To Walk Like Boys
– The Limit of Gender Equality?
A Qualitative Evaluation of The Facilitator Role in The Adolescent Project Conducted by The Sakhi Resource Center in Thiruvananthapuram, the Capital of Kerala, a State in the South of India.
Thanks.

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Abstract

The Sakhi Resource Center is at the moment conducting an educational program for adolescent girls and village health care workers in the district of Trivandrum, Kerala. Gender and sexual reproductive health are taught among other things. Classes are structured in a participatory way, giving the girls the opportunity to develop and practice their leadership and organizational skills among other things. One of the aims of The Project is to increase the confidence and sense of coherence of the girls and thus raise their ability to act in an empowered way in their societies. Another is to educate and engage health care workers out in the villages. The health care workers are Facilitators in The Adolescent Project. The Facilitators are both being educated by the Project staff and then themselves educating adolescents in The Project.

The purpose of my study has been to evaluate the role of The Facilitators in The Project with the focus on gender. My research method is case study, and my empirical results are based on observations and nine in-depth interviews with The Facilitators. I have also studied Project Documents. I have used gender theory and theories of empowerment along with post-colonial theories of intersectionality. The Facilitators have a key-function here as after the project they are intended to continue conducting classes in the villages. I have found for example that the motivation to become a Facilitator in the Project can often be traced back to personal experiences from adolescence. I have focused on the Facilitators’ attitudes and found a tendency for them to promote arranged marriages and set limits on gender equality. I have also focused on how the Facilitators experienced results gained from the Project, both for them themselves and for the adolescents. In the analysis I have suggested that Sakhi could put more emphasis on the student role of The Facilitator to ensure gender sensitive project running in the future.

Key words: Kerala, Gender, Adolescents, The Adolescent Project, Sexual Reproductive Health
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Prologue

Two day camp in Mangalapuram in May 2011

One by one they are called up on the stage. It’s hard to tell the difference between tension, anxiety and excitement as they walk with their backs towards the large audience, through the path made between those red plastic chairs that I’ve learnt are so typical for Panchayath offices. This is a vast white-painted hall with tall non-glass windows letting patterns of sunlight play on the opposite wall. Far above us in the ceiling there are sleepy black fans rotating at different speeds, not succeeding at all to create that kind of cooling breeze that we all long for. We have passed noon. This is after lunch and The Facilitators in the back of the hall are stretching out their legs, one is fanning herself with a piece of paper. I’m sitting behind The Facilitators, close to the open door leading to the street. I’m looking over the heads of the audience, all those neat braded heads some decorated with jasmine flowers that you can sometimes smell in the air. The stage itself has two platforms. There is an old black hand-driven bicycle placed on the higher stage. It looks dramatic there, as if it’s there for a reason. Now the girls don’t have to climb on to that stage, they are at ground level with Beena Mol and Sreekala TS, two of the program leaders. The girls turn to face the crowd, feet aligned, and backs straight. They are given a microphone that sometimes makes a horrific screeching sound when it’s being moved around between hands and close to lips. There are eight girls. Each has been selected as leaders of their discussion groups. It is striking how different they all are in height, some of them seeming so small and much younger than the others. Like this girl dressed in pink. She looks down at her paper, grabs the microphone and starts speaking. Very soon I realize that I can relax. She is speaking with a surprisingly steady voice. I know from another Two Day Camp I’ve visited that this is the first time that the 120 or so girls have met. And it is also the first time that many of them have spoken into a microphone. This girl does not seem to react to the way her voice is being amplified across the hall. On the contrary; she seems to be enjoying it. She is reading from the paper with a high but steady voice. Towards the end she looks up, taking in the audience, not seemingly at all frightened by it, smiling at us, satisfied. I turn to Renu Henry, the Interpreter, who is sitting next to me with a note-pad on her lap, I want to ask her if she is getting all this, especially the part when this girl was making the people laugh. Renu is busy writing. The girls on stage have been instructed to present the main points that came up in the previous group discussions about problems experienced by them in their lives and possible remedies to these problems.
The Interpreter is filling in the topics in English in a scheduled way, problems on one page, remedies on the opposite.

On the bus, on the way home through the never ending traffic, the Interpreter and I go through the topics. Lack of freedom seems to be the most striking problem experienced by the girls, and that is expressed as; “lack of freedom”, “lack of freedom from home”, “can’t make decisions”, “can’t travel in trains or buses”, “can’t travel alone”, “getting beaten up at home”, “can’t talk to boys”. They experience; “control for girls”, “control from society”, “control from older people”, “abuse in public places”, “comments”, “harassment at home”, “boy disturbance, through internet”, “rumors”, lack of “opportunities” in general and a more specific lack of “opportunities for the abilities of girls” to be expressed, “for example in sports”. Another problem is the injustice that they experience. They say things like “men can travel” and that “boys misbehave”, which in the context in which it was said I understand to mean freedom to travel and misbehave.

On the remedy pages of the note-pad we found comments like “confidence and courage”, “awareness”, “protection” and “protection by police and conductors”. One group requested more “organizations to work with this” and that the “Panchayath should interfere”, they also wanted “awareness for girls and punishment for boys” and that society should “punish the abusers”. Two groups talked about “equality” and one of them about “equal wages”. Another group said that “girls have to make money and study” and there was one group that argued that it was the “behavior of the girls that had to be improved”.

I would like to ask the reader of this thesis to keep these voices in mind. We are going to shift focus here and hear The Program Facilitators’ stories and perspectives, but it is those of the girls and their voices that should be our point of departure and return. How they sounded in that local self government hall. How they defined their own problems when they were given a microphone to speak into for the first time.

1 Introducing The Sakhi Resource Center

Sakhi means Friend of women in Malayalam. Sakhi is a politically autonomous organization working in Thiruvananthapuram against discrimination due to cast, class and sex. Aleyemma Vigayan, described as the most famous feminist in Kerala by some (Wingborg 1999, p 73 for example), initiated the organization together with Mercy Alexander in 1996. Now however, she is in the process of retiring; only working at the headquarters in Convent Road a few
hours a week. On our first meeting she tells me that she is not supposed to be more important than the organization and that she is happy to leave the running of the organization to the other employed workers at Sakhi (personal communication 1). Seven people are working full time in Sakhi. All of them are women from either Hindu or Christian communities and all have a Social Work degree of some kind behind them.

Sakhi has been involved with the local self governments, the Panchayaths, since the Decentralization reform was launched in 1996. Sakhi was networking with the elected women representatives in the Panchayaths in order to emphasize and mainstream the ideas of women’s development. Sakhi also took on the task of analyzing the budget of the Panchayaths with special regards to the ear-marked funds for women. From the start Sakhi has run different capacity building programs in gender, leadership and masculinity. Sakhi have offered free of charge legal support to abused women from poor families and the organization have also involved itself in different anti-sexual harassment committees in workplaces and campaigned in different ways on the subject of violence against women.

Sakhi is also a “resource center”. Based on the idea that information is power, they assist women groups with information on gender and feministic perspectives. They have a library on Convent Road open to the public.

Today the two projects running at Sakhi are The Adolescents Project and The Safe Cities Project, the latter is a collaboration project with other women’s organizations working in large cities in India. The aim of this project is to examine how Indian cities can be developed in order to become safer for women.

Since 2002 Sakhi has run different out-reaching projects with adolescents in marginalized communities. In 2004 Sakhi developed the Life Skill Education Manual, which is a set of training modules addressed to adolescents covering such topics as Gender, Personal Development, Reproductive Health, Influence of Media and so on. Aleyemma Vigayan further explains to me that the manual includes training in leadership skills, self confidence and identity-formation, communication skills, gender and social norms, body-mapping and sexual reproductive health, training and discussions about social life and social issues. It also takes up violence, love, marriage and children, rights and available legal services in society, environmental issues, media and gender (personal communication 1). Sakhi has also conducted different programs through the schools, communities and the local self governments, The Panchayaths, sometimes with the help from other local NGOs. All this finally came together in the idea for a new project (with a very long title): “The Sexual and Reproductive Health of Adolescent Girls through Capacity Building of Village Health Care
Workers for Enhanced Access to Public Health Care for Young Girls”, from here on The Adolescent Project. The Adolescent Project was launched in January 2010 and was planned for three years onwards. Three people from Sakhi are engaged in The Adolescent Project, they are Sreekala TS, Beena Mol and Geetha John who is the program coordinator. The Ford Foundation is funding the Adolescent Project. Three books have been published addressed to youngsters: Me and My Body for boys and for girls and one book on Child Sexual Abuse (internet 1, 2011).

1.2 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to make a mid-term evaluation of The Adolescent Project, focusing on that part concerned with “capacity building of village health care workers”, in other words The Facilitators development within the project.

The Facilitators hold a key-function in The Adolescent Project. They are to be educated by the project and at the same time be educators of the project. They are both students and teachers.

All in all The Adolescent Project of Sakhi is planned to run for three years. It is now entering its second year. The project leaders of Sakhi are in the process of moving from the ten local self governments (Panchayaths) they are now involved in and on to ten new ones, leaving the first ten Adolescent-centers to run The Project by themselves, through The Facilitators.

My aim is to focus on The Facilitators of the first year and to explore the processes they have gone through while working within the project. I want to understand how they view their own work around gender and gender equality. I have therefore formulated my research questions as follows:

• How is this project described and planned for in written documents and in interviews with The Sakhi Resource Center personnel?
• How are gender related problems and solutions associated with adolescents understood by The Facilitators after attending The Project?
• How do The Facilitators view The Project and their role within it?

Through these questions I want to acquire an understanding about:

• What possibilities and problems can be identified within The Adolescent Project with regards to The Facilitator function?
2 Earlier Research

In the following chapter I will give account for earlier research concerning women in Kerala. My aim with this literature review is to get the reader acquainted with the wide range of conditions directing and forming women’s lives in Kerala. Of course this “wide range” is not wide enough to give a complete picture. The studies below are depicting women in different spheres, geographical areas and contexts, such as work-related (in the Cashew industry and Mussel Farms), family and marriage related and youth and modernity-related. I will also give account for research made on statistical data, where the Keralan woman show up as she does in the Human Development Index under the headline “On the Status of women”.

2.1 Anna Lindberg on the Cashew Workers

Lindberg (2001) writes about women in the Cashew industry in Kerala. Her aim is to give an historical account or “reconstruction of their profiles” (n.n, s. 29), in other words “analyze the formation of (their) identities based on class, caste and gender” (Lindberg, s. 29). Lindberg writes that the Cashew-workers were chosen for the study because they did not seemingly fit in to the stereotypical picture of Third World Women, they worked instead in the formal sector, where they were organized in trade unions and were literate (n.n.).

Through concepts of “Ideology” and “Discourse” (which she uses as two compatible entities) and “Housewifization” (the normative notion of making women more dependent on their husbands/marriages for survival) and “Sancritization” (when lower-castes adopt higher-castes’ culture and rituals, for example that of Purdah;) (Lindberg, s. 35, 40, 53) she analyses historical documents and interviews with people from the cashew industry. She also conducts in-depth interviews with the cashew-working women themselves in order to reach their lived experiences (n.n. s. 60). An example of her results show that in the 1930s and up until the 1950s the Cashew-working women’s identities were still built mainly around aspects of caste, although the tendency was that caste was becoming a more passive agent then class, while gender was passive albeit with a tendency to becoming more active. In the fifties and up to the seventies caste aspects became passive in all areas other than work allocation and marriage, but class that was politicized at the time moved in strongly as an identity forming agent, although the understandings of class differed with regards to gender. Gender itself was a more active identity forming agent in this period compared to before. The period from the seventies and up to 2000 was characterized by passive caste agents. Class was of importance, but only
peripherally for women, while gender was active and “encompassing all aspects of life” (Lindberg, s. 325)

Lindberg argues that the Cashew-working women in Kerala are often low-caste, poor, extremely hard working and discriminated against, but it’s their subjective and active experiences that shine through in Lindberg’s study.

2.2 On the Status of Women

Among the abundance of literature about Kerala there is a lot of research about the status of women. Many of the writers I’ve studied talk about a paradox. For example Mitra and Singh (2007) use the Gender Development Index to show that while Kerala ranks high in life standard variables for women it also reveals at the same time high suicide rates among females and increasing domestic violence and unemployment for women - the highest in India. Mitra and Singh paint a picture of a woman’s life, where the educational pressure is hard while work possibilities are few. Many of the female suicides are education or work related, according to the writers (Mitra, Sing 2007, s. 1240). Mitra and Singh argue that the educational level of the women is one factor in explaining increasing family conflicts and domestic violence (and also high suicide rates). They say that highly educated women often do not accept the traditional dominance of men. They also point out that the social pattern of male dominance restricts the general choices for women and that many women in Kerala suffer from exhaustion and depression. Mitra and Singh talk about human capital factors, such as education and argues that education alone will not change the social and cultural fabric to allow women to empower themselves in the society of Kerala.

Ohlsson conducts a comparative descriptive study of the state of Kerala and the state of (the) Punjab. With the help of the Human Development Index she describes women’s life situations and ability to escape poverty in the two states. For example, she compares health, educational and work related indicators and the Sex Ratio (amount of women/1000 men). Ohlsson finds that the life standard and possibilities for women to escape poverty vary within the two states due to many different factors such as living area, class, caste, tribe, religious group belonging and position within the family. However, she also finds that there are general structural differences between the two states and that women in Kerala, due to the general social welfare structure, have more rights or entitlements (education and health for instance) than women in Punjab. According to statistics presented by Ohlsson, Kerala does not show any indication of
the “missing women” problem or “son preference” that is common in Punjab (and in the rest of India which in turn leads to lower Sex Ratio), but she points out that some patriarchal tendencies seem to be increasing in Kerala, for example that women now more and more often than before become housewives (despite their higher education).

**Chacko** (2003) also analyses different life standard measurements for women in Kerala using the Human Development Index. She maintains that life expectancy and literacy rates are high and interrelated to both the high age for marriage and first child rates. She also talks about the “strikingly high” Sex Ratio in Kerala compared to other Indian states (Kerala has more females than males in its population, compared to the opposite relationship in the rest of India) (n.n. s. 53). Chacko does not perhaps question the health factor indicators per se, but she does call for a more nuanced understanding of the women’s situation in Kerala. By linking marriage and questions of social development (dowry) to these status indicators, she exposes a society where a woman’s status is far from un-problematic (n.n. s 54).

She points out that civil law and rights to marry, divorce and inherit vary according to religious beliefs in Kerala (n.n.). Chacko also speaks of the widely spread and inter-religious practice of dowry. Although dowry was criminalized in India in 1961 (the Dowry Prohibition Act) the practice of marriage transactions of funds or property from the bride’s family to the groom’s continues to grow in India and Kerala, causing economic problems for families, emotional problems for many girls, and also conflicts and violence within the families (n.n., s. 55, 56). Chacko says that “Physical violence, emotional trauma among women, and even death can often be traced to disputes over monetary transfers related to the now entrenched tradition of dowry” (Chacko, 2003, s. 57). In 2001 for instance, there were 35 pending cases of dowry deaths in the Kerala High Court (n.n.). Chacko calls for a mobilized (women’s) movement against the escalating dowry-system.

### 2.3 Praveena Kodoth on Dowry and Matchmaking

Kodoth (2008) looks more closely into the mechanisms of dowry by conducting fieldwork in a village in the north of Kerala. She calls the village Belur and here the Nair and Tiya castes are dominant. Belur is a traditionally matrilineal society, although the Kerala Joint family (abolition) act of 1976 eliminated the legal conception of matrilineal property. It was from then that the society started to regress from a system where women could divorce and have legal claims outside of marriage to one where “a new marriage regime… would enforce male
responsibility as husbands and fathers and bring women under conjugal patronage, thereby extending recognition and protection… primarily in their capacity as wives” (n.n. s.267).

Belur does not by (matrilineal or communistic) tradition comply with the concept of dowry. However Kodoth finds that dowry transactions are in fact made in Belur anyhow. Kodoth analyses the specific circumstances of dowry and sees a pattern of gender and caste-dependent matchmaking rationales. Dowry in Belur can be used as a compensator for the brides’ lack of gender specific attributes. Kodoth speaks for example of “healthy good looks”, age factors, healthiness, fullness of body, fairness of skin and other attributes connected to sexual attractiveness and child bearing (n.n. s. 278). The bride’s educational level is also understood in the light of her reproductive capability (her capability to educate her children) and lack of education can therefore be compensated by dowry. For a man to be ranked high in the matchmaking market, he needs first and foremost to be able to make an income, thus many low educated Gulf workers can be matched with well educated girls (Kodoth, s. 278). Kodoth says that masculinity on the matchmaking market is prized for its ability to dispense male power over women, and that the question of a man’s income is not only a factor to sub serve marriage, while normative femininity is (n.n. s.281). That means for example that income can serve other things in a man’s life than his marriage. As an example of male expected dominance over women in relation to matchmaking rationales we can see how the number of sisters in the groom’s family is a variable to be measured. If the groom has many sisters it is a negative attribute, since this is seen as a huge responsibility for the brother to discipline many sisters (n.n. s. 273).

Another thing that according to Kodoth can be devastating for men and women on the marriage market is the importance given to astrological features, especially something called the “chovva dosham” which is supposed to bring about a negative impact on relationships in general (n.n. s. 276). A bride and groom with the chovva dosham in their horoscope might have to negotiate downwards in the marriage hierarchy, or in the girls’ case: compensate with dowry. Caste works within the matchmaking rationale in different ways. The standard is to match men and women from the same caste position, but sometimes this tradition is abandoned and when it is, it is abandoned for gender specific reasons – a man’s disability to provide or a women’s lack of normative femininity.
2.4 Development Work, an example from Kerala

The work situation seems to be a major problem for women in Kerala. **Kripa and Gopalan Surendranathan** (2008) look into the empowering effects of a development project which introduced mussel farming technologies. The development project was conducted by the Central Marine Fisheries Institute from 1996 to 2006. The target group for the project was women in fishing villages situated in the north of Kerala. In the traditional fisheries women assisted fishermen on the shore. “Collaborating Spouse” was often used as a term to describe the women’s position here. However with the mussel farming project two different types of mussel farmers emerged; the family enterprise (initiated by a woman) and the collaboration type formed between several women mussel-farmers through self help groups for women. Kripa and Gopalan Surendranathan find that mussel-farming is now the sole income for many of the women in the fishing villages in Kasargod, and that the project has shown itself beneficial for women in their striving to escape poverty and unemployment. It has also encouraged them to become independent and more in control of the business and to rise above the “Collaborating Spouse” concept (Kripa, 2008, s. 204).

