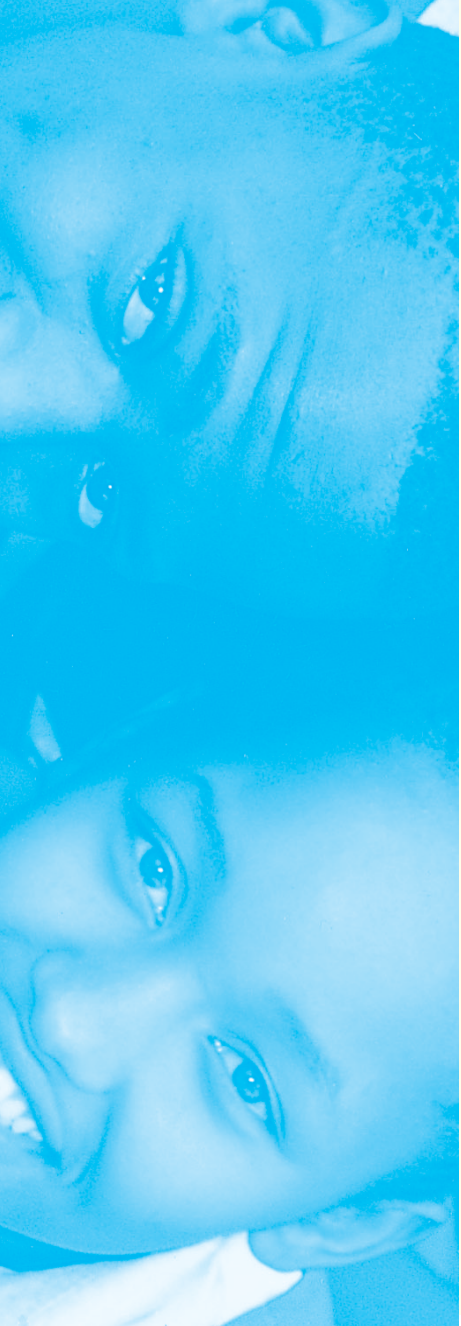


Finding Our Voices is a very reader-friendly book. The book demonstrates how girls and boys aged between 6 and 18 years can empower themselves to steer their own agenda once they are provided with safe environments and spaces within which to flourish. We hope that educators, peer facilitators and other people who read this book will find it a useful resource in their work with young people.

Per Engebak, Regional Director UNICEF ESARO, October 2003



What makes *Finding Our Voices* exciting and engrossing is that the book demonstrates the need to design HIV/AIDS and life skills education within a human rights framework in which young people are empowered, not only to claim their rights, but also to take charge of their lives.

