of gender and romantic relationships, as well as some new subjects for consideration during intervention or analysis. In particular, the participants discussed a commitment-based conception of love, and linked it to partner-fidelity, but also to his commitment of time and attention. A feelings-based conception of love was mobilised to suggest why a participant may deviate from the norm of breaking up with a partner who has been unfaithful. The question of children was contested in terms of whether they should be part of a committed relationship, or a decision that a woman should make separately from her romantic relationships. Taken together, it is suggested that because conceptions of love and having children appear not to be foreclosed normative practices as these participants debate and contest them, these could prove fertile points of intervention with young women's choices, agency, and ultimately, empowerment. Thus this study recommends disseminating and increasing the scope of hi4LIFE and similar projects that provide platforms for the production of female agency.

Keywords: mHealth; Conversation Analysis; female agency; adolescent relationships; South Africa