2.5 Ritty Lukose on Youth, Gender and Consuming Globalization

Lukose (2005) looks at youth, gender and consumption in Kerala in the context of globalization. Lukose’s article examines both masculine “anxieties” (she interviews a college boy) and the creation of a feminine representation and identity she calls the Modern Miss. Here she studies the ideological meaning underlying the Miss Kerala contest held in Thiruvanthapuram in the mid 90’s. Lokuse looks at the way the Keralan global identity was formed and broadcast in this contest, disseminated for example through the symbols of middle caste/class tradition (the traditional Nair robes and dresses that the girls had to wear in the different stages of the contests) but also through the way that the different Miss Kerala contestants all came from places like Abu Dabhi, New York and London and so on, mapping the accepted and perhaps idealized Keralan diaspora in the “West” (Lukose, 2005, p. 928) In this context Lokose takes up the commercial representation of the NRI-lifestyle in India (n.n. p. 920). NRI stands for Non-Resident Indian and marks the middleclass and gendered (masculine) ideology of modernity and aspirations (n.n. s. 918). Femininity has also recently been brought up on to that stage; through beauty contests, like the one in Kerala and youth television where the young female program leaders speak English and wear jeans (n.n. p. 921). But when femininity is brought up on to that stage it is also followed by various forms
of protest. In the Miss Kerala contest for example the audience laughed at the contestants, shouting at them to go home (n.n., p. 930). And the Miss Universe contest held in Bangalore, Karnataka, in 1996 required the presence for two months of 12 500 police and paramilitary personnel from state, city and central security forces to control the protests coming from women’s movements on both the political left and right (n.n., p. 930). Instead of seeing the young consumers as merely victims of commercial interests, Lokose regards them rather as acting in a marked site with activity, desire and agency (n.n., p. 931).

Lokose argues that the binary relationship of Tradition and Modernity can be placed on a post colonial space and time map, where the concept of Modern ends up in “a present future” but with its center in the West. (n.n., p. 928) That means that the creation of the “Modern Miss” identity, a beauty consuming girl in (globally inflected) jeans, also recently represented with (sexual) agency and aspirations, according to Lokose (n.n., p. 930) is an identity propelling the girls “into a dangerous “West” out there” (n.n. p. 928). Lukose maintains that the protest for example in Bangalore “erases the critical task of examining beauty as a structure of aspirations and anxieties and also erases the need to address a feminist politics to (these) young women” (n.n. p. 923). Lokose concludes that “globally inflected spaces of consumption … are structured by specifically post-colonial preoccupations about tradition and modernity”. These preoccupations are gendered and thus their consequences differ for young men and women.

3 Method

The relationship between practice, evaluation and research is a fundamentally intertwined and important relationship. Qualitative evaluation can be seen as research to serve and help develop the practice, but it can (and should) also in itself be part of that practice; by enhancing understanding and forming bonds of coherence between the different individuals participating within the practice (Lishman 1999 s. 8). I conducted a case study on The Adolescent Project during my fieldwork period from March 16 to May 31, 2011. Case study is a very suitable methodology for qualitative evaluation as we shall see below.

3.1 Approach

A case study is ideal when you want to understand a pedagogic process and where you can detect a particular system or case within this process (Merriam1988, s. 34). My “case” is The Adolescent Project. But the focus in my study is on The Facilitators and the processes they go
through when they follow The Adolescent Project. The Facilitators role can be seen as a system within the system of The Project, or a case within the case.

The basis of this case study is qualitative research; it rests on an attempt to focus on discovery, insight and interpretation (Merriam s. 25). Case study can be understood as interpretation in context (n.n.). By concentrating on specific situations one can shine a light on various important factors; the context that define the situation (n.n.). In direct reference to my study this approach reveals: By concentrating on The Facilitators I wish to shine a light on various important factors in the context which define The Adolescent Project.

Qualitative case study is by definition particular, descriptive, heuritical and inductive. Particular means that a case study is focused on specific situations. This may result in an understanding of general conditions, but more often it generates practical solutions to specific problems (Merriam s. 26).

Thick descriptions are also associated with case study. Thick descriptions are complete descriptions (or as complete as they can be): That is what is said and done, where and how, complete with underlying meanings, norms and attitudes at play. Thick descriptions are generated through the many qualitative methods that are relevant in case study (n.n., p. 25). Heuritical in the context of case study means that the study with its inductive nature is intended to open new horizons of understanding for the reader (n.n., p. 27). Inductive means that the understandings are to be drawn from the collected data. It is the study itself that will generate theories about its conditions and contexts and not vice versa (Merriam, p. 27).

In case study it is always a possibility that the researcher’s own ideas and biases can affect the outcome of the study (n.n.). This has to do with the role that the researcher plays as a human instrument. He or she is not a computer, and indeed that would not be the ideal. Merriam maintains that a case study will often result in a valuation of the case in question.

Lishman additionally argues in the area of evaluation in Social Work Practice, that evaluation is a tool that can be used in different ways and with different underlying purposes. Evaluation with and for service users can for instance be used in an empowering way. Evaluation has the possibility of enhancing understanding and creating a sense of group belonging and coherence for the individuals within the practice.

3.2 Data Collection

In the following chapter I will give account for how data was collected from the field.
3.2.1 Evaluation; Design and Selection

Patton speaks about evaluation design and the units of analyses to be studied in evaluation (Patton, 1987, p. 50). What these units are will determine how to collect samples from the field. Patton argues that the first stage is to discuss with the stakeholders how a purposeful sampling can be conducted (n.n. p. 51). The logic of purposeful sampling is to find information-rich cases, or units, for in depth study (Patton 1987, p. 52). In my case the units are The Facilitators (and The Project Documents). I have in collaboration with the stakeholder (Sakhi) chosen a sampling strategy based on maximum variation. This concept rests on the logic that “any common patterns that emerge from great variation are of particular interest and value in capturing the core experiences and central shared aspects or impacts of a program” (n.n., p. 53).

In discussion with Geetha John, the project coordinator, four Panchayaths were selected for in-depth interviews. Two interviews per Panchayath were arranged. None of the Facilitators were however working together in the same center, which meant that I interviewed Facilitators from nine different Project centers. The Panchayaths were selected on the grounds of different social structures. One was mostly agrarian, one had a large Tribal population, another Panchayath had a large Scheduled Caste (and Tribal) community and one had mostly daily laborers living there (Proposal Document. p. 6, 7). The interviewees volunteered to participate; the question of whether or not they wanted to was mediated and put to them through Geetha John. This probably affected the selection of those whom I ended up interviewing.

3.2.2 Interviews

Patton speaks of three approaches to qualitative interviews. One is the informal conversational interview. Another is the general interview guide approach and the third is the standardized open-ended interview (Patton, 1987, p. 109). The first type of interview takes place in the field and is part of the “flow of an interaction” between the researcher and the people present in the field. The interviewee is often not aware that he or she is being interviewed (n.n., p. 110). An interview guide is a list of issues to be explored during an interview and the standardized open-ended interview is a set of questions arranged to take all interviews in a study “through the same sequence” (n.n. p.12). I have used all three of these approaches. During observations I was given a great deal of information through informal interviews with
the Sakhi personnel and The Facilitators and sometimes even with the adolescents. I have conducted nine in-depth interviews with Facilitators from the first year’s program. Due to the fact that I knew I had to work with an interpreter I concluded that semi-structured interviews would be preferable. I made an interview guide with both issues and precisely phrased and (mostly) open ended questions. During the interviews this guide worked as a kind of road map, while the stories took different turns, it made me (and perhaps the interpreter too) feel safe as we could always go back to the guide and on to a question that we knew beforehand. While interviewing the Facilitators I laid importance on the openness in the interview situation, especially in the discussions about gender. I wanted the interview situation in itself to be a positive experience for the Facilitators giving them an opportunity to reflect on their role and voice their engagement in the Project. I wanted the interview situation to be part of the “empowering” process of the Facilitators (and myself).

Shorter formal interviews at the end of my fieldwork were conducted with the project leaders: Geetha John, Beena Mol, and Sreekala TS. These interviews were also a way for me to give feedback to them regarding issues that had come up during the evaluation process. All formal interviews were recorded. One evaluation meeting took the form of an informal interview. That meeting was also recorded. I conducted additional interviews. One with the gender focused researcher Praveena Kodoth at The Center for Development Studies in Thiruvananthapuram, another was a group interview with people originating from Kerala, but now active in Sangama, an organization working towards sexual minority groups in Bangalore, Karnataka. The additional interviews were also recorded.

3.2.3 Observations

According to Patton, observations in the field serve the purpose of describing this field. Observations have three advantages: They allow the evaluator to better understand the context of the field, and bring about an inductive approach. Observations can give the possibility for the evaluator to see things that would “routinely escape conscious awareness among participants” (Patton, 1987, p. 73). The times that I actually entered the Adolescent Program for observations were easily selected. During almost three weeks (19th of March to 3rd of April) I went to all scheduled project meetings, travelling from the north to the south in the Trivandrum District to participate. The meetings varied from environmental field visits with the adolescents from the previous year, to orientation meetings for new Facilitators in the
second year program. I observed a One Day Training meeting for new Facilitators in the second year, and different forms of evaluation meetings with adolescents in two Panchayaths, and together with the project personnel at the Sakhi headquarters. Later I also observed two different Two Day Camps, where the adolescents entered the program for the first time. This meant that observations were made at the very end of the first year’s program and the very beginning of the second year’s program.

The observations made were of a rather special nature. They were conducted during the very beginning of my stay and it was before I had had the chance to meet my Interpreter, who then helped me with the interviews. To help me I had a social work student, Charu Sebastian, who was on her field studies with The Adolescent Project. Charu helped me with many translations, taking notes or just whispering to me during the classes. Even so, most of my observations were made without the help of direct translation and were thus focused on form and non-verbal understanding, such as how the room conditioned the situation, the silent interaction between people, how time was allocated between different people and different issues and so on. It was an interesting experience realizing how much can be understood, even with the language button switched off. But still, without the help of Charu Sebastian and the informal interviews kindly given by the Sakhi staff, there would have been very little understanding of the concepts of the program. The question of whether I was an Onlooker or Participant sometimes became tricky to answer. My intention was to be an Onlooker, however I was getting a lot of attention and twice I was called up on stage (as part of a communication class where the importance of language was being emphasized).

Field-notes and photographs and (sometimes video-clips) were taken during all observations.

3.2.4 Study of Documents

Program documents are also a rich source of information with regards to different projects (Patton, 1987, p. 89). They can provide information about the program and its activities and also give hints on which questions that will be of importance when pursuing the evaluation (n.n. p. 90). The ideal, according to Patton, would be to study all Program documents and correspondences (n.n. p. 90). I have studied three documents regarding The Adolescent project. These were the existing documents written in English about The Project. One is the proposal to the Ford Foundation, who fund the Project. This document, from now on referred to as The Proposal, is dated October 2009. Another document is a correspondence between The Sakhi Resource Center and the Ford Foundation, written in January 2010. It is titled “The
Ford Foundation Grant Reporting Instructions” and it has preprinted questions and boxes with limited space in which Sakhi has been asked to answer questions about the development of The Project. “This document will be referred to as The Grant Report. The third document I have studied is the “Sexual and reproductive health of adolescent girls through capacity building of village health workers for enhanced access to public health care for young girls. Process Report (January to December 2010)”. This document was written after the first year of the project and it will be referred to as The Process Report. It sums up its activities and figures. The name of the project varies in the different documents; however it is the same Adolescent Project they all refer to.

I have treated The Project Documents as a separate unit in my evaluation. The documents have been studied to first and foremost correlate to my first question of how The Project is described in written documents. To treat the documents as a unit enables me to compare The Project Documents with The Facilitators experiences of The Project.

3.3 Literature Review
The purpose of my literature review was to show “the state of the art” for women in Kerala (Merriam, 1994, p. 74). As a first stage I wanted a wide focus on women in Kerala. Thus I searched the Academic Search Premier database with the words “Women + Kerala”, “Women’s movement + Kerala” and “Gender + Kerala”. There was a lot of research here and I spent a long time reading and selecting on the grounds of relevance (Merriam, 1994, p. 78). For the second stage I wanted to look closer at research carried out on youth with regards to gender in Kerala. Therefore I searched The Academic Search Premier database a second time with the words “Gender + Youth + Kerala”. Results showed that there was not a lot of relevant research. I found one article about youth and consumption, thus depicting the development for middleclass youth in Kerala, but nothing relevant written on the topics of the groups of adolescents that The Adolescent Project was aimed to reach; the marginalized groups of adolescents in Kerala. I also searched for “Youth + Gender + Sexual Reproductive Health” in the hope of finding qualitative studies about the discussion on sexual reproductive health in the school syllabus. Here I found nothing relevant. The result was the same with “Gender + Youth + Sexuality + Kerala”.

3.4 The Processing of the Data
The Project Documents have been treated as a separate unit. I have presented the documents through themes that emerged from the documents themselves such as “How the Project is Motivated”, “Suggested Interventions”, “Project Plan”, “Long Term Goals” and “The Educational Program/Project Practice”. My presentation of the documents can be called my “case journal” of the documents, and I have chosen to present that case journal as a whole (Merriam, 1988, p. 140). This serves my purpose of accounting for how the Project is described in the written documents.

Another unit in this evaluation (case study) is the formal interviews with Facilitators, observations from the field and informal interviews with the Sakhi staff. All formal interviews have been transcribed close to the time of the actual interview. Parts of the informal interviews have also been transcribed. Field-notes and transcribed material have been arranged thematically in a separate case journal (Merriam 1988, p, 139). Categories emerged from the material itself, from what The Facilitators said and came back to, from things that seemed to be reoccurring and from things that did not come up at all. There were also things that seemed to be of importance by their very uniqueness (Merriam, 1988, p, 147). The evaluation aspect of this case study also played a role in determining at least one of the categories to be presented; because classes in gender and sexuality are part of The Project, I had to form gender and sexuality into categories (n.n., p. 147). To work with the material like this, i.e. to concentrate the material and fit it into categories and themes is part of the interpretation and analysis of the material (Merriam, 1988, p. 152). Directly after presenting each category I have summarized them. The summarized chapters are part of the analysis when to summarize results is to describe the material in a generalized way.

3.5 Reliability and Validity

Perfect reliability and validity is an ideal for researchers, according to Neuman (Neuman, 2006, p. 188) Reliability has to do with consistency. That means that the results of a study should reoccur given similar circumstances (Neuman 2006, p. 188). Validity has to do with the truthfulness of the research instrument (Neuman 2006, s. 196). Merriam is talking about these ideals in relation to case study and qualitative research. She argues that because deeper understanding is the aim, the ways of measuring validity and reliability will be different than those in research aiming at testing hypotheses (Merriam, 1994, p. 176) Merriam argues that when you enhance internal validity you also simultaneously raise the reliability of the case study (Merriam, 1994, p. 177). Internal validity is the way that the result of the study is actually capturing the realms of the reality that is being studied, compared with external
validity which is the way the results of the study are applicable to other situations then the ones being studied (Merriam, 1994, p. 177,183). Since reality in the qualitative understanding is not an objective set of building blocks out there, but a holistic web of different interpretations or realities that change over time, it becomes difficult to speak about internal validity as a measurement of “reality”. Rather Merriam argues that it is interpretations, perspectives and understandings that one wants to account for in qualitative research. It is the reality as it occurs to the informants. How well the researcher captures these perspectives of reality is therefore crucial for the validity of qualitative research. Checking how the researcher influences the situation becomes as important as continuous transparency (Merriam p. 175). Merriam also argues for six strategies to enhance internal validity. I have used four of them: Triangulation of sources of information and methods (Merriam, s 1994, s. 180), longer and repeated observations in the field, “horizontal critique”, and finally I have tried to be clear about my own viewpoint and position as I entered the field (n.n.) In my case study I have triangulated between different researchers in my literature review and I have triangulated my methods by interviewing, observing and studying documents and literature. I have also according to Merriams strategy of “horizontal critique” discussed the results with colleagues and friends (Kodoth, Henri, Carrigan and my tutor for example) (n.n.). The other two of the six strategies concern informants participating in the research process. I have not been able due to time and language limitations to work in that way with my informants. Merriam argues that internal validity is in fact the strength of qualitative research if it is naturalistic (which means that it is taking place in the actual field). If the researcher manages to presents accurately the different perspectives or understandings of reality that the informants give voice to, the internal validity is automatically high (Merriam, 1994, p. 178).

Reliability as a measure of consistency also falls before the qualitative logic that understandings of reality change over time. Merriam argues instead that triangulation, transparency of the researchers position through thorough documentation enhances reliability as well as internal validity (Merriam 1994, p. 183). External validity or the ability to make generalizations based on the results of the study is always dependent on the validity of the study. If you don’t get valid results it becomes pointless to talk about generalizations (Merriam, 1994, p. 184). According to Merriam one way of dealing with the possibilities of using the research results outside the researched area is to think of them in terms of usefulness and thus leave the question to the readers (or experts within their areas) (Merriam 1994, p. 187). Merriam exemplifies this; a medical doctor or lawyer would themselves determine which cases are applicable for them in their work. In this case study I am sure that there are
results, or parts of results, that can be used outside this given context, but what exactly they are I will leave to the reader to decide.

### 3.6 Ethical Considerations

The ethical considerations in this study were a guiding light on my way to the group of Facilitators. To focus on the adults within the project saved me from the many ethical dilemmas that would have come from working directly with the adolescents. I have paid regard to the four ethical requirements for research as stated by Vetenskapsrådet (2002). The requirement of information states that the researcher must inform the informants regarding the purpose and conditions of participation in the study (Vetenskapsrådet). The Facilitators were informed verbally and also in a written letter given to them prior to the interviews, stating the purpose of the study and that all participation was voluntary. With regards to the requirement of consent I also gave information to the informants that they could at any time withdraw their participation, I added my contact details and those of the interpreter to the letter in case they wanted to withdraw their participation after the interviews. I also informed them on how to use the stop-button on the recorder in the interview situation. One of the informants used the stop-button once, but all chose to continue to participate. The requirement of confidentiality was achieved by informing the interviewees that they in the end-product would appear completely anonymously. The Facilitators were also told that their anonymity towards the Sakhi organization and its staff members could not be guaranteed, although that would have been preferable. Due to language problems, it was through the Sakhi staff that The Facilitators volunteered to participate in this evaluation. The integrity of my informants was a difficult ethical factor. Interviews were made in very different locations. Sometimes we would sit in the Panchayath office (with a different meeting going on at the desk next to us), sometimes we managed to get a place in the Anganwadi houses (where children were playing together and helpers were cooking lunch in the same room), sometimes we were at the homes of The Facilitators. Here there were family and friends, pets and workers and of course my Interpreter always present. However, it was the interviewees that arranged the settings of the interviews, and by giving their consent to the interview they also gave their consent to the interview situation.