Cream Wright, Chief, Education Section, UNICEF New York, October 2003

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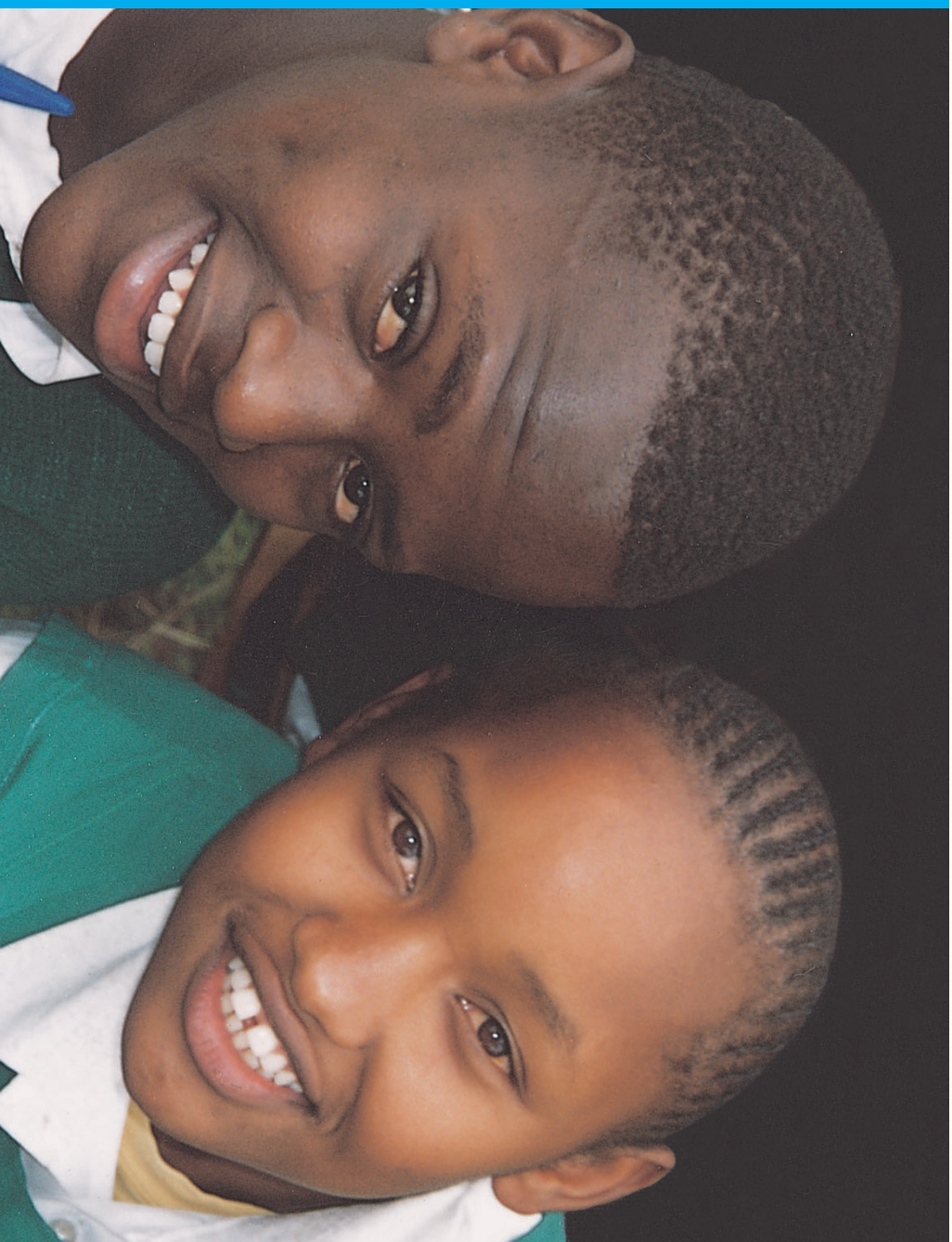
Africa: Young Voices Series

FINDING OUR VOICES

GENDERED & SEXUAL IDENTITIES
AND HIV/AIDS IN EDUCATION

FINDING OUR VOICES

GENDERED & SEXUAL IDENTITIES AND HIV/AIDS IN EDUCATION



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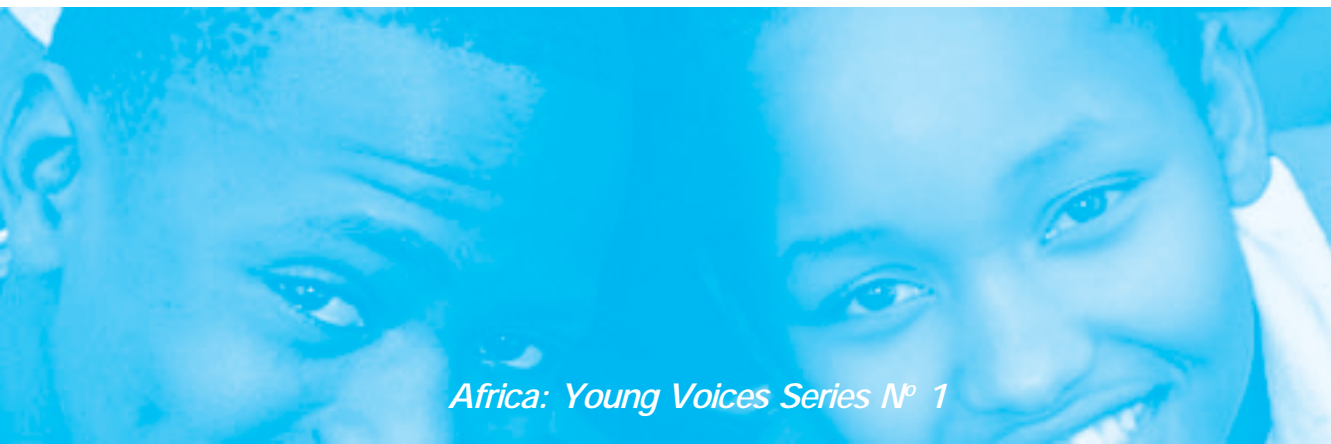
FINDING OUR VOICES

