

**Let's talk about sex: A study of the impact of gender socialization
on urban Shona youth sexuality in Harare, Zimbabwe**

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BY

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ABSTRACT

Over the years, the studying of human sexuality has evolved from being strictly within the biological field, to being an area of interest within the social sciences. Looking at sexuality through a sociological lens in particular allows one to form a platform on which the relationships between culture, opinions about sexuality, sexual activity and good health can be understood.

This study set out to explore the impact of gender socialization on sexual norms and behaviours, and the construction of sexuality amongst Shona speaking youth in Harare. Of particular interest was the level of sexual freedom that young women experience in modern times. Seven group discussions were held from a sample population which included urban, Shona speaking individuals between the ages of 19 and 25.

The results showed that even though the norms passed to the youth through gender socialization sometimes have a limited effect, gender socialization still influences youth sexuality, thus failing to support the researcher's initial assumption that sexual norms and behaviours are no longer influenced by Shona gender roles and norms which are passed to the youth through the socialization process.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

The study of human sexuality has become an important research area in the field of Social Sciences in recent years. This is due to the fact that human sexuality finally became acknowledged as more than a biological phenomenon therefore leading the academic world to open up the area of sexuality research to other academic fields such as sociology (Parker, 2004). Looking at sexuality through a sociological lens is an essential part of understanding the social construction of sexuality and the relationship between sexuality and culture. This is exactly what this study set out to do by exploring changes in how sexuality is constructed amongst the youth in Zimbabwe.

The Zimbabwean youth make up a sizeable proportion of the population and are viewed as being at great risk for contracting sexually transmitted infections or HIV/AIDS due to the barriers in accessing information and health services (YMCA, 2012). According to a report published by the National Aids Council in 2004, adolescents and the youth had the highest HIV incidence in Zimbabwe even though knowledge about HIV was high within these groups (NAC, Ministry of Health and Child Welfare, 2004). Such findings should have raised alarm within the government and encouraged policies that also focus on fighting HIV/AIDS amongst the youth and not just adults, however, this was not the case in this situation. Just as prior government policy documents had done, the 2005 government policy documents showed an unwillingness to accept that young, unmarried people were sexually active (Muparamoto & Chigwenya, 2009). However, as the years have progressed, it seems as though the government has begun to take the issue of youth sexuality seriously as the Zimbabwe National HIV and AIDS Strategic Plans (2006-2010 and 2011-2015) acknowledge the importance of targeting young people in the fight against HIV/AIDS.

The NAC report relied heavily on the 2001-2002 Young Adult Reproductive Health and HIV and AIDS Survey (YAS) conducted in Zimbabwe. This survey was the first and last of its kind. It classified young adults as being between the ages of 15 and 29. The results of the research showed a double digit HIV prevalence rate within this age group, with 72% of the women and 99% of the men admitting to having their first sexual encounter before marriage and yet only 15% of the women and 38% of the men used condoms during their first encounter (Ministry of Health and Child Welfare, Zimbabwe National Family Planning Council, National

AIDS Council & U.S Centres for Disease Control and Prevention, 2002). One can't help but question why there would be such a high percentage of youth engaging in premarital sex in a country in which traditional rules regarding sex are thought to help control youth sexuality. The low level of condom use, especially amongst young women also raises a question of why this is the case when the youth are well informed about HIV prevention strategies. Being a young Zimbabwean woman, I have lived amongst the youth and have borne witness to the shifting attitudes and behaviours, which are often said to be the result of cultural imperialism and corruption by the West. These lay explanations of the changes in youth sexual behaviour ignited a desire within me, to shed light on reality of the situation and hopefully present an answer as to whether or not traditional beliefs and values that used to "police" youth sexuality have lost their significance.

Youth culture in Zimbabwe is not unitary, it "consists of various subcultures based on the geographical and ethnic background" (Nyanga, Mudhovozi, Zirima & Kasayira, 2011: 352). The urban contemporary youth culture and the rural youth culture are viewed as different, with the urban youth presented as more likely to engage in pre-marital sex and openly challenge traditional sexual beliefs as they have greater exposure to different cultures through international media and this plays a significant role in their socialization process (Nyanga, Mudhovozi, Zirima & Kasayira, 2011). Although I believe this is a reasonable argument it would be wrong to ignore the fact that the youth in rural areas also do engage in premarital sex for a variety of reasons just as the urban youth do. These two groups are therefore not completely different such that there would be no areas of overlap should a research study look at the construction of sexuality by the youth in both groups. The view that the youth in urban areas are more likely to engage in premarital sex is in fact also greatly driven by lay perceptions and the idea that detribalization through the exposure to urban living and modernity leads to the breaking down of the "cultural immune system" and the "infection" of people by Western values and Western constructions of sexuality (Epprecht, 2004: 185).

I chose to specifically focus on urban, Shona youth for a variety of reasons. Firstly, the Shona are the largest ethnic group in Zimbabwe, making up approximately 82% of the population (Encyclopedia of Nations: 2014). It is my opinion that the urban youth's sexual activities are more visible as compared to that of the rural youth. As a result, a lot of the research on youth sexuality in Zimbabwe focuses on the urban youth. Studying the urban Shona youth

would therefore make an interesting project as there is a significant amount of information with which to compare findings, thus helping to give a clear picture of the changes that have occurred in regards to the construction of urban youth sexuality. Secondly, although I found a significant amount of information on the construction of sexuality amongst the Shona, I was unable to find any evidence of research that focused on the differences in perceptions of sexuality held by males and females in Zimbabwe, this acted as another motivating factor for me to carry out this particular study as understanding these perceptions could possibly give insight into the gendered practices, or other factors that either push individuals to engage in risky sexual behaviours or motivate them to strive for sexual health. In addition to filling a knowledge gap and encouraging more research that looks closely at the construction of sexual relationships amongst the youth in contemporary Zimbabwe, the research findings can potentially be used to find new ways of promoting sexual responsibility amongst both males and females.

This chapter defines key concepts, sets the research within the Zimbabwean context, and also introduces the research aims.

1.2 Gender and sexuality

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), sexuality is present throughout life and “encompasses sex, gender identities and roles, sexual orientation, eroticism, pleasure, intimacy and reproduction” (2006a). As stated earlier, sexuality is more than a biological phenomenon, in fact, sexuality is influenced by the interaction of biological (e.g. hormones), sociocultural (e.g. norms) and psychological factors (McAnulty & Burnette, 2006). Sexuality is therefore a key aspect of being human and a core component of gender relations and individual identity that is “experienced and expressed in thoughts, fantasies, desires, beliefs, attitudes, values, behaviours, practices, roles and relationships” (McAnulty & Burnette, 2006: ix; WHO, 2006a, Epprecht, 2004).

In the past, sex, gender and sexual orientation were “conceived and applied in tight relation to each other both intellectually and normatively” (Valdes, 1995: 4). The term gender is used to depict masculine and feminine characteristics which are socially and culturally constructed categories that are fluid and based on subjective meanings that are produced through actions (Courtenay, 2000). The sex/gender/sexuality system coined by Rubin (1984)

and Butler's heterosexual matrix both show the way in which culture forges links between biological sex, social gender and sexual attraction by constructing gender as an elaboration upon biological sex (Kang, 2012; Tracey, 2007). Although the conflation of sex, gender and sexuality is no longer seen as valid, these systems are particularly useful when addressing societies, such as Zimbabwe, in which this conflation still occurs thus promoting an androsexist and heteronormative status quo, the combination of which Valdes (1995) would refer to as hetero-patriarchy. Researching human sexuality within such a context therefore requires an exploration of gender too, lest the research findings end up "flat, empty and morose" (Tamale, 2011: 11).

Butler's heterosexual matrix "underlies performances of sex, gender and sexuality" (Tracey, 2007: 5) and can be used to explain the heteronormative status quo in Zimbabwe. According to the matrix, gender is exclusively deduced and assigned (by society) based on sex, i.e. one's gender is determined by one's sex, meaning a male should be masculine whilst a woman is feminine. Gender is then inextricably linked to sexuality as an individual's sexual orientation is expected to amount to the sexual performance of his/her gender. In such a reality, desire is strictly heterosexual as this fits in with the sex/gender system (Tracey, 2007; Valdes, 1996). This argument goes hand in hand with Rubin's sex/gender/sexuality system.

1.3 Sexuality in Zimbabwe

Sexuality within Zimbabwe is highly politicised and is at the centre of the tension faced between modernity and tradition, or what Mathury (2000) would call 'the alien' and 'the authentic'. For the purposes of this research, modernity refers to societal characteristics that are often associated with the Western world, such as individualism and the presence of free will, choice, mobility and progression of society as a whole. Tradition on the other hand is used to refer to societal characteristics that have been passed down from generation to generation and are often associated with rural societies such as interdependence, harmony and group welfare, religious values and filial piety (the respect of one's parents, elders and ancestors) (Wafula, 2011).

According to African Renaissance literature, the post-colony distinction between tradition and modernity is an uneasy one as "the post-colony is necessarily implicated in both sides of

the divide”, that is to say the post-colony has stakes on both sides (Mathury, 2000: 2). This results in paradoxical post-colonial nationalist discourses which simultaneously defend both tradition and modernity as “The emergent post-colonial nation must posit itself as the vehicle for the economic and cultural progress – as the agent of modernity. Simultaneously, it must represent itself as the custodian of the fixed 3 identities conferred on it by (an imagined) pre-colonial past – as the repository of tradition” (Hoad, 1998: 33). As a result of this, as the post-colony looks forward to what the future brings, the past is also held onto through ‘traditions’ which are claimed to have existed before colonialism and outside of it through resistance to colonial rule. Tradition is therefore always presented as an essential part of recreating a national identity and “reconstructing the nation as having always resisted the alien intruder, maintaining its ‘sovereignty’ despite its occupation and rule by the colonial power” (Mathury, 2000: 3). However, in reality, some of these so called traditional beliefs have Christian/Western origins as shall be discussed in a later section, secondly many people often find it hard to comprehend the simultaneous existence of the traditional and the modern (Mathury, 2000).

According to Taylor, acultural theories of modernity often view the move towards modernity as a process during which traditional beliefs and allegiances are lost as mobility and urbanization “erode the beliefs and reference points of relatively static rural society” (1995: 25). These acultural theories form part of commonly held beliefs that development is brought about through the demise of tradition, thus leading to the rise of the modern (Taylor, 1995). This idea is often shared by lay people who view the move towards modernity as a threat to their traditions and beliefs, which are the very essence of their identity, not only as Africans but as Zimbabweans. This idea can be used to explain the conflict between the modern and the traditional in Zimbabwe.

As stated before, sexuality is an area in which conflict occurs between the old and the new, that is, the traditional and the modern. This conflict manifests itself through intergenerational conflict where older generations fight to keep traditional beliefs and allegiances whilst the youth refuse to hold on to some of these beliefs and instead want the older generation to recognise and accept new values (Wafula, 2011). In this case it is an issue of the older generations wanting to maintain traditional beliefs regarding sexual norms such as the emphasis on heterosexuality, the avoidance of speaking about sexual matters as they are taboo, and the belief in sex occurring only within a marriage, versus the youth with their ideas of talking openly about sexual matters and the freedom of choice (Muparamoto

& Chigwenya, 2009). The tension between traditional (African) beliefs and modern (Western) beliefs can be traced back to the tense relationships between African states and the West throughout history (Essien & Aderinto, 2009).

In Zimbabwe beliefs regarding sexuality are also deeply embedded within the religious and 'traditional' systems and this has made it very difficult for sexual freedom to flourish as this is viewed as being linked to the corrupt ways of the West. The effect of the three platforms (i.e. traditional, political and religious platforms) contributes to the conservative nature of the Zimbabwean government, which supports the 'traditional' beliefs that underlie the nation's attitudes and legislation concerning sexuality (Gunda, 2010).

The heteronormative status quo in Zimbabwe results in heterosexuality alone being accepted as being 'right' and natural. The Zimbabwean president (who is Shona) sees the government as being the "protector of society's moral values" (cited in Gunda, 2010: 179), and is therefore publically opposed to legalizing homosexuality, which he and the majority of the nation view as foreign, unnatural, un-African and an indication of "Western cultural infiltration and imperialism" (Essien & Aderinto, 2009: 122). It can therefore be argued that gay and lesbian rights in countries like Zimbabwe are viewed as "a legacy of colonialism and as facilitating a new identity-form that threatens national values" (Hoad 2007 cited in Togarasei & Chitando, 2011: 122). Based on this belief, Aarmo (1999: 255) suggests that the construction of homosexuality as un-African by those in power is "an attempt to reinforce a national identity constructed by means of culture", a culture which in this case is dependent on a symbolic heritage that is built on a shared language, religion or custom and traditions that are central to the nation as a whole.

Research conducted on sexuality within Zimbabwe shows rigidity not only in views regarding sexual orientation but also in views concerning the regulation of sexual activities amongst heterosexuals. Lay people seem to particularly take pride in presenting the Shona as a group which values traditional beliefs regarding sexuality. By placing emphasis on the positive impact of these traditional beliefs and behaviour, the Shona culture is glorified whilst actively condemning the evils associated with Western civilization. For example, premarital sex is forbidden by the Shona and a young woman's virginity was a politically, economically and socially valuable asset as virginity increased a young woman's chances at a

upwardly mobile marriage and also resulted in the parents receiving an additional gift upon her marriage as a man had to earn the right to taking the woman's virginity by "paying" for it through the giving of a token of appreciation (as part of the bride price) to her parents once they have agreed for him to marry their daughter (Epprecht, 2004; Kambarami, 2006). This token was in the form of a cow, which was referred to as *mombe yechimhanda*. In situations where an unmarried girl became pregnant, the girl's family could sue the boy's family for loss of virginity and damages (Gunda, 2010). These practices were said to discourage premarital sex amongst the youth as the husband's family could verify the young woman's virginity by checking the bed sheets for blood after the couple's first sexual encounter. If the girl was found to not be a virgin it would bring shame on her family as the husband's relatives would send a broken clay pot or a sheet with a hole in the middle to the young woman's family. This was an indication of the family's failure to raise a "good" daughter who held onto the traditional values and did not engage in premarital sex. The public shaming linked to such a situation could potentially lower a family's social standing. The bride price also decreased as the girl's family did not receive *mombe yechimhanda*, and to top this off the groom's family could also negotiate a lower bride price as the girl was said to show "a potentially dangerous streak of disrespect for her elders" (Epprecht, 2004). The improving of a family's social and economic standing was therefore dependent on the family's ability to instil a sense of duty and respect within the young women and also the family's ability to keep a close eye on them, ensuring that they remained virgins until they were married (Epprecht, 2004).

Although these practices are no longer common in contemporary Zimbabwe, they are still glorified and encouraged by older generations as they are said to discourage the presence of sexual permissiveness, which is associated with the West. In some areas in Zimbabwe, the practicing of virginity testing before marriage has even been revived (Chirawu, 2008).

Virginity tests involve physical examination usually using fingers, to find out whether the girl's hymen is still intact. Although virginity testing was traditionally practiced as an effort to maintain social norms regarding premarital sex, the practice re-emerged in recent times not only as a method of encouraging compliance to traditional norms but also a method with which to combat HIV/AIDS. Virginity testing is no longer only practiced within

sanctioned gatherings as it was done traditionally, in current times testing can be conducted in homes, schools or even churches by mothers, aunts, other relatives or even prospective husbands and neighbours (Integrated Regional Information Networks, 2004).

Religion, in the form of Christianity, plays an important role in all this by further solidifying the political and traditional sexual values, based on the biblical beliefs that both homosexuality and premarital sex are sins (Gunda, 2010). Christianity also helped establish silence around issues of sexuality. It is within this context of silence and strict rules regarding sexual activities that the youth are growing and breaking free from some the values and beliefs that the older generations are trying to pass on. I will at this point take the time to emphasise that the purpose of this project is not to suggest that 'tradition' is 'African' and therefore bad and 'modernity' is 'Western' and therefore good, or even something that all societies should strive to achieve. Instead, I believe that both African and Western cultures have their strong and weak points when it comes to addressing youth sexuality. For many young girls, intrapersonal tension may therefore arise because of the temptation to engage in pre-marital sex instead of honouring the "culturally cultivated attitudes and norms" (Kambarami, 2006: 4).

It is evident that in such an environment it is likely that women have a limited amount of control of their sexuality (Gunda, 2010). However, one must also take into account women's agency and their ability to resist certain practices and expectations. In Zimbabwe, this resistance sometimes goes beyond a single woman taking a stand for herself as resistance is sometimes organized into social groups which can be formal such as Non-Governmental Organizations that fight for women's sexual and reproductive rights or informal groups made up of members of society coming together to put pressure against the larger society to acknowledge women's rights to choose how to dress and what to do with their bodies. It is not only women who engage in such activities. For example, the Students and Youth Working on reproductive Health Action Team (SAYWHAT) has recently started a campaign (backed by male and females) against gender based violence, including all forms of sexual assault, whilst citizens of Zimbabwe came together earlier this year in a protest (mostly using social media) against members of the public who jeer at, beat and strip young women who they believed to be provocatively dressed.

1.4 Research Overview

This research focused on the effect of gender socialization on the expression of sexuality, the acquiring of sexual norms and the subsequent sexual behaviours of urban youth in Zimbabwe. The experience of sexuality itself is a complex one that is produced in historical contexts and includes many aspects such as the negotiation of safe sex practices and the balancing of factors that motivate or deter an individual from engaging in sexual activity (di Mauro, 1995). The question to address here was to what extent these aspects are influenced by one's primary socialization process.

Although gender role socialization occurs throughout one's entire life, I was interested in the effects of the socialization process that occurs from childhood to the period where individuals are considered to be young adults.

The following research question was posed: "What are the gender constructions around sexuality amongst Shona speaking university students in Zimbabwe? More specifically, how do they understand their gender socialization and what influence do they perceive it exerts on their sexual attitudes and behaviours?"