The utilization requirement was met by making sure that transcribed material, photographs, videos, documents and observation notes have been treated as strictly confidential material,
kept in a safe place. Names, villages and places are coded in order to protect the informants. This is due to the sometimes sensitive nature of the material.

3.7 Discussion on Methodological Problems

As well as having to scream my questions through sounds of heavy rain on steel roofs (and trying to transcribe them later), and spending many hours on buses due to sometimes very long distances between interview locations there were a few other problematic things conditioning my case study that must be mentioned. First of all, mostly because of language problems and limited knowledge about the field, I had very little control over the setting up of dates for interviews and arranging the scenes and locations for them. It seemed that all the time I had to take whatever I could get and that a fight for interviewee integrity was always a fight I lost. There were people around us practically all the time, the interpreter, of course, but also in one location Geetha John. In the other three locations there could be husbands and children, family and friends, colleagues and so on depending on whether the interview was taking place in someone’s home or in the Panchayath office or in the Anganwadi house. These non-private conditions must of course be taken into account in this study.

Another was the limited time I spent observing The Project. Even though it was useful to see how The Project both ended and started, it would have been preferable to witness the whole process. For example I was not there on any regular monthly meetings where The Facilitators are more active in their Facilitator role then during the times when I observed The Project, for example during the Two Day Camp or field visits. I never actually observed the Facilitators taking classes. This was of course due to The Project Schedule – there were no regular monthly meetings going on when I was there.

Important also in influencing this study is my role as a person coming from The West. I got a lot of attention, most of the time friendly attention. Teenagers came up to me just to touch me or to say “hi”, but even the Facilitators were sometimes very curious of me. At the end of one meeting for instance, one of them turned to me and said “I Like You”, which, no doubt derived from my position as someone coming from the West. This might have also played a role in deciding who I ended up interviewing. It may have been the people who beforehand decided that they “liked me” who wanted to talk to me.

Participants volunteered for these interviews (through Geetha John). That meant that I managed to interview women from different classes and castes and from the Christian and
Hindu communities. I also interviewed one Tribal woman. However, not one of my informants came from any Muslim community which, of course, is a weakness in this study. However external I was in the setting, to the organization and in the country, I was still sometimes considered as “one of them” by the interviewees. One of them in this context means one of the Sakhi people. Many of The Facilitators had met me during the observations and there I was introduced to them together with the rest of the staff. During the interviews I had to keep asking myself whether or not the interviewee answered according to how she thought these answers would be acceptable from the organizations point of view. This was unavoidable. But we managed to reach beyond that bias, I think, based on the spread of opinions represented in the results below. One thing that we didn’t reach beyond was how sexuality was so sensitive in this environment. My external role gave me some possibilities to talk about it with my informants, but I still do not know if we were on the same wave length. The Adolescent Project teaches about “Sexuality”. In my understanding aspects of agency and lust cannot be subtracted from the term. However I had the feeling that in the context of The Adolescent Project it could and it was. My direct questions about sexuality were not answered; they were too sensitive according to the interpreter, which means that I still do not know exactly how sexuality was understood in this context.

3.8 Lost in Translation

Many problems derived from the language barriers. I do not understand or speak Malayalam. In most cases The Facilitators did not speak nor understand English. The Interpreter’s first language is Malayalam and my first language is Swedish. It took us a while (and a few interviews) to reach a good understanding. With the interviewees of course we only had one chance to reach that understanding. I was lucky to have the help of a very sensitive and skilled Interpreter, Renu Henry. Even so, in-depth interviews are very difficult to conduct and analyze through an interpreter. Nuances in language and underlying meanings were hard for me to pick up. It was also hard to probe or ask accurate follow-up questions in a conversation relying on a third person.

In the end I had to question my material, whether it was the informants or Interpreters thoughts or words that I was analyzing. In this thesis I have chosen to quote my informants by constantly letting the interpreter be visible in the presentation, as such for example T (short for Translator): Quote. At the times I quote myself in the interviews it will be as I (short for Inquirer): Quote. And when the interviewees answer directly in English that answer will be
referred to by the interview code, such as 2: Quote. I have also chosen to spell out each time Malayalam is spoken.

4 Contextualizing Kerala

Kerala lies along the southern west coast of India and boarders with the states of Karnataka in the north and Tamil Nadu in the east. Only a few kilometers from the seashore the land gets hilly; the Western Ghats form a natural boarder to the state of Tamil Nadu. Below the mountains there are the cultivated slopes and lowlands, and beyond these the long and vast coastal strip, lined with endless forests of coconut trees.

Thiruvananthapuram or Trivandrum is the capital city of the state. Malayalam is the local language and many places have two names, one in Malayalam and one spelt the simplified English way, as a reminder of colonial times. Kerala is divided into 14 different districts and 978 local self governments, called “Panchayaths”.

At a given point in 2011 Kerala was home to 33 387677 people (internet 2, 2011). 74 percent live in a rural environment, while the rest live in cities. The Hindu population is the largest in Kerala, about 57 per cent, while the Muslims make up 23 per cent and the Christians about 19 per cent. Temples, mosques and churches tower ever present over the surrounding environment.

Kerala’s economy is predominantly agrarian and focused on live stock, agriculture and fisheries. There are traditional industries in the state, like Cashew, Handlooms, and Beedi and Cigar-making but there are no existing heavy industries (internet 2, 2011).

Unemployment is high in Kerala (sometimes estimated as high as 25 %). Many unemployed people travel abroad to work in the Gulf States, like Kuwait, Qatar and the Saudi Arabia. (Wingborg, 1999, p. 51)

According to Wingborg more than one million people from Kerala worked in the Gulf in 1997, where the salaries could be up to ten times as high as the average in Kerala (Wingborg, 1999, s. 52). The money coming from the Gulf States and in to the Keralan economy represented 25 per cent of the total GDP (n.n.). Everywhere you go in and around Thiruvanthapuram you see examples of large modern buildings. These new concrete houses are built by returning Gulf-workers. Wingborg argues that this economic difference between people cuts straight through the traditional class system, separating those working class families that have family members abroad from those that have not (Wingborg, 1999, p. 54).
4.1 The Historical and Political Backdrop

4.1.1 The Caste System

The caste system is not, as many believe, abandoned in India. It has just changed, like all social systems change over time. Sharma (2001) calls the castes of today “discrete categories” and “plastic states of mind” (n.n. p. 7). The caste system(s) in India on a traditional level is built around the term Varna. The structure of the Varnas is made up of; Brahmins, Ksatriyas, Vaishas and Shudras, hierarchically arranged and associated with different colors. The Brahmins are the highest priests (white) and the Shudras are the servants/peasants (black). Those groups outside the Varna- system are nowadays referred to as Scheduled Castes. Scheduled Castes were formerly regarded and discriminated against as out-castes and untouchables (Lindberg, 2001, p.17). Another term associated with caste is Jati which means “birth” in Sanskrit, and it is a term used for referring individuals to the community they are born in to (Lindberg, 2001, p. 18).

The Nambudiris are the Brahmin caste of Kerala. There is an historic alliance between the Nambudiri and the Nairs. The caste system in Kerala was subdivided with a multitude of gradations based on occupation, habitat and political influence (internet 3, 2011). The idea of un-touchability was promoted as a way to keep the purity of the high castes from being polluted by the low castes, and it was compatible with the concept of Dharma and Karma in the Hindu philosophy (Lindberg, 2001, p. 49). Those who suffered worst were the Parayar, the Pulayar and the Cheramar among many others (internet 3, 2011). Up until the 19th century the caste system was utterly rigid and very oppressive in Kerala. This led the Ezavas to revolt. Their struggle formed a mass movement that later developed into the Communistic movement (internet 3). Up until the 20th century lower castes and non Hindus were denied governmental positions in Kerala. However, directly after Indian independence in 1947, the national government undertook measures to deal with the discriminations and atrocities being suffered by the Scheduled Castes. The constitutional law (Article 14, 15, 16 and 17) states that everyone has a right to equality and that discrimination due to caste is prohibited with regards to public employment. Article 17 is the abolition of Un-touchability Act (Judge, Bal, 2009, s. 11).

Sharma calls for caution and would like to see the caste system studied with more emphasis placed on process rather than structure to avoid reproducing fixed categories.
But some dimensions of caste are also structural, organizational and legal. For instance there are today different community based caste associations providing services related to various ritual areas of life, for example, marriage and cremation (Kodoth 2008, s. 270, personal communication 3). The Nair Service Society is one of these associations working for the Nairs, and the Sree Narayama Dharma Paripalana Yogam (SNDP) is another working for Ezhavas. In the matchmaking procedure the internal relationships of the castes of Kerala are the most visible as we have seen earlier (personal communication 3).

4.1.2 Political Context

Kerala became an Indian state in 1956 when India went through general changes in state structure. Kerala’s political history is dominated by two political blocks: The Left Democratic Front, or the LDF, with The Communist Party of India – Marxist (CPI-M) as the leading party, and the United Democratic Front, the UDF with the Congress Party as their front party. Since 1957, when the first free election was held in Kerala (and won by the Communist Party of India, then the largest communist party in the state) (Wingborg, 1999, p. 12, 13) the two blocks have governed the state of Kerala every second mandate period with at least seven periods of presidential rule in between.

When I arrived in Kerala on the 16th of March 2011, the ruling block was the LDF. But during my stay, on the 13th of April 2011, a state election was held and the result of the election was announced on the 13 of May. UDF had once again taken over and the state had added another mandate period to the already given pattern of governmental change every other election.

Wingborg states that the CPI-M (despite its name) and its allies have pushed forward an agenda of free market economy with a strong emphasis on the social welfare sector, (n.n. p. 14). Wingborg also maintains that the political movement of the CPI-M is in fact a parliamentary movement aiming at general welfare and social democratic values. He points out that the different communist parties in Kerala, due to the specific political history (strong mass movements) and context (election results turning from one block to the other every other mandate period), have been forced to choose a grass-root democratic strategy (Wingborg 1999, p. 98). It was the LDF that in 1996 pushed through the Decentralization reform that transferred funds and power down to the local self governments, the Panchayaths.

The paradox of Kerala’s economic situation, with its low income and production per capita rate on one side but its relatively high life standard shown for example in literacy and general life expectancy on the other, is often held up as the Kerala Phenomenon or the Kerala
Example of Development. The Kerala example is supposedly showing the possibility of development of high life standards through social welfare planning and education, despite low or even very low economic growth (for example Ohlsson, 2008, p 6).

4.1.3 Decentralization.

In 1996 the Panchayaths in Kerala were given more power and funds as a result of a reform known as the People’s Planning Program or the Decentralization reform. It was launched by the LDF government and it was considered a bold experiment of power sharing (internet 1, 2011). The reform’s objectives aimed at securing grass root democracy by empowering the Panchayaths, fighting corruption and enhancing economic growth through encouraging local enterprise (Sakhi, 2002, p. 3). In the People’s Planning Program the government tried to pay special attention to women in the section called The Women Component Plan, here for instance gender was included as a criterion for beneficiaries in poverty alleviation programs. It was also stated that 10 per cent of the total welfare funds should be addressed to women (Isaac, Franke, 2001, p. 161). Worth mentioning is that in the latest Panchayath election (2010), and perhaps as a direct result of this special focus on women’s development, fifty per cent of the seats were reserved for women.

4.1.4 Matrilineal Tradition

Traditionally there has been a practice of matrilineal inheritance in some societies, particularly among the Nairs, in Kerala. This meant that children and property was counted on the mother’s line, through a so called joint family system known as a Taravad. The importance of the matrilineal tradition is repeatedly mentioned in literature. The Matrilineal tradition can be seen as a phenomenon in the historical and cultural context that helped raise the status of women, and especially mothers in Kerala. For example Krishnaraj (2010) writes that even though Matrilinial (inheritance through the female line) should not be confused with Matriarchy (female dominance over the male), but rather understood as a system working within the patriarchy (n.n. p.26), the Matrilineal inheritance system did have implications on the social placement of women living in these societies. Kodoth argues that in the Matrilineal society the status of women was high, based on the logic that without daughters born into the family there would be no more “family” (personal communication 3). Women (and especially mothers) in the matrilineal system did enjoy a relatively high status and a less controlled sexuality compared to women in other societies in and around Kerala during this time (n.n. p.
28). Krishnaraj points out that the idealization of mothers in India can be partly explained by the Matrilineal system of inheritance. Krishnaraj asks the question if this glorification of the mother also comes with a side twitch, if it is a glorification at the cost of real empowerment and if it in fact undermines development towards real equality (n.n).

The Matrilineal system in Kerala has now, more or less, been abandoned in favor of a system of inheritance through the male line (Kodoth, 2008, p. 268). Decades of legislative sanctions and colonial pressure resulted in the Kerala Joint Family Act of 1976 which took away the right of Taravads, or joint families, to own property together (n.n.).

4.1.5 Scheduled Tribes

The term Scheduled Tribes is not un-problematic. As Chacko (2005) writes the term “tribe” has never been defined with any scientific precision, and more over “there was no concept of tribe before colonialism took root” (n.n. p. 16). In fact some of the so called tribes of today were once nations before they were colonized (n.n.). Still Pathy (2005) identifies some empirical characteristics, for example homogeneity, isolation and non-assimilation, territorial integrity, unique identity, and absence of organized state structure and exploitation of classes and so on (Pathy, p. 36)

India has the largest number of tribes in the world. However, the size of tribe varies in population from ten people in one tribe and up to millions in another (n.n). The term Scheduled Tribe is used administratively by, for example, the state government. In 1975 a special department, the Department of Scheduled Tribe Development, was set up in Kerala to monitor tribal development activities. It runs education programs and special hostels; it cultivates rubber in tribal settlements and monitors health care among many other things (internet 2, 2011). In the section headed the Scheduled Tribe Department on the official webpage of Kerala the term “backward” appears on a number of occasions, for example when the department motivates the emphasis to be put on education: “It is clear that backwardness in education leads to financial backwardness” (internet 3, 2011). Scheduled tribes are the subjects of many programs in Kerala designed to help them integrate with the so called “mainstream”. However, that mainstream is, or should be, as difficult to define and generalize about as the many tribal people living in India, judging by Chackos argumentation (Chacko, 2005, p 17). Chacko also states that there are vested interests to keep the tribes (and lower castes) un-integrated “so that they can be exploited for carrying out tasks, which the higher castes consider unclean” (n.n. p. 21). Historically the tribes of India have been subjected to discrimination. The Criminal Tribes Act of 1871, for example, assumed that all members of
the so called criminal tribes were born criminals (n.n, p. 27). Scheduled tribe population in Kerala was about 360 thousand in 2010.

4.1.6 Other Backward Communities

Other Backward Community, OBC, is another term used by the central and state governments. OBCs are a list of underdeveloped groups in India. The governments consider from year to year what groups are to be included in the list. To be taken up on the OBC-list entitles the group to certain beneficiaries.

4.1.7 Indian Penalty Code 377 and the Recent Focus on “Lesbian Suicides”

The IPC 377 criminalizes any penetrative sex that does not lead to reproduction. However on the 2nd of July 2009 The Delhi High Court made an historical judgment in a case, declaring that any form of consenting sex between adults in private is not a crime. A phenomenon depicted recently in two Indian movies (one being a Malayalee production) and which led to public debate is lesbian suicides. The Sahayatrika organization based in Kerala was among the first to shine a light on the subject by conducting research on a case concerning two lesbian who had committed suicides. The Malayalee movie is partly based on that research. According to Sahayatrika the risk of young LBT people committing suicide is strongly connected to social class, and lesbian girls from marginalized communities are especially vulnerable, being isolated and subjected to hard pressure to get married (personal communication 7). Sangama is a sister organization of the Sahayatrika, working towards the same group of people, but Sangama is based in Bangalore, Karnataka.

5 Theory

In this chapter I wish to account for the theoretical framework in which I have found my study to be situated. My approach has been inductive which means that the theories presented here became relevant through the material itself. Gender is a central aspect in this thesis and along with Mohantys’ post-colonial feminist theory with emphasis on intersectional power structures it becomes bound to questions of caste, class and “race”-ethnicity. Empowerment is another theory which I use to understand the possibilities of a educational program focusing on gender.
5.1 Gender

Gender is a term which refers to the social and cultural form of sex. It has to do with expectations, symbols and language. We treat people different and expect difference in return when we place people into a specific sex category (man/woman). In my use of the term I am inspired by Fanny Ambjörnsson. In Ambjörnssons understanding of Gender there is a hierarchical order laid down in the gender structure (Ambjörnsson 2003, p. 15). She sees gender as a verb, as something that people do by acting and repeating and interpreting masculinity and femininity in a continuous process (n.n. p. 13). The gender process is, according to Ambjörnsson, deeply connected to the production of an heterosexual ideal where the relationship between body, gender and sexuality and desire appear given by nature (n.n. p. 15). Gender and heterosexuality becomes normative by seeming unproblematic and natural (n.n.). With Ambjörnssons understanding acting gender in the “right” way is crucial, and when you succeed you are benefited (you are seen as a real and desirable man/woman), when you do not succeed you will be discredited in different ways. The heterosexual matrix, based on two separate and different sexes, is being upheld and re-created in this repetitive gender acts.

5.2 Chandra Talpade Mohantys’ critique

Mohanty argues that there is no fruitful aim in trying to find the general woman’s position. Nor is there a general women’s experience that we can take for granted. The experiences vary with all the different aspects of social position; ethnicity, sexuality, class, age, caste, religion etc. (Mohanty 2003, p. 21) Mohanty’s theoretical discussion takes off in a criticism of the western feministic project, maintaining it is trying to transcend gender from the intersecting structural and historical fabrics of power, by, for instance, calling for a sisterhood without boundaries, without actually recognizing these boundaries (example in n.n. p. 51). She says that by analyzing women firstly as a transcendent and coherent group and only then placing and comparing them in different contexts or societies, the feministic analyses tended to be blind to the way these contexts were in fact forming women or creating “womenhood” (n.n. p. 55). She maintains that “womenhood” (my translation) is created precisely through the intersecting of those different systems of power. As an example Mohanty talks of the white American woman during the time of slavery and how her identity was created around such ideals as chastity and sexual morality as opposed to - and therefore also bound to - the
Mohanty writes about how research on Third World Women tended to serve the identity of the Western Woman. The Western Women comes out of that research as flexible, modern and active, as opposed to the victimized Third World Women who is bound by traditions (n.n). This kind of analysis rests on stereotyped (and even racist) views of Third World Women, according to Mohanty (n.n. p. 40), and does not recognize the agency (nor history of resistance) of Third World Women. Nor does it take into account the specific ways through which power manifests itself in the history of the world, how women in different times and places are suppressed in different ways. Here Mohanty is talking about imperialism, capitalism, colonialism and globalism (Mohanty 2003, p.258, 260,276).