GENDERED & SEXUAL IDENTITIES

AND HIV/AIDS IN EDUCATION

Rob Pattman

Fatuma Chege



Africa: Young Voices Series N° 1

For every child
Health, Education, Equality, Protection
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Dedication

We dedicate this book to our beloved Moses Sichone, the former Regional HIV/AIDS advisor for ESARO, who passed away on Monday, June 23, 2003. He committed himself tirelessly to this initiative and ensured that we worked collaboratively to carry it through.

Contents

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	v
FOREWORD.....	vii
PREFACE.....	viii
INTRODUCTION.....	ix
PART ONE: THE <i>YOUNG VOICES</i> PROJECT.....	13
Background and Context.....	13
The Need for Fresh Research.....	13
Theories Informing the Research.....	13
Key Concepts.....	15
The Research Objectives.....	17
The Global Context.....	18
Research Methodology.....	21
Training the Researchers.....	23
Potential Limitations.....	24
PART TWO: RESEARCH FINDINGS.....	27
Topic 1: Young People Presenting Themselves to Researchers.....	27
Topic 2: Identifying as Boys and Girls.....	37
Topic 3: Learning about Gender and Sexuality at Home and at School.....	54
[A] Experiences of Sexuality and HIV/AIDS Lessons.....	55
[B] Learning Sexuality Education in the Family.....	70
Topic 4: Girls' and Boys' Problems.....	75
Topic 5: Boys and Girls as Friends.....	80
Topic 6: Boyfriends and Girlfriends.....	86
Topic 7: Age, Sex and Sugar Daddies.....	102
Topic 8: Sexual Harassment.....	109
Topic 9: Gender and Violence.....	119
Topic 10: Culture, Tradition, Modernity, and Gender and Sexual Relations.....	127
PART THREE: RESEARCH HIGHLIGHTS.....	137
Establishing Good Relations with Young People.....	137
Constructing Gender Differences.....	137
Sexual Double Standards.....	138
Tradition and Modernity.....	138
Girls Talking About Boyfriends.....	139
Boys Talking About Girls.....	139
Boys' 'Power' Over Girls.....	140
Sugar Daddies and Mummies.....	140

Boy-Girl Friendships.....	141
Problematic Relations with Adults.....	141
Religious and Faith Organisations.....	141
HIV/AIDS and Life Skills Education.....	142
IMPLICATIONS OF FINDINGS FOR FUTURE PRACTICES	145
Dissemination of the Research Findings.....	146
Communication Between Adults and Young People.....	146
Addressing Adults and Young People in HIV/AIDS and Life Skills Education.....	147
Peer Education.....	148
Addressing Violence in Schools.....	148
Making Critical Use of Popular Cultural Texts.....	148
Teachers and Pastoral Concerns.....	149
Educating Politicians.....	149
Challenging Popular Constructions of Male and Female Sexuality.....	149
Adopting an Holistic Approach to Teaching HIV/AIDS and Life Skills Education.....	151
Addressing Desires and Feelings Without Moralising.....	151
Addressing Multiple Identities of Boys and Girls.....	151
Encouraging Boy-Girl Friendships.....	152
Mixed and Single-Sex Groups in HIV/AIDS and Life Skills Education.....	152
Addressing How Young People Construct Modernity and Tradition.....	153
Addressing the Significance of Drinking in the Construction of Gendered Identities.....	153
Addressing Faith Based Organisations.....	154
Traditional Cultures and the Rights of Girls and Women.....	154
Male Dominance of Anti-AIDS Groups.....	155
Addressing Homosexuality.....	155
Research on Gender and Sexuality with Young Children.....	155
Longitudinal Studies.....	156
Capacity Development.....	156
Educational Resources.....	156
REFERENCES.....	159
ANNEX: SAMPLING PROCEDURES.....	165

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We would also like to thank the many other people who, although not mentioned by name, contributed to the success of this initiative. Your efforts are highly appreciated.