This question was addressed by placing emphasis on a number of important areas that are indicated by the following secondary questions:

1. According to the participants, what are the predominant gender roles promoted by the Shona?
2. What is the perceived impact of social and cultural rules learnt in childhood on the current, individual expression of sexuality and the construction of sexual norms/scripts?
3. Do gendered constructions of female and male sexuality enable or undermine sexual health amongst the youth?
4. Do youth attitudes, beliefs, values and behaviours align with the traditional viewpoints passed on through gender socialization?

The interview schedule was constructed based on the first three questions posed above as the last question was used as more of a guide to the summarizing of the findings and their presentation within the concluding chapter.

1.5 Chapter Outline

This research report has five chapters including this introductory chapter. Below is a brief outline of the following chapters.

Chapter 2 presents relevant literature on gender and sexual socialization in Zimbabwe. The literature looks at both historical and modern writings which helps give the reader a clear understanding of how the Shona have approached issues surrounding sex and sexuality over the years.

Chapter 3 outlines the research methodology and takes a closer look at data collection methods, challenges faced during the data collection process and also the methods used in the analysis of the findings.

Chapter 4 presents the research findings along with an analysis of these findings. The key findings are then brought together in Chapter 5 which acts as a conclusion to the report by outlining whether the research objectives were met.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

Within any given environment there exists a diverse range of approaches to, and experiences of sexuality. These differences are due to the fact that personal experience interacts with social norms and culture therefore creating differences in how each person defines, feels, perceives and interprets his/her sexuality. Even though this is the case, colonial writers isolated and reified a homogenous African sexuality which equated both male and female sexuality with primitiveness and immorality as they were perceived to be lascivious and “bordering on nymphomania” (Tamale, 2011: 15). Both African men and women were noted as being “the peril to white sexual and reproductive health” (Becker, 2001) as the women were characterised as sexually available disease carriers whilst the men were presented as rapists.

The misrepresentation of African sexualities continued into the early 20th century with Western anthropologists viewing them as exotic and backward (Tamale, 2011). By claiming that there was a homogenous African sexuality, these writers failed to acknowledge “the richness and diversity of African peoples’ heritage and experiences” (Tamale, 2011: 1). For example, within Zimbabwe, youth attitudes towards sexuality differ between and within ethnic groups. The Ndebele (second largest ethnic group) youth are said to be more likely to engage in premarital sex and risky sexual activities as compared to the Shona. Furthermore, amongst the Ndebele, the rural youth are more likely to cheat and engage in risky sexual behaviour as compared to the urban youth (Sambisa, Curtis & Stokes, 2009).

Speaking of a type of sexuality held by the Shona, as I do in this report could give the impression of a failure to acknowledge the differences within this ethnic group but the reference to Shona sexuality within this project is not an indication of one generalized sexuality within this ethnic group as I am aware of the problems associated with such a claim. The reference to a type of sexuality held by the Shona is used only to highlight certain aspects of cultural ideology that seem to be shared by most Shona people.

2.2 Tradition, Sexuality and the Shona

Understanding and conceptualizing tradition and modernity comes with a number of difficulties. These two are often presented as binary oppositions in a “linear theory of social

change” (Gusfield, 1967: 351), which suggests that tradition is necessarily weakened or even completely displaced by modernity thus moving towards a single global society. This is a viewpoint I do not agree with as I believe that both traditional and modern characteristics can be present within a society at the same time. This belief is based on the argument that contemporary society is the result of the progression within different civilizations that have their own specific cultural beliefs and practices (Taylor, 1995). I also support Oommen’s (2001) argument that the idea of all societies progressing from being primitive to being modern, (through the displacement of characteristics associated with the traditional society and replacing them with modern characteristics) in a unilinear manner is untenable because total and impartial displacement of traditional beliefs, values and practices is impossible. The process of displacement also differs from society to society meaning “what is displaced in one society is not necessarily displaced in another society” (Wafula, 2011: 135). It’s therefore possible for a society to be classified as modern/ civilized yet there are some traditional characteristics that were not displaced during the modernization process.

For the purposes of this research, tradition is taken as an ideal as it is used in this sense by most writers whose literature will be referred to throughout the research project. These writers, for example, Kambarami (2006) and Shoko (2007) speak of a *Shona* culture, which is complex in the sense that ‘traditional’ and ‘modern’ customs coexist within the cultural practices. Tradition and modernity are therefore viewed as two sides of the same coin. Secondly, when I use the term tradition I refer to only those beliefs and practices that have been passed from generation to generation since tradition became framed within a colonial discourse, i.e. those traditions that came about as a result of cultural hybridity. Lastly, I am of the opinion that tradition does not necessarily have a negative effect on people’s sexual and reproductive health as has been often suggested by the Western idea of harmful cultural/traditional practices. In some cases tradition is actually drawn on as a tool to assist in adjusting to the modern world, which is characterized by industrialization, capitalism and globalization. Based on these characteristics, Zimbabwe can indeed be classified as a modern society with its own culture in which traditional social and cultural values still exist, and are valued by a significant proportion of the adult population (Taylor, 1995). However, we must also remember to acknowledge the effect that the religion of the colonizers (i.e. Christianity) had on traditional Shona beliefs.

2.2.1 Colonization and the 'evolution' of tradition

The documented history of Zimbabwe dates back to pre-colonial times, but not much information is available regarding the culture of the Zimbabwean people before the “arrival of the white government in the country in 1890” (Gelfand, 1965: 180). However, from the little information that was available from writings of the colonizers, some scholars concluded that in pre-colonial times, the Shona were aware of the existence of homosexual activities but these were usually veiled/not openly discussed and were only condoned amongst traditional healers who were said to be possessed by an ancestral spirit of the opposite sex, as the gender of the ancestral spirit was said to outweigh the biological gender (Morgan & Reid, 2003). Heterosexual sex on the other hand was viewed in a positive light and there were also educational structures which regulated sexuality and reproduction as individuals transitioned from childhood to adulthood (Maunze, 2009: 44; Chikovore, Nystrom, Lindmark & Ahlberg, 2013).

Sex was viewed as pleasurable and all women were expected to submit to male desire or risk being kidnapped or ‘eloped’ (Epprecht, 1998: 634). This was also true in the colonial era where these practices were considered legitimate and were sometimes even carried out with the help of the girl’s family if the girl refused to conform to heterosexual norms or submit to male desire. In extreme cases where a young girl proved to be recalcitrant, for example by admitting or showing she was attracted to members of the same sex, her family and even the community as a whole sometimes condoned forced and violent sexual intercourse with the girl (Epprecht, 1998). This is referred to as corrective rape. As Christianity became more influential within the lives of the Shona, the social construction of sex as pleasurable became viewed as a sign of promiscuity and a lack of civilization, strong morals and values (Pattman, 2001). Talking about sex therefore became constructed as shameful and taboo as Christian values became incorporated into Shona beliefs, therefore creating what is referred to (in post-colonial discourse) as cultural hybridity (Chikovore, 2004).

According to Cohen and Kennedy (2000: 377), cultural hybridity refers to “the creation of dynamic mixed cultures”. In Zimbabwe’s case cultural hybridity initially occurred through “the mingling of cultural signs and signals of the colonising and colonised cultures,

producing...‘something familiar but new’” (Chikovore, 2004: 13). The resultant cultural identities were “not fixed, but poised, in transition, between different positions; which draw on different cultural traditions at the same time; and which are the product of these complicated crossovers and cultural mixes” (Hall, 1992: 310). In this case, although sex became constructed in a negative light, some pre-colonial customs and beliefs were still held on to such as the elongation of the labia minora. This practice was seen by some as a rite of passage into womanhood that prepared one for sexual intercourse and led to increased sexual pleasure. The stretching itself involved the use of oils and crèmes to manually stretch the labia minora and sometimes the clitoris too. Traditionally, young girls would start stretching their labia before they had their first menstrual cycle and their paternal aunts, grandparents or peers would give instructions of how this was done (Perez, Aznar & Namulondo, 2007).

The educational structure also did not completely disappear even though talking about sex became taboo, instead, sexual education remained in the form of group discussions but moved from the public sphere and became a private matter that was discussed only in certain settings. At the time, compounds were set up in such a way that extended family members lived together and this allowed for aunts and uncles to bring the youth together and discuss issues of sex and sexuality. The uncles would talk to the males whilst the aunts spoke to the females. The family therefore acted as a source of social control in regards to youth sexuality (Gelfand, 1976).

Unfortunately, colonial interventions such as urbanization began to change the set up of the family structure as mobility increased. Extended families were split apart as some family members migrated to urban areas and this led to the breakdown of the environment in which sexual socialization generally occurred, thus leaving a void in relation to sexual education and socialization. The nuclear family was left with no one to carry out the sexual socialization as parents had been socialized to believe that talking about sex was taboo and it was not their duty to do so. This has led to the modern day situation where Zimbabwe has, like most African societies, a ‘culture of silence’ when it comes to issues of sex (Mutema, 2013). Along with these problematic changes in family structures, the economic and political changes brought about by colonization resulted in changes in gender orders and sexuality

amongst the Shona. The introduction of colonial policies such as land alienation led to the forced ceasing of rotational farming which was linked to specific definitions of what it meant to be a man or a woman, and the roles which were expected of each gender as both sexes took part in the farming process. As cultivable land became scarce, men were forced into the role of breadwinner which often meant they had to migrate to cities, leaving their wives and families behind for a chance to immerse themselves in the cash economy so they could continue to take care of their families. Traditional structures and roles which allowed for land ownership by women also crumbled as colonial policies called for the registration of land or property to be in a man's name. This increased women's dependence on men as women's control over food production and distribution became non-existent (Chikovore, 2004). Political and economic changes facilitated "the emergence of new expressions of sexuality including heterosexual female prostitution" and encouraged female assertiveness and individualism as sexual favours could also be exchanged for food and accommodation (Epprecht, 2004: 183).

South Africa is another example of an African country in which colonization had a negative effect on cultural practices and beliefs regarding sexuality. In fact, the history of sexual socialization in South Africa has some similarities to that of Zimbabwe. In pre-colonial South Africa, sex was also viewed as a natural part of life and structures were in place that educated the youth regarding sexual matters and also controlled youth sexuality. Looking specifically at the Pedi (major ethnic group), sexual play amongst young children was seen as non-threatening whilst the Xhosa valued sexual gratification at all ages and allowed for sexual exploration and limited/external sexual intercourse during which the male did not fully penetrate the female as full-on premarital sex was forbidden. As colonial settlers increased in numbers and spread their religious beliefs, some of the locals converted to Christianity. Pre-existing forms of sexual socialization were abandoned, ultimately, the cultural practices and beliefs that helped control youth sexuality such as limited intercourse were lost as sex became constructed based on Christian beliefs and Victorian prudery (Delius & Glaser, 2002). Sex therefore became an adult-only domain that was shrouded in secrecy and full abstinence was expected amongst the youth. The legacy of colonialism is still visible as in current times the youth in both South Africa and Zimbabwe are left in the dark when it comes to sexual matters as there is an "inter-generational silence on sexual matters" (Delius & Glaser, 2002: 38). Even though this is the case, as the world becomes

more and more globalized the youth are beginning to fight for the adoption of what can be referred to as post-modern views on sexuality. These views acknowledge youth sexuality and the fact that young, unmarried people can and are engaging in sexual activities and therefore need to be well equipped with information regarding their sexual and reproductive health. This has led to a situation where the older generation is holding onto beliefs that came about as a legacy of Christianity whilst the younger generation fights for new ways of thinking that are associated with the modern/post-modern Western culture.

It is within this 'new'/ 'evolving' hybrid context that the Shona youth are sexually active. Parents and communities have constructed different ways of addressing the increase in sexual activity amongst the youth, for example the reinstatement of virginity testing in some areas and the infliction of violence on young girls if it becomes known by their family that they are sexually active (Chikovore, 2004). These responses are ways in which some parts of society are attempting to bring back social control over youth sexuality in a time where cultural imperialism seems to be taking over traditional beliefs that present premarital sex as taboo. Walker, Reid and Cornell would argue that in some respects this "desire to retain and recreate past traditions is a symptom of disempowerment and the fragmentation and disintegration of traditional society" (2004: 76), with the high rates of sexual and reproductive health problems being a symptom of society's failure to adapt to the situation. This context leads to a situation where adolescents rely on other (sometimes unreliable) sources of information such as peers, siblings and the internet when it comes to answering questions they may have regarding sexual matters (Mutema, 2013). It is therefore important to investigate the process of sexual socialization and uncover the beliefs held by the youth regarding sex, along with who they perceive to be the most influential socialization agents when it comes to sexual matters.

2.3 Gender and Sexual Socialization

Gender socialization refers to the way in which gender appropriate behaviour is taught and learnt, thus allowing individuals to fit into their society. Gender socialization begins at birth and continues throughout one's life. Families, especially parents, play a central role in infancy and early childhood gender socialization (Strong & Cohen, 2014). According to Martin and Luke, "parents hold strong gender norms for even their very young children and

work to socialize them in accordance with normative gender expectations” (2008: 279). This holds true in the context of the Shona where individuals are socialized into sexually differentiated roles from infancy.

Theoretically, once children have begun the gender socialization process, they begin to identify with a specific gender and their gender identity is then expressed through gender-role behaviour and gender specific behaviour (Ehrhardt, 2000). Although conformity may be flexible in earlier years, as children enter late childhood/adolescence, conformity to gender roles becomes more characteristic (Aarmo, 1999; Strong & Cohen, 2014). One of the ways in which gender socialization takes place within the Zimbabwean context is through the playing of childhood games like *mahumbwe*, where children learn to take on the roles of a ‘real’ man or a ‘real’ woman as male and female children are allowed to pair off and pretend to be a married couple. The husband plays the traditional male whilst the wife is the ‘home-maker’ (Gunda, 2010).

2.3.1 Gender Socialization amongst the Shona

In current times, Shona children are still socialized according to the traditional male and female roles. Male children are “socialized to view themselves as breadwinners and heads of households whilst females are taught to be obedient and submissive” (Kambarami, 2006). By the time they reach adulthood, qualities that are therefore expected of cultured (Shona) women would be submissiveness, passiveness, gentleness and the desire to always please men (Materike, 2010). These patriarchal attitudes decrease women’s freedom as they leave room for male domination. Furthermore the notion of the man as the head of the family can sometimes result in situations where the man makes all the decisions, even those that affect his wife’s sexual and reproductive health as the man decides whether or not condoms are used. Along with this decision making power, traditionally women are not expected to resist their husband’s sexual advances as its seen as his right to have his sexual wants satisfied (Motsi, Banda & Mabvurira, 2012). The paying of the bride price by the man’s family could also result in the idea that the man has the right to regard his wife as his property (Chirawu, 2008).

The socialization process that occurs mainly within families therefore perpetuates patriarchal attitudes as they 'teach' individuals to accept sexually differentiated roles where women are viewed as sexual beings whose purpose is to be obedient, submissive and use their sexuality to please males in the form of their husbands (Kambarami, 2006). It is therefore no surprise that a large number of Shona women, especially those who are married are unable to negotiate condom use or leave cheating partners (Chimbandi, 2014). As true as this may be, these arguments fail to take into account women's agency in choosing their partners and the possibility of them accommodating and even in some cases helping to construct these gender differences by 'choosing' to surrender to their men as a way of giving cultural meaning to their lives and these relationships (Jewkes & Morrell, 2012). Another way in which women can move away from seeing themselves as victims of patriarchy is by negotiating respect and non-violence within their relationships whilst still accommodating men's power. Even though women's freedom is constrained they are not necessarily passive and they actively "negotiate their sexuality under conditions of patriarchal inequality" (Jewkes & Morrell, 2012: 1730).

Interestingly, the gender identities which are often referred to as 'traditional' in post-colonial discourse were actually "promulgated by the missionaries in the first half of the 20th century" (Arnfred, 2005: 14). For example, the idea of women being passive when it comes to sexual intercourse can be traced back to Christianity as the pre-colonial Shona women were encouraged to use their bodies to please their husbands, the elongation of the labia being one of the ways in which this was done. The effect of Christianity on traditional beliefs and practices therefore serves as proof that traditions/cultures are fluid and are constantly evolving in accordance with changing circumstances (Walker, Reid & Cornell, 2004).

The concept of gender can therefore be used in the Zimbabwean context not only to analyse "the relationship between male and female experiences in the past but also the connection between past history and current historical practice" (Scott, 1986: 1055). In this case, one can argue that the traditional attitudes that are passed on during socialization may act as barriers to the open discussion of issues surrounding sexuality and sexual health (Ehrhardt, 2000).

2.3.2 Sexual Socialization amongst the Shona

In many societies, parents are significantly involved when it comes to teaching their children about sexuality. This form of sexual education is referred to as sexual socialization, which is a life-long process that begins in childhood. Sexual socialization can be formally defined as “the process through which young people learn and internalize sexual knowledge, attitudes, skills, norms and expectations for sexual relationships” (L’Engle & Jackson, 2008: 355). Sexual socialization amongst the Shona, usually doesn’t involve the parents as “culturally parents are not at liberty to discuss sex with their own children” (Mungwini & Matereke, 2010). Aunts and uncles are viewed as the appropriate people to take the lead in addressing issues of sex amongst the young of their own lineage.

In the past, sexuality training within some Shona groups would last for about two weeks with the aunts instructing the girls on sexual matters whilst the uncles instructed the boys (Gelfand, 1967). In some areas the practice of *chinamwari* was also held. According to Biri (2011) *chinamwari* was a form of sex education targeted at young men and women who had reached the age to marry. It included cultural rituals and initiation rites. For the young women, cultural rituals included older women taking on a male role that involved “having sex” with younger women to teach them the ways in which they should act and how they should perform so as to please their husbands during sexual intercourse. This training would continue until the elder was satisfied with the young woman’s performance i.e. the younger women’s perceived ability to please her husband. This was not viewed as a lesbian act as the reason behind it was to educate the younger women. On the other hand, the male initiation included practices like fertility tests and did not include an emphasis on how to please their wives sexually. This again shows how Shona patriarchy put male sexual needs on a pedestal (Biri, 2011).