Mohanty does not stop at the doorstep of cultural relativism or post modernistic deconstructions. She is not saying that there are different rights and wrongs or that there cannot be a meeting and solidarity between feminists from different parts of the world. She is actually calling for that solidarity, by demanding an even deeper understanding and more complex tools for analyzing power and identities. Feminists are situated on the socio-economic map; they are at different distances from the power centers of the world. Mohanty argues that even though the feminist woman from the West is not a racist or a global exploiter she enjoys race and class-dependent privileges that derive from her position.

Another important point to be drawn from the “map” metaphor is that all things there are not viewable from all given positions. Mohanty is talking about how the position of for instance a middle class white woman in America could limit her view of the black working class areas on the map. Or that the position of colored women in The Third World could be the most favorable position for demystifying the power fabric of global capitalism (n.n. p.112, 275). In the 2000s Mohanty’s agenda changed somewhat, as we shall see below.

Also the Third World Women do not form a coherent group. Women’s positions here are as varied and different from each other as those in the West. Mohanty writes however, about “common differences” being a possible theoretical platform on which to include and organize women from different Third World (and possibly other) positions (n.n. p. 251). In the 2000s Mohanty argued the case for an intersectional method of analysis including gender specific ideologies regarding work and the worker and with special emphasis put on global capitalism and its ways of re-colonializing and exploiting women especially those in the Third World as cheap laborers (n.n. p. 179).
5.3 Empowerment

Empowerment is a term often associated with social activism and grass root movements. Empowerment is based on the word power which brings into mind connotations like strength, force and control. Empowering a marginalized group (or individual) can be understood as making that group (or person) able to take power into its own hands and do something about the (marginalized) situation (Askheim p. 18). Askheim argues that the term empowerment is used in (at least) three different and opposing theoretical frameworks or discourses. In the first discourse, empowerment has to do with the establishment of counter-power. Here the individual is understood in relation to structural aspects of society (n.n., p. 20). In the second discourse empowerment is used as a market effective tool for self-help and in the third, which Askheim calls the therapeutical discourse (physical health care is an example), the focus is on personal problems where empowerment becomes a way for individuals to overcome their problems, for example by eating and drinking more healthily (n.n. s. 19, 22, 26). Here the individual should change and not society. There is also a criticism against the term empowerment itself where it is seen as a tool to control or foster people to live lives as laid down by the liberal canon (n.n. p. 29).

I will use empowerment as it is defined in the first discourse; as a way to establish counter-power. When Askheim talks about empowerment as such he is referring to Paolo Freire. Paolo Freire wrote about a certain group of poor farmers in Brazil. He saw that the people being economically and politically oppressed became apathetic. They were “buried” in their situation and unable to see it critically and thus react to it. Freire also saw how they were oppressing themselves; they had internalized and thus hosted the consciousness of the oppressors, making it seem right to live their lives as they were so doing (Askheim, p. 21). For Freire, enhancing awareness and forming a consciousness based on the situation of the oppressed became crucial. His pedagogics for the oppressed involved educating people to be able to identify social, political and economic interests and to oppose those interests that created oppression. Only then could they react and do something about their situation (n.n.). The collective plays an important part in this creation of consciousness and thus in the possibilities of reacting. Firstly, consciousness is raised through the sharing of experiences, and in the next stage those shared experiences becomes the platform for collective action (n.n. p. 21). The lived experience of oppression that different groups share can form a common identity from which it is possible to challenge the oppressing structures; in other words to establish counter-power. This whole process, the sharing of experiences and challenging power through organization, constitutes the term empowerment.
Mohanty’s and Askheim’s (Freire) thoughts are overlapping, but whereas Mohanty calls for caution within the feministic movement it seems that Askheim (Freire) even here advocates action against the oppressing system (in this case the patriarchy). Both seem to be convinced that forming a collective identity is the base upon which to build counter-power. The question now seems to be how local (and intersectionalized) should that identity be without itself becoming an oppressing (or blinding) force against those who do not fit in to that identity. I will use Mohanty’s theory as a method of problematizing the Adolescent Project, and Askheims understanding of the term empowerment as a way to establish counter-power as a possible motivator for the Project.

6 Results

In this chapter the empirical results of the study will be presented. In chapter 6.1 I shall describe how The Adolescent Project is presented in the written documents that I was supplied with by The Sakhi Staff. In chapter 6.1.5 I present additional information obtained from informal interviews with the program leaders and personnel from Sakhi. Accordingly, this chapter will address my first research question, namely that of describing how The Project is planned for in written documents and interviews with The Sakhi Resource Center personnel. Under the subtitles 6.2 to 6.4.6 I shall present results concerning The Facilitators’ understanding of their gender related work and role in The Project. These chapters correspond to my second and third research question. Also here I present additional information given to me by The Sakhi Project Leaders.

6.1 The Project Documents

I have studied three program documents: “The Proposal”, “The Grant Report” and the Process Report”.

6.1.1 How the Project is Motivated in Documents

The Proposal Document motivates the program by formulating problem areas that adolescents, girls in particular, are facing in Kerala today. This document states that problem areas are: Lack of proper sexual education (The Proposal Document explains that sex education has been excluded from the school syllabus in Kerala). Other problems are increasing sexual violence, unemployment, alcoholism (among men) and high rates of suicide compared to other Indian states. According to the same document suicide is the second most
common cause of death for adolescents in Kerala and the rate is increasing for girls below fourteen years of age (Proposal Document p. 2).

Use and misuse of mobile phones and internet (ICT) is also taken up as problematic in The Proposal Document, where it is stated that ICT, urbanization and globalization are factors leading to changes in family structure; from multi generational ones, to nuclear or single parent families, where the “traditional values” tend to “erode” (Proposal Document p. 2).

High and low marriage age for girls is also mentioned as problematic but for different reasons. It is stated as a problem when in “certain” communities girls get married between the ages of 13-16 (Proposal Document p. 2). However, the same document also maintains that the average age for girls getting married in Kerala is 22 (compared to 19 in the rest of India). This is also seen as problematic considering at the same time the age for menarche is decreasing creating a “longer period of unprotected sexual activity” which, it is argued, leads to increased risk for unwanted pregnancies, abortion, HIV and other sexual transmittable diseases (n.n. p. 2).

Other problem areas are abuse and sexual abuse. The Proposal Document states that girls in Kerala are abused more often than boys (Proposal Document p. 3). In The Grant Report it is stated that The Project is aimed at the children in “the most marginalized communities” since they otherwise wouldn’t get a chance to be “exposed to newer ideas”. (Grant Report s. 1) In The Process Report those marginalized communities are defined as “remote” villages, including Tribal settlements, coastal villages and villages near the Western Ghaths (Process Report, p. 3). The same document states that families living in these areas are “socially, educationally and economically backward” and that most of them belong to “backward communities including Dalit (Scheduled Caste) and Tribal (Scheduled Tribes)” (n.n.). The term “backward” seems to be connected to education since “higher education facilities are rare” in these areas. Other things “exist” in these areas such as “ignorance, alcoholic consumption among men, broken families, atrocities against women, child sex abuse and early marriage” according to the document (n.n.).

6.1.2 Suggested Interventions

The Proposal Document refers to appropriate interventions addressed to adolescents and government functionaries (Facilitators). It is, according to the document, crucial for adolescents to be informed about safe sex, and their right to privacy and respect. It’s argued that young people should be equipped with the tools they need to be able to make a “clear” analysis of society especially with regards to politics, power, social participation, gender and
gender equity. These tools will enable them “to make informed decisions and negotiate with their partners and families on issues regarding them and their sexual and reproductive health” (Proposal Document p.3), and are seen as a right for young people (n.n.).

Capacity building for the local level government functionaries (ASHA and Angenwadi for example) is another suggested intervention. Sakhi hopes to train a cadre of trainers/leaders who will be able to work with young people (Proposal Document, p. 8).

The Proposal Document also informs us that prior to The Adolescent Project, Sakhi had already worked in four of the first suggested Panchayaths, building up a so called resource team of “gender sensitive” women leaders (Proposal Document, p. 6). These are intended to collaborate with the local self governments and lead/promote the Project.

6.1.3 Project Plan/Practice (Organizational)

According to The Proposal Document Sakhi will work with Panchayath functionaries, local NGOs and peer educators to carry out the adolescent education program. Sakhi wants to start in 10 Panchayaths (some of which they have already been working in forming resource groups) and then after one year move on to ten new Panchayaths and then another ten during the third and last year of The Project. If you compare the figures in The Proposal Document and The Process Report you find that Sakhi had planned to reach out to 850 girls during their first year (Proposal Document p.6), however, 1006 girls attended the program according to The Process Report (Process Report p. 5). If these figures are sustainable it means that the project will have reached around 3000 girls after three years. In The Proposal Document the number of Facilitators that Sakhi planned to reach is not stated, but in the Process Report it is clear that 106 Facilitators had attended The Program (Process Report, p. 5). In The Proposal Document Sakhi also writes that they aim to reprint and distribute the three books on body awareness (Me and my body for boys and girls) and Child Sexual Abuse. This goal is not mentioned or followed up in The Process Report.

6.1.4 Long Term Organizational Goal

By 2012, after working three years with The Adolescent Project in a total of 30 Panchayaths, Sakhi hopes to have educated youth, enhancing their understanding of their rights and responsibilities (Proposal Document p. 8).

An important long term goal for Sakhi is a wish to create a model of education that will be adopted, continued and financed by the local Panchayath governments (Proposal Document, p. 4). The local self government functionaries (The Facilitators) are already appointed by the
government to interface with the community through health and educational programs (Proposal document, p. 4). Therefore it is argued that they could also learn and adopt The Adolescent Program as part of that task (n. n.). This would mean that the local self governments could integrate The Adolescent Project into their budget plan (n.n.)

6.1.5 The Educational Program/ Project Practice

**Facilitators** are invited to join a first introduction meeting where Sakhi explains their aims. After that meeting Facilitators volunteer and are selected. A Two Day Camp is set up for the trainee Facilitators, where they join classes on gender, sexual reproductive health, masculinity, violence and counseling techniques (personal communication 2). They then recruit girls from their area and a parents’ meeting is held (n.n.). The Facilitators and Sakhi conduct another Two Day Camp for all the girls in the centers of the Panchayath (there are 3-4 centers in each Panchayath). After this a local Facilitators’ meeting is held, where Facilitators and Sakhi discuss together the topics and methodologies for the coming classes. Here an Action Plan for three months onwards is drawn up. The Facilitators and Sakhi then conduct regular monthly meetings with the children and every three months the Facilitators meet to form a new Action Plan (personal communication 2).

In The Proposal Document “indicators of success” for Facilitators are focused around their abilities to teach including such things as: Increased communication and organizational skills through greater ability to mobilize youth, increased effectiveness of learning and teaching by conducting sessions and using audio-visual techniques, improved leadership skills such as taking responsibility for group dynamics; handling conflicts and creating a positive atmosphere (Proposal Document, p. 10). Improved relationships between the Facilitators and the community, the parents, the local self governments are also mentioned as indicators for success (n.n). However, there is no spelled out importance given to what the Facilitators as students in the program should learn, for instance the ability to analyze society with regards to gender, caste, class and so on.

The **Adolescents** will according to the program meet for the first time during a Two Day Camp. Then they follow the regular monthly sessions, ten sessions per year. Sakhi hope that the adolescents in The Program become socially aware and “gender sensitive leaders” (Proposal Document p. 8), Indicators of success are awareness of self, body, sexuality, love and marriage, where marriage is described as a supposed partnership and not a hierarchical relationship (Proposal Document p. 9). Awareness of society is mentioned as the ability to
analyze the society regarding multiple hierarchies of class, gender, caste, ethnicity, religion etcetera (n.n.). Ability to critically analyze the Mass media and ICT (internet), increased leadership skills (decision making, communication skills, conflict resolution) and ability to intervene in cases of Child Sexual abuse are other indicators of success.

6.1.6 Summary of the Documents

The Adolescent Project is motivated by problem areas for adolescent girls in general (for example lack of sexual education in the school syllabus) and specifically for girls in marginalized communities, where they are at risk of not being reached by newer ideas. Education here seems to be the key for unlocking the development process from “backward” societies - where girls are often abused and unaware of their rights of equity and respect - to something better. Education, it is also argued will help to protect the girls from exposing themselves to sexual transmittable diseases and unwanted pregnancies during the longer and longer time of unprotected sexual activity between first menstruation and marriage. Notable here is that “safe sex” seems to be possible only within marriage, whereas the problem of “unsafe sex” seems only to occur outside marriage. It is also notable how the eroded traditional family structure is described as a problem area for young girls without defining in what way it is problematic. Surprisingly, the dowry system is not mentioned in the documents as a problem area.

Educational interventions are suggested for both teenagers and Facilitators. Sakhi has also built up resource teams in four of the local Panchayaths. I understand these groups to be models for The Facilitators. The way Sakhi guided the resource team towards gender sensitivity is the way they hope to capacitate and develop The Facilitators, so that they in turn will be able to lead the program in a “gender sensitive” way. However, this goal for Facilitators is not articulated, as we have seen above.

The documents show that The Adolescent Project is reaching out to more girls then planned for in the initial stage of the project.

Sakhi’s organizational goal is, after three years, to let the local self governments adopt, continue and finance The Adolescent Project in the future, using the already appointed government functionaries (the Facilitators).

There are different indicators of success for adolescents and Facilitators stated in the documents. Adolescent success is measured by what adolescents have learnt during the process of The Project. Emphasis is put on gender and the ability to analyze social relations with regards to power structures. Facilitator success on the other hand is measured by other
standards. Responsibility and ability to lead and teach adolescents are indicators of success here. It is notable that Sakhi chooses to see the Facilitators as merely teachers and not students in The Project, thus failing to formulate goals that could help to ensure “gender sensitive” continuance of The Adolescent Program.

6.2 The Facilitators in the Project

In this chapter I will present results deriving from interviews with Facilitators (and sometimes Sakhi staff) in The Adolescent Project. I have interviewed nine Facilitators. They have been working in The Project for one year in different Project centers across the district of Thiruvanthapuram. These Facilitators have been recruiting and assisting Sakhi in educating the girls. At the same time they have also them themselves been educated by the program. In the camps for new Facilitators that I visited it was clear that many of them present had never heard the word “gender” prior to that occasion (personal communication 4). The interviewed Facilitators are Christians, and Hindus from different castes, one Facilitator is Tribal. They are between 35 to 55 years old and all are married women and mothers. Five of them are mothers to teenagers within the program.

The Facilitators that I interviewed worked as Anganwadi-teachers or ASHA- workers. The Anganwadi is an integrated child care facility initiated by the central government through the so called ICDS, (Integrated Child Development Scheme). One of The Facilitators here talks about the duties of the Angenwadi-worker: 

T: We have a lot of jobs. (…) between 3-6 year old children, we have to educate them, pre primary education like that, not official education. Like unofficial, like reading stories and that (Interview 3). She continues:

T: The whole population, details we should know. If there was a new Anganwadi we would have to go to every house visit and collect the information about the whole population, and there is an age category also, like how many in the age group five to ten. (…) So we do a detailed survey actually, looking for whether there is somebody partially disabled or handicapped or anything. Kind of illness or a delivery death or anything like that like, that we would collect these details (n.n.).

She explains that this survey is then used in the Panchayaths’ social welfare planning and budget calculation. She continues:

T: And then we also check the weight of the children whether it is enough and provide nutrition and then we collect the details of lactating and pregnant mothers and there is the house visits regularly and conduct mothers meeting and a teenage meeting and once in a month there would be a welfare committee (…)(n.n.).

When I ask how many of her co-workers are men, she answers quite surprised, as if it’s self understood, that all Anganwadi-workers are women. When I ask why she thinks that this is
the case she answers that the wages are low. The interviewee informs me that the amount of pay she gets after more than 20 years in duty is 2000 Rupies and that is not a self sufficient salary in Kerala (n.n.).

Another interviewee speaks about the duties of the ASHA-worker:

T: Have to give health education for people like regarding hygiene and, like if there are mosquitoes you have to find the source for the mosquitoes and destroy, these kind of things we have to tell the people to do like that, and like chlorination of the water, and have to put in the well and things like that, and also…. Informing the people and maybe giving the chlorine to the people and tell them how to do it, and also maybe if there is a pregnant women or something, find out the person and get a report on her, like the situation and like birth, death all this, make a report (Interview 7).

When I ask her what the differences are between an ASHA-worker and an Angenwadi-worker the answer is simple. The ASHA-work is voluntary: T: No income for ASHA-workers (n.n).

In the following chapter I will present The Facilitator’s views, focused around three main themes: Motivation and Experience, Roles and Attitudes at Play and Empowerment.

6.2.1 Motivation and Experience

Despite no or at best very low income and an already heavy workload, eight out of nine interviewed Facilitators had chosen to participate in The Sakhi Adolescent Project. Expressed motives for having joined The Project vary from more ideological reasons to individual ones like wanting to learn and/or teach. One of The Facilitators, an Angenwadi-teacher, says that in her area they had been asked to conduct classes for teenage girls before, but when they did so the girls didn’t show up. She continues by saying that when Sakhi came with a whole crew of different lecturers, plans for fieldtrips, and many games in stall, the girls became interested and inspired and entered The Project (Interview 6). In other words: The form of the Sakhi Project attracted both Facilitators and teenagers to participate.

Another Facilitator, working as an ASHA-worker talks about what motivated her to join the Adolescent Project with Sakhi:

T: Like it was so interesting because I could teach children like earlier itself I was interested in teaching and when my father didn’t want, and brothers and all didn’t want me to take a casual job, (…) And here, when I got the opportunity to teach the children it was so interesting for me not only to teach, singing and dancing and playing with them. And also I could teach them so much and do so much with them but also, I could learn also. (Interview 7)
Here the form (singing, dancing and playing) was an important motivator. Another was her will to teach but also her own curiosity to learn. In fact many Facilitators mention curiosity as a reason why they chose to participate in the program. But there is another kind of motive too. The following was said by a Facilitator (Angenwadi) who was engaged in many organizations both inside and outside of the Church she belonged to: T: *The society, there are so many discriminations and injustices and all, so working against that and bringing up the next generations to go against all this bad qualities and things like that, they were talking in the class, so I thought it was my job to do that, I have a responsibility to society* (Interview 4).