Foreword

The voices of children are typically absent from research on African communities. The assumption is that children and adolescents are not active subjects, and that adults can speak and act on their behalf. *Finding Our Voices* is a book with a difference. It addresses the walls of silence between children and their parents, between teachers and learners and between boys and girls, on matters of gender, sexuality and HIV/AIDS. Within these walls individuals construct and reconstruct their roles as either feminine or masculine. In *Finding Our Voices*, we see girls and boys challenging such constructs and reclaiming their voices and their right to be heard as experts about their own gendered and sexual lives.

This book provides ample evidence of how boys and girls are encouraged to identify with “masculine” and “feminine” characteristics and forms of behaviour in various communities. It illustrates how girls and boys construct their identities, negotiating, adapting to and resisting common articulations of masculinity and femininity. The book also demonstrates why it is wrong to constantly associate gender with women and girls. It focuses on the gender of boys as well as girls and addresses masculinity and femininity not in isolation of each other but as relational identities which derive their meaning from each other.

In a very reader-friendly way, *Finding Our Voices* presents findings from a regional study in seven countries in Eastern and Southern Africa. The book’s focus is on gender, sexuality and HIV/AIDS in education, demonstrating how girls and boys aged between six and 18 years can empower themselves to steer their agenda and articulate what it means to be particular girls or boys. The book not only provides a rich account of the lives, cultures and identities of girls and boys, but draws on the findings to make important and thoughtful suggestions about appropriate strategies and resources in HIV/AIDS and life skills education. One important finding was how keen young people were to talk about themselves, their fears, anxieties, passions and desires and how keen young people were when being interviewed by friendly, empathetic and non-judgmental adults. This offers important lessons on participatory pedagogic practices for school teachers and other educators as they engage children and young people in HIV/AIDS and life skills education.

The book offers new dimensions for HIV/AIDS and life skills education based on a human rights and community capacity development perspective. This is done by creating spaces for girls and boys to speak for themselves as they challenge gender and sexual stereotypes. We hope that *Finding Our Voices* will appeal to a wide readership including not only teachers and teacher trainers, but also students and academics with an interest in gender, developmental, childhood and health studies, NGOs and interested lay people. The book is concerned with how young people can work in partnership with teachers, parents and other adults in fighting HIV/AIDS.

Urban Jonsson
Regional Director
UNICEF ESARO, June 2003

Preface

HIV/AIDS is one of Africa's major development challenges. Since the 1980s, it has continued to devastate the lives of millions of people across the continent. Today, the Eastern and Southern Africa region is the most hard hit in the world. Most worrying is the fact that more than half of the newly HIV-infected are young people between 15 and 24 years of age. Throughout the region, the risk of HIV infection for young women is also increasing. Of the 8,600,000 young people living with HIV/AIDS in sub-Saharan Africa, 67 percent are young women and 33 percent are young men (*Young People and HIV/AIDS: Opportunity in Crisis*, UNICEF, UNAIDS, WHO, 2001).

These grave scenarios have provided the rationale for the UNICEF Eastern and Southern Africa Regional Office (UNICEF ESARO) to give first priority to HIV/AIDS. The first priority status includes a policy that requires each section of the Regional Office to spend 50 percent of its budget on HIV/AIDS-related programmes. The initiative on Gender, Sexuality and HIV/AIDS in Education was launched in Blantyre, Malawi by UNICEF ESARO in July 2001 through a regional workshop for young people. The initiative is a collaborative endeavour between the regional HIV/AIDS and Education sections with funding from UNAIDS and the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs for the Girls' Education Programme.

viii

The Girls' Education Programme recognises "gender" as the features associated in specific cultures with masculinity and femininity, and acknowledges that not all societies and cultures share the same ideas of what it means to be male or female. As the title of this book suggests, there is overwhelming silence about the role of gender and sexuality in the construction of identities. The identity of being women/men or girls/boys is taken for granted as a fixed natural endowment that corresponds with being female or male. Being female is thus gendered as feminine and polarised against the masculine. Such assumptions tend to divert attention from the fact that human beings are continually producing and reproducing themselves as particular women/men or girls/boys in different social contexts. This book provides space for girls and boys to address the gendering of their own identities and those of others