In modern times the African (Zimbabwean) child is in a disadvantaged position when it comes to acquiring knowledge regarding their sexuality as urbanization has led to the movement and separation of families. What used to be tight knit connections have now broken down in many cases and aunts and uncles can no longer play the main role in children’s sexual socialization. Scholars such as Mungwini and Matereke (2010) have argued that it is unfortunate that Shona parents have not stepped up to the plate to carry this responsibility as the majority hold on to the belief that it is inappropriate for them to do so.

Parents who do discuss sexual matters with their children tend to do so in a unidirectional and authoritative manner where they give warnings rather than opening up the topic to discussion (Mutema, 2013). In some cases the approach could also be indirect and ambiguous thus leaving room for confusion or misinterpretation of the message. This in itself is a part of the sexual socialization process as from parental behaviours and approaches to sexuality children learn that it is taboo to talk about sex and sex is only appropriate amongst adults. It is however important to note that sexual socialization is a multidirectional process whereby children do not just accept what they are being taught, they also pose questions (Martin & Luke, 2010). It is no surprise that young people would turn to other sources of information such as friends and the internet. The media and peers therefore sometimes play a stronger role in sexual socialisation than family units, especially the parents (Mutema, 2013). The resulting beliefs and attitudes regarding one's sexuality play an important role in the construction of sexual scripts.

2.4 Scripting Theory

Scripting theory is rooted in two theoretical approaches, namely, symbolic interaction and social construction (Maticka-Tyndale *et al*, 2005). Social scripts are stereotyped patterns of interaction that govern behaviours and the meanings that are attached to the behaviours (Hynie, Lyndon, Cote & Weiner, 1998). They are learnt through watching how others act in particular situations, through societal institutions (e.g. the law and specific laws that forbid same sex practices), and through the images depicted through mass media (Weiderman, 2005). Individuals are expected to always adhere to the accepted social script. It is therefore fitting that sexual behaviour should also follow a particular script within a culture.

Sexual scripts are guidelines that are responsible for shaping sexual attitudes including factors such as how individuals define their roles in sexual interaction, an individual's comfort with his/her sexuality and the norms of sexual interactions such as the sequence of events and the type of acceptable behaviours within the interaction (Parsons, 1983). Early on in life, parents play a key role in shaping the development of sexual scripts but as children grow other factors such as the media and peers also begin to affect the scripts (Strong & Cohen, 2014).

Gender socialization plays a key role in determining male and female scripts of sexual behaviour as individuals learn the “appropriate, legitimate and acceptable” (Strong & Cohen, 2014: 183) sexual behaviour for their gender. Sexual scripts determine how behaviour is managed within heterosexual relations. When males and females enter situations that have the potential to become sexual, scripts are used as a way of understanding the situation, providing meaning to the interaction and they also determine the appropriate way in which the individuals involved can respond to the sexual cues (Phetla, 2007; Weideman, 2005). Male and female scripts often overlap and complement each other therefore reducing anxiety in a situation as each individual knows what to expect from the other. Due to the fact that likely motivators for actions are translated through complementary scripts, two different scripts that do not complement each other can cause tension to arise (Weideman, 2005).

There are many sexual scripts, some would even go as far as saying there are an infinite number as each script can be modified. However, only a small number of sexual scripts are used regularly and can be referred to as the dominant scripts (Maticka-Tyndale, et al., 2005). The traditional sexual script in most societies is that men initiate sexual advances and women set the boundaries therefore taking on the role of ‘gatekeepers’ who can accept or decline advances (Phetla, 2007). This gatekeeper role is particularly important for women who have a relationship-centred sexual script where relationships act as incentives for sexual intercourse (Weideman, 2005). This role helps protect the women from gaining a bad reputation. The woman also decreases the risk of having hurt feelings by avoiding interactions where the man is mostly driven by the pleasure-seeking goal which can be explained by bodily-centred male scripts that present sexual stimulation and physical sexual pleasure as isolated from emotions (Weideman, 2005).

Research conducted in the United States in the 1990s showed that “both women and men expect men to be the initiators most of the time” and men tend to control the interaction (Ehrhardt, 2000: 12). These findings surprisingly correspond with the male and female expectations in Zimbabwe where hegemonic heterosexual script tends to exist. According to this dominant script, Shona males are expected to pursue the females and initiate sexual relationships/encounters and the Shona women are not expected to have a stronger sex

drive than their male counterparts or to express their desires verbally (Maparamoto, 2012; Motsi, Banda & Mabvurira, 2012). In fact women are encouraged not to be open about their sexual desires at all as a cultured woman is expected to “exercise self control in both her desires and instincts” (Shoko, 2007: 21). The use of the word ‘instincts’ paints a picture of the woman as having a primitive and uncontrollable sexuality thus emphasising the negative construction of women’s sexuality. Such viewpoints are no longer valid within the social sciences and feminists would argue against this negative construction as it is discriminatory. Even though this is the case, there is still the attempt to control women’s sexuality within the contemporary Shona society. If women attempt to go against their script by demanding sex or having sex with multiple partners they are at risk of being labelled as prostitutes, loose or having weak morals (Chimbandi, 2014; Motsi, Banda & Mabvurira, 2010). However, research carried out by Chimbandi (2014) amongst married Shona couples showed that in some cases married Shona women could discuss sex freely with their husbands and could also easily initiate sex as they saw communication as important especially when it comes to sex. Participants stated that the couple has to consider the desires of both the man and the woman as emphasis is placed on the idea of sex as a two-man act. It is important to note that within that particular study, amongst the younger women, age seemed to be an important factor in creating a comfortable relationship. Having a male partner who was in the same age group was more likely to result in a relationship where the power was balanced and women were better able to communicate with their husbands as compared to women who were married to the older, more traditional Shona men who find talking about sex difficult (Chimbandi, 2014). This shift may be due to the empowerment of women that allows them to refuse to conform to cultural expectations that call for the woman to be passive especially when it comes to sexual matters. Some scholars refer to these changes as the development of contemporary sexual scripts (Strong & Cohen, 2014).

Other traditional sexual scripts amongst the Shona typically include silence around sexual issues and controls over the public display of affection. The silence in itself is a script as it dictates how individuals must approach sexual issues, i.e. they must not be openly discussed. This inevitably spews over and controls how individuals are permitted to display their affection. Amongst the Shona, displays of affection are typically expected to occur in

private, behind closed doors. However, as with the changes occurring with the other sexual scripts, the younger generations are proving to be more open with affection as compared to previous generations. For example, whilst the University of Zimbabwe banned kissing on campus, the students condemned this rule with the president of the Zimbabwe National Student's Union stating "we are against these rules which we view as archaic, repressive and evil" (Capital FM, 2014). Some students took it a step further and not only spoke out against the new rule but refused to sign the indemnity forms given out at their hostels.

Even though these changes can be associated with the development of contemporary sexual scripts, there are no actual "new sexual scripts" that have been identified amongst the Shona, meaning the rules and guidelines of conduct are not as explicit as they were in the past and this has the potential to make sexual interactions confusing (Hammond, Cheney & Pearsey, 2009; Ehrhardt, 2000). However, it isn't rare to find complex sexual scripts that are a mix of "traditional beliefs, norms and expectations; Western values, ideas, and modes of interaction" in Africa (Maticka-Tyndale *et al*, 2005: 29). These scripts not only play a role in determining sexual behaviour, they also help determine health seeking practices of both young men and women.

2.5 Gender and Sexual Health

Within the social sciences, the term sexual health "refers to a state of physical and emotional well-being in which an individual enjoys freedom from sexually related disease, dysfunction, coercion, and shame, and thus the ability to enjoy and act on her or his sexual feelings" (Carpenter, 2007: 4234).

Research conducted in developing and developed countries showed that both males and females are more likely to use condoms in casual relationships, once trust is established condoms are used less regularly as this shows that the relationship is exclusive and that both partners trust each other (Hynie, Lyndon, Cote & Weiner, 1998; Longfield, Klein & Berman, 2003). Although males may also be health conscious, clinics in Zimbabwe are often constructed as female spaces. It is therefore more likely that a female will try and maintain her sexual and reproductive health compared to males who generally become more disconnected from the health care system as they grow older (Skovdal, Campbell, Madanhire, Mupambireyi, Nyamukapa, Gregson, 2011). Research conducted in Zimbabwe

showed that dominant masculine scripts acted as a barrier to the use of health services, especially HIV related services due to the fact that men are expected to be disease free, strong, resilient, highly sexual and economically productive (Skovdal *et al*, 2011)

The demonstration of masculinity or femininity is linked to social practices that can be “associated with very different health advantages and risks” (Courtenay, 2000: 1388). This is particularly true with traditional male and female attitudes, beliefs and behaviours as they “have all been well documented as determinants of sexual risk taking behaviour and negative sexual and reproductive health outcomes” (Rolleli, 2013: 2). For example, young Shona men who live according to traditional masculine scripts may try and prove their virility by taking part in health risking behaviours such as engaging in sexual intercourse with multiple concurrent partners and refusing to use condoms, therefore asserting their manliness. The “denial and disregard of physical discomfort, risk and health care needs are all means of demonstrating difference from women, who are presumed to embody these “feminine” characteristics” (Courtenay, 2000: 1389). Men therefore play a role in perpetuating these stereotypes.

Shona women who adhere to traditional feminine norms are less likely to plan for sex or negotiate safe sex due to the likely power imbalances in romantic relationships. In such situations it is not surprising that condoms use is inconsistent, unintended pregnancies are more likely to occur and the women are at greater risk of experiencing sexual abuse (National Aids Council & Ministry of Health and Child Welfare, 2004; Rolleli, 2013). This is partially because cultures where traditional views are held tend to value virginity and women grow up in an environment where they are not supposed to talk openly about sex, let alone plan for it (Rolleli, 2013). These findings can be applied to Zimbabwean literature as the previous sections have already shown how Shona women are taught to be submissive, and how women’s sexual freedom is restricted and is often at their husband’s or partner’s disposal.

The emphasis on virginity may lead to women practising risky sexual activities such as anal sex as this preserves one’s virginity (Courtenay, 2000). The societal pressure also ultimately

implies that it is inappropriate for young women to desire sexual experience or play an active role in sexual interactions (Courtenay, 2000).

2.6 Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

Although theorising is not considered to be an essential part of sexuality research seeing as the modern research tradition in this field draws on the Kinsey approach “which sought to collect information without owing allegiance to any theoretical perspective” (Baumeister, Maner & DeWall, 2006: 18), along with the theory of social constructionism, this research paper touches on feminism

According to Baumeister, Maner and DeWall the reason for the lack of emphasis on sex theory in modern sexuality research is that “two main theoretical orientations (constructionist feminism and evolution) dominate the field” (2006: 18) and do not leave room for the formation of mid-level theories. Researchers who do not wish to align themselves with either perspective therefore end up reporting their findings with “little or no theoretical context, and so evidence accumulates in a theoretical vacuum” (Baumeister, Maner & DeWall, 2006: 18). With that being said, although the theories mentioned above are used within this paper, this is not done extensively.

2.6.1 Social Constructionist Theory

The social constructionist theory suggests that reality is socially constructed with historical, cultural and personal variation playing a role in influencing how people interpret the realities they live in. According to this theory, “sexual desire and behavior are a product of upbringing, socialization, religion, the media, political influences, and so forth” (Baumeister, Maner & DeWall, 2006: 18), in other words, the social constructionist theory argues that sexuality is socially constructed. The theory therefore complements this research project as the project aimed to uncover how these social factors, particularly socialization and upbringing, affected youth sexuality. Furthermore, in the Zimbabwean context sexual socialization is affected on one side by religious and political agents along with the family who attempt to police youth sexuality, whilst peers and the media on the other side often encourage sexual freedom (Gunda, 2010). One can argue that various sexual scripts therefore exist in the different contexts that the Shona youth find themselves in. A script

that is dominant and valued in one context (e.g. religious) may have little value in another context where a different dominant script is followed (e.g. amongst peers).

Social constructionism also helps researchers to uncover the differences between and within different social groups. Even individuals “have different perspectives, and in a sense are different people depending on the communicative contexts they are parts of” (Helle-Valle cited in Arnfred, 2005: 22). This idea is one linked to a concept referred to as ‘dividuality’ which is based on the suggestion that each individual is not unitary nor bounded but is a part of multiple social contexts within which their behaviours and beliefs can change depending on the context they find themselves in (Arnfred, 2005). This is a concept that could prove to be useful when trying to explain differences between beliefs, attitudes and behaviours of youth in regards to their sexuality.

It is well known that differences in socialization and sexual education given to males and females, tend to result in gendered differences in sexual perceptions, attitudes, feelings and behaviours (Weiderman, 2005). Although gender role theory is now considered outdated by most social scientists seeing as it tends to view men and women as being in “fixed, static and mutually exclusive roles... that do not vary by context or change over the life course” (Ehrhardt, 2000: 3), understanding gender is an essential part of understanding the perceptions, sexual attitudes and behaviours of males and females. In present times, emphasis is placed on post structural views of sexuality that acknowledge that “real men and women do not always fulfil their society’s prescriptions” (Scott, 1986: 1068), and this is indeed true in this era where the boundaries between what is considered masculine and feminine have been pushed far beyond where they were when the concept was first introduced in the social sciences. However, I agree with Gunda who when referring to the Zimbabwean context stated that “it is impossible to talk of sex without referring to gender roles” (2010: 165). I therefore consider the concepts of socialization and gender as essential parts of this research project.

2.6.2 Feminist Perspective on Sexuality

Feminism is “a conflict oriented perspective that is characterised by women’s search for liberation from a sexually repressive patriarchal system” (Chimbandi, 2014: 10). This

repressive system results in the construction of different sexual scripts for men and women. Men are afforded sexual freedom and make use of pleasure centred sexual scripts that allow for casual sex with multiple partners whilst women's sexuality is controlled through a relationship or emotion centred sexual script where sex should only be used to show affection to a significant other. A feminist theory of sexuality therefore "locates sexuality within a theory of gender inequality" (Geer & O'Donohue, 1987: 67).

When theorising about sex, feminism and social construction are highly compatible and often overlap heavily therefore only a few thinkers make use of one without the other. However, in theory it is possible for one "to be a social constructionist without being a feminist, and vice versa" (Baumeister, Maner & DeWall, 2006: 19). The overlap in this area comes from the feminist belief that "sexual attitudes and practices are rooted in the gender roles that each particular culture and historical period have constructed" (Baumeister, Maner & DeWall, 2006: 19). Feminists argue that sexuality is socially constructed and is "a part of social life and identity which can be sexualized or de-sexualized through its cultural meaning and regulation" (Baumeister, Maner & DeWall, 2006: 19). This brings about the issue of power, which is also central to feminist thought, particularly in the sexual sphere where issues of power and patriarchy come into play and allow for the sexual oppression and exploitation of women through legitimised social structures that favour men at the expense of women (Kambarami, 2006; Baumeister, Maner & DeWall, 2006).

These patriarchal ideas are particularly useful in the Zimbabwean context where women's sexual freedom is restricted because of traditional beliefs centred on the idea of submission to one's husband and catering to his sexual needs (Kambarami, 2006). As a result of patriarchal beliefs, sexual double-standards are present amongst Zimbabwean youth who sometimes make use of the pleasure centred scripts for the young men whilst young women have to make use of the relationship centred sexual script (Muparamoto, 2012; Shumba, Mapfumo & Chademana, 2011). These differences in the construction of sexuality play an important role in determining the sexual behaviour of the youth as was discussed earlier (Baumeister, Maner & DeWall, 2006).

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Paradigm

Research paradigms provide a framework for research and define the nature of the enquiry based on three dimensions, the ontological, epistemological and methodological dimensions (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999). The research was conducted using the interpretive paradigm because the researcher's ontological assumption was that the 'reality' the youth live in is constructed through "people's subjective experiences of the external world" (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999: 6).

The ontological assumption is framed in the interpretive paradigm, which complemented the research aims as the research focused on uncovering the ways in which males and females are socialized into their specific gender roles through interactions they have with their society. In this case the theory of symbolic interactionism became an essential part of understanding the reality as it sets a platform where socialization and the construction of sexual scripts can be viewed from.

Symbolic interactionism is based on three premises, firstly, that human actions towards things are determined by the meanings that the things have for them, secondly, the meaning is derived from social interaction and lastly, these meanings are "handled and modified through an interpretive process used by the person in dealing with the things he encounters" (Blumer 1998: 2). In this case, I assumed that human actions regarding the expression of one's sexuality are determined by the meaning that the individual attaches to their sexuality. For example one would expect girls who were raised in traditional Shona families (that view premarital sex as taboo) to value their virginity and be conscious about the type of sexual relationships they find themselves in (Kambarami, 2006).

3.2 Sampling

A non-probability sampling method, snowball sampling, was used to gather participants. I approached individuals I knew where part of the inclusion criteria, then asked them for referrals or for them to invite their friends who also fit the criteria (male and female Shona speaking university students, 19-25 years old). This was done at Women's University (WU) and the Harare Institute of Technology (HIT).

The researcher conducted seven group discussions, each of which had between six and twelve participants. The table below shows the demographic composition of each group.