This motive I understand as social engagement.

One Facilitator did not express a personal motive to become a Facilitator in The Adolescent Project. That Facilitator was a Tribal woman working as an Angenwadi-teacher. This is how she experienced entering the program:

T: *Ok, like I was part of the settlement area, I had to be in the program, like the other came and told me that, she was the one talking to the people, and she informed and that’s how I came in to the Sakhi program (…) Because I’m in the category of that settlement area and one Angewadi from that area had to be part of the program, I had to come. We are the ones who could call the children from that area.* (Interview 9)

This Facilitator is very sceptical about the Project. The Project centers for the Tribal settlements were not set up in the actual settlements, but in the location of their schools. The children go to school in a village a one and a half hours walk away through the forest (and an even longer uphill walk on the way back home). This she argued, were making the parents in the settlement suspicious and worried. The Facilitator is saying that just because they, who live in the settlements, are used to walking these distances it does not mean that they want to (Interview 9).

### 6.2.2 When the Facilitators were Young(er)

Motivations can also be found on a less outspoken level. The Facilitators talk about the experiences they had during their own adolescence. There are a broad variety of memories, but also many similarities. Many of them remember happiness and friends, but there are almost always problems emerging at puberty and onwards. Many have experienced a more restricted life after puberty and first menstruation, for instance this Facilitator:

T: *Like before puberty I was so free and my family is really orthodox kind of family, like they have a temple in the yard itself, their own temple, so they are much more strict then in any other place. Like in the first six days (of menstruation) or something I could not even go out of the house, I cannot go in front of the house because the temple is there, if I want to go to school or something, I have to always go*
towards the backdoor, cause in the front door I cannot go. They have separate plates, separate places for sleeping, and everything is different… (Interview 8).

Another Facilitator has a similar experience of things changing after puberty: *T: (...)So before I used to play with them but after my puberty with them and after I stopped. My mother said not to go and play with them, so after I stopped and just stayed in the house.* (Interview 7)

One interviewee from a Scheduled Caste explains that in her area and caste the first menstruation is a public business and celebrated as a “small marriage” where the girl could get gold and clothes as presents. I choose here to quote a long section of her story in order to let herself paint the picture for the reader, since I have not experienced nor observed this kind of celebration myself:

*T: Yes, and sort of big celebration actually. (...) it’s like a small marriage, for some caste people. (...) T: Like here in this area everyone celebrates it, if they don’t do that, if a proposal comes, people say that it is not appropriate, so it’s a problem. Then everyone celebrates it in this area. (...) T: (...) the aunty will be invited. And the aunty will come and the women will be where this girl is sitting. No men allowed where this girl is sitting. And so they will be feeding the child with flower and this jagory, that mixture. And from the next day onwards, all the religious and the relatives will arrive, all of them will be feeding the girl the same thing and before feeding they will light the lamp and then feeding the child, and these first few days, these seven days, it is considered impure, that area. So all this, seven days later the temple, the people from the temple will come and bless the area and all the people, like cleaning them with the water from the temple, and then they have all this, after all this bath and everything, then they have food and everyone gives gifts and everything. (...) Normally after the first day you walk outside you are bit shy, because everyone know. But most of all you are happy because.. I: Yes, because all of the presents, all ear rings and gold and… (laugh) (Interview 7)

This kind of public celebration does not ensure that the girls themselves learn about menstruation. Both this Facilitator and another from the same area gave examples of many kinds of superstitious beliefs and fears with regards to menstruation, for instance girls being told to sleep with nails in their hands or that their menstruation could attract snakes or even ghosts. They also gave examples of girls not understanding why they are being celebrated at all (Interview 7, 8).

Some Facilitators have experienced poverty and very heavy work; many of them have had many sisters and brothers and especially sisters are mentioned as a problem for the family and as such also for the interviewees. The experience of having an alcoholic father is mentioned by two Facilitators. A very strict father who doesn’t let them out of the house was also experienced by more than one Facilitator. The mothers of the Facilitators are mostly mentioned as friendly but powerless in relation to the fathers in the Facilitators’ adolescent memories. However, one Facilitator mentions her mother as the one being strict:
T: Don’t talk to boys.
-Malayalam-
T: Many times there were a lot of trust issues.
-Malayalam-
T: There were a lot of restrictions, that’s all.
-Malayalam-
T: Go to school, go to temple, that’s all. Nothing more in the life.

She talks of the same mother-daughter relationship today: T: Even now (…) 
-Malayalam-

T: Like when the mother is sitting there I feel difficulty to talk. (Interview 8)

Another Facilitator talks about her experience of lack of freedom, but also of how boys would get more food than girls: T: In our time, we never used to go out freely and at home also we wasn’t even… shouldn’t even go to the front room…. We couldn’t go out and also always the boys would get more preference, even in food and everything. (Interview 1)

The following Facilitator talks about shyness as her main adolescent problem, she also reasons about how that shyness was inflicted on her:

T: I wouldn’t get out of the house and talk to people. Like I was so shy, like that. And also my mother would advise me not to… talk to people and it’s not right because other people would tell something about us. I couldn’t even talk to my class mates who were boys… So then people would think something else. So then… We didn’t… so everyone told us not to talk, so we never talked to the boys in the class. And also if somebody would come to the house, if it was a man, we wouldn’t talk. And also like that kind of feeling has not gone from the mind still. So we are still a bit shy in everything… (Interview 2)

There is an interesting, and perhaps natural, correlation between what some of the Facilitators mention as problematic in their adolescents and what they identify as problem areas for the adolescents of today. For instance The Facilitator above when she mentions shyness talks later about positive results for the teenagers in the program, she says that: T: Mainly it is that they are not shy to speak, like in a public, or in a like meeting or something… (Interview 2)

Another Facilitator is talking about the lack of advice she experienced in her growing up period: T: I am from a poor family so there was nobody there to advise me. If there was any doubt or questions there was nobody there that could help us with the answers or anything so we had to keep it in mind. When she reasons about the main problems for adolescents of today she says that: T: There are several problems, one is the doubts and all, they cannot solve the doubts, like they don’t know who is the right person to ask the questions and get a solution and this makes them have a lot of stress inside them (…) (Interview 3) To give advice to the adolescents is now one of the things that motivate her in the program.
6.2.3 Summary on Motivation

Three motivations for being in The Adolescent Project are articulated by The Facilitators. One is wanting to learn, another wanting to teach and the third is social engagement. One Facilitator did not give voice to a personal motivation. Instead she felt that she was forced or persuaded into The Project. She explained that centers for the children in the Tribal settlements were set up at a too far location, making the effort to participate in The Project too large for her as well as for the children.

Motives behind wanting to work with adolescent girls can also stem from The Facilitators own experiences of being unequally restricted by their parents and by society when they were younger. Puberty is a period where many experienced increased restrictions over their life and mobility. There were in the past and still are today many unspoken areas in the education regarding physical changes of the women’s body during puberty, according to some Facilitators. Some Facilitators also give voice to an interesting correlation (or projection), between what they experienced themselves and what they think the girls of today experience.

6.3 Attitudes and Roles at Play

6.3.1 Gendered Areas

With “gendered areas” I mean the different ways that gender is depicted in the material. Gender is present here on different levels; as experiences, as norms and reasons given for things being as they are. Gender is also an analytical concept and tool to question the status quo. The Facilitators experiences of motherhood, marriages, adolescence, puberty and work are gendered experiences. But in this chapter I would like to focus on the way that the Facilitators themselves reflect on gender in a more explicit way. As we shall see below there are normative thoughts on gender present in the material, but also what I choose to call, progressive thoughts or different ways of questioning the normative gender expectations and relations. There are also interesting mixtures of normative and progressive thoughts.

All but one of the Facilitators were asked if the struggle for gender equality was important for them and three of them answered “yes”, “yes, sure” and “yes, for sure” (Interview 4, 7, 8). One of the Facilitators answered that she did not think it was important, because: T: Girls are different to boys. She continues: T: Don’t over do it. Like girls should not walk like boys (Interview 1).

Another Facilitator who answered that she did not think that the struggle for gender equality was necessary anymore also used the expression “walk like” men: T: Early it was too bad,
now it is much better. (...) like now there is a lot of freedom but the girls are not able to walk like the man. (...) T: They cannot go everywhere like the boys. (...) T: They might be harassed (Interview 2).

To “walk like men” seems to be the limit of the gender struggles for these two Facilitators, “walking like men” is an boundary where ambitions of equality have to halt due to the risk of harassment.

Another Facilitator was on the same line of thought, talking explicitly about the gender teachings in The Project:

T: The only thing that I am a bit negative to is the gender, because I don’t even accept it, we are social beings so in this kind of village society I don’t accept the gender teaching very much. So I don’t accept it even though I am teaching it, but that made some problem in many places but when I don’t, cannot accept it, how can I teach it, that’s a problem. Here is a bit problem.

This was clearly a sensitive subject. A few moments later she asked the Interpreter to switch off the recorder. Then she explained that the separation of the sexes was the only possible method to protect girls (Interview 5). To treat boys and girls differently is, in other words, necessary for the sake of the girls’ protection.

The Tribal Facilitator among the interviewees said the following:

T: I’m interested in the equality and all, but more children not from my area, but the children in the other areas they are not… are feeling a bit shy about this. Equality, they are not accepting equal, like this.

For her inequality is something existing in the other areas. A statement which becomes even more interesting when you hear her talk about her own adolescence:

T: At that time we had a lot of freedom, never had to face a harassment or anything. After my tenths standards and pre degree I used to go for the literacy programs and go and talk to people and there was so much contacts also but never I had any experience about harassment or anything, like I had a lot of freedom but never heard about that kind of thing like that. (...) I would just go anywhere by myself. (Interview 9)

According to her experiences there is no obvious link between freedom from control and an increased risk of sexual harassment.

Gendered areas in life, or stories of how gender gives access to different areas or possible experiences, show up in various places in the material, and not only when The Facilitators
were asked specifically about gender. For instance this Facilitator talks about her daughter’s experience from school when she had just entered puberty:

T: She went to the school and come back and told me that I didn’t want to have it and I asked why and she said there is no freedom onwards, I can’t look this and I can’t look this, I can’t do this, and I asked why, I didn’t tell you not to do these things, and she said it’s not you but the other girls, like the older girls are telling me that I can’t do this or I can’t walk like this, so it’s still like this. (Interview 7)

The same Facilitator makes an interesting sliding movement from using gender as a tool, to questioning how men are hindering women’s freedom, to then explain that the way women dress causes men to behave badly. This kind of thinking – that girls’ dressing causes sexual harassment- was held to be a common notion among the Facilitators when they first entered The Project. This issue is also directly addressed and discussed in the gender class conducted for the Facilitators (personal communication 4). The following Facilitator starts off by saying that the main problem is men:

T: Freedom is the problem. And what stops them from the freedom. Like men are the problem. Like earlier it was the adolescent boys creating the problems for the adolescent girls, but now it is not like that. Now girls have to be careful about all the men, and at the same time, not everyone, but most of the people are creating problems for the girls (Interview 7).

When asked what kind of problems these are she talks about various forms of harassment and then ends up arguing that the way girls dress is causing the harassment. This I interpret as a normative and gendered view on men and their sexuality: T: *The dressing of the girls also are like (...), making the men do things like that (...) Now it’s like, it’s a girl, or a woman, it’s something that I can use. Or enjoy or something. (...) (Interview 7)*

Normative masculinity and how that masculinity can be inflected in a boys’ life is also taken up as a side story in the same interview. The Facilitator is talking about her son:

T: My son, even if he is a good student he is very shy to talk to girls, (...) even in earlier classes he never used to talk to girls and all and even the teacher is a bit upset that he is too silent, because he is not talking to anyone (...). The next day I went to the school with him to ask the teacher what happened and he said it’s nothing, nothing is wrong with his studying, he has signs and all, but I wanted to give him two beatings for being too shy and silent. (Interview 7)

So in this situation and for this boy, not talking to people from the opposite sex was considered a big problem and he was physically punished by his teacher. This should be compared to how The Facilitators were instructed not to talk to boys at all when they were younger.
Alcohol is another gendered area in the material, where boys drink alcohol and the girls are restricted by their doing it:

T: Evening times the boys all join together and have alcohol and stand around and say things and all, that time it is not safe to go.

-Malayalam-
T: It’s not that you (a girl) can’t go, if you need you can go, it’s just unnecessary that you go and create a problem. It’s very difficult to solve it, so you have to be secure, so in this situation it is better not to go. (Interview 8)

Another gendered area is the concept of virginity. In one conversation we started off by talking about the consequences of rape and ended up talking about virginity. It seems that rape (or the loss of “virginity”) becoming public is the most problematic consequence: T: *Virginity is very important. For virginity you can also cheat people, but directly saying is not possible to get married.* Later on it is explained to me that there can a remedy for that: Money. T: *Well if you are from a rich family and you have lachs and lachs to pay dowry, nobody will ask you what is your background* (Interview 8).

So because rape is an event that inevitably will end up in the public consciousness, the raped girl will not be able to marry without lachs and lachs of money. This shows how gendered areas differ with social class.

Normative gender is also being expressed by the way some Facilitators in the material give advice to the adolescent girls. For instance here, but there are many examples in the material along the same line of thought:

T: *Like can have good friends, from both sex, but be aware not go to the next step. And like parents can be scolding and getting angry but understand and behave according to that. And I never tell my daughter that, but have to be good, don’t go to the next step, don’t do the wrong things.*
I: *That means don’t go into a sexual relationship or love-affair?*
T: *Yes.*

(Interview 8)

Another aspect of normative gender is the reflections on what kind of work is performed and by whom:

T: *The boys don’t have to work hard, the girls have to sweep the garden and everything, the boys don’t have to do that, and the husband he has to wake up in the morning and sit there and the wife have to bake the new bread and give him and he will sit there and read, so have to tell them that both girls and boys can sweep the garden and work home.* (Interview 7)
Here it is the expectations laid on women and girls by society that are normative, and the way the Facilitator is critical about this can be understood as a way of using gender as a tool to analyze the situation.

One Facilitator uses gender to analyze many struggles of life in different areas. When asked if the struggle for gender equality is important, she answered:

T: The women are being neglected a lot, a great example is the Anganwadi teachers, after 26 years their wages and salaries is very low still, the government is not respecting that, nobody, the public also is not bothering and nobody is accepting the duty which we are doing so much, like ten peoples’ work we are doing a day and that is not considered by the government or public or anywhere. (…). If there was men also working in here the salaries should have gone up, but now there is only women and they are not going up. And another thing is that in the Panchayath level there is 50 per cent reservation for women but if you go to the top level in parliament it’s not come yet, so even in the Panchayath, if they get the election also, the political party people also “Oh, she is just a women”, that’s what they think. Whatever indications, or qualifications that is not considered, and also the women after six o’clock evening, a women cannot go out. But if it’s a man goes out nobody bothers, but if a women goes out somebody says something or harass her, so the trial still goes on. That’s what I think. (Interview 3)

6.3.2 Summary on Gendered Areas

In this chapter I have presented results showing how and when The Facilitators use gender as a way to analyze their situation. Some of The Facilitators were using gender as a tool. But others were very critical about that tool. One Facilitator raised the question of how it was possible for her to teach on the subject of gender when at the same time she didn’t believe in it. How The Facilitators reasoned about gender equality as a possible goal to struggle for also differed. At least three gave voice to the idea there should be some limits in equality, most of them justified those limits with the argument of protection.

I have also shown how The Facilitators depict gender specific areas of life, in the more general normative context in Kerala. Here for instance it was shown that even when one mother was not restricting a girl’s mobility after her first menstruation, society, in the form of her friends, was. It was also revealed how a boy would get punished for not speaking to girls in school.

Alcohol, virginity and sexual harassment are also examples of gendered areas in this material.

6.3.2 The Married Woman
All of The Facilitators were married. Only one of them had been married in a so called Love-marriage, which means that she herself chose her husband, or that they, husband and wife, chose each other on the grounds of love. The others had had different experiences with arranged marriages. In the interviews with The Facilitators the discussion about arranged marriages versus so called Love-marriages was always present, explicitly or implicitly.

One of the interviewed Facilitators had the experience of being forced to marry a person because she was in love with somebody else. She was still, 20 years later, very sad about this. Another Facilitator had to marry a distant relative because that was the cheaper alternative in the dowry system. She said:

T: Like even if it was my auntie’s family I actually didn’t know them very well, just after I completed my tenth standard I was, I met her on the road or something…
I: Him?
T: No, the auntie, and when she realized that this, that this was her (sisters) daughter, she started visiting in the house regularly, and then later she asked my parents if she could have this girl to her family, and then they fixed the marriage and everything. I first met my husband like ten days back or something. After the marriage was fixed and all this, the hall for the marriage was prepared just outside the house at that time, so every preparation was there and then only he came to the house and met me. And the marriage was fixed and everything was said. There was no opinion from my side asked. It should be like they decided and I have to listen to them, nothing else. And it was just only before my course was completed. And then after the marriage my husband was really a rough kind of person, he never showed any love, even if he is a loving person and very nice, like that, and it was a joint family, in one compound it was so many relatives living around. And they had so many opinions about me and education and my husband would let me go study and complete my course, and the whole family was kind of angry of that and had so many opinions about that, like should a girl go and study after marriage. She will fail. And things like that. Like, they thought that I would fail. Like they were saying like that. But I studied really good and I passed my exam with a good mark and everything. Still my husband is really rough, like now. And they didn’t have to pay any dowry for the marriage, and that was a good thing for my family because they didn’t have any money to do that also. (Interview 3)

But with this experience behind her she now thinks that her marriage has led her to security:

T: Like in the social way I have reached a secure life. In front of other people I feel like I have a secure place. The same Facilitator compares her own story with the story of her sister who is divorced from a Love-marriage. Talking about that she says: T: (...)she fell in love with somebody, and got married with him, and now she is separated because he had no good behavior and now she is working in a cashew factory and living with the parents. She has two children.

This experience leads her to speculate about the problems of Love-marriages, calling them a trap for girls, insecure and unstable.

Another Facilitator had the experience of first thinking that she did not have to get married because she was sick, but then she was married anyhow with the second best proposal according to her taste (the color of his skin):
T: And people started coming slowly with the marriage proposals and all, and I thought that I shouldn’t get married because I have, I am sick, but the family said no, you have to get married even if you’re sick, it is not an excuse for that not getting married (…). And I used to look at the outside expression of the people, like coming very well dressed, and putting a comb in the pocket and stylish, I didn’t think about how they behaved and all. (…) I was 20 years so many people were coming to see me. And I was at home, at the church I was very good in discussions and I used to defeat everyone in discussions no matter if I was right or wrong (…). One marriage proposal came, a person from military, working in the military. He was from Tamil Nadu, and dark complexion, so I didn’t want him, to get married.