Following the Malawi workshop, the Regional Office undertook a study in seven countries to examine young peoples' perceptions and experiences of gender, sexuality and HIV/AIDS in education. These seven countries were Botswana, Kenya, Rwanda, South Africa, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe. The research findings are being used to furnish educationists, policy-makers and parents with rich information about the cultures and identities of young people. The life skills education programme emerging from this study aims to provide effective prevention and mitigation of the impact of HIV/AIDS in our education systems.

Changu Mannathoko
Regional Education Advisor
UNICEF ESARO

Africa: Young Voices Series

Introduction

This book draws on the findings of in-depth, mainly interview-based research on the experiences and identities of boys and girls aged between six and 18 years from the ESAR countries of Botswana, Kenya, South Africa, Tanzania, Rwanda, Zambia and Zimbabwe. Our researchers addressed the young people as 'experts' about themselves and encouraged them to talk, at length, about their pleasures, fears and anxieties, and their relations with contemporaries and adults of the same and opposite sex. Significant adults, mainly teachers and parents, also participated as subjects, and we examined how they constructed their relations with girls and boys, how this affected what they told them or did not tell them about sex and sexuality, and how this impacted in turn on the identities of girls and boys.

The rationale for engaging in this research was to provide detailed and vital information about the cultures and identities of young people living in Africa, which could be used to develop relevant, learner-centred and gender sensitive HIV/AIDS and life skills education. In an attempt to represent the voices of the young people from the various countries participating in the study, we quote extensively from the interview transcripts. We do not, however, take the accounts of young people at face value, simply as descriptions of themselves and the worlds they inhabit, but as social constructions that provide us with insights into the ways in which they actively produce their gendered and sexual identities. We explore how boys and girls construct their identities in relation to each other, their investments in these identities, and how they present themselves to our researchers. We discuss the implications of our findings for good pedagogic practices in HIV/AIDS and life skills education, and for social policy more generally.

The book comprises three parts. In Part One, we provide details of how the research came about, its aims, methods used, and how the researchers were trained. We locate our research in relation to other research on young people's gendered and sexual identities and develop the theoretical framework that informs our analysis. Part Two presents our findings organised around 10 interconnected topics. These focus on 1) the ways young people present themselves to our researchers, 2) their identifications as particular boys and girls, 3) messages communicated about gender and sexuality at school and at home, 4) boys' problems and girls' problems 5) possibilities and impossibilities of friendships between girls and boys, 6) experiences, fantasies and views regarding girlfriend/boyfriend relations, 7) age - gender hierarchies and sugar daddy relations, 8) sexual harassment, 9) gendered physical violence, including corporal punishment, and 10) identifications with modernity or tradition.

While our findings are presented in terms of these overarching themes, we also compare and contrast trends both within and between countries. This is in addition to comparing

data from single-sex and mixed-sex groups, as well as individual interviews. We are interested not only in the identities that particular boys and girls routinely construct and inhabit, but also in the implications of these identities for the sorts of relations they forge with various categories of people.

In Part Three, we highlight key issues based on our findings and based upon these, we make suggestions for future practice. Among these is the need to develop educational initiatives that not only address young people's investments in particular identities, but also engage with boys and girls in ways which encourage and enable them to reflect and talk about themselves and their identities as gendered and sexual beings. By addressing young people in a holistic, friendly, non-judgmental way, many of our researchers provide examples on how to develop such relations. Major recommendations include the need to design HIV/AIDS and life skills education within a human rights framework, in which young people will be empowered not only to claim their rights but to take charge of their lives. In addition, educators should emulate the good practices of working with young people as exemplified by many of our researchers and gender sensitive peer education should form a core component in all HIV/AIDS and life skills education programmes.

*Rob Pattman and
Fatuma Chege
Regional Research Team Leaders and Authors*



Part One: *The Young Voices Project*

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

The Need for Fresh Research

The ways in which young people think and talk about themselves, their desires, concerns and relations with others, have not featured in many studies – particularly in sub-Saharan Africa. When young people are addressed, it is often as passive beings who are subject to processes of socialisation over which they have no control. Not only has research in Africa failed to address young people as active subjects, as cogitative people whose identities are constantly evolving in relation to others; it has also tended to group them together as impersonal subjects who are incapable of individual thought. As you will discover in this book, nothing could be further from the truth.