Group	Institute	Composition	Description
1 Mixed (pilot group)	WU	5 Males 3 Females Aged between 20 and 23	Discussion was held in a classroom at WU and lasted for 40mins. Participants reported that some of the questions were difficult to understand and changes were made accordingly
2 Female	WU	8 Females Aged between 19 and 24	Discussion was held in a classroom at WU and lasted for 1hr 12min. The discussion was balanced with all participants responding equally
3 Female	WU	7 Females Aged between 20 and 23	Discussion was held at a break area and lasted for 1hr 32min. Respondents were enthusiastic and reported that they enjoyed the discussion despite the brief interruption from a group of men nearby
4 Male	WU	7 Males Aged between 19 and 25	Discussion was held at a break area and lasted for 1hr 29min. Participants were eager to participate and enjoyed the discussion. The group offered to take part in a follow up discussion if it was deemed

			necessary.
5 Female	HIT	6 Females Aged between 19 and 23	Discussion was held in a HIT female residence common room and lasted for 1hr 20min. Group discussion had to be moderated at times as some speakers dominated the discussion
6 Male	WU	7 Males Aged between 20 and 25	Discussion was held at a break area at WU and lasted for 48min. Participants arrived late leading to the discussion being cut short as some participants had to leave to attend class. Some participants did not seem interested in the discussion but an effort was made to get all participants to engage
7 Mixed	HIT	7 Females 5 Males Aged between 19 and 25	Discussion was held at HIT in the male residence common room and lasted for 1hr 27min. 3 participants arrived after the discussion had begun. The discussion was held in the early evening and there was a power cut which resulted in some questions being discussed briefly or not at all so as to cover the most important

	areas before it got dark
Total	55 Participants 31 Females 24 Males

3.3 Data Collection

The nature of the interpretive paradigm calls for a methodology that is interactional, interpretive and qualitative, meaning the researcher has to form a relationship with the subjects (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999). For this reason, data was collected through the use of focus group discussions. Focus group discussions are a form of group interview set up with the purpose of discussing a particular issue whilst monitoring the interaction between group members. In this case the focus groups were made of “natural groups”. In the context of focus groups, “natural groups” are made up of people who already know each other from a social setting (Bryman, 2011).

This method was preferred over that of interviews because it allows the researcher to “gain access to the inter-subjective experience” (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1997: 388), which is what I intended to do as I had set out to explore how the experience of socialization is shared by a community and how they negotiate their sexuality and sexual experiences based on the information they acquire during the socialization process.

I conducted a total of seven group discussions. The first discussion was used as a pilot study to review and restructure the research instrument where necessary. Five of the remaining six groups were single-sexed. The male and female focus groups were held separately in the hope of encouraging participants to express themselves freely without fear of judgement from the opposite sex. The mixed group was made up of members of the HIT Students and Youth Working on Reproductive Health and Action Team (SAYWHAT- a civil society organization that acts as a platform for students enrolled in institutes of higher learning to discuss sexual and reproductive health challenges) as they are already accustomed to openly discussing issues surrounding youth sexuality within an environment where both males and females are present.

Following the changes made to the instrument, both Shona and English were used during the discussions as participants sometimes slipped into Shona in the middle of a response, found it easier to express things in Shona, or did so as a way of placing emphasis on Shona beliefs. The sessions lasted between 40 minutes and 1 and a half hours and in some cases I had to probe for responses from participants who were less outspoken and this led to new themes emerging including the effect on genetically modified food (GMOs) on one's sexuality, and the effect of stigma on the youth's intentions to make use of health services.

To aid in the transcription process, brief notes were taken during the discussions and each session was recorded using a tape recorder. All Women's University sessions were conducted either in a classroom or outside at one of the break areas whilst the HIT sessions were conducted on campus in residence common rooms. Refreshments were provided for the participants.

3.4 Ethical Considerations

When carrying out any research process, ethical considerations are very important especially if the topic being studied is of a sensitive nature. I was sure to get the participants' informed consent before any of the focus groups (Neuman, 2011). This was done after potential participants had been informed of the nature of the research and of their freedom to withdraw at any point (Bryman, 2011).

Protecting the participant identities is also important as confidentiality helps prevent situations where the research causes harm to participants once information is published. Unfortunately, guaranteeing confidentiality in a group setting is not possible as some group members may talk about others' responses once they leave the group setting. To try and mitigate this, each of the participants was asked to complete a section of the informed consent form which stated that they agreed not to discuss participant responses outside of the group meetings. Each participant was also told to assign themselves a number which they would use to identify themselves before responding so that no names were mentioned during the discussion. Although the participants themselves will not receive a copy of the study, it will be available to them through their respective institutions should they wish to see it.

Participants were not required to discuss their own sex lives or sexual experiences in detail as this information is particularly sensitive.

3.5 Research Design Limitations and Challenges

There are a number of factors that make it difficult to research socialization and its effect. Some of these factors include the fact that socialization occurs throughout one's lifetime and secondly, individuals are rarely conscious of their own socialization and its effects. The researcher tried to account for this when preparing the research by choosing to focus on a specific period (from childhood to the period individuals are considered young adults), and constructing questions that avoided asking about socialization directly. This allowed the researcher to uncover how the participants' upbringings had affected their perceptions and constructions of sexuality.

Some of the Women's University groups were held outside at the break areas after I had failed to find an unoccupied classroom. This resulted in a few interruptions with some people stopping by to find out what was going on. In one case a group of men came to have their tea close to the area where I was holding a discussion with young women. This was very distracting as participants struggled to hear some of the points being raised. The men's presence however did not seem to influence the participants' desire to speak openly.

Co-ordinating participants was very challenging as the data collection occurred during a period where many students had assignments to complete. This led to some participants committing to the discussion but failing to show up once I had arrived at the agreed location. As a result, some of the discussions had to be cancelled and re-arranged. The time limitations did not give me an opportunity to have follow up discussions.

The use of focus groups without the incorporation of one-on-one in depth interviews may have resulted in me missing out on rich information from those participants whose 'voices' and opinions may have been marginalized by more outspoken participants. Along with this problem, the group set-up may have led to some participants failing to give their own opinion due to the fear of being judged or fear of their responses becoming public knowledge due to the fact that confidentiality cannot be guaranteed within a group setting. Similarly, some participants may have given responses that they deemed desirable within that social context (Bryman, 2011).

Although the younger generation seems to have no problem discussing sexual matters amongst their peers, approaching the older generations directly to find out their views on sexuality and what they had taught their children was not an option in this case as it would have over extended the research project and would also been difficult to accomplish given the reluctance older generations have when it comes to discussing sexual matters. However, had this been possible the information collected would most likely lead to a stronger research report and a clear view of whether 'traditional' norms are indeed being passed down by parents, and also the level of the emphasis they place on these norms.

3.6 Data Analysis

Data analysis is used to organize and present the information obtained from the research in such a way that the researcher can then interpret and explain the findings. As Rubin & Rubin stated, the end result of the data analysis process should be "a description of the norms and values that underlie cultural behaviour" (1995: 229). The analysis process also involves finding patterns or differences within the data by carefully examining and interpreting it. Seeing as participants responded using both English and Shona, the direct quotes within the analysis are an exact replication of what the participants said. Where the participant responded in Shona, the English translation is shown in the parentheses, where further explanation is needed for responses given in English, these are found in brackets so the reader can distinguish between what the respondent said and the expansion/explanation given to make the statement clearer.

The data collected during this research project was analysed by categorizing it according to the themes and concepts brought up during the discussions then comparing the way in which the different groups responded to the questions or dealt with problem statements brought up by one of the group members. This allowed me to pick up on the similarities and differences in responses between different groups. I also kept in mind the context of the responses and how this affected their meanings (Rubin & Rubin, 1995).

To guide the analysis process I followed the 5 stages of data analysis that are based on Babbie (2008) and Ulin (2005).

Stage 1: Reading through the findings

This step involves the researcher reading through the transcripts and identifying patterns along with noting the quality of the data. This stage is particularly important because it helps the researcher ensure that before s/he goes further with the analysis process, all the necessary information has been collected (Farlane, 2009). In this case, it was after the first interview that I realized some of the questions needed to be rephrased so responses could better address the research questions. Even after the changes had been made, I was surprised to find that some of the findings were quite contradictory. It would have been beneficial if secondary discussions had been arranged but time constraints meant this could not be done.

Stage 2: Coding

This stage involves making the data easier to handle through the identification of themes present within the collected data, then grouping all the information into categories based on these themes (Farlane, 2009). In this case, coding was done both manually and through Nvivo. I grouped the data according to the themes that were present not only in the responses but also in the initial interview guide thus ensuring that I paid attention to each research objective during the analysis process.

Stage 3: Displaying data and distinguishing nuances

This involves “taking an inventory of what the researcher knows related to the theme, capturing variation or richness of each theme” (Farlane, 2009: 50) and finding the differences between the groups and the areas in which different themes overlap. This process is centred on the researcher using the information s/he already knows, and comparing it to the actual findings. During this stage I found that a lot of the themes were interlinked, and this is clearly shown within the next chapter.

Stage 4: Data Reduction

Data reduction involves the reducing of data so that all the important concepts and relationships become clear. This can help to distinguish between data that ‘speaks’ to the primary objectives of the research and the data that ‘speaks’ to the secondary objectives (Farlane, 2009: 50). During this stage I managed to pick up the primary and secondary

themes and this was useful when it came to the final presentation of the data as I had to distinguish between the major sections and those that did not require as much attention.

Stage 5: Interpretation

This stage involves descriptions and explanations for the data collected, along with the presentation of the different themes and patterns that are present. The researcher can also “establish whether the themes responded to original study questions, and secondary findings” (Farlane, 2009: 50). In this case, the themes uncovered within the collected data did indeed respond to the research questions.

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

4.1 Tradition.... Do we even know what that is?

The first parts of all discussions focused on trying to uncover two areas of interest, firstly the information the participants had regarding the traditional Shona way of life in terms of gender role expectations and the norms and values that surround youth sexuality; secondly the lessons that the participants themselves had been given in regards to their gender roles and appropriate sexual behaviour. This served to create a contrast to reveal whether the traditional beliefs, values and customs are still being passed on to children in modern times.

Although a number of the participants managed to mention the traditional roles taken on by men and women, the complexity of the term tradition came up in one of the discussions. A question was posed by one of the participants of whether they were even sure what could be considered to be traditional beliefs or behaviours. As one of the respondents said:

“I think the Shona culture dissolved a long time ago with colonization. I don’t think it’s worth talking about anymore, when we started being brainwashed [by the West] so it’s hard for us to really stand here and say we know the true Shona culture, what we know are bits and pieces of what people attempted to pass over” (Female, WU)

Such a response shows the types of problems people could battle within internally when trying to respond to a question that requires them to call to mind traditional aspects of their culture. What this participant did not realise is that those “bits and pieces” of knowledge that have been passed down are actually tradition itself as traditions and cultural beliefs are not necessarily static but go through periods of change. What is referred to as “brainwashing” in this response is actually the hybridised culture that is currently visible in Zimbabwe (Chikovore, 2014).

During the discussions it became apparent that the knowledge the participants had of the traditional teachings regarding sex were far richer when it came to what was expected of women compared to what was expected of men. For example, whilst the only points made about male sexual behaviour was that the traditional man had multiple partners and had to be sexually experienced, the female groups managed to come up with dynamic discussions where various points regarding what women were and in some cases are still being taught.

This difference in knowledge brings to mind the contrast between the male and female experience during *chinamwari* (period of sexual education and training) where the female's training/education contained more detail on sexual performance and pleasing one's partner (Biri, 2011).

The participant's responses regarding what women were taught about their sexuality ranged from rules regarding the frequency of sexual intercourse to general preparations for sex as shown below:

"Murume haarambirwe bonde (you cannot refuse to give your husband sex) and they [the husband's family] even go to the extreme of approaching your aunts so they can talk to you and reprimand you for such behaviour, so you have no control over your body. You can't starve your man" (Female, WU)

"...sometimes the teachings towards sex are also in line with preparations for sex. For example, pulling the labia. Sometimes you are not told why you have to do these things but you just have to do it for your future husband because as a woman your role is to please him" (Female, WU)

"...sex before marriage isn't advocated but after marriage it seems to be more of a service that is obligatory. Something a woman should be capable of providing for her man, more like duty than an act both parties are meant to be involved in and enjoy" (Female, HIT)

"...by the time you get to our age you are now taught as a girl not to have sex before marriage... when it comes to boys the emphasis on avoiding sex before marriage isn't there. I think it's because if a girl engages in sex and messes up and ends up pregnant it is visible and actually embarrasses the family because everyone can see your child has become pregnant out of wedlock" (Female, WU)

The responses show that the woman is constantly in the 'disadvantaged' position where her sexual needs and desires are invisible and therefore ignored. Instead of giving women the room to explore their sexuality, they are expected to focus on pleasing their husband and making sure he is satisfied sexually.

By taking the view that women are meant to be able to please their husbands in bed, the idea of the traditional woman as passive and inexperienced became chequered. The question once again came up of what exactly should be considered 'traditional', whether it is those practices that were in the pre-colonial or post-colonial period and whether these practices were indeed "real"/authentic, or whether they had been affected by Western beliefs and customs. Some would argue that attempting to unravel belief systems in order to trace back the 'true traditions' which were void of western/Christian influence is a useless venture as traditions change all the time, however, according to Arnfred, embarking on such a task may help to "broaden the vision, to keep alert a notion of positive alternatives, and to maintain a perpetual awareness regarding what otherwise might very easily pass as implicit assumptions" (2005: 15). In other words, it is important to look beyond the accepted view of what is now regarded as traditional so we can become aware of other alternative customs and beliefs that existed and governed the lives of people before colonization and the introduction of Christianity.

4.1.2 Presenting the 'traditional' man and woman

In trying to uncover the characteristics the youth believed were traditionally held by men and women in Shona society, the word 'cultured' was by the researcher to refer to a woman who is well mannered and has a good upbringing as it was the most appropriate English term to use for the interpretation of what is referred to in Shona as *mukadzi kwaye/mukadzi ane hunhu*. For the males, the term *murume chaiye* was used to refer to a traditional man. In English, this can be loosely interpreted to mean a 'real' man.

The female groups were required to speak only about what was expected of women and the male groups focused on what was expected of men. In the mixed group both males and females were free to respond to either side. The female participants were quick to give answers as to what the traditional roles of women are within the Shona culture. As the discussions continued, what came across clearly was that the male groups were more aware of the women's traditional roles and expected behaviours than they were about their own. When asked what traditional male roles were, the male participants seemed hesitant to respond and responses were less detailed than those of the female respondents. The question here arises of whether the female respondents were more knowledgeable in this area or whether the male respondents simply weren't as good at vocalising their thoughts

pertaining to this particular section. Another possibility could be that extra emphasis is placed on the socialization of the female child, this could be an area worth investigating further in future studies.

Although the discussion had a slow start in some cases with responses to questions on tradition being limited, roles, behaviours and characteristics that the participants noted as being traditionally held by men and women emerged. The chart below contains responses grouped according to the number of times the issue came up in the discussions. The question asked here called for the participants to identify what was traditionally expected of a 'well-cultured' woman and a 'real' man. The information in the table below coincides with what previous scholars have regarded as traditional characteristics of Shona men and women. These traditional masculine and feminine characteristics that were pinpointed by the participants can be traced to as far back as the 1960s.

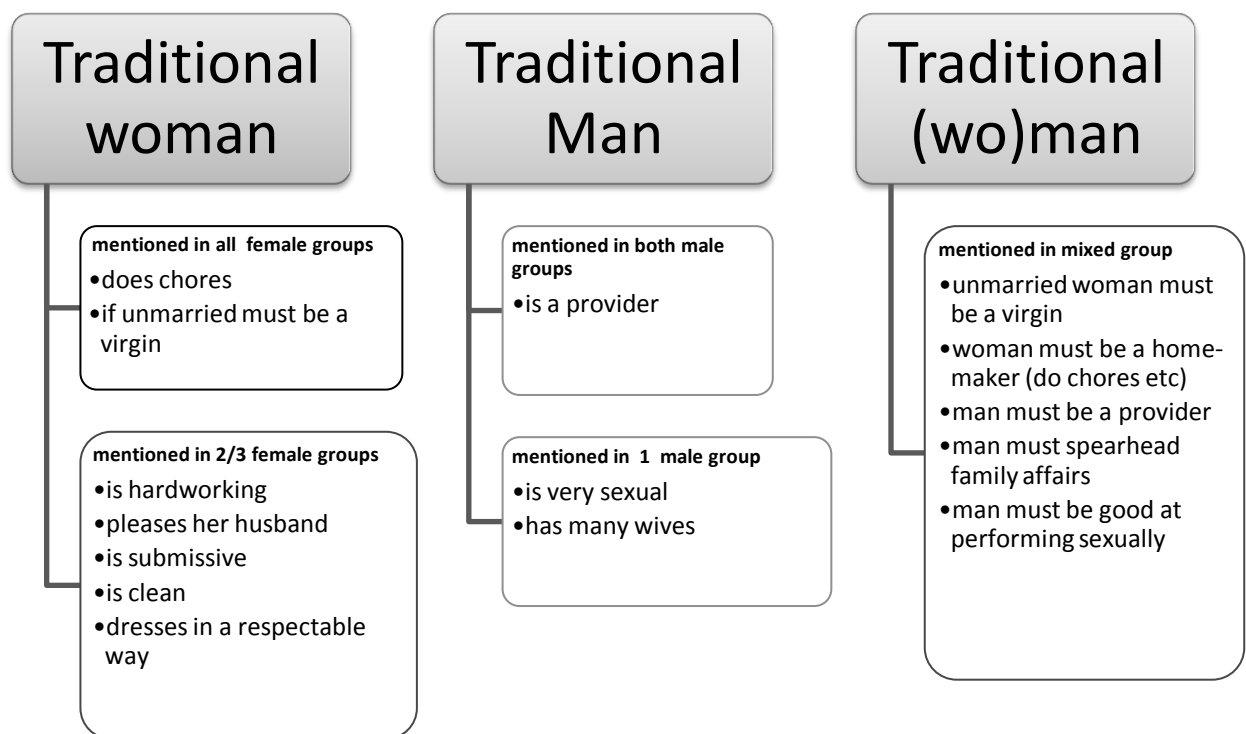


Figure 1

The findings in the chart show the importance of submission, virginity and hard work in the life of a Shona woman whilst presenting the man as the unquestionable head of the family. This coincides with Gelfand's (1967) work in which he mentioned how Shona mothers place importance on teaching their female children how to carry out the chores which include

activities such as cooking, cleaning and washing whilst the aunts played the role of sexual socialization agents who would tell young women about the importance of virginity and the sexual expectations that came along with marriage. The men on the other hand were taught to be brave and to prepare to be the leaders of a family. Emphasis was placed more on their fertility and the continuation of the family line than on abstinence (Gelfand, 1967).