I: Dark complexion?
T: Yes. Dark color. (…) But my whole family was happy with him because he was, there was only one man in his family, he had only one brother, younger brother, in her husband’s family only one more brother is there, so there are not so much expenses (…), if there is women, sisters, that is a problem for some, not for everyone, but some people have to find a lot of money. And also his mother was very healthy also, so don’t have to take care of her, and because I was sick so the mother can take care of me, (…) And the same day another man came and he has a work in a education office, and I was so happy with him because he had good color, lighter color, he was a bit older, but he was better I thought, but the whole family said no, the other is better. And everyone discussed about my illness and all and then the person said I don’t mind about your illness because most of the people have some kind of problem and already you are open too and so I don’t care what kind of illness is there… and so we moved to his house.

I: Which one?
T: The Tamil guy. The dark one. (Interview 4)

She seemed to be quite happy about this today, saying that they had an equal relationship where they could speak about everything (except how he lost their money in the Gulf) and that he and the society admired her.

Another Facilitator argued the advantages of an arranged marriage. She was asked what kind of advice she would like to give to the adolescent girls in her area, and her first answered was that they should strive for a good job, the second thing was that they should get married through an arranged marriage: *T (...) if you take an interest in somebody there should be an arranged marriage, like they should discuss with the family and decide who is good one and then get married* (Interview 6). She continued:

T: Like if it is an arranged marriage the whole family is supporting and accepting that marriage, and supporting. so if there is an issue also, the child can strongly think that the marriage is conducted by family, so if there is a problem I can go and tell them, and discuss with them and they will come to solve the problem, if the eh… in the love- marriage the child wont tell the parents because it’s her responsibility for having the marriage, and also the family would think she didn’t listen to us, let her suffer a little bit. So it’s better to have an arranged marriage and have the support of the family (n.n).

When asked what kind of problems could be solved within the family, she answered as follows:

T: Like a girl marrying and going to the (husbands) family, like mostly she would do things, like caring, for the husband, and just doing things for the husband and she doesn’t consider them as family, and do things for the parents and like that, so that can create a lot of problem in the house, so if that kind of problem come to our notice then we will advice them, like what to do and how to manage these things, and in other ways sometimes the dowry system, have many problems also, like if we are not paying
enough dowry, like whatever we have said to them that we will pay, and we do not, then that problem, regarding that, we will also have to solve. (n.n)

According to this it seems it is the grooms’ problems or those of the grooms ’families’, with the wives and/or with the amounts of dowry received that are expressed and “solved” through extended family negotiations.

Yet another Facilitator expresses her view on her experience of marriage: T: (…) After marriage only we started getting more freedom. Started be free. (Interview 1)

She is the only Facilitator who directly expresses experiencing a less controlled life after marriage. However it seems that many, if not to say all, have lived a freer life after getting married.

The only Facilitator who married for love did not get the support of her family and thinks that Love-marriages for young girls are a bad idea: T: So like when I take class for children I always advice them not to have a love- marriage if you have a marriage with the support of your parents then the responsibility is there, in the other case no there is no responsibility, nobody is responsible for what you are doing, not anything (Interview 9).

6.3.3 Summary on The Married Woman

There seems to be a hegemonic opinion that arranged marriages are preferable to Love-marriages despite often very painful memories and experiences. All The Facilitators say that they would advice young girls to get husbands arranged through family negotiations – even The Facilitator who did not get married in such a way herself. It seems to be a general notion that Love-marriages are the same as marriages without family support. Family support is exemplified, by one Facilitator, as favorable to the groom, or groom’s family. She explains how conflicts around, for example, a too low dowry payment can be solved within the family, as well as problems arising when, in her husband’s home, the girl does not treat her new relatives well enough (interview 6). It is also shown that some Facilitators think of marriage as a way to attain social position. As married they feel “secure” and “admired” (Interview 3, 4). One Facilitator even says that she, as a married woman, enjoys more freedom then she did before she was married. One conclusion that can be drawn from this is that married women seem to enjoy certain benefits. As unmarried girls The Facilitators were pressured into getting married, as in the cases with interviewees 3, 4 and 8.

6.3.4 Motherhood
Motherhood functions in the Project at many levels. All of the interviewed Facilitators were mothers. For the teenagers in The Project these Facilitators must therefore all represent the mother generation. At least five of the Facilitators I interviewed had brought their daughter into the program. One of the Facilitators had brought her two daughters, even if they were not in the adequate age category (they were older). Many times these Mothers/Facilitators talked about how the Project resulted in changing their daughters’ behavior within their own family, as we shall see in the next chapter.

Mothers were also mentioned as forming a network that could be used in strategic ways. For instance; when the Facilitators were recruiting the girls they first addressed their mothers; they had to of course get the father’s permission, but always persuaded the mothers first, in meetings, house visits or in the streets (Interviews 1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8). When doing so some of The Facilitators stressed particular arguments to these mothers, like pointing out that if the mothers themselves were too shy to teach their children about things like sexual reproductive health and menstruation it would perhaps be a good idea to let their children learn about these things through The Project. This way of arguing shows that education in such topics is first and foremost the responsibility of the mother. It also shows that The Facilitator can be well suited for taking on the mother’s responsibility.

The role of The Facilitator and the mother seems to be similar in ideology and even intertwined in those cases where Facilitators are actually mothers to girls in The Project. One Facilitator talked about how mothers are supposed to be very close to children: *T: Like, thing is that the mother should be the best friend of the child and the child should be the mothers’ friend. Then they can… and I always tell the children that you have to open up to the mother first, you have to have the freedom to open up to the mother (…)* (Interview 4)

The way the daughter’s relationship to the mother is supposed to be special is also illustrated in this Facilitator’s short story of a train journey that she and her family undertook: *T: In the train also my daughter would sit with the father and I with the son, and the people were making fun.* (Interview 8) So this family seems to be breaking from the norm - father and daughter are (sitting) closer then mother and daughter and this results in people making fun of them.

Later on the same Facilitator talks about the role (or function) of the mother in relation to the children and how she should and should not be, and note here how she first talks as a mother and then as a Facilitator and then as a mother again:
If I don’t take enough time to listen to what they have to say then they won’t come anymore. And then I won’t know what will be happening and then I can’t direct or anything, and in the case sometimes some children come to me and say oh, when I come, my mother doesn’t hear what I say, she sits at home watching television and I don’t have anyone to speak to, and here both the son and the daughter, and I tell them to speak, they tell everything about their friends, boyfriends and girlfriends and all, they tell everything.

I: Everything about their girl friends and boy friends. Not girlfriends and boyfriends, right?
T: No no, friends. (...) they come home and tell me everything and if they say something wrong I direct them. Not scold. Like some parents would fight with them and in that way create problems. And that will just make their life difficult (n.n.).

She sees it as the mother’s duty to be available for the children. She should not sit and watch television. Nor should she be too judging or scolding, but rather friendly and interested enough to encourage them to talk to her about things happening in their life so that she can advise them. (Another point that could be drawn from this interview is that she as a mother would listen to children talking about socially accepted things and not about possible boyfriends or girlfriends). Later on in the interview the Facilitator says that her experience with The Adolescent Project enhanced her patience at home, as a mother, giving voice again to the intertwined roles or functions of Facilitators/Mothers.

Motherhood is also presented in the material as a controlling and even violent force. For example Aleyemma Vigayan said: *There will be a lot of psychological issues between the mothers and children. The mothers are really afraid, they are the protectors of the family honor.* (personal communication 2). On a Two Day Camp for Facilitators I observed that the book “Me and my body” was handed out to the Facilitators. I never observed the book being handed out to any adolescents, which caused me to ask The Facilitators about that. This Facilitator said the following concerning the book:

T: No, not for the children, but for the Facilitators. (...) The children and the Facilitators had the opportunity to see this book because the Facilitators get a copy and they keep it at home. So that’s how the children has seen, not all. I kept it in the shelf and the children took it and read and my daughter anyway has read it, and we keep all the books together, but I haven’t said like, not to read it or anything. (Interview 3)

Another Facilitator says that she as a mother and Angenwadi-teacher has to beat the children (hers and others) as part of their education: *T: We have to beat the children. Even if we know (that there is a child protection law) then also we do this* (Interview 6).

The question of whether or not a Facilitator must beat the children in The Project became a subject of discussion, but the other Facilitators I questioned about possible violence (or punishments) in The Project answered that they had never experienced any. It was a “friendly” Project (Interview 7). It should be noted here that I too never saw any evidence of
violence in the program (but perhaps a harder form of education earlier could explain how exceptionally well behaved the girls were while attending classes). The risk of violence and control are however important aspects concerning motherhood.

6.3.5 Summary on Motherhood

A mother’s supposed function in society is similar to a Facilitator’s function in this Project. A mother is expected to have a close relationship with her children. In a similar way, the Facilitators are supposed to advise and educate children in the Project. For many of the Facilitators the two roles, mother and Facilitator, are intertwined. Some say that being a Facilitator in the Project helps them in their role as mothers. With regards to education in sexual reproductive health the Facilitators suggest to those mothers that are too shy to talk about sexuality, menstruation and such that they, the Facilitators, can take on that role.

Motherhood has a controlling function. In the Project Sakhi hands out the “Me and my body” book to the Facilitators/Mothers as if to reinforce the role that mothers play as protectors and educators. The Facilitators become “doorkeepers”, guarding the information available for the children, with the result that not all children have the opportunity to read the books. The “Me and my body” is kept safe in the bookshelves of the Facilitators.

The mother-child relationship can be an oppressive one. How exactly the aspects of the violent mother previously interviewed are reflected in the role of the Facilitators as a whole is uncertain.

6.3.6 What is Not Talked About – Women’s Sexuality

Girls are advised not to “go to the next step”, not “to fall in love” or that kind of “trap”. They are presented with different forms of a male sexuality. These are given as reasons for the control they are being subjected to, a constant threat they are exposed to when walking alone after dark, travelling, and marrying (as in the discussion about rape above). In The Project I also observed discussions and role-plays on the subject of “The right to say no” or “The way to say no” (to be confident and not shy, for example). However, “The right to say yes” was never taken up. It was as if the girls’ own sexuality was constantly being made invisible.

There are many, and quite peculiar examples of misunderstandings and translation difficulties in my material when it came to questions about women’s sexuality. Aiming at the area of sexual agency and a more positive view on sexuality I asked the Facilitators questions around the subject of lust. These questions were in two cases misunderstood and in a third
case simply ignored. After trying a fourth time the Interpreter turned to me and said: *T: Here you cannot ask this question, ever.*

One Facilitator explains in a metaphor about the problem of talking (and not talking) about sexuality: *T: Like if somebody comes and covers something and tells you not to look, you have a feeling to wonder what it is or to lift it a little bit and to look.*

*I: Of course.*

*T: But in my case, they didn’t tell me anything like that so I didn’t have that eagerness to look. (Interview 7)*

The logic here seems to be that if you say to your daughter: “don’t think about sexuality”, it will in fact make her think and become curious about it. But if you simply ignore the subject of sexuality, her curiosity around it will not be awakened.

In another situation the communication between me, the Facilitator and the Interpreter gets complicated due to sensitive topics:

*T: Like there was some questions that they asked, there was some children that were not... so these kind of questions was a bit difficult for the children.*

*I: What kind of questions?*

*T: Like she is a bit shy to say the questions, I think.*

*I: You think or you know?*

*T: Think. I tried to ask her but she didn’t say.*

*I: Ok.*

*T: This a... there was children who were not mature yet, didn’t come over puberty These kind of children, some of them, didn’t want to come after that.*

*I: So these kind of questions were concerning sexuality?*

-Malayalam-

*T: She is not saying exactly, so yes, these kind of questions... (interview 9)*

It seems as though this Facilitator is saying here that the younger girls attending The Project were embarrassed by certain questions. These questions are however of so sensitive a nature that even the Interpreter is afraid to embarrass the interviewee by asking her exactly what these questions were, making the whole conversation very difficult and also very hard to understand. Was the problem rather that these questions were more embarrassing for this Facilitator?

Another time one Facilitator mentions a strategy used in The Project to encourage the girls to ask and speak about things that would otherwise be too sensitive. Her answer is a good illustration of how anonymous the situation had to be to allow the girls to ask what they wanted to ask:
T: Yes. Like they would put a box there. So if there was any question that they could not directly ask they would put it there and answer in public. Everyone will hear the answer and so they don’t know who asked the question, like that. …

I: So what kind of questions came up in this box?

-Malayalam-

T: I don’t know what it is because they told us to stay outside, and then… because they (the girls) felt a bit more shy because we are from the same place. So we were staying outside.

-Malayalam-

T: But when I was staying inside they were asking about abortion. They were not reluctant to ask so they would ask about abortion. (Interview 2)

So the Facilitators were too close to the girls (and the girls’ families) to allow an open discussion. When getting back to The Project Leaders after having interviewed nine Facilitators they, The Project Leaders, were asked if they thought that there could be a possible way to remedy how sexuality was always depicted as a threat and bring in a more positive and lustful aspect, and whether sexual agency and different sexualities could be represented or addressed in some way in The Project. I also asked about homosexuality specifically. Sreekala TS and Beena Mol stressed how that would be difficult in regards to the context. No parents would allow their children to participate in that kind of Project, they said (personal communication 4, 5) Geetha John suggested that the issue of sexual agency (and homosexuality) would have to be taken up with great tact (personal communication 6).

With regards to the question of sexualities The Facilitators function as the eyes of society, controlling and limiting The Project to address only things that are acceptable for girls, for example “the right to say no”.

6.3.7 Summary

In this chapter it has become clear that a women’s sexuality is a sensitive question. Questions about lust cannot be asked at all, according to my Interpreter. Sexuality is present during observations in the field and in interviews, but always depicted as a threat coming from men. Positive aspects of sexuality or the sexual agency of girls is not addressed at all; perhaps as a strategy resting on the logic of that which is not talked about does not exist. Also in the Project Documents sexuality is mentioned in negative terms, as something that girls should learn about in order to be protected from it. Marriage, as we have seen in the documents, is also understood as a protecting factor: Safe sex happens in marriage and un-safe sex outside.

In the interview with one Facilitator it becomes clear how anonymous the situation had to be for the girls in The Project to be able to ask about abortion. She also pointed to the fact that Facilitators could be too close to the girls which inhibited the girls freedom to talk and ask
questions. This showed the control-function of the Facilitator and how that can be a threat to the openness in The Project.

Two of the program leaders were concerned with the difficulties of addressing sexuality in a way that was not accepted for girls. The program coordinator said that it had to be done in a very tactful way. The Facilitators, as participating eyes of the society, could be a factor here making things even more difficult.

6.3.8 The Others

In this material there are gendered stories of “The Others” present. The Adolescent Project reaches out to many different groups within Kerala based on the criteria of marginalization. Those participating are girls and Facilitators from Scheduled Tribes and Castes, “Other Backward Communities” (OBCs) in sometimes very remote villages. There are representatives from the different religions and areas in The Project, as well as different generations and roles on the labor market. In this chapter I will show how and when the Facilitators produce stories of them “The Others”. Producing such stories also tells us something about how the storyteller views herself and the group she belongs to. For instance when this Facilitator says: T: Oh, there’s a lot of problems there with like unmarried mothers, like that. A lot of unmarried mothers. So there is a big problem. She is at the same time saying that in her group there isn’t really a lot of problems. At least not with unmarried mothers. The quotation is from a Hindu-Nair Facilitator talking about the problems in the Tribal areas (Interview 1). “The Others” also show themselves in this material when some Facilitators relate to what they think is “The Others’”s opinion about them. As we shall see below both one Tribal Facilitator and a Facilitator from a Scheduled Caste respond to a pre-assumed picture of how “The Others” see them.

The material shows that there are certain groups being treated as “Others” more often than other groups. For instance there were never any Hindu Facilitators talking about Christians as “Others” or vice versa, even though the Christian and Hindu Facilitators dominate the material. “The Others” are mostly Muslims, Tribals and Men, and sometimes also me, the person from The West (as in interview 1, 7, 5, 6). It could also include the young people, the adolescents (as in interview 6, 7, 5).

A Christian Facilitator working with Muslim girls at one Project Center says the following about “conservative” Muslim parents: T: (…) they do not allow their children to talk to
anyone at all. They don’t want to send their children to this kind of program also (…) But even in the mosque they are sending them to the female teacher, instead of to the male teacher, that’s how much conservative they are (Interview 2).

Another Hindu Facilitator who told me about her difficult experiences with an alcoholic father goes on to talk about the young Tribal people in her area. According to her there is a difference between “Them” (the younger generation Tribals) and her, when it comes to the feelings concerned with having an alcoholic father: T: (...) like even if the fathers in the Tribal areas (...), like if they is alcoholic or something the children don’t care about that. The father, let him go for himself and for us to have our own way (...) (Interview 5).

This Facilitator is Christian and she is working with Tribal girls in the settlement area. She expresses fantasies about what goes on in the houses of “The Others”:

T: Like in those areas there are no proper houses like with separate rooms and everything, so most of the people are living, staying, sleeping in the same room, like husband and wife and children, so I was confused because maybe they are seeing the fathers and mothers sexual affairs or something and then like before 18 or around 15 themselves they are having the character of going away with somebody and getting married very early (...) (Interview 5)

She continues by describing The Tribals as “lazy” due to the fact that they get so many benefits from the government: T: Like even the rubber plantations, the plantations are made by the government, they have to just take the income and leave, so they get lazy and not to do much like save or everything. (Interview 5)

In the following quote her group identity is visibly constructed by comparing it to the story of “The Others”: T: (...) they don’t think about the future. Like we think about the future and what to do in the future and all but this people don’t have any kind of thought about what they can do in the future or what will happen and no worries about the future and that’s what makes them live like this. (Interview 5)

Another interviewee is assuming a difference in the problems faced by young girls in her area and in the area of “The Others”:

T: Like in this area it is harassment that is the problem, like boys making fun of girls and things like that, and abroad… no, not abroad, like across the river, in the forest area, the Tribal area, there the problem is that they have too much freedom, like if somebody tells them something, like you should do, like, you should not do that, like walk around with boys, then they will upset them back because there is nobody saying that “no” for anything, so they have too much freedom and they are creating a lot of problem because of that freedom. So here the children are scared of the relatives and thinks like if I do something I will get scold but there they don’t have anything like that and that’s the problem as I see it. (Interview 6)

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One Facilitator sees a big difference between “We” in our generation and “They” in the younger generation: T: (...) now there is no hard work at all, morning they all wake up happy and everything is finished and have so much money and the children think about mobile phones and things like that (Interview 9).