In July 2001, UNICEF's Eastern and Southern Africa Regional Office (ESARO) set out to redress this imbalance through a series of research projects designed to investigate the experiences and identities of young people in seven African countries. The projects interviewed hundreds of young people in Botswana, Kenya, Rwanda, South Africa, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe, in an effort to understand how they perceive their own lives and experiences – and how these perceptions influence their relationships with others. By interviewing girls and boys of specific ages and backgrounds, the projects were designed to 'give a voice' to young people from socially and politically marginalised groups.



The *Young Voices* research projects began with a workshop in Malawi on the theme of 'Gender, Sexuality and HIV/AIDS in Education'. The workshop brought together 70 young people with researchers, NGOs, UNICEF and government officials from 13 African countries to examine and improve current pedagogies and materials for HIV/AIDS and life skills education programmes, and to train national researchers in the seven initial countries to design and carry out the *Young Voices* research projects. The latter entailed the development and study of qualitative, gender sensitive, young person centred research methods – including interviews, observations, diary-keeping and drawing – to study the ways that young people perceive their identities and interact with their peers and others.

The education authorities in the seven initial countries have all committed themselves to developing life skills education that addresses vital – and thus far largely ignored – issues of gender, sexuality and HIV/AIDS. Before the *Young Voices* researchers set out to conduct their national studies, they first underwent training to equip them with harmonised research parameters, in order to ensure that their findings would be compatible and comparable. This book offers a synthesis of their national-level findings (Part Two), together with key regional findings and their implications for future education practices (Part Three). For ease of reference, the findings have been categorised under the major themes and sub themes that emerged from the different research projects.

14

The research in this volume is designed to furnish educationalists, policy makers and parents with vital and comprehensive information about the cultures and identities of young people across Africa. The importance of such information was emphasised at UNICEF's Malawi workshop, at which several delegates made the point that life skills education would only be effective in mitigating the impact of HIV/AIDS if it was genuinely 'relevant'. In other words, it must be based upon a solid and accurate understanding of the concerns, fears, pleasures and desires of young people – and of the identities and relationships they forge as boys and girls growing up in the complex and demanding environment of 21st century Africa.

Theories Informing the Research

The *Young Voices* researchers set out to discover exactly how young people in their countries feel about themselves and their experiences – giving them a chance to articulate their thoughts with a minimum of pressure or interference. The research methods focused on creating an environment in which the interviewees could discuss their feelings freely and fearlessly. In particular, the approach drew on the concerns articulated by feminist researchers (eg. Stanley, 1990) to 'give a voice' to people from disenfranchised groups, whose views and experiences have not been accorded the same legitimacy as those of other groups in the past.

Every effort was made to treat all the young interviewees with an 'adult' level of respect – as one would treat any expert discussing issues within their chosen field. Although the

researchers wanted the interviewees to address certain general themes, they also encouraged them to set the agenda for the interviews and to raise and discuss any subject they personally considered important.

In addition to the loosely structured interviews, it is hoped that many of the other research methods employed – for example, diary keeping and drawing – may serve as examples of good practice that can be successfully incorporated into pupil-centred life skills education in these countries in the future.

The project interviews were informed by the ‘discourse theory’ of conceptualising gendered identities (see Foucault, 1979), which states that identities such as male, female, black and white only exist in relation to each other, and because we have words to describe them. Researchers previously influenced by this theory (eg. Wetherell and Edley, 1998; Frosh et al, 2000; Hollway, 1989) have adopted a ‘social constructionist’ rather than a ‘social realist’ epistemology (see Burr, 1995), which holds that gender identities are not fixed but are continually developing according to the different ways in which individuals ‘construct’ or perceive themselves, and their collusion with or resistance to cultural norms and expectations.