In modern times, parents hardly take it upon themselves to talk to their children about sexual matters as they expect this to be done by others. It is highly uncomfortable for parents to take on this role as the Shona are taught that within a family, aunts and uncles are responsible for initiating discussions around sex. Unfortunately the modern family structure in many cases does not leave room for aunts or grandparents to talk to the children. The problem faced in this situation is that there aren't many alternative agents who can bring up such topics successfully. This approach to sexuality suggests that the Shona might still be struggling to adapt their sexual socialization process to complement the change in family structure, which, some may argue is the reason why the youth face so many health problems when it comes to their sexual and reproductive health.

4.1.2.2 Shifting perspectives

Within different groups, questions arose of whether the initial responses regarding what was traditional were valid or whether these ideas had in fact been influenced by Christian ideals passed along through colonization.

For example, when one male participant mentioned that the traditional man was a monogamous man, the rest of the group disagreed stating that Christianity had brought that belief and that was in fact not the case:

"...traditionally, the number of women or wives defined who you were in society. As we look at the integrations of Christianity, in contemporary situations we now have a divided society, others define man in terms of Christianity and others define according to traditional roles and others according to socialization seen in movies or the media" (Male, WU)

This response acknowledges the presence of a number of socialization agents in the lives of the youth. It would therefore be unacceptable to assume that there is only one form of

masculinity amongst the urban Shona youth, instead one has to acknowledge the presence of multiple masculinities. Different sexual scripts can therefore be expected as each masculine script calls for a certain combination of characteristics.

Although all groups agreed that traditionally women's sexual freedom was restricted, within the female groups the question arose of whether traditional women were indeed meant to be passive as sexual partners given the fact that aunts used to give young brides sexual advice before they went off to their husbands. The participants also noted that wives were expected to please their husbands sexually, and how does one do this if they are passive? These questions resulted in the agreement within in all female groups that traditional women could play an active role in their sex life especially when they are married. One participant suggested that the idea of being passive came about as a result of the incorporation of Christianity into the Shona culture which led to the evolution of what was considered traditional. This is what some of the respondents had to say regarding women's sexuality:

"I think experience isn't only a modern woman type of thing. Even back in the day or now, women get instructions from their aunts and maybe other women at kitchen tea parties. Traditionally when going into marriage you are given that guidance which indicates that experience and that ability to satisfy your man are also valued" (Female, HIT)

"In the Shona culture I don't think women weren't allowed to initiate sex, there is no evidence of that" (Female, WU)

"...as much as it appears as if we are meant to be passive, if you look at our aunts and grandmothers, they had their natural aphrodisiacs that they used and they used to go for chinamwari, [lessons on the art of seduction, how to perform sexually and how to please your husband]... it also means we shouldn't just be passive like logs, there should also be some action on our part and some things we do to instigate [sexual encounters] and show the guy that we are interested" (Female, WU)

The responses show that snapshots of the past at different periods give different pictures as what is considered traditional has changed across the years. What is considered by others as

the genuine/traditional Shona culture is that which was present during the pre-colonial times whilst others argue for the fluidity of culture and what is viewed as 'traditional' now being a combination of beliefs, values and practices from the pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial eras.

The influence of Christianity is particularly important when it comes to the evolution of sexual beliefs as the Shona went from being a group that viewed sex as pleasurable and something that could be spoken about openly to being a group in which sex was strictly for procreation and could not be spoken about as it is taboo (Maunze, 2009). This suggests the notion of cultural hybridity where the evolution of beliefs and customs and the construction of 'new' Shona traditions can be seen as continuing even to this day (Chikovore, 2004). That being said, the culture of silence around sex was struck off as being part of the pre-colonial Shona culture and was seen instead as a result of the manifestations of Christianity. The participants called for a return to the times when families played a key role in addressing issues of sex and instructing adolescents on sexual matters.

In my opinion as the youth refuse to blindly follow what is considered part of the Shona tradition, they are playing an active role in navigating through these rules and norms and choosing for themselves what they believe to be good whilst leaving out what is considered bad or unnecessary thus creating what will be regarded in a few generations as the Shona tradition.

As some of the participants said:

"...it's now an issue of phasing out the influence and beliefs of the older generation. It's simple for us here to talk about these things [sex] in finer detail but if there is someone older, maybe by 10 years it becomes a problem to divulge as much information as we are now. I think once these generations are gone talking about sex will be as normal as having a cup of tea and we are already slowly sliding towards that" (Male, WU)

"As much as you are saying cultural preservation is important it's not all cultural practices which are good. Some practices were oppressive... you really have to go back and see which practices or teachings were valuable" (Female, WU)

Another participant, when referring to the modest dressing that is expected of a well cultured woman said:

"...usually the guys we protect saying we must be the good wives, are they not the very same ones who leave the home and go look for other women elsewhere. I'll be at home dressed in a long skirt being the good wife, but [you can] see him out there with women wearing these short skirts. We should strike a balance, as much as you want to be good you should also be aware of the things that keep your sexual relationship intact" (Female, WU)

This response shows how young women are moving away from equating women's active role in sexual relationships with being "bad", instead, this active involvement is becoming acknowledged as an important part of every marriage. It is therefore important to open up discussions around sexual matters not only so that sexually active unmarried youth are well informed about their sexual and reproductive health and rights, but also for the benefit of young married couples.

4.2 Let's Talk about Sex... Breaking the culture of silence

According to the participants, Zimbabwe has a culture of silence when it comes to sexual matters. Talking about sex is seen as something that is taboo and as a result parents in most cases don't talk to their children about sex, instead children are left to learn from their peers or their teachers. A number of the participants chalked this down to being a matter of the fears held by parents regarding being open about sexual matters. This finding corresponds with previous research that showed that parents feared that talking to their children about sex would lead to them experimenting sexually, silence/ignorance was therefore viewed as a better alternative for encouraging abstinence (Gwanzura-Ottmoller & Kersby, 2013). As some of the participants stated:

"I've come across traditional beliefs that if parents teach their children about sex they are likely to engage in premarital sex so tradition says it's better not to teach my child" (Female, WU)

"Most parents don't like to talk to their kids about sexual activities. I think they fear that talking gives you a go ahead but in reality, not talking to the kids makes them more curious" (Female, HIT)

The participants then acknowledged that they respond to the fear parents have by subconsciously creating their own fear that stops them from initiating the conversation. In a respondent's words:

"There is a breakdown of communication because young people can't discuss these issues about sex with their parents because they feel that once you bring up the topic your parents may jump to the conclusion that you are sexually active" (Female, WU)

The fears held by both parents and their children emphasise the fact that sexuality is constructed as an adult-only domain that young people have no business asking about. Although parents are aware of the fact that young people sometimes engage in premarital sex it seems they would rather believe that their own children would not dare to do so. Sadly leaving sexual education in the hands of others can lead to misinformation or a lack of adequate knowledge. Participants in all of the groups spoke of inadequate knowledge as one of the main reasons why young people find themselves in situations where they have compromised their sexual and reproductive health. In their words:

"Parents aren't teaching us and children end up wanting to experiment in the wrong way ... Nowadays I hear something from somewhere, maybe a friend or someone's experience when we sit down and share stories as friends. My parents don't really open up about this, they will mention a story about someone's child who got into a bad situation because of sex but they don't always go into detail" (Female, WU)

"...us as guys here can be telling each other that sex is great but we then don't mention kuti kuMashambanzou kune varikurwara (that there are people dying at Mashambadzou [home for the terminally ill])" (Male, WU)

The male response above suggests that in most cases when young men do talk to their friends regarding sex these conversations rarely include discussions on the negative effects of engaging in risky sexual behaviour such as the likelihood of contracting sexually transmitted infections.

Although the issue of inadequate knowledge was raised in all groups, emphasis was placed on the effect that lack of knowledge has on adolescent girls. This may be because females have more to be concerned about as they have the possible burden of not only contracting

sexually transmitted infections, including HIV, but of also falling pregnant, which is a visible sign to the community that the girl has been engaging in premarital sex.

The discussion of these issues within the female groups included the emphasis of sexual education either from aunts or from the parents. This gives the impression that girls may long for these educational relationships more than the boys do because of the added burden they have to carry should they fail to take the protective measures during sexual intercourse. As one of the female participants said:

“Parents have a crucial role to play especially as they are the ones who are close to their children and can share with them openly and freely. It’s also easier to receive that kinda education from a parent you trust” (Female, WU)

A male respondent also had something to say about the knowledge deficit:

“Making this sex topic a taboo is one of the leading causes of all the sexual issues we have these days. I have so many female friends who have gotten pregnant and I’ve asked them how they got into that position when there are so many types of contraception, even the morning after pill and they just said they weren’t aware of how to handle the situation after the sex had taken place because they never got to understand how everything works. Little knowledge is dangerous, the kids at school now they know there’s something called sex, you take this thing, put it in there and push. They don’t know what comes after” (Male, WU)

Although it was suggested that the level of education one has can be highly dependent on one’s economic background and the type of school (private or public) that one attends, this argument was not developed fully.

Some participants also linked the evident lack of communication between parents and their children to the fact that even though the structure of the modern Shona family has become such that the key educators (aunts and uncles) live very far, the parents continue to think discussing sex is not their job. The participants identified this attitude as one that urgently needs to be addressed if the problem of promiscuity (which according to the participants involves having multiple concurrent sexual partners) and early sexual debut is to be controlled more effectively. As one participant stated:

“[cultural] dilution has led to this situation where we can’t talk about sex compared to back in the day when our aunts would sit with the children and talk to them. Relationships between our parents and these aunts have also broken down and it becomes difficult for them [the aunts] to take an active role in teaching us and reprimanding us if they see us doing something wrong. So I think parents taking that teaching role can be very important” (Female, WU)

As mentioned by the participants, in olden times, the familial structure in Zimbabwe allowed for aunts and uncles to take on the role of teaching these children about sexual matters and passing on morals and expectations. The strength of the familial unit and the family also helped ensure that most children abided by the ‘rules’ governing sexual behaviour (Gelfand, 1967). According to the participants, the current lack of communication acts as a barrier to the attainment of good sexual health as the youth then have no one to turn to when they are sexually active. Both male and female respondents made it clear that either sex could struggle because of this silence around sexual matters.

“It would be easier if I could go to my mum and tell her I made a mistake I’m no longer a virgin please help me to reduce my sexual rate [i.e. the number of partners] because once it [virginity] is lost, people no longer have a mentor who can help them not become promiscuous. Others once they lose their virginity they lose their dignity” (Female, HIT)

The dignity mentioned by this participant refers to one’s pride in themselves, which affects how the individual carries herself and respects herself and her body such that she does not then begin engaging in numerous, casual sexual encounters with any boy who is willing to have sex with her. The loss of dignity in this case would lead to multiple concurrent sexual relationships which are of a casual nature.

One male participant mentioned:

“In the family that I come from it’s a taboo to talk about sexual matters in the household. You are asked hunhu huchiripo here (do you still have any manners/morals)? ... maybe I’m experiencing ups and downs in my relationship then I approach my dad for advice he regards me as one of the bad elements in the family

because it's not regarded as formal [it is not right to bring up such topics] within the family set up" (Male, WU)

This way in which parents approach matters of a romantic or sexual nature when talking to their children plays a large role in their children's construction of sexuality, along with the way in which the youth cope with problems that may arise in these relationships. It is therefore important to look at the nature of the conversations parents have with their children when it comes to sex and relationships.

4.2.1 The nature of discussions initiated by parents

Just as Gary and Rich (1992) pointed out, in some instances parents do talk to their children regarding sex, however, the participants generally feel that this is done in an aggressive and uninformative manner where a set of rules are given and they are not allowed to ask questions or treat the situation as a conversation where they can also state their opinion. Presenting sex in this way apparently leads to its creation as the appealing "forbidden fruit" and leaves room for peer and media influence to encourage early sexual debut. According to some of the participants:

"The discussion is there but it's not really a discussion, it's more of if you do this [engage in premarital sex] I will kill you... I think what you learn as a child actually affects how you feel as you grow because looking at our context, when you're a child you're told sex is bad so as you grow it's like the forbidden fruit. You want to know about it but you have this background that it's bad... Now we can't even communicate with our parents about it because they've told us from the start that it's very bad" (Female, HIT)

"Yes I have discussed [sexual matters] with my parents but not in the sense that I say what I think. It's in the sense that they are telling you not to have sex... So they will be talking and you will be agreeing... they say you can date but don't have sex, if you lose your virginity it's all on you [the problem is yours alone]. They never actually ask whether or not you've lost it already. They just have the mindset that you're still a virgin and you won't do it" (Female, HIT).

One male participant also had a similar statement:

“I did discuss with my dad. It was more of an intimidating type of discussion, mwanangu ukamitisa hako mwana hatimurambi ndewedu asi ziva kuti zvaunenge waita unenge wazviparira (my child, if you impregnate a girl we won’t refuse the child because it is ours but just know you would have put yourself into an unfavourable situation)” (Male, HIT)

Another strategy used to approach sexual matters is to approach them indirectly thus decreasing the uncomfortable feeling that parents may anticipate by bringing up the issue of sex. This is also a finding that Gary and Rich (1992) came across in their research study. Such an approach could lead to confusion and leave children uncertain of the real message that parents were trying to convey (Mutema, 2013). According to the participants, with males, the indirect nature of the conversation usually has to do with the referral to condoms whilst females are usually told stories of other young women who have fallen pregnant. This can be better explained in the participants’ own words:

“I did discuss [sex] with my dad but it wasn’t that clear. One of those we were asking for money to go out then he said here’s some money musazokanganwa kupfeka. Game kupfeka (don’t forget to put it on [a condom])” (Male, WU)

“...once my uncle came with condoms and said to me I don’t mind coming to see mwana wemuzukuru asi handiuyi kunhamo yemuzukuru afa neAIDS (my nephew but I won’t come for a funeral for a nephew who has died of AIDS). Then he left the box and disappeared, it was a 10 second conversation” (Male, WU)

This response shows that in some cases uncles do take it upon themselves to bring up discussions surrounding sex although the discussions may be seen as unsatisfactory by the youth.

Although these strategies are considered ineffective by the youth, they are thought to be better than those of strict parents who do not discuss sex at all and go to unusual lengths to protect their children from hearing about or engaging in it. A number of stories were told during the discussions of how strict parents often have children who end up pregnant whilst they are still teenagers. Participants were therefore in favour of having an open relationship, particularly with their own children where they explain to them the pros and

cons of engaging in sexual intercourse before marriage. Unfortunately I did not get the chance to uncover what the youth think these pros and cons are. However, here is what some participants had to say about the relationships they hope to have with their children:

"I think the moment you have children don't tell them not to have sex, give them that independent mind and make them see ok you can have it but mistakes can happen..."
(Female, HIT)

"If I was to have my own kids I'd definitely have a different way of handling sex now that I am at this stage whereby I think it's a matter of giving the child the knowledge they need in order for them to make an informed decision and to also make it a two way conversation were they tell you what they think and you tell them what you think. So not necessarily telling them what to do but giving the pros and cons"
(Female, HIT)

This response gives the impression that the participant at one point agreed with the idea of keeping sex shrouded but then went through situations that resulted in a change of mindset.

One male participant responded in a way that presented females as victims of sexual desire and young men as having the power to encourage the female counterparts to engage in sex even though they female may have had no intention of doing so. This gives the impression of men being driven by a pleasure centred sexual script whilst young women desire more than pleasure. As the participant said:

"...I think I would place more emphasis on [talking to a girl]. I want to teach her to have a counter solution because as men we now have new ways to get in a girl's pants no matter how hard she tries. So I want her to be on guard" (Male, WU)

Although most respondents agreed that they would feel comfortable talking to both male and female children about sex, one male respondent stated that he was more likely to feel comfortable only with the male children.

"... if it's a girl I don't think I could [talk to her about sex] but if it's a boy then yes I can give him pointers so if he gets sick let's say he gets an STI he can come ask me to

take him to the clinic or if he makes a girl pregnant he can come to me instead of attempting to deal with the situation alone so we start planning on how to deal with the situation” (Male, HIT)

I can only speculate that the reason behind his response was due to the gendered differences in how male and female sexuality is constructed as females are expected to have a lower desire to engage in sex. The point was also stressed that sexual education should begin at a young age, which is an effective strategy because forming a trusting relationship is noted as being one of the steps to ‘controlling’ youth sexual behaviour or at least creating a situation where each individual is aware of the steps they need to take to maintain their sexual and reproductive health. For example, the different types of contraception and how they function. This aligns with a lot of previous research that acknowledges that “greater levels of perceived parental openness, responsiveness, comfort and confidence in discussions on sexuality are associated with lower levels of adolescence sexual behaviour” (Mutema, 2013: 605). According to the respondents, this type of communication is particularly useful in a child’s early life because:

“...a kid who is 6 or 7 and attending nursery school may get some [bad or inaccurate] information from their friends so parents should introduce this issue at an early stage but the information should be filtered according to age” (Female, WU)

“Nowadays vana vangwarisa (children are too inquisitive), kids in primary school are even engaging in sex. If you don’t talk about that [sexual matters] you may find these young children falling pregnant or contracting STDs. So you should start at an early age so they know the consequences of having sex and preserve themselves” (Female, WU)

These statements regarding children’s sexuality are not farfetched as an article published on a Zimbabwean website relayed the story of grade two students who were caught engaging in sex at their school during break time whilst a grade one boy in another part of Zimbabwe was forced (by three adolescent boys) to have sex with a dog for fun (Mloyi, 2015; Masvingo Mirror, 2015). The ideas linked to early education were also often linked to events that the respondents had witnessed themselves as shown by the statements below.