Another Facilitator shows how she is relating to “Others” when she defends herself against expected prejudice against her as a person coming from a Scheduled Caste:

I: So what does it mean that you are scheduled caste?
-Malayalam-
T: It is considered to be lower caste, that’s all.
I: But does it mean anything, does it affect your life in some way?
-Malayalam-
T: Doesn’t make me behind. Go backwards. Everywhere I go forward and do things so it doesn’t matter to me. (Interview 7)

Even though she is saying that, coming from a Scheduled Caste position doesn’t affect her, she still refers to expectations put on her by people from other groups of society, “The Others”. My guess is that her sudden use of the word “backwards” comes from the tag Other Backward Communities, used by the Indian Central government.

The Tribal Facilitator says: T: (...) I don’t feel like any shyness or difficulty to go and say that I am a Tribal person, there is like people who have become educated that are shy to go and tell to people that they are Tribal, I’m not like that. (Interview 9)

It seems to me as if she is also relating here to what she thinks is expected of her; to feel shy about being Tribal.

6.3.9 Summary on “The Others”

I have shown that there are groups who do not produce stories of “Others” between one another while some groups are often mentioned as “Others”. These are mostly Muslims and Tribals, but also Adolescents (and Men and people from the West). One Tribal Facilitator and one Facilitator from a Scheduled Caste also refer to “The Others” while defending themselves against “The Others”’s definitions of their groups.

6.4 Experienced Results

The Facilitators give example of results of The Adolescent project. One Tribal Facilitator talks mostly about non-realized results. The only positive thing she has to say about The Project is the way it has helped the girls to have the confidence to talk openly (Interview. 9).
But the rest of The Facilitators bear witness to different types of positive results in connection with the adolescents, for example in their learning processes, behavior and self confidence. But results are also experienced personally by The Facilitators. They talk about things that have changed in their lives after attending the program. We shall start by hearing what they have to say about the adolescents.

6.4.1 Teenager Empowerment

In this chapter I will account for how the Facilitators experience results of The Project reflected in the adolescents. In some places the methods used for reaching these results are actually visible, as if the results and the methods are so clearly connected that they are inseparable. For instance the way gaining “self-confidence by doing” is visible in the material. That for instance is the case with for instance one Facilitator who talks about making the adolescents sing and dance well: T: Like everyone, some of them said that I cannot sing and I cannot dance or like that, we made them come in forth front and do it, and we made them do it well, and they had a feeling that I can do it (Interview 7).

Another example in this material of “self-confidence by doing” is when this interviewee tells the story of a girl, who before attending the program could not ride a bike, so the Facilitators in her center decided to teach her:

T: There in a family, there is three children, like one boy and two girls and the boy and the younger girl knows how to cycle and all, and the others used to make fun of her (the older sister) like when she fell and all, saying that you will never learn and she used to come here, and asked are you teaching cycling and we said yes and she said then I’m coming and her brother came with the bicycle, and that boy told that if you are teaching everyone then you should teach this girl first. Before the other people, and this girl learned very well and was very happy and bought sweets to everyone and… Now she won’t hold on the handlebars when she is cycling. (…) And she puts loads also, like one boy in the back and one girl in the front and bicycles in front of the house like that, see auntie how am I doing. (Interview 8)

Later on that girl also taught another girl how to cycle, her development hence going from not knowing, to student, to knowing, to teaching. That is a good example of a growing self confidence.

An emotional development of girls participating in The Project is mentioned by one Facilitator:

T: Some of the students used to be gloomy in the home…
I: Gloomy?
T: Yes, and in the family and also when they were in the groups they would be silent and all. They started changing in the group and also when they went to the family the family members said that they, it’s a lot of change in that. (Interview 1)

And later on she talks about the teenagers who as a result of The Project, become more active in society, and are able to express their aspirations and goals:

T: Like they are doing so many things for the society and some of the students also started thinking that they have to do something about society and some were saying that even. After this class only they have the ability to say what they want to become. What they want to do and all. Before they didn’t say anything what they like to do…. (Interview 1)

Empowerment as the ability to question society is present in the following story told about one group taken on a fieldtrip to the local police station. The Facilitator says:

T: Like they were kind of very strong students so when they went to the police station they asked the CI, the circle inspector whether he takes bribe.
I: Whether he takes bribes! And what did he answer?
- Malayalam-
T: There are people who do that. And (then they asked) do you beat people and why do you do that.
I: And what did he answer?
- Malayalam-
T: He, for the question about beating, there was a guy who was drunk and all and so he had to take him upstairs because he was taking away all his clothes in front of the people. And it was not able to put him in front of the children.
I: Aha, so during the time that they were there?
T: Yes, so like (he said) people behaving like this sometimes we have to beat them. Like when they are too bad and also sometimes when they are doing like illegal alcohol and things like that also we have to behave like that. So its according to the circumstances. And they also they were asking like how to use the rifle and guns and all and they got a full explanation like that (laugh).
(Interview 8)

Another Facilitator talks about how The Adolescent Program equipped the girls with enough knowledge and self confidence to defend themselves:

T: Self confidence one, like earlier when the children were travelling on the bus, like if it was a crowded bus they always had a lot of stress, like they were stressed that somebody would scratch them or hold them or do something towards them…
I: Like sexual harassment?
T: Yes. So always they were having so much stress now they are a bit more relaxed, thinking that if somebody does something to me I know that I can do something, like go against that, and so they are not stressed and they are confident that they can go without any problems, earlier it was not like that (…)

She also shows how the girls’ newly gained gender awareness helps them to demand equal treatment in their families:

T: (…) And another thing was that there was a division of labor in many families, like girls should do that and boys should do that. And now when somebody says that, if somebody is telling them to do that, they
would ask why couldn’t a boy do this. And also gender, like this. Why can’t he also come and do that. That kind of gender awareness is also coming to them that anyone can do. Anyone can do any kind of job. (Interview 3)

She exemplifies with her own daughter who has been in the program:

T: The daughter also, my daughter, if somebody tells something to her, even my husband even, she would say that it is not right.
I: Aha, ok, and how do you feel then… proud?
Malayalam, laughing loud-
T: I’m a bit worried about that, that the child is behaving like this, because the girl has to get married and go on to another house, and if the husband is not a smart guy, whether he will accept that or will it become a problem. That’s the tension.

I understand her anxieties here as her duties as a mother collides somewhat with The Project’s ideology to equip the girls with tools to question the gender specific labor division. Another Facilitator takes up the same kind of thing. She says: T: If I tell my daughter to do something she will tell me that why don’t you ask my brother, like I am studying and he is studying, he can also do things. (interview 7)

Results showing increased conflicts between mother and child are also occur in this interview:

T: Like evening time when it starts getting dark if my daughter say that I will go to the shop and come, and I will say no don’t go, she says that she will call Sakhi, that she is saying, that after the class also you are not letting me go and sometimes also, when I am telling her to do something she is saying that children should not work, like that is also not allowed. (Interview 8)

In another interview this type of empowerment resulted in a far more severe conflict. The Facilitator’s way to use violence as part of her motherhood is questioned after her daughter and she attended the program together:

T: (…) some book about law and all and one day she (the daughter) took the book and read it and… and so she took and read the book and said that if you beat me I will call the police.
I: She said that?
T: Like the daughter said that to her mother. There is a law for child protection so.
I: Yes, smart.
T: So the children are using these things (Interview 6).

This was said to me by a smiling Facilitator and, even if her daughter, who was sitting next to the Facilitator/Mother at the time of the interview, was not smiling, I got the feeling that the Facilitator/Mother was in fact proud of her daughter and saw that result (that the daughter knew she could call the police) in a positive way.
In the following quote this Facilitator expresses the way that the program gave self-confidence to the girls. This way of reasoning about self-confidence is common in the material:

T: Like, before they were kind of not open in front of a group or anything they were always staying behind and not coming out to speak or sing or anything, and now they have lost all that shyness and always coming out to talk so this kind of behavior has changed in them. (Interview 6)

Another thing that came out as a positive result for the children, according to The Facilitators, was the way superstitious beliefs regarding menstruation were cleared up by a gynecologist invited to the program:

T: The students had a lot of confusion like regarding period and so much, like superstition. Like some people was given nails to hold on when they are sleeping because in the period time there will be attacks from some other ghost or something, some people believed and also some people would keep a broom near the head, like used for sweeping so all this kind of things they were asking about when they came and talked, so all that confusion was cleared… (...) yes, so many different beliefs are there regarding period, and some people believe that snake will come. Like snake will come and all these things they will believe and they were scared from that. (Interview 8)

This following Facilitator gives an example here of how the positive results which she thinks are experienced by the children can be intertwined with the positive results experienced by The Facilitator: T: Like personal development is the most important thing like a girl who could get the ability to walk by herself, like to go somewhere, like even in the evening and that’s the best thing which has developed in me and I already used to walk like this but this kind of freedom and development that what has made me interested in this. (Interview 4)

6.4.2 Summary on Teenager Empowerment

Teenager empowerment is articulated by The Facilitators in a several ways. I have shown that “Self confidence by doing” was one area where girls were gaining confidence by learning new things in The Project, according to The Facilitators. Another interesting area of results is the stories of girls questioning their realities or situations, whether it be police officers at the police station, the gendered division of work, the way they act/react to the threat of sexual harassment and/or abuse in official places or the way they are starting to question their situations within their own families. There are many examples of girls questioning their Mothers/Facilitators. Other results talked about are emotional: the idea of “personal development” as a way of moving out of a “passive” and “shy” state of mind and on to an active, mobile and secure one is a common theme when The Facilitators talk about teenager
results. These results are very similar to, and in some cases intertwined with, the results that Facilitators themselves experience.

6.4.3 Facilitator Empowerment

The Facilitators refer to their own development both professionally and personally. This Angenwadi teacher is talking about professional inspiration:

T: The most interesting was like they were taking the class through a game or, the Sakhi people were taking the class through a game so I thought this was a good idea for me also when I take class I can also take this path. So the children were never bored they were really interested, like everything was interesting for them for examples sometimes they would say that the children would take some plant or something and then through that they would give a good lesson so I learned from them that this is a good thing. (Interview 5)

As we have seen in the motivation chapter before there is also the ASHA-worker who always wanted to teach and never had the chance to do so. In The Project she had that chance and took it and grew from that experience (Interview 7).

On the personal level the following Facilitator talks about learning new things, even if it takes some time to admit exactly what these new things were:

I: what kind of knowledge?
- Malayalam-
T: Personal development, leadership qualities and communication like this.
I: So this was a surprising experience for you?
-Malayalam-
T: We received the knowledge and every time in the meeting there are at least ten students that would come so we would share the knowledge with them and that was a very good experience for us, the Facilitators. And we have learned about reproductive health and so many new things for us (…) we got that knowledge from this program.
(…)
T: Now I can use this knowledge for my grandchildren or something (laughing). (Interview. 1)

How she was talking about learning about sexual reproductive health made me curious and I started asking more questions about whether she thought that other Facilitators had also learnt this from The Project. She answered that she didn’t know because they never spoke about such things. She added however, that she thought that probably everyone learnt something new in The Project. In the rather general silence that lay around the subject I am quite convinced that she was not the only Facilitator in The Project who learnt something new about sexual reproductive health.

Another theme of Facilitators empowerment or development is what we can call social status: T: People started thinking that if there is a problem they could ask me. (Interview. 1)
Many talked about an experience of becoming quite popular or in demand in the village or society due to their Facilitator role: T: *Yesterday also one parent came and asked me when is the next class.* (Interview 2).

How that kind of social appreciation and higher self confidence can spiral off in a positive way is expressed by this Facilitator:

T: The thing is that we learn a lot and now 100 people and so we can talk to them, No problem, like earlier it was not like that. We could bring out the children from the houses and give them a good kind of way like a new behavior, to them. This was really good.
I: This makes you feel proud?
-Malayalam-
T: Yes. And the people respect me because of this. (Interview 7)

The experience of being part of a program that is slowly but steadily gaining the respect of the people and society around seems to be a very important and empowering thing: T: *The society respects us now but in the beginning they were always asking like why should you have these kind of classes, but now they are asking for more classes, and more classes for the boys also* (Interview 7).

### 6.4.4 Summary on Facilitator Empowerment

It is notable how The Facilitators are putting emphasis on the way their role in society has changed after being in The Project. Here many use the word “respect” and how in their societies it has been a tough struggle sometimes for them to gain this respect. The tendency seems to be that in the beginning The Project was questioned, but by the end The Facilitators are requested to not only conduct it again but to develop The Project to also include boys.

A few Facilitators mention professional inspiration and how they have learnt new methods of teaching the girls. One Facilitator in The Project is really happy about how she had the opportunity to teach for the first time.

Another Facilitator also explains that she learnt new things from The Project on the subject of sexual reproductive health. I see it as very important that she recognizes this but also that she is prepared to talk about it, even though in the next breath she says that she and the other Facilitators cannot talk about it. Perhaps this is the beginning of an empowering process; their starting to reflect on what is not talked about?

### 6.4.5 Empowerment and Social Change
The Facilitators discuss the processes of social change and how they can be measured. There is no one-sided answer to how and why things have changed. For instance, when it comes to the subject of lack of freedom it seems that The Facilitators draw different conclusions about the situation today. Some see that it has changed for the better and that girls now have more freedom than they The Facilitators themselves had experienced when they were young. Others talk about a development in the opposite direction where harassment and restrictions on girls are increasing. But in this chapter I want to gather the pictures of social change given to me through the interviewees. One picture is this:

T: My sister’s 13 year old daughter was lying on the sofa close to the TV and she was changing the channel with her leg, like that, (laugh) I saw that and called my sister and showed her and she said she wont listen to me, she said, the sister said, and I said would your grandmother see this. And even the grandmother said: she won’t listen to me. If it was in our time and we did this I would have chased her… (Interview 1)

Another Facilitator talks about the difference in conditions between generations and about how learning from older generation’s mistakes is creating change:

T: Like actually this is a migrated area, so people started migrating in the 30s and many people came back and in 1940s those kind of people were coming here, like my parents. Those people, came from Kottayam, middle Kerala mostly, and at that time this area was forest and they had to chase the elephants and fight with all the animals and everything and to do agriculture (…). And so they had to work very hard. At that time they started making alcohol for their use. They use to make alcohol here and drink. The whole generation was like this.
I: Just men, or women also?
T: Not much. No, the women didn’t drink.
- Malayalam.
T: It was just for an enjoyment actually after hard work, but many people didn’t come out of that. They became addicts, like that. And the next generation, my generation, my brothers don’t have alcohol like this because they know what are the problems. So this kind of change is there in the next generation. (Interview 5)

It is again notable how gendered alcohol is in her village, both in the first and second generation.

The following Facilitator explains how you must become aware of a problem before you can experience it and react to it: T: At my time in every house it was almost like that and I was not sad also, my friends also were there, and happy, and every family was like this, only now I understood there was no freedom but it was common in everywhere and so it was not a problem for us. (Interview. 7)

The same Facilitator talks about changes in the caste system, and how she is now able to prepare food for people from all religions and castes, something that would not have been possible before. She compares then to now:
T: I work as a good cook also and sometimes for some celebration there is 200 people and all for food to be arranged in the Panchayath I will make them food, and for that nobody asks as before, who do the cooking and if they know they are happy to know that, for every religion every caste comes now and have food from that and nobody has a problem. (Interview 7)

That change is explained by the same person like this: *T: Earlier we didn’t have enough education and all but now the situation it has changed, the education situation, because we have reservation and now everyone is educated here, and so we have a good position in the job so they can’t say anything now* (Interview 7).

Later, the same Facilitator talks about how she thinks action is necessary to create change:

T: (…) we give them advice on how to react on things what we don’t like. If somebody is treating us badly to us, we have to react instead of going backward and backward and backward, we have to react and do something against that and we are doing also…

7: Some of us. (Interview 7)

One Facilitator says that the reason why her mother did not finish her sixth standard was the lack of a need for her education: *T: That time they didn’t need her to study.* (Interview 8)

Another thing that has created a social change is the following: *T: Now only TV in their own home, before there was one TV at a neighbor and everyone would be meeting there, so now that is also lost.* With regards to these two mentioned circumstances, the demands of society and TV being available in every household, there seems to be very few possibilities for the individual to act.

This Facilitator also points out that she now, just like her mother was then, is appointed to do the house work, but that the situation has changed somewhat in her generation. In her mother’s generation her father would take on the house work for five days every months, but only because of superstitious beliefs concerning a women’s menstruation:

*T: Before marriage it was somewhat like that, like so much superstitious beliefs but after marriage I couldn’t put on all the superstitious beliefs because I had to take care about all the things in the house, like couldn’t sit away from the kitchen for I am the one who is supposed to be taking care.*

I: Because that’s what you are supposed to do?

T: Yes.

-Malayalam-

T: When I was young, when my mother had a period my father would cook, not my mother.

8: Five days. (Interview 8)

So unfortunately, when the superstitious beliefs were abandoned she did not get any break from the household work. The husband simply left the kitchen.
6.4.6 Summary on Empowerment and Social Change

In this chapter I wanted to catch the ways The Facilitators reasoned about social change and about what causes or triggers it off. There are examples of social change in the material where it seems like a force pressing from the outside, putting TVs in everybody’s homes for example, and thus limiting the meeting places and excuses for girls to visit other houses and friends. This kind of social change is also exemplified by how expectations put on girls not to study made it hard or even impossible for them to do so.

Many speak of education as an empowering thing however. Education, with the help of reservation (i.e. political interference) has, according to one Facilitator helped to force the caste system to change for example. The Facilitator talks about how she herself with regards to gender had to become aware of how her freedom was restricted. She was living “like everybody else” and didn’t see how she was treated unequally (interview 7). She also stresses how one must react (and not go backwards) for things to change in the social world.

Another interviewee argues that it is possible to learn from the mistakes of the older generation, which I think is a very positive view of development. This statement becomes even more interesting when you think about how conflicts between Mothers/Facilitators and Adolescents/Daughters were one of the consequences of adolescents attending The Project – which indicates that the girls are learning to see how they are being unequally treated and are starting to react to this. One of the consequences for Mothers/Facilitators in the Project is having to face the criticism of the younger generation.

7 Analysis

In this chapter I will analyze what possibilities and problems there are with The Facilitator’s role in The Adolescent Project. I intend to use Mohanty’s and Askheim’s theories and comment on the material through the concepts of Gender and normative heterosexuality. I will also use earlier research to explore the empirical results.