The researchers in this project also advocate a social constructionist position, which addresses people as active individuals who are always producing and negotiating – whether consciously or not – their gender identities. Their interviewees’ accounts of themselves and the opposite sex are thus taken not only as descriptions of culturally determined gender roles and characteristics, but of the ways in which they are actively *producing* their social identities, relationships and emotions in relation to one another.

KEY CONCEPTS

Following on from the social constructionist approach outlined above, it is important to clarify some of the key concepts of gender and identities that have informed our study:

Identity Construction and Gender

Our gender identities or how we see ourselves and how we behave as boys and girls, men and women, are not naturally but socially constructed. This means that our gender identities are *socially derived* – in other words, who we are and how we see ourselves depends very much upon popular ways of classifying and treating boys and girls, men and women, and the importance attributed to this. What it means to be male or female is not the same in all communities and cultures. These associations are learned, and boys/men and girls/women are encouraged to identify with what are considered to be masculine and feminine characteristics and forms of behaviour. These, however, may be contested and resisted, as we shall see in several of our interviews, in which girls resist boys’ depictions of them as weak, unfree, domestic and passive.

Gender identities are not like shoes that we simply step into, but are *negotiated* identities. While we derive a sense of who we are from the ways in which we are treated and classified by others, we are also active in the process of constructing our identities. Identities are not things that we have but things that we do or perform – and that are partly forged through the language we use to describe ourselves and others. This may take the form of presenting ourselves in opposition to characteristics that we attribute to the opposite sex. For example, in several of the interviews in Topic 2, many boys describe themselves as tough, active and free, in opposition to characteristics that they associate with femininity, such as passivity and physical and emotional weakness. We shall also see, in Topic 3, how these two identities are *performed* in relation to each other in the classroom. Because these performances become so habitual and taken for granted, it appears that boys and girls are naturally like this – that gender is, indeed, something that we have which determines our behaviour.

Our identity varies according to our social context: who we are with and what we are doing. We may think of ourselves differently and behave differently when we are in a group of people of the same sex than when we are in a group of people of the opposite sex (see Topic 3), or when we are with a male or a female interviewer (Topic 1). We may also present ourselves and our relations with people of the opposite sex differently in interviews and diaries (see Topic 6). In this sense, we can be said to have *multiple identities*.

16

Gender is sometimes associated with femininity. This is problematic because it implies that boys and men do not have a gender and that research on gender should focus exclusively on girls and women. Not only does this exclude boys and men from such research; it also severely limits and distorts what we can learn about the gendered identities and experiences of girls and women. It is important when researching girls and boys to focus on relations between them – as we have endeavoured to in this book – and how they identify themselves in relation both to people of the same sex and the opposite sex. Masculinity and femininity only exist in relation to each other. Like things that are hot or cold, long or short, they derive their meaning from one another.

Gender Sensitivity

Gender relations are often taken for granted, which serves to reproduce the kinds of power relations that are tied to them. Our aim is to develop gender sensitive approaches in our research, in order to identify and analyse activities that are normally taken for granted in terms of the gender power relations underpinning them.

Sexualisation

To 'sexualise' a person is to make them sexually appealing. The assumption here is that sexual attraction is not simply instinctual, but that we construct certain characteristics and forms of behaviour as sexually appealing – a practice that is often influenced by our peers and by popular cultural representations of sexuality and gender. Studies have shown

that, even at a very young age, boys construct girls and women as ‘sex objects’, eroticising parts of their bodies in isolation of their personalities (see Walkerdine, 1981). It seems likely that they are being influenced by and drawing upon the proliferation of popular discourses and visual images that present women in such a way. By eroticising women like this, many boys and men see themselves as possessing a powerful, even uncontrollable sex drive. The emphasis in many societies on ‘protecting’ young girls from boys (see Topics 3, 5 and 10) is problematic not only because it seriously restricts what girls can do, but because, ironically, it actively *makes* them the objects of boys’ and men’s desires – and precludes the possibility of non-sexual relations between boys and girls. Rather than adopting a purely instinctual model of sexuality, which may lead people to assume that boys and men are naturally more sexually motivated than girls and women, we would like to focus on how relations of power are produced by constructing males and females in this way.