"I have a 3 year old cousin and at one point I found her with another kid imitating sex, and I was very surprised so I think it's important to start with this education from a young age" (Female, WU)

"As a Sunday school teacher I try and incorporate issues of sex because these young children can even watch cartoons and see hearts floating around and they start to fantasise about love. The moment you talk to children you start to realize they know more than you thought so you need to consider the level of development and how they are growing psychologically" (Female, WU)

Some respondents also saw early sex education as a tool to combat sexual abuse, however, in all discussions it was agreed that the information given should be age appropriate so as not to overwhelm children with graphic ideas of sex at an early age. As participants said:

"You can use a different way when talking about sex. For example, my aunt tells my 5 year old niece that from the neck to the knees it's a 'don't touch' area. So she knows if someone comes and touches her in that area to say no, don't touch me that way. So it depends with the method you use, you can tell them how to interact with people, the appropriate things to say, how not to play or sit on stranger's laps and so on" (Female, WU)

"I think it's not that they should be protected from information but there should be age variance with the content that they are provided. Yes we can say on sexual matters, we won't teach children about sex up until they are 7 years old but we are also saying as they grow and go to school in grade 1, 2 or 3, in plight of the increase in child abuse, if they are aware of such situations we can be able to protect them from the occurrence of such." (Female, WU)

Although this section has more or less focused on what parents have been doing wrong when it comes to educating their children about sex, it would be unfair to conclude this section without acknowledging that in present times there are parents who do take the time to have informative and open discussions with their children and some of the participants did attest to this:

“My mum taught me not to indulge in any sexual activity before marriage so it’s all about keeping my virginity. She also tells me the advantages and disadvantages of that [remaining a virgin] (Female, WU)

There was also one respondent who spoke in defence for all the parents who do not actively inform their children by saying:

“The same way we are seeing things now that make us want to teach our children may be the same way that our parents saw things that made them decide not to teach their children about sex in depth” (Female, WU)

The youth therefore don’t necessarily blame their parents for the way they approach issues of youth sexuality, instead there is the understanding of the power of traditional expectations and the parents’ own life experience. Seeing as talking to parents about sex is out of the question for most participants, they turn to their friends for information.

4.2.2 Talking to peers about sex

Although older generations may be uneasy when it comes to talking about sex, the youth are open to the idea. Talking about sex was viewed as informative and interesting but this was said to only be the case in situations where one is surrounded by their friends. Participants also agreed that talking about sex should be avoided with people one is not acquainted with and people who may lie and encourage behaviour that would put one in a precarious position.

“If we could be open about sex it would be easier because our stress levels are being raised because we are dealing with these issues alone. Sometimes you might have a friend with a kid but still isn’t comfortable talking to you about sex, it’s better to talk than to be stressed alone” (Female, HIT)

“If it’s your friends then that’s ok [to talk about sex] because as friends we can discuss and share our experiences and knowledge, not just people who randomly start talking about sex” (Male, HIT)

Amongst those who claimed to have no sexual experience, some were open to being around friends who were discussing sex but others were not as they feared being uncomfortable.

“I get to learn more about the actual act, it doesn’t mean that because you are listening you will also end up doing the same thing, you can just learn” (Female, WU)

“The time will come when you do want to do these things and if you don’t know it won’t go so well, but if you can draw on what you have learnt from others that’s good” (Female, WU)

“I feel uncomfortable [talking about sex] because if you aren’t sexually experienced and are sitting around people who are talking about sex and describing all sort of activities, for you who is trying to preserve yourself and have nothing to contribute because you haven’t done such things, it’s uncomfortable” (Female, WU)

As this section has shown, even amongst the more ‘liberal’ youth, talking about sex can still be seen as taboo and uncomfortable in certain contexts. This suggests the presence of both new and old beliefs regarding sexual matters. As one participant stated, the silence around sex especially between friends can lead to increased levels of stress as an individual has no one to turn to, to ask for advice regarding their sexual health. This could influence the likelihood of them making use of sexual and reproductive services.

4.3 Sexual and Reproductive Health (SRH) Products and Services

Based on participant responses, it is evident that the conservative nature of Zimbabweans and the culture of silence don’t only affect the youth in their homes, this problem crosses over into the public arena whereby the youth are unwilling to access free sexual and reproductive health services unless they can do so anonymously, without others knowing that is the reason for them visiting a centre. If a particular centre or part of a centre is known to focus specifically on sexually issues the youth are less likely to make use of this service.

Another concern was the response the staff would have when dealing with a young woman requesting contraception, or in the case of those who would like to buy condoms from supermarkets, the reactions they would strike from the tellers. These young women feared that the staff would then discuss their health problems or the fact that the individual was getting contraception. These fears are not unfounded as previous research has shown that it is hard to find youth-friendly sexual and reproductive health services are in Zimbabwe as they are few, if any! Along with this, the study by Bhatsura, Chevo and Changadeya (2013)

found that the health care professionals are sometimes uncomfortable or even unwilling to deal with young people who are sexually active as premarital sex is viewed as wrong in the Shona culture.

Below are some of the responses to the question of whether one would make use of facilities that offer free SRH services.

“There’s an issue that must be discussed about stigma. If I can do it in a discrete way I’m sure most people would but if it’s going to be there’s a specific centre for that I don’t think people would go” (Female, HIT)

“...if I was sexually active and there was no stigma associated with going to get tested at this age or to have a vaginal exam I would go maybe to a female clinic regularly” (Female, WU)

“If I was sexually active I wouldn’t go because the nurse will know that you are sexually active. She can also discuss with other nurses but if it was private where there aren’t lots of people I would go” (Female, HIT)

“I don’t want people seeing me going to the clinic regularly to get condoms or something because then you know I’m sexually active, so yes I’d use it but depending on how I’m getting there” (Male, HIT)

What I found particularly interesting about these responses is that even a male participant stated that he would not be comfortable with people knowing that he was engaging in premarital sex. This brings up an important point that not all males are proud to be engaging in premarital sex and some would rather keep this information private even though males are generally expected to experiment sexually.

The problems with health care professionals are also present when the youth attempt to access long-term contraception like contraceptive injections or the implant. Based on a research project I carried out during my undergraduate studies, I came across the fact that health care practitioners tend to ask these young adults unnecessary and devaluing questions as the patient is looked down upon for engaging in premarital sex (Chikukwa, Dlamini, Madzivire, Toyi & Walaza: 2012). Although it was agreed by all groups that the

females should either get more of a say, or be equally involved in decisions regarding whether condoms are used or not, the question of whether females should then also have the freedom to carry around condoms came up with more negative comments from the male respondents than expected. The respondents showed that the youth themselves also help in driving negative attitudes towards females who purchase condoms or individuals who push for safe sex.

Whilst a large number of the female respondents supported the buying of condoms by females, others said it was not a good idea as the male partner would begin to question the woman's morals or her faithfulness because a woman who carries condoms can easily be painted as one who also sleeps around. So whilst some would feel confident to purchase condoms, other young women would rather not buy the condoms because of the fear of being labelled as loose. Some of the statements regarding the provision of condoms are as follows:

"The man shouldn't be the only one [providing] because if I get pregnant it's on me, so I should have a larger contribution on the type of contraception we shall use"
(Female, HIT)

"If you know you are sexually active you don't have to wait for the guy to bring the condom because what if he doesn't bring one? You can buy the condoms and move around with them just in case" (Female, WU)

"...The fact that you think the guy will provide leads to situations where you end up having unprotected sex and at the end of the day you are crying and blaming the guy" (Female, WU)

"Why should it always be him buying? You can go and see for yourself that you have bought the right ones and if something goes wrong like if it breaks you know you are responsible... As a woman you can also use female condoms especially for those who date guys who drink and they come home wanting sex, maybe he won't even put it on properly or will forget completely so you should always be ready because you are the one at risk at the end of the day" (Female, WU)

“Personally I wouldn’t go buy them... you could meet a fool who then says to you oh so you’re always moving around with condoms, who will you be with and what do you need them for, I’m the guy and should be the one to provide them or move around with them” (Female, WU)

“It causes problems, whether I see my girl with a box of condoms, used or unused it doesn’t matter because the first thing I think of is there were more and those are the left over ones so women should not move with them” (Male, WU)

Although some participants stated that they would indeed doubt a girl who carried around condoms, there were some exceptions to this:

“the girl might have the money to buy but you don’t. Then let her buy, nothing wrong with that. Carrying condoms isn’t a passport to be promiscuous, it’s just to be safe because you never know what may happen” (Male, WU)

“It depends on the situation. Maybe my girl’s in town then I also end up there and I find she has condoms in her bag, it doesn’t paint a good picture but if it’s a situation where we know that’s what we’re hooking up [meeting up] for then its fine, no problem” (Male, WU)

“Women should be responsible because no guy wants to use a condom” (Male, HIT)

“It’s good for the women to walk around with condoms. HIV is an issue so even if she’s tempted I’m assured that she can be protected” (Male, WU)

“If you wanna protect yourself and you not quite certain of your man you should feel comfortable to carry that condom, it’s you just trying to protect yourself” (Male, HIT)

It came as no surprise that only one participant mentioned the female condom as it is unpopular because of its large shape. All participants were quick to assume that the condoms being referred to in the question were male condoms. One can therefore assume that there is a preference for male condoms and the use of female condoms is low.

On the other side of this equation are those who do not like to use condoms at all. A male or female may find themselves in a situation where their partner is refusing to use protection

by posing the question *“Don’t you know a sweet eaten whilst in its wrapper doesn’t taste good?”*. What was unexpected was that it became clear that it isn’t only the males who use this statement. This indicates that young Shona women may also prefer skin-to-skin contact and engage in sex not just as a way of showing an emotional attachment to their partner, but for pleasure too. This goes against the dominant traditional Shona sexual script that expects women not to be vocal about their sexual needs and desires (Chimbandi, 2013). One can therefore argue that the idea of the female as driven into premarital sex by the pressure of a relationship or the search for love is sometimes unfounded.

The theme of *the sweet in the wrapper* came up in more than one of the discussions as shown below:

“Other girls say a sweet in a wrapper doesn’t taste good, so for a sweet to taste as a sweet it has to be removed from the paper. [i.e. sex is better without a condom]”
(Male, WU)

“I was having a discussion with other guys and they were talking about how it feels to eat a sweet when it’s inside the wrapper. Does it really taste? What they say is it doesn’t so their real wish is not use protection at all so as a lady you have to stand your ground and say no, here we are going to use protection” (Female, WU)

I acknowledge that there are other (individual) factors that drive youth decisions when it comes to making use of SRH services as the youth are aware that their health should be a priority. Out of all the group discussions, only one male and one female out rightly said they would make use of free services, whilst one female participant placed emphasis on the power of individual decision making.

“As long as it [the free SRH care service] is accessible and it doesn’t deprive me of my time to do other productive things. I’d always be there getting tested” (Male, WU)

“I think I’d go [to the free SRH care facility] because it’s all about you. If you check yourself regularly you know you’re in the clear because anything can happen down there. So you feel more confident [if you go for regular check-ups]” (Female, HIT)

“Condoms are for free but most girls aren’t using them. Testing is also free but most girls don’t go regularly so it depends on your personal beliefs and how well you want to take care of yourself, what you were taught and how you were raised are also of importance” (Female, WU)

The same respondent who had previously stated that she would not personally buy condoms because of the fear of stigma did also mention the importance of seeking advice if one suspected that something was wrong. In her own words:

“Gone are the days were you should be shy about having sex because if you keep quiet when something is wrong it’s your problem, find someone to confide in especially if you don’t understand what’s going on so you can be advised to go get checked” (Female, HIT)

Based on these findings, it is evident that the issue of stigma seems to be a stronger determinant of the use of SRH products and services, than the issue of gender expectations. Both males and females seem equally unlikely to use these services even though they are aware of the benefits. This is highly problematic in a context where sex is seen as appealing and many give in to the pressure to engage in premarital sex.

4.4 Premarital Sex.... The forbidden fruit

The issue of premarital sex and the importance of virginity brought up a lot of emotions during the group discussions. Although the respondents did admit that virginity was particularly important for females, it was also clear that it is no longer as highly valued as it was traditionally. When asked whether they would admire someone who was virgin when they got married, each of the four groups that covered this part of the discussion had a range of responses.

A lot of the respondents in group two (Females, WU) seem to have been virgins and this may have influenced responses within the group, which generally agreed that they would admire those who kept their virginity because of the willpower needed to resist temptation. However, even in this group it was acknowledged that it’s those who are not virgins who often manage to get the good men. These good men are classified as the loyal men who are

willing to settle down and be faithful. The statement below summarizes this group's response:

"I would admire them [virgins] for their determination... it's good for virgins to marry each other because it's the blind leading the blind so no one will criticise the other because you both don't know what is right. But nowadays the promiscuous girls are the ones getting married" (Female, WU)

Group three (Females, WU) took a different stance and agreed that they would not necessarily admire someone who got married a virgin because there is more to a happy marriage than virginity, secondly it's possible for one to lose their virginity without necessarily having had the intention to do so. The following quotes summarize the arguments about the importance of virginity:

"Sometimes we tend to make small issues so sacred. It [virginity] matters to some extent but to some it's of no importance because this girl could get married a virgin but doesn't have happiness or has a terrible character. These days well groomed ladies are getting their men snatched by whores, it's not really about virginity anymore because that 'whore' may be cheerful, cooks well and always handles her man correctly, including being able to please her husband sexually" (Female, WU)

"There's an assumption that a woman who gets married a virgin will be treated better than one who doesn't, but nowadays to me it doesn't really seem to matter whether or not you are a virgin when you get married, the type of treatment you get depends on your husband's character. I could keep myself for 25 years but that doesn't qualify me as having the right man who will respect me for that" (Female, WU)

"I think it's good for one to wait till marriage but in reality sometimes these things just happen without you being prepared... It's now up to me as an individual to decide... this encounter how do I view it and is it something advisable and should I continue to do it... the fact that I did it once doesn't mean it has to be a repeated thing where I sleep with whoever I date" (Female, WU)

Group four (Males, WU) also gave a different perspective by arguing that they would only admire a woman, and not a man who got married a virgin. The discussion in this case was centred around the idea that yes, the keeping of virginity could be governed by principles and priorities, but mostly in the case of men its considered weird for them to still be virgins at a certain age. At such a stage, their decision to remain a virgin will automatically be put down as being a result of fear, the inability to perform or simply a lack of opportunity. This presents the man as a sexual being who should actively go out and seek to have his needs met, which in reality may not be the case for every man.

Like group two, group five (Females, HIT) agreed that they would admire virgins, however, in this case there was the condition that the person has to have kept their virginity because they wanted to and not because of external pressure from family members or cultural expectations. As one respondent said:

"I would admire that person if they did it [kept their virginity] for them self. People have a tendency to get married as virgins just because society says it's a good thing. Then once the person is married they start cheating. If it's their own principles that made them remain a virgin then yes I would admire them" (Female, HIT)

In this group, the idea also came up that one being a virgin could be problematic in a marriage, and two reasons were given for this. Firstly, if the other partner is sexually experienced the difference in levels of experience could lead to a lack of satisfaction or comparing one's partner with previous partners who could perform better. Secondly, a woman who goes into a marriage as a virgin could find herself holding a deep level of regret if things don't work out because she would have saved herself for her husband and may feel he has a hold over her because of this. It would then be difficult to leave an abusive marriage. This suggests that young women can develop a strong emotional attachment to the man they lose their virginity to.

Group seven (mixed group, HIT) had a variety of responses regarding whether or not they would admire virgins. Some participants said they would admire virgins, even the male virgins, unlike group four which specified that only female virgins would be admired.

"Guys have a tendency to want to experiment and have different tastes so one who is a virgin has mastered the art of controlling himself, even if a girl is undressed he can tell her to put her clothes back on but one who isn't [a virgin] would feel the urge to taste. So I would admire a guy like that [a virgin]" (Male, HIT)

"If I was to come across a virgin guy I'd definitely respect him because it takes so much self control not to sin" (Female, HIT)

Other group six participants, like those in group five said they would only admire virgins who had kept their virginity because of their own desire to do so.

"[my admiration] Depends on the reason they kept it [their virginity] for, that's what I would respect. If someone actually had the opportunity to lose it but didn't, I would respect that but if you were kept in a way that you had no way whatsoever to have sex then I can't respect that because it's just situational" (Female, HIT)

Although the groups had different views regarding the importance of virginity as shown above, all groups agreed that the youth have become more promiscuous as the age of sexual debut continues to drop over the years whilst the rate of partner change and the number of current partners increases. According to the participants, in some cases individuals can even be mocked for still being virgins by the time they become university students as engaging in sex is sometimes viewed as "fashionable" by some groups of youth, females included. Even though this is the case, within group discussions it seemed as if the female respondents were removing themselves from this group of promiscuous youth, whilst the males saw no problem with being called promiscuous. This was evident in the way all the female respondents stressed that if one must engage in sex it must be within a committed relationship, whilst the male respondents saw no problem with engaging in casual sex. As one participant stated:

"Some people think sex is for fun. This guy once asked me what I do for fun and I said I listen to music and watch movies because I don't even have friends in the area I live. He actually mocked me and said what other fun do we have except sex?" (Female, group 2).

This difference in perspectives can result in situations where girls are placed a greater risk of contracting infections as they may be unaware of their partner's sex network.