7.1 Possibilities and Problems with the Facilitator role

Because The Facilitator role is dual in The Project it will be addressed separately in the two forms; The Facilitator as a Teacher and The Facilitator as a Student.

7.2 The Facilitator as a Teacher

As we have seen in The Project Documents the indicators of success for The Facilitators stated by Sakhi are concerned with their teaching abilities, including communication skills
and organizational skills (The Proposal document, p.10). Many Facilitators are motivated to join The Project by their desire to teach. Some find professional inspiration in the program and ideas for new methodologies in their work with adolescents. Especially The Anganwadi Facilitators (who are appointed to conduct teen clubs) express how The Project has given them new ideas. They talk as if The Project has a different educational content than that which they were used to before. They take up for example singing and dancing as a part of classes, visits from gynecologists, field trips to the local police station, girls being taught to ride bicycles and so on. Many Facilitators also mention how they have developed more confidence, being able now to speak in front of large groups, for example. That The Facilitators are inspired in their role as teachers is of course a very positive effect of The Project, as is the fact that they feel more confident when they are challenged. To have the confidence to talk to large groups of people can be seen as a way that The Project has helped to empower The Facilitators as individuals. The Project has also managed to empower professional groups in relation to society. Both Anganwadi and ASHA Facilitators talk about a positive process where they have had to struggle to gain the trust from parents and the adolescents but by the end of The Project they have received respect and many requests of continuance from society. According to The Project Documents the indicators of success for The Facilitators are fulfilled when they all experience that they have enhanced their teaching capacity.

7.2.1 The Question of Gender Sensitivity

Attitudes concerning Gender vary a lot among The Facilitators (even though they have all attended the gender classes in The Project). One view on gender that comes up in the material is that there should be a definite limit for gender equality. That limit is more specifically a limit on the mobility of girls. Girls should not be “walking like boys”, which means in this context that they should not hang around street corners, travel alone on buses, and especially not after dark. I understand the arguments behind this point of view seen against the usage of the terms normative heterosexuality and normative gender (Amjörnsson, 2004). Masculinity is regarded very differently to femininity. Still however, the two genders are supposed to desire one another (even though that desire has to be very discreet in a woman’s case). Normative masculinity in this context is built around the idea of an almost uncontrollable sexual drive that can express itself in many different ways, including various forms of sexual harassment. This behavior can be triggered off by the clothes the girls choose to wear. Normative femininity on the contrary is built around the ideals of virginity, i.e. chastity and sexual
morality. The punishments are severe for girls who do not manage to “perform” or live their life according to these ideals. Here we can reflect on what was said about rape in the material. A raped girl has no chance on the marriage market (if her parents are not very rich) because people around her would know that she is not a virgin (interview 8). With this in mind it becomes logical that one has to restrict a girl’s mobility in order to protect her, thus she cannot “walk like boys”, nor dress improperly. Another important thing indicated in the material is how the girl has to be protected from her own sexuality. Being aware of her own sexuality could cause her to “perform” badly in the gender acting process (where a girl is not supposed to want anything sexual for herself) and if she does she will be punished for it, for instance with rumors or sexual harassment. One of The Facilitators in my material says that not talking about sexuality was a strategy used by her parents to make her unaware of it (interview 7). Another problem with a girl’s sexuality is of course that it could lead to her falling in love. To fall in love is very dangerous according to what is said here by The Facilitators; it can cause boys and girls to elope and it can cost the girls a lot on the marriage market (money, honor, possibilities). Love is regarded as a very unstable base for marriage and unstable marriages are more unfavorable for women (as in interview 3).

Praveena Kodoth argues that normative femininity is built around aspects that purposely sub-serve marriage (Kodoth 2008, p 281). Normative femininity has to do with child-bearing ability, sexual attractiveness, competence in educating kids, healthiness and last but not least fairness of skin. (We have seen that fairness of skin in men was an attribute also requested by women on the marriage market, see interview 4). When marriage is the hegemonic ideology, seen almost as natural as menarche, birth or death, we can talk about it as the most concrete form of normative heterosexuality. Despite marriage in this context not being built around romantic love but rather on an agreement between families, it is still important for the bride to be attractive to the groom and vice versa.

The Project never actually questions the ideology of (heterosexual) marriage. And in The Project Documents marriage is seen as quite unproblematic. Whereas, in the Facilitators’ lives, it seems to be a highly complicated matter causing in many cases a lot of emotional stress. Even so The Facilitators in different ways promote marriage. Even when they advise the girls to first and foremost get a good education and job, they also advise them to get married. Assuming that there must be some girls in The Project with different sexual preferences, or simply having sexual preferences at all (which is norm breaking enough in the context), this advice concerning marriage can be problematic. Instead of helping these girls
The Project can be incorporating itself as part of a system that fosters people into the general norm, actually oppressing those who do not fit in.

### 7.2.2 Making Different People Different

Attitudes held against “The Others” are present in the material; stories of differences produced about certain groups of people. There are two groups of people who do not produce stories about each other. These are the Hindus and the Christians. This special relationship between Hindu and the Christian is also present on a central level in The Sakhi organization where the staff is either from one or the other of these two communities. This tends to suggest that, in the context of The Project, the seat of power is occupied by Hindus and Christians. In this material Tribals and Muslims stand out as most often referred to as “The Others”.

According to Mohanty’s theory it is important to see differences in how gender is created along other axes such as caste, religion, class and age etc. and not just pre-assume that Gender is directly translatable from one society to all. In some cases I think that The Facilitators are thinking along these lines, recognizing that there are differences. For instance it becomes very interesting when The Tribal Facilitator talks about freedom as part of her childhood, and gender inequality as something that went on in the other societies. She also says that sexual harassment played no part in how gender was created in her childhood, while control, inequality and sexual harassment were experienced by all The Facilitators from the other communities. This seems to give credence to the fact that gender is socially created in societies and that for example sexual harassment is not a “natural” phenomenon. These differences experienced by The Facilitators are an asset to The Project. Discussions about these differences should be emphasized, thus helping to create progressive possibilities of revealing the different social constructions of Gender.

But there are the other axes of power to be aware of too. I think it is important that Sakhi draws a line between on the one hand recognizing and being open to these contextual differences between groups and on the other, creating margins and stereotypes based on stories of difference. Different communities have different access to power, and gender lies integrated in those other oppressive systems. If you want to empower women in different contexts you must be open to those contexts and work close them, which generally speaking I think The Project is doing. In the Trivandrum District The Project Centers are placed near to where the girls they are addressing live. However this is not the case in the Tribal settlements, where the girls and Facilitators have to walk a long way to get to their center (Interview 9).
7.2.3 Mothers-Educators-Facilitators

The Facilitators in the Project are all Mothers. We have seen how in this context mothers are educators and protectors of the family honor. The control function of the Mother in society and of the Facilitator in The Project is noticeable on many levels in this material. Of course it should be pointed out that control is not the only function of the mother/Facilitator. It is the mothers that make this Project possible, firstly by the network they form, secondly by allowing (and persuading the fathers to allow) their daughters to participate, and thirdly by as Facilitators being engaged in the work with The Adolescent Project. It could be argued that this Project is promoted, organized, and made successful by mothers caring so much for their daughters that they want to go all this way (despite the hard work and criticism this involves) to equip their daughters with tools to help them cope better with their lives. I am deeply impressed with that. However, the role of The Facilitator/Mother is also problematic, when they function as “doorkeepers” and control the dissemination of information between Sakhi and the adolescents, as in the example of the book “Me and my body”, and also when they admit to using violence as a way to educate children. The risk of the relationship between mother and child, or Facilitator and child becoming oppressive is palpable. Conflicts in concerns of the mother and the Facilitator are also visible in this material, when for instance one mother is worried about if her daughter’s future husband will be able to accept her daughter’s behavior after attending The Adolescent Project. We have also seen important examples of solutions to the problem of anonymity/integrity, when Facilitators have left the room, and by doing so allowing the children to speak freely to doctors about sensitive subjects.

7.3 The Facilitator as a Student

I understand that treating Facilitators as teachers is a strategic way of getting the support needed from the Panchayath. The Anganwadi and ASHA-workers’ responsibilities are close to those of a teacher/educator/informant. One of the main motives for becoming a Facilitator was “wanting to teach” as we have seen above. However, I think that The Adolescent Project would gain from seeing The Facilitators more as students, who on equal terms with the adolescents participate in learning about gender and social hierarchies. Creating a more equal platform would also enable Sakhi and the participants to address those attitudes about for example Gender, age and “The Others” that have come up in this material.
Indicators of Facilitator success could easily be formulated around different aspects of gained knowledge about Gender and social hierarchies. Another equally important motivator for Facilitators to join The Project was “wanting to learn”, as we have seen above. To put emphasis on The Facilitators’ student role would enable Sakhi to better ensure that nobody ran The Adolescent Project who did not agree with the ideas of gender equality. We have seen how at least one Facilitator herself was concerned with how she was supposed to teach Gender equality when she did not “believe in it”. If a certain understanding of Gender is not agreed upon as a “common platform” for The Facilitators, there is a risk that when Sakhi leaves the Panchayaths The Adolescent Project will develop into yet another normative program. Still I must add that education in Gender, like all education, is a process and that process will take time.

7.3.1 Shared Platform

It is when Sakhi, The Facilitators and the adolescents together form a team that I think The Adolescent Project is at its most impressive. When for example The Facilitators in one center respond to the wishes of a girl who wants to learn how to ride a bike with coming up with a program to teach her and everyone else that wants to learn, it becomes visible how that team can lift all of its participants. The Facilitators are challenged and inspired to formulate new ideas, take responsibility and to run The Project. The adolescents are taught to ride that bike and in doing so they improve both their mobility and confidence. The girls and The Facilitators are at the same time having fun; they are forming bonds between one another.

When the adolescents are taught to question the gender structures (and more) The Facilitators are also learning new things. As we have seen, for many Facilitators The Project provides a first introduction to the word Gender. Gender is a term that can allow them to analyze their own situation as well as that of the teenagers.

Askheim talks about ways of establishing counter-power. The sharing of experiences is the first step to take in order to build a common platform upon which as a second step you can act. In this material at least one Facilitator explains how you must become aware of things before you can act on them (interview 7). To become aware of the concept of Gender as cultural norms and expectations placed on people can be a way of discovering and questioning inequalities. It could also make visible new choices for individuals to “act” differently than what is expected of them (girls entering traditionally male spaces for example) and thus cause some dynamic in the hetero-normative system.
Mohanty also calls for such a platform to act from. However she argues that that platform should be placed close to the people who are the most affected by the intersections of the axes of sex, class, sexuality, caste etc. in the fabric of power. She maintains that position is the most beneficial and including (Mohanty 2003, s. 251). In The Project that seems to indicate that the position of the teenager is more important than that of The Facilitator.

The Adolescent Project provides a meeting place for women in different groups and generations. I think it is important to take up the feeling of the younger generation that it is also oppressed (controlled) on the basis of age. This experience tends to be expressed by the girls (like it was in the Two Day Camp in Mangalapuram, see prologue) but perhaps not properly dealt with in The Project when Sakhi continues to give The Facilitators the role of controllers or protectors of the girls (for instance when they leave it up to the Facilitators to decide about whether or not to let the girls read “Me and my body”).

I think that The Project would benefit by treating its participants (Facilitators and Adolescents) more equally. By letting the participants share their experiences as different women and by providing tools for analyses, Sakhi can make proper use of the fact that several generations (and groups) are attending. If you could take The Facilitator out of her fostering role and encourage her to share her own memories of marriage, love and work for example, describing the problems that she has experienced here and then together with the adolescents analyzing them, I think The Project could have a greater effect. Further discussions about power and equality, gender and sexuality are also necessary and could be triggered off if the platform upon which such discussions are built is based on trust and respect.

The meeting between Facilitators and adolescents could in itself become important to the girls. The Facilitators can help and support them in their struggles towards increased confidence and mobility (freedom) in the local societies. According to Askheim’s understanding of empowerment it is by networking and sharing experiences that groups can establish counter-power and thus be a factor taken into account by society. The status that age and position gives The Facilitators is beneficial for the adolescents if The Facilitators’ Gender understanding is used in a progressive way to question and bend the norm system in a more favorable direction for the girls.

8 Conclusions

The conclusions below are formulated around improvements that can be made within the context of The Adolescent Project with regards to The Facilitator’s role. I am convinced that
most Facilitators gain from being in The Project; they learn new things, networking and enhancing their confidence and status in society. I am also convinced that most of them contribute to The Project and thus help to create a positive educational atmosphere for the adolescents. That atmosphere seems to be significant for this Project. The improvements that I suggest here are formulated with the will and ambition to improve an already impressive Project.

The first thing I would like to suggest is that “indicators of success” for The Facilitators should be formulated around their acquired knowledge as well as their ability to organize and teach in The Project. In that way Sakhi can have better control of ensuring that The Project remains progressive and gender sensitive. It might also help The Facilitators’ development to know what is required of them in order to be able to continue working with The Project.

In this study problems have come up with regards to the controlling function of The Facilitator. I would suggest that controlling function to be continuously monitored and kept at a minimum. This would enable Facilitators to participate on more equal terms and thus allow both them and the adolescents to analyze their situations more freely. Another related and important thing is for Sakhi to make sure that the books intended for the adolescents do actually get to them, and are not merely tucked away in the bookshelves of The Facilitators.

When it comes to the placement of Project Centers I think it is important that all of them are established close to where the girls live regardless of how far away that is. It seems that girls and Facilitators from the Tribal areas have to put in a much larger effort to participate in The Project, and it becomes counter-productive to meet people where they don’t want to be met.

On an organizational level I think that contacts should be made with organizations working towards sexual minority groups, for example the Sahayatrika organization based in Kerala (internet 4, 2011), in order to formulate strategies for addressing the issue of different sexualities. The task will be to do that without at the same time frightening parents from letting their girls participate.

Another central issue in The Facilitator role that I think should be dealt with in a conscientious way is that of the relationship between mothers/Facilitators and daughters/adolescents. There is a risk that the presence of mothers limits the girls’ ability to participate fully. We have seen how for example Facilitators had to leave the classroom for the girls to feel comfortable to ask questions about abortion. The mothers control and responsibility goes far beyond that of The Facilitator. Perhaps mothers and daughters should not attend classes in the same Project center?
9 Thoughts on later research

During the work with this study I have come across many interesting topics that could be subjected to later research. To capture the reality of the children in The Adolescent Project and of children and adolescents in general in Kerala it would be interesting to focus studies on them directly, perhaps within the realms of the educational system. Many things within that context could be looked at: Gender and gender specific punishments (as in the case with the boy who got beaten up by his teacher for being too shy), educational forms and ideologies, the relationship experienced between teachers and students for example. In my material the relationship between students and teachers has often been mentioned as an important and complex one. Puberty and adolescence seem to be a critical and important age to focus gender related studies on. During the time I was in Kerala discussions were going on among adults about how children should be protected against ICT (Internet Communication Techniques). To look deeper into the problems and possibilities for adolescents with the internet, how they use it and what it means to them would be very interesting to study with a special focus on control, knowledge, identity, globalization and sexuality.

A very important field for further research concerns attitudes around sexuality and sexualities on different levels in the society. A related topic could be the discussion in the media for and against sexual reproductive health as a general subject in the school syllabus. That question was still being debated in the newspapers during the time I was there.

The Other Backward Community (OBC)-tag could be another interesting subject to explore. How is this label experienced by different communities and what happens between groups (the attitudes and relationships) when one group for example is included in this category and others are not.
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**Interview chart**

Interviews 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9 – Facilitators in the Adolescent Project

Personal communication 1 – Informal interview with Aleyemma Vigayan (11.03.18).

Personal communication 2 – Informal interview, Evaluation meeting at the Sakhi head quarters with external evaluators (11.04.01)

Personal communication 3 – Interview with Praveena Kodoth (11.05.04)

Personal communication 4 – Interview with Sreekala TS (11.05.11)

Personal communication 5 – Interview with Beena Mol (11.05.12)

Personal communication 6 – Interview with Geetha John (11.05.29)

Personal Communication 7 – Interview with Gee Ameena Suleiman (11.05.18)
Appendix 1
Guiding Questions for the Interviews with Facilitators

Background: age, caste, class, religion, work position?
How do you remember your own adolescence? Any special memories, problems?
In the beginning when you just started working with the Life Skill Education Program, can you remember which part of it you thought you would like most?
How did you become active in this project?
What do you think are the main problems that adolescent girls face today?
What advice would you like to give to the adolescent girls in your Panchayath?
How do the girls become active in The Life Skill Education Program? How did you find the girls that you recruited?

What is your role within the program? What do you do? How can a typical day look when you are meeting the adolescents within the program?
How do you think this project can be of importance for the adolescents? Please give examples.
How do you think this project was received by the first group of adolescent girls in your area? Any feed-back from them, problems? drop-outs? Examples?
What has been the most interesting part of this project for you yourself? Was there anything that surprised you about this experience?
How do you feel that the Panchayath and people in the society look upon this project? Are there any organizational obstacles? Any negative social pressure?
Are there any sensitive issues in the program, do you think?
Where I come from gender and questions about sexuality or reproductive health can be sensitive. How was it to talk about such things here in this group? Did you think that the adolescents felt comfortable talking and asking questions during these meetings?
How do you think a group has to work in order to uphold a good level of trust?

Do you think there are other girls in this Panchayath that would benefit from this program, do you think?
Could the reach-out to these girls be improved in some way according to you?
Have you had the support you needed from the Sakhi staff, or do you think there could be any improvements?
Do you want to continue to work with The Life Skill Education Program (after Sakhi has withdrawn)?
What do you think is the most important lesson for next year’s program?
And last but not least: Do you think that the struggle for gender equality important?

Appendix 2
Ethical considerations (to Interviewees)
Please be advised that participation in this evaluation is voluntary. You can at any time during this interview decide to end your participation. The interview is conducted in order to evaluate the Adolescent Project conducted by The Sakhi Resource Center. It is important for the development of the project to evaluate its processes. The evaluation will be based on recorded interviews. In the final product names will be coded in order to protect the integrity of the interviewees. Please note, however, that your anonymity in relation to The Sakhi Resource Center is not guaranteed.

Please note that you can end your participation during the interview. If any material was gathered up until the finalizing of participation this material will not be used in the end product of the evaluation. The recording device can at any time at your will be switched off.

The interview will be transcribed and the material will be treated with highest confidentiality.

Your viewpoint, opinions and feelings is of the highest importance to me as an evaluator.
Thank you so much for participating.

Anna Carrigan
(phone number)
Renu Henri
(phone number)