A number of factors were cited as being the driver of premarital sex and increased promiscuity amongst the youth in modern times. Although there were common themes that came up in all the groups such as peer pressure and the media, other interesting factors were also mentioned such as the lack of communication between parents and children/ the formulation of sex as the forbidden fruit (mentioned in a previous section), or, lack of morals and values, the type of food being eaten, boredom, and sex becoming a trend.

The suggestions the participants gave on how to deal with this issue were in line with the problems.

4.4.1 Communication

This section shall be looked at briefly as an in-depth discussion of the problems with the lack of effective communication was discussed earlier.

A large number of the participants agreed that:

"Lack of time with our parents and guardians is creating the problem. There is no communication or an attempt to relate to each other" (Female, HIT)

Some participants believed that along with leaving children with inadequate information, this lack of communication also leads to a situation where important norms and values are not efficiently communicated to children the way they were in the past. As a result:

"...sex is now everywhere. We are no longer protecting, as future leaders of tomorrow, the norms and values of our society" (Male, WU)

The agreed upon solution for this problem was that:

"We need to talk about sex openly because making it taboo and not talking about it makes children more curious" (Female, WU)

"Our parents should educate us gradually because once you reach a certain age and they start wanting to tell you about sex when you're already engaging it will be too

late. They need to start early giving you that education so that it makes it a little more likely that you can keep your virginity” (Female, HIT)

Although there is a culture of silence around sexuality, these findings show that the youth are willing to fight against this norm as they are comfortable discussing issues of sexuality with their peers and long to have the type of relationships with their parents were they could openly bring up these issues. These findings and suggestions coincide with other studies that have shown that communication with parents has the potential to delay sexual debut. Open communication channels regarding sexual issues also leave young people in a position where they can make informed decisions regarding their sex lives (Mutema, 2013; Chikovore, Nystrom, Lindmark & Ahlberg, 2013).

4.4.2 Peer pressure, Trends and Boredom

Peer pressure was picked up on in all groups as being one of the factors that encourages people to engage in premarital sex, such that:

“Virginity is now becoming something to be ashamed of yet back then not being a virgin was something to be ashamed of” (Female, HIT)

“We as the youth are becoming more promiscuous, you may find out we are sitting in a group like this talking and number 7 goes on about that he was doing with his girl, and number 1 here is a virgin but he’ll be too embarrassed to admit. He will also make up his own story about what he has done. Being a virgin is now something that’s wrong” (Male, HIT)

That being said, if one is in such a high pressure environment, the contributing effects of boredom and the need to ‘follow the trend’ and not be left out become strong motivators to engage in sex. According to one participant:

“Sometimes when you have too much free time on your hands you just end up engaging in random sexual encounters” (Male, WU)

Restructuring virginity as something to be proud of and increasing the number of youth activities could therefore be a way of discouraging an increase in sexual activities. However,

the first of these suggestions would be very difficult to pull off as it would involve a significant number of young people and the modification of dominant sexual beliefs.

Even though the idea of virginity as being something to be ashamed of was a common theme in discussions, there was also a common counter argument that showed that amongst the Shona youth, differences in beliefs and behaviours exist when it comes to the issue of virginity and admitting whether one is a virgin or not. In some situations, the stigma attached to premarital sex is still so high that young girls deny that they are no longer virgins. This is likely the case in areas where Christian beliefs are strongly held as tradition alone doesn't seem as a strong deterrent. Girls therefore still want to be regarded as "good" as opposed to sexual, whilst the young men want to be seen as having many sexual conquests. The different interpretations/understandings of sexual activity show that sexuality is socially constructed and understood differently across and within groups, in other words, there is the existence of multiple sexualities (Tamale, 2011). The two statements below show how virginity is valued in some spaces and devalued in others:

"Here [at HIT], people respect you for being a virgin, for being virtuous, for being principled. But out there's places where they question you for being a virgin"
(Female, HIT)

"I think all the guys claim they are not virgins and all the girls claim that they are virgins. I've never met a girl who says she isn't a virgin even a girl we know has been sleeping around, even one you've had sex with personally you can hear her telling others she's a virgin" (Male, HIT)

4.4.3 The influence of the media

According to the participants the media has a large role to play in socializing the youth and encouraging them to engage in sexual intercourse, not only because of the ease with which one can access sexual material online but also through the programs shown on television and the technological advancement that allows for the quick and easy sharing of nude pictures and homemade pornographic material. As one female participant said:

"These days the technology is encouraging. You start from sending a pic, next it's a nude pic..." (Female, HIT)

According to the participants, technological advancements like these therefore encourage the escalation of a relationship because by looking at sexual images and videos, one can also quickly become curious and wish to try some of the things they see. Other participants clearly agreed with this:

“If you can just Google sex, best styles for sex, you’ll get a lot of information. This results in situations where young people become curious and want to experience all this at a young age” (Male, WU)

“Without the age categorization on the internet everyone can just access anything which is not age appropriate unlike in traditional ways of life when we relied on the parents. They are the ones who recognised that you’re now at the age where your socialization should include such a curriculum which has information about sexual matters and at the end of the day it was given to people at the appropriate time. In this modern society, if a 5 year old kid manages to get access to the internet they come across information that should only be accessible to adults” (Male, WU)

The media is a hard thing to control but the suggestions given were based on the idea that control over content should be made more effective and the media should also be actively used as a tool to educate the youth and discourage promiscuity, for example, educative material should be placed alongside adult websites. However, even with this measure, there will still be shows shown on television during times when children are awake that can have suggestive content that parents may think nothing of. One participant could personally attest to this:

“One situation I had with my nephews around prime time. We were watching Generations [South African Soapie] then after, one of them said lets kiss like they were doing on Generations, so I think we are living in the technological age where most of the stuff is available for everyone” (Male, WU)

I am left with the question of whether or not children in such situations are aware of the meanings behind the actions they view and what imitating such actions could mean.

4.4.4 Food Consumption

This was one of the most unexpected findings that I came across. Some participants, especially the males brought up the idea that consumption of food loaded with GMOs is resulting in young girls looking much older than they are which leads to them attracting older partners or encourages them to experiment. This mature look is said to allow young girls to attract older boys or men who may then engage in sexual intercourse, sometimes without them even being aware of the girl's true age.

It was therefore suggested that parents should not rely on imported genetically modified food, for example chicken. Instead, organic food should make up the main part of children's diets.

4.5 The importance of sexual experience and expression

4.5.1 Sexual Experience

Most participants mentioned that it is important for both males and females to have sexual experience especially when going into a marriage or relationship where one of the partners has some form of experience already. In the participants' own words:

"Yes, I think it [experience] is important because dating someone who doesn't even know how to kiss is not appealing" (Female, HIT)

"If you get married to an experienced guy he will already know what other women have to offer so you should also know so you can satisfy your man because once that happens then I don't think there will be disruption in the relationship" (Female, HIT)

"It's important for both to know what they're doing. Let's say one knows and the other doesn't, e.g. the man doesn't know and the woman knows there's gonna be a problem with the communication" (Female, HIT)

"If the man is allowed [to be experienced] then yes [a woman should also be allowed]. You can't say the man should be experienced and the woman shouldn't, both partners should be experienced" (Male, WU)

"I don't even want to be in the situation where I have to now start teaching someone. There's no job that you get into without experience, that's what I want, someone with experience" (Male, WU)

As shown by the previous response, in cases where one partner is inexperienced it then falls on the other to do the "teaching" and some of the respondents saw no problem with this.

"It's important for a woman to be experienced because she's there to correct you if you're doing something wrong so you don't keep repeating the same mistakes" (Male, WU)

"I came across a view that the guy is meant to teach you so the guy must be experienced then he teaches you" (Female, WU)

However, some respondents preferred not to be with an experienced partner at all because of the pressure that comes with the fear of unmet expectations and being compared to past lovers. This was true for males and females alike.

"Men with a lot of experience aren't highly regarded because at the end of the day when you get married he will be comparing you with other girls. He will be saying she [my wife] isn't good at this but I know this other girl is so I can just go to her if I want to do that. He won't have time to teach you because he knows where to find those who already know how to do it" (Female, WU)

"Too much experience can be problematic because then they want to dictate how you have sex" (Female, WU)

"With experience you then set certain targets and if your partner doesn't meet that there's a problem" (Male, HIT)

"Men are expected to perform but I wouldn't like someone comparing me to anyone else that's why I said those with experience should be together and those without should also be together" (Female, WU)

"I think a woman shouldn't be experienced practically because what if the recent guy had a big item [penis] and you won't be able to satisfy her to that extent. It's better when the girl has no experience and she can warm up to you instead of her now comparing you to past experience" (Male, HIT)

The issue of practical experience raised by the male participant above came up in a number of discussions. Participants felt that it was ok for one to have experience as long as it was not gained from engaging in sexual intercourse. The gaining of sexual experience (especially amongst female respondents) was therefore not necessarily linked to practical experience, instead experience from listening to stories from others or from social media was viewed as a better option than having had multiple sexual partners. This is particularly because of the idea that women should not go about engaging in casual sex.

"According to what I was taught about sex, it involves a spiritual attachment to someone. After you have it with someone you have a certain connection with that person so it's not something you can just do randomly" (Female, WU)

"Knowing is ok. Not necessarily because I've been sleeping around but just knowing without the doing" (Female, HIT)

"... girls find it easier to be experienced because of social media. Its open and you can access anything you want to regarding sex. There are also platforms such as your aunts, their role traditionally is to instruct you on how to handle sexual situations or how to act. If you have no experience you tend to have problems in your home. So I think experience is quite important, how you get the experience is another issue..." (Female, WU)

However, even the gaining of knowledge and experience from different sources of information could lead to problems in a relationship where the male is insecure because:

"Some men go out and they sleep with lots of women then at the end of the day they want a virgin and want to train their wife themselves. When you have experience they can start asking how you learnt what you know and accusing you of being promiscuous and sleeping with the whole community so it backfires at the end of the day" (Female, WU)

"I wouldn't want a woman who is experienced. Where did you get that from? Personally I want to get married to a virgin so if a woman has experience already that's a minus" (Male, HIT)

So whilst women may be allowed to gain information regarding how to please their man, sometimes there are restrictions placed on how they can make use of this information as being too open about their level of experience can raise questions. This brings us to the final section that reviews sexual expression within relationships.

4.5.2 Sexual Expression

Most participants agreed that expressing one's sexual desires to their partner was positive as communication was the key to every relationship. Sexual activities were seen as a "two-way street" in which both parties had the right to satisfaction, of which, communication was seen as a central part of this. I found it interesting that at no point was the issue of power relations or the traditionally acceptable way of behaving raised by female respondents, all their attention was focused on sexual expression being a sign of good communication and a healthy relationship.

"I think it's ok [expressing your desires] because it strengthens the relationship e.g. if you're kissing and you don't like it, it also leads to cheating because you wanna be with someone who knows what he's doing. Why not just tell your guy that if you do it this way I don't really enjoy it and we can try something else. For those who are sexually active it can be about the moves or positions" (Female, HIT)

"I also think all relationships are based on communication. If you can't communicate it will be a disaster" (Female, HIT)

"I think for the woman being open is ok, that's how we interact and it shows that the relationship is stable but if you aren't sharing you end up getting something done to you that you don't like and you're unable to communicate that to your partner" (Female, WU)

Some male participants showed that they would be grateful for having an enthusiastic partner who is able to communicate her needs therefore helping to ensure that both partners are satisfied.

"I want a creative girl. Not just one who waits for me to take the lead all the time. I want her to be able to say today I heard about something new" (Male, WU)

"Women need to be understood a lot more than men because with men once the woman knows the basics then she can pretty much use them on any man unlike a man trying to use same techniques on

different women so it's good if the woman tells you [what her desires and preferences are]" (Male, WU)

However, it was evident that in some cases being too open or being too experienced would raise some questions about the woman's sexual history, but this is only true for some males. In this case, women's expression is therefore expected to be restricted so as not to make the male uncomfortable within the relationship and to avoid the girl presenting herself in an unbecoming manner. As the males said:

"...when a man is being told what to do by a woman he feels less of a man and feels inferior and can think "now I'm the woman and you're the man". Very few guys if any at all would want to feel that way" (Male, HIT)

"You [the woman] can switch positions quietly than to out rightly say you want something or that something isn't working because the guy won't enjoy it" (Male, WU)

"I think if the woman says [how she wants] it, it kinda sounds slutty. Its better if the woman acts it, you know what you want, if you want a different position whilst in the act just act it out and change it up instead of having to say out loud because he may question where you heard it" (Male, HIT)

"I think that according to the stereotypes that are there if the female tells you exactly how she wants to have sex the guy raises questions about how did you know that and where did you do that before..." (Male, HIT)

Whilst some male respondents placed limitations on the amount of openness that women could show, these very respondents had no problem with male openness when it comes to sexual activities as this meant they didn't have to be frustrated after a sexual encounter and also wouldn't have to seek satisfaction from multiple partners. This gives the impression that women's sexual expression is still quite restricted as compared to that of males as it's seen as 'abnormal' for a woman to be completely open. This limitation affects the amount of effort a man has to put in a sexual relationship

One participant believed that:

"Those restrictions [that were traditionally placed on women's sexual expression] were for a reason. Modern day women request things which are not practical, they want you to do styles which are very hard to execute... Women are too demanding. Some would expect you to go for the whole night I think the guy should just satisfy himself" (Male, HIT)

Surprisingly, out of all the discussions, only one participant mentioned the importance of openness about sexual matters when it comes to dealing with one's sexual and reproductive health and not just issues of pleasure:

"I think it depends with the level of the relationship. We can't have started going out today and you start telling me about sex when I've never even had it, its problematic but at the same time I think it's very good for us to be able to discuss almost anything in a relationship especially matters to do with sex so we can also talk about the mechanisms we can use to protect ourselves from diseases" (Male, WU)

The fact that only one participant mentioned this issue raises the question of whether the youth generally do not discuss issues about sexually transmitted diseases with their sexual partners. Such a situation would be highly concerning. It would therefore be worthwhile for researcher to explore this theme further.

CHAPTER 5: BREAKING NEW GROUND? (CONCLUSION)

This study sought to show the ways in which sexuality is constructed amongst urban, Shona youth in Zimbabwe. The study was driven by my desire to uncover whether or not traditional gender roles still play a large role in this construction. Emphasis was therefore placed on the importance of socialization when it comes to the construction of sexual scripts. Focus groups presented the best environment in which to uncover the desired information as they gave me access to inter-subjective constructions of sexuality and also allowed for different perspectives on sexuality to be challenged. However, reliance on this method alone may have resulted in me missing out on information that could have been gathered in one-on-one in depth interviews where participants would have been guaranteed anonymity. Talking to older generations regarding their beliefs surrounding sexuality would have also resulted in richer findings and ultimately a more detailed study but such extensive data collection could not be accommodated due to time constraints and the limited length of the research report.

The challenges faced throughout the study such as the disruption of discussions and the postponement of some discussions were overcome and I still managed to collect a significant amount of data.

Looking at the responses given regarding the characteristics of a cultured woman, one could easily see how patriarchal ideals coloured the responses. The traditional woman was defined as one who kept her virginity until she was married and thereafter isn't too open about her sexual desires, one who dresses modestly, is hardworking within the home and accepts her husband as the head of the family and is submissive. The 'traditional' male on the other hand was defined as the provider who spearheads family affairs and is also highly sexual. These definitions on their own set a scene where the woman is in a disadvantaged position as the man is presented as being the powerful one within the relationship, secondly, one can already see how female sexuality is restricted whilst the males are expected to embrace their sexuality. This leaves them room to do as they please even before marriage. Unequal power relations are therefore embedded deep within the cultural fibres of the Shona culture, however, in pre-colonial times the theory of feminism would not have applied so easily as women were respected and each gender's roles were seen as

equally important. Socialization of young boys also included an aspect that emphasised the respect of one's future wife, and women in general (Gelfand, 1967).

The question then was whether the youth in this era would use these same characteristics in their definitions of a cultured woman and a 'real' man in contemporary Zimbabwe.

According to the findings, whilst there was an overlap between youth definitions of what it means to be a cultured woman or a 'real' man in this era and the traditionally held definitions, there were a few modifications/clashes between the meanings assigned to womanhood and manhood. This chapter shall summarize these differences in a bid to answer the main research question. Focus shall be placed on male and female roles within a sexual relationship and youth friendly reproductive services

Although retaining one's virginity until marriage was seen by some as ideal, participants also stated that virginity should not be considered one of the factors used to judge a woman's character. Furthermore, most participants agreed that although virginity did have some form of value, virgins would only be admired if the decision was personal and not because of the pressure from cultural expectations. This shows a shift from the traditional ways of thinking that equated a virgin to a good potential marriage partner for the men. In the case of the youth, the male participants mostly had no problem with dating or marrying someone who wasn't a virgin and the female respondents also noted that they would not look down on women who engaged in premarital sex as this was not a strong indicator of flaws within someone's character. Multiple references were made of how the good, loyal men are being taken by prostitutes or loose women. This gave the impression that sexual experience and the ability to please one's man are becoming of more importance than keeping one's virginity. However, it was mentioned that there are some communities in which virginity is still highly valued by the youth, and admitting to engaging in sex in such a context would lead to one being looked down on. The youth therefore live in a context where there are different sexual realities that need to be navigated carefully.

Male sexuality on the other hand is still constructed along the lines of traditional masculine ideals and sexual scripts where the man is given leeway to experiment sexually before marriage, with multiple partners. Casual sex is therefore considered to be normal amongst young men as they are believed to have a high sex drive. This continues to present male

virginity as of no importance at all, particularly seeing as there has never been a way to be certain of whether a male is a virgin or not.

Responses showed that in some sense, power-relations within sexual relationships have begun to shift. The youth are becoming empowered and no longer live in an environment where the men are allowed to take the lead and make all the important decisions within a relationship, in fact, some female participants felt that their independence was a key characteristic of their womanhood and their strength. In regards to sexual relationships, both male and female participants agreed that females should play a key role in deciding whether or not condoms are used instead of the man being the one making the decision. This shows a shift away from the standing traditional beliefs that present the man as the decision maker in all situations.

Some male respondents even argued that whether or not the male partner wants to use condoms, the female has the right to stand her ground and support her preference, especially in a situation where the partner is not trustworthy. This affects women's sexuality as this gives them the opportunity to confidently make decisions that will have a positive effect on their sexual and reproductive health. This suggests that advocating for female agency and power definitely helps young women become more empowered and creates a platform from which they are able to realise the value of their health and their happiness within a relationship, thus allowing them to fight against unequal power relations when it comes to making decisions about their sex life.

Unlike the traditional sexual scripts that dictate that a woman should take the secondary role within a sexual relationship and not be vocal regarding her preferences or her desire to engage in sexual activities, the participants in this study showed that most male and females think it's important for both parties to communicate and be open about their desires. Within this discussion there was no mention of power or the differences in sex drives, instead focus was placed on the idea that sexual activities involve two people and both parties therefore deserve to be satisfied. This was stated as being particularly true within a married couple as sexual openness was marked as being an indication of a successful, stable relationship in which both partners feel free to communicate thus decreasing the chances of extra-marital affairs.

Both male and female respondents also noted that there was nothing wrong with a female initiating a sexual encounter or suggesting a change in how things are done within the bedroom. All these ideas point towards an increase in women's sexual freedom.

When one puts these findings besides those of Chimbandi's (2013) findings, a pattern can be seen forming of a new way in which the younger generation is approaching their sexuality and relationships, especially in the form of marriage. As in Chimbandi's findings amongst young, married Shona women, a lot of importance is placed on communication and the satisfaction of both partners. This undoubtedly shows a change in sexual norms and the way in which sexual scripts are constructed.

Although there was a positive attitude around talking about sex with friends and accessing information regarding sex, accessing actual services was perceived in a different light. The research findings showed that the stigma attached to youth sexuality had greater impact on whether or not one made use of SRH services, compared to gender expectations. The issues associated with stigma can include embarrassment or the fear of being judged. Both males and females feared being judged, not only by health care workers but also by their peers. However, the idea of women as more concerned about their health can also come into play in the sense that given there was no stigma, a few more women than men stated that they would be willing to make use of the services.

The important point to note here is the need not only of youth-friendly services but also of a change in mindset when it comes to youth sexuality as provision of youth friendly services (i.e. those that attract the youth, meet their needs and retain clients for continuing care) may do little good if the youth feel as though their peers would judge them for making use of these services.

Although the findings presented above create an illusion of a playing field that is becoming more level, and sexual norms that are drastically changing, by looking at the bigger picture, it was evident that the youth still hold on to some traditional beliefs that have been passed on through the gender socialization process. One may view this as an attempt to find a middle ground where the youth exercise their agency by making sexual decisions and seeking pleasure without completely disregarding the values and beliefs that have been passed on to them by their parents.

Although the value of virginity had decreased meaning it is no longer shocking to hear that a young woman has engaged in premarital sex, there are restrictions placed on the type of relationship in which one can do this in. There is the expectation that a respectable woman will only engage in sex when it is within a stable relationship, preferably a long term one in which emotions have been invested. Engaging in casual sex for pleasure is seen as unbecoming and the more one engages in this type of behaviour the more one risks tainting their image and gaining a reputation as a 'slut'. A woman therefore has to act as a "gatekeeper", a term used by Weideman (2005) to refer to a role that helps to protect women from gaining a bad reputation and also the risk of having hurt feelings in an interaction where the man is driven only by the pleasure-seeking goal.

As one male participant confidently stated *"if one key opens five doors it's a master key but if five keys are gonna be opening one door, the door is loose"*. Simply put a man can receive praise for sleeping with many women but a woman is looked down on for sleeping with more than one man. Casual sex and sex with multiple partners were viewed, by both the male and female participants as acceptable only within the male domain. This therefore assumes that a "good" woman is driven to engage in sex only as a means of showing affection to her partner. The discourse of pleasure is completely ignored when looking at women as those who engage in casual sex are seen as "bad". This is a strong indication of the continuing oppression of women's sexual freedom.

In the same way in which women should not engage in casual sex for the sake of pleasure, restrictions are also placed on the role that women can take in providing condoms and in expressing their desires or their level of sexual experience. Although all participants agreed that women should also decide whether condoms are used, most male participants did not support the idea of women buying and carrying around condoms as it gave the impression that the woman is loose and cannot be trusted. Being too open about one's desires or being too experienced also lead to situations where males begin to question their partner's sexual history, for one not to be labelled as a slut there should therefore be restrictions placed on these behaviours. It is viewed as better for the woman to subtly or indirectly get her suggestions across. This is partially due to the fact that the males did not want to be with a woman who had more experience than they did as it plays on the male ego and leads to insecurities regarding their ability to satisfy their woman. In this regard women therefore

have to bend to accommodate the men's whims thus giving the impression that the man is still taking the lead.

All these findings show that there are numerous sexual scripts amongst the Shona youth and they have to navigate through these and choose different scripts to be followed based on the context or environment they are in. In some cases one has to appear clueless and "good" whilst in other cases one's experience is welcomed by their partner and presenting one as a virgin could lead to being mocked. I cannot go as far as to conclude that there is a dominant sexual script amongst the youth as there are varying scripts that are constantly being modified.

That being said, I will conclude this report by saying, although it seems as youth sexuality and sexual norms/beliefs are rapidly changing, the Shona youth are still holding on to many cultural beliefs even though some have been slightly modified. Gender role socialization impacts the construction of youth sexuality to a large extent as the current changes to how the youth interpret issues of sexuality are based on a foundation of traditional beliefs and practices. It may take a few more decades before 'new' sexual norms and scripts have emerged altogether but the question to ask is will this even happen? There are an infinite number of sexual scripts even though only one or two are predominant, so are sexual norms indeed changing or are we looking at a situation where the simultaneous existence of the 'old' and 'new' has become more apparent and needs to be embraced, or a hybrid situation where the fusion of the 'old' and 'new' has already occurred thus producing something familiar yet new?

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APPENDIX I: FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS

Section 1: Socialization and sexual norms

1. Traditionally, what does it mean to be a real wo/man? Pachivamhu zvikanzi Mukadzi (muskana)/murume (mukomana) kwaye or chaiye
2. Who is responsible for teaching you how to behave as a wo/man. Are your beliefs in line with traditional ones?
3. Traditionally what are males/females taught about sex?
4. Did you ever discuss dating and virginity loss with parents?/Who taught you about sex and what where you taught?
5. Traditionally is virginity equality important for the man as it is for the woman when they get married?
6. Does what you learn as a child affect how you feel about sex as you grow?
7. Where you taught different things as you grew, primary vs. high school vs. university life?
8. Do adult responses to a child's sexual behaviour have an effect on how "good" or "bad" children think sex is throughout their lives?
9. As a young adult have you ever been present whilst as adults discuss sexual issues (kitchen tea parties)?

Section 2: Attitudes

10. In a sexual relationship should women openly talk about sex (i.e. ask for sex, suggest positions) the same way men talk about sex?
11. How do you feel about women buying and carrying around condoms?
12. Would you be comfortable being around people who are openly sharing their sexual experiences?
13. It's important for women to be sexually experienced?
14. It's important for men to be sexually experienced?
15. Would you admire someone who is a virgin when they get married?
16. Do you think children should be sheltered from sexual messages? If you had a child would you want to give them as much information as possible?

Section 3: Perceptions

17. Is sex still viewed as taboo/ something that shouldn't be spoken about?
18. Do you think 'traditional beliefs' hinder communication between adults and the youth in regards to issues surrounding sex?
19. Traditionally, is women's sexual freedom more restricted than that of men's?
20. Do you think it is ok to be open about your sexual needs and desires with your partner? Why?
21. Do you think young people are becoming more sexual/promiscuous? What do you think should be done to help change youth behaviour?
22. Is it important for sexually active males/females to go for regular check-ups?
23. Should virginity testing be practiced?
24. Should sex be had only in committed, long-term relationship?

Section 4: Behaviours

25. In your opinion, what are the main factors encouraging the youth to engage in sexual intercourse?
26. If free reproductive health care was provided would you use it regularly?
Should HIV testing be compulsory? /Is getting tested regularly important?
27. Do you think only men should be responsible for providing condoms?
28. Do you think men should be allowed to decide individually whether a condom should be used?

APPENDIX II: INFORMATION SHEET AND CONSENT FORM

Participant Information Sheet

(Working) Title: “The Influence of Gender Role Socialization on Sexual Norms and Behaviours of Youth: Perceptions Of Shona University Students In Zimbabwe”

Investigator: Shamiso C Madzivire

Email: 485151@students.wits.ac.za

Supervisor: Dr. Lorena Núñez-Carrasco

Email: Lorena.NunezCarrasco@wits.ac.za

Miss S.C. Madzivire

21 Rayl Road

Borrowdale

Harare

-- September 2014

To whom it may concern:

I am a Masters student at the University of the Witwatersrand in South Africa. In order to meet the requirements needed for me to graduate I have to carry out a research project. The topic I chose is titled “The Influence of Gender Role Socialization on Sexual Norms and Behaviours of Youth: Perceptions Of Shona University Students In Zimbabwe”.

You are hereby invited to take part in this study which will be focusing on the effects that the gender and sexuality education received from society have on practices, attitudes and beliefs held by young people regarding their sexuality. Your participation is voluntary. If you do not want to take part you are free to say so and it will not affect you in any way. If you do want to take part now, but change your mind later, you can pull out of the study at any time.

Should you need to be educated on sexual and reproductive issues, please contact the SayWhat organization on your campus or at other member institutions. The Students and Youths Working on reproductive Health Action Team (SAYWHAT) is an institution that aims at tapping out consciousness from students and youths in Zimbabwe into active participation on sexual and reproductive health issues including rights. The contact details for all member institutions can be found online.

I give you this form so that you may read about the purpose, risks, and benefits of this research study. If you agree to take part in this study, you will be asked to sign the Consent Form on the last page. This document is 3 pages long. Please make sure you have read and understood all the pages.

PURPOSE:

As stated earlier the purpose of this study is to uncover the effects that the gender and sexuality education received from society has on practices, attitudes and beliefs held by young people regarding their sexuality. This will hopefully help in understanding the relationships between culture, opinions about sexuality, sexual activity and good health. This information can then be used in the fight against the sexual issues (e.g., high rates of sexually transmitted infections) currently being faced by the youth in Zimbabwe.

DURATION AND DISCOMFORTS

If you decide to participate, you will be part of a group interview process with at least 6 other people. During this process the group will be asked to answer a series of open ended questions in a discussion-type format. The length of the interview will depend on how detailed your responses are. Some of the questions may be of a sensitive nature and may lead to discomfort should you choose to answer them.

BENEFITS AND/OR COMPENSATION

I cannot and do not guarantee or promise that you will receive any benefits from this study.

CONFIDENTIALITY

If you indicate your willingness to participate in this study by signing this document, I plan to disclose the research findings to the University of the Witwatersrand in South Africa, the Harare Institute of Technology and Women's University in Africa. Any information that is obtained in connection with this study that can be identified with you will remain confidential, however, confidentiality is limited due to the interview being held in a group setting.

VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION

If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw your consent and to discontinue participation at any time without penalty. If you decide not to participate in this study, your decision will not affect your future relations with the ... (name of institute to be inserted)... and its personnel.

AUDIO RECORDING

Agreeing to be recorded is a pre-requisite to you participating. The recording made will be stored in a password protected computer in a hidden folder which will only be accessed and used by the researcher to review the information and write it down during the transcription process and will be deleted thereafter.

OFFER TO ANSWER QUESTIONS

Before you sign this form, please ask any questions on any aspect of this study that is unclear to you.

AUTHORIZATION AND CONSENT FORM

I have read, or have had read to me and I understand the Participant Information Sheet.	Yes ☐	No ☐
I have been given sufficient time to consider whether or not to participate in this study.	Yes ☐	No ☐
I understand that taking part in this study is voluntary (my choice) and that I may withdraw from the study at any time.	Yes ☐	No ☐
If I decide to withdraw from the study, I agree that the information collected about me up to the point when I withdraw may continue to be processed.	Yes ☐	No ☐
I understand that my participation in this study is confidential and that no material, which could identify me personally, will be used in any reports on this study.	Yes ☐	No ☐
Whilst outside the group setting, I will not discuss the opinions expressed by others during the group interview session	Yes ☐	No ☐
I agree to being audio recorded	Yes ☐	No ☐

Declaration by participant: I hereby consent to take part in this study.

Participant's name:

Signature:

Date:

Declaration by researcher: I have given a verbal explanation of the research project to the participant, and have answered the participant's questions. I believe that the participant understands the study and has given informed consent to participate.

Researcher's name:

Signature:

Date:

APPENIX III: ACCESS REQUEST

Miss S.C. Madzivire

21 Rayl Road

Borrowdale

Harare

Zimbabwe

-- September 2014

The Registrar

Dear Sir/Madam

I am a Masters student at the University of the Witwatersrand in South Africa. In order to meet the requirements needed for me to graduate I have to carry out a research project. The working title for my study is: "The Influence of Gender Role Socialization on Sexual Norms and Behaviours of Youth: Perceptions of Shona University Students in Zimbabwe". The study will be focusing on the effects that the gender and sexuality education received from society have on practices, attitudes and beliefs held by young people regarding their sexuality. This will hopefully lead to new information that can help in understanding the relationships between culture, opinions about sexuality, sexual activity and good health. This information can then be used in the fight against the sexual issues (e.g., high rates of sexually transmitted infections and unintended pregnancy) currently being faced by the youth in Zimbabwe.

I am requesting permission to source some participants through your University.

Your assistance will be greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,

Miss S.C Madzivire

APPENDIX IV: WOMEN'S UNIVERSITY LETTER OF APPROVAL

WOMEN'S UNIVERSITY IN AFRICA



Addressing Gender Disparity and Fostering Equity in University Education

Education Services Center
Upper East/Brighton Rd
P.O Box MP 1222
Mount Pleasant
Harare

Tel: 307930/333139
Tel/Fax: 333154

FROM THE OFFICE OF THE REGISTRAR

9 September 2014

Miss S.C. Madzivire
21 Rayl Road
Borrowdale
Harare

Dear Miss Madzivire

Re: **REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CARRY OUT RESEARCH AT WUA**

Reference is made to your request for permission to carry out research on the following topic:
"The Influence of Gender Role Socialization on Sexual Norms and Behaviours of Youth: Perceptions of Shona University students in Zimbabwe" in fulfillment of a Masters Degree which you are undertaking with Witwatersrand in South Africa.

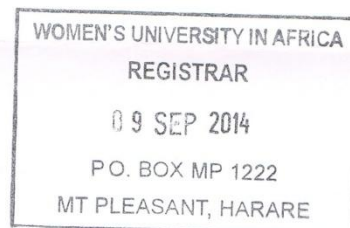
After due diligence of your research proposal, you are hereby granted permission to carry out your research. However, the findings of your study should be confined to your original intentions only i.e research. Any breaching of this understanding can constitute an act of misconduct.

Thank you for your cooperation.

Yours sincerely

B. Mugwise (Mrs)
REGISTRAR

CC: Pro-Vice Chancellor
Research Board Chairperson



Board of Trustees-Chairperson: Dr Fay King Chung; **Trustees:** Prof. Hope C. Sadza,
Mrs E. Gadzikwa, Mrs P. Mupfumira, Mrs C. Mtasa, Mrs G. Nhekairo – Mutukwa,
Mrs B. Nkala, Dr. U. Ushewokunze – Obatolu

APPENDIX V: HARARE INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY APPROVAL LETTER



Harare Institute of Technology
P.O. Box BE 277
Ganges Road, Belvedere
Harare, ZIMBABWE
Tel: 263-4-741422-37
Fax: 263-4-741406
Email: Admin@hit.ac.zw

REGISTRAR'S OFFICE

8 September 2014

Miss S.C. Madzivire
21 Rayl Road
Borrowdale
HARARE

Dear Miss Madzivire

RE: PERMISSION TO CARRY OUT RESEARCH

Your letter dated 5 September 2014 in connection with the above matter refers.

Please be advised that you have been granted the permission to carry your research at Harare Institute of Technology. Kindly submit a copy of your research document to this office upon completing your research.

Yours sincerely

L. Kusema (Mr)
DEPUTY REGISTRAR- ACADEMIC AFFAIRS

Cc: Registrar

APPENDIX VI: ETHICS CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE



Research Office

HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE (NON-MEDICAL)

R14/49 Madzivire

CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE

PROTOCOL NUMBER H14/08/22

PROJECT TITLE

The influence of gender role socialization and sexual norms and behaviour of youth: Perceptions of Shona University students in Zimbabwe

INVESTIGATOR(S)

Ms SC Madzivire

SCHOOL/DEPARTMENT

Social Sciences/Sociology

DATE CONSIDERED

22 August 2014

DECISION OF THE COMMITTEE

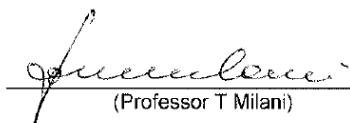
Approved Unconditionally

EXPIRY DATE

13/10/2016

DATE 14/10/2014

CHAIRPERSON


(Professor T Milani)

cc: Supervisor : Dr LN Carroscio

DECLARATION OF INVESTIGATOR(S)

To be completed in duplicate and **ONE COPY** returned to the Secretary at Room 10000, 10th Floor, Senate House, University.

I/We fully understand the conditions under which I am/we are authorized to carry out the abovementioned research and I/we guarantee to ensure compliance with these conditions. Should any departure be contemplated from the research procedure as approved I/we undertake to resubmit the protocol to the Committee. **I agree to completion of a yearly progress report.**

Signature

Date

PLEASE QUOTE THE PROTOCOL NUMBER ON ALL ENQUIRIES