THE RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

While each participating country was free to choose their own methods, samples and research sites, they were all committed to being gender sensitive and young person centred in their national studies. While the research teams could also choose the specific objectives of their national studies, they agreed to pursue at least one of the following general objectives:

- To investigate ways in which boys and girls construct their identities and develop relationships between people of the same and opposite sex in different settings – at school, at home, in the community – and how these identities and relationships may encourage or mitigate the spread of HIV/AIDS;
- To investigate teachers’ constructions of girls and boys, and the ways they identify themselves in relation to them, with a view to exploring their sensitivity to gender-based power relations both in and out of school, and their commitment to pupil centred pedagogies;
- To investigate how cultural practices, tradition and modernity are understood by boys and girls, how they relate to the ways that they construct themselves, their gender and their sexuality, and whether these constructions make them more or less susceptible to the spread of HIV;
- To investigate how boys and girls understand and experience their relationships with their duty bearers – mothers, fathers and teachers – and whether young people perceive these relationships to be helpful or otherwise in relation to their feelings, concerns and views about gender and sexuality;
- To identify and document good practices in the family, school and community, and to reflect upon positive research practices that may encourage young people and adults to engage in open, critical discussions about their gender identities, concerns and actions, which may help to protect them from HIV/AIDS;

- To develop a plan of action, based upon the gender and sexual identities that young people are commonly constructing, the type of relationships they are forging with the significant adults in their lives, and the kind of issues and concerns they are raising, to mitigate the spread of HIV/AIDS.

THE GLOBAL CONTEXT

Nearly all contemporary research published on the identities of young people within a social constructionist framework has been undertaken in the West. This research has generally found that boys and girls tend to construct gender identities in opposition to each other, and that their differences are often structured and experienced as relations of power (see Frosh, Phoenix and Pattman, 2002; Thorne, 1993; Francis, 1998; Prendergast and Forrest, 1997). Frosh *et al*, for example, found that boys placed a strong emphasis on themselves as strong and active, while describing girls as weak and passive. The *Young Voices* research projects aimed to discover whether African boys are equally concerned to construct their identities in such a 'manly' way – in opposition to their perceptions of femininity – and, if so, how they do this.

Research on girls and the construction of 'femininities' has suggested that girls often position themselves as mature and sensible in relation to boys, who they commonly regard as stupid, rude and irresponsible (see Francis, 1998; Frosh *et al*, 2002; Walkerdine, 1991). Indeed, in many western countries, girls usually outperform boys academically and the rates of delinquency are far higher among boys. It has been suggested that one reason for this is that boys, in identifying as boys, are expected to be irresponsible. To be responsible is thus constructed as 'girlish'. Our researchers set out to discover whether there was any evidence of such perceptions in Africa – and, if so, how they were being manifested.

Research among mature students in institutions of higher education in Zimbabwe and Botswana suggests that the men gain 'status' by engaging in activities such as beer drinking and having multiple sexual relations, which they themselves construct as naughty and irresponsible. By comparison, women who engage in similar behaviour are called derogatory names and are accused of 'violating culture' (Pattman, 2001, 2002; Gaidzanwa, 1993). Likewise, women who wear 'revealing' clothes or go to popular nightspots – particularly if unaccompanied by a boyfriend – are accused of being too 'modern' or 'western'. Girls are also criticised for speaking too openly or often in class or in other contexts in which boys are present. Fear of being labelled in this way acts as a powerful means of social control, strongly restricting what young women say and do. This project aims to examine whether there is any evidence of this sort of 'policing' of girls' identities – and how it affects the ways that they think and act.

While the use of the word 'traditional' in contemporary African societies often refers to what are assumed to be pre-colonial values – as opposed to 'western' ways of thinking and behaving – this project takes the view that 'traditions' are often invented, and that we construct what we define as 'traditional' in relation to particular versions of what we call 'modern'. This project is concerned with how young people, their parents and teachers create and categorise aspects of behaviour and values as 'traditional' or 'modern', and how this reflects upon the ways that they construct their own identities as particular kinds of boys and girls, men and women. In the light of the AIDS pandemic, is there not a risk that certain practices and values are being idealised as 'traditional' simply because they are different to 'western' practices? Are young people being blamed – and blaming others – for imbibing 'western' ideas about sexuality and gender? Do some boys and girls construct themselves as 'modern'? If so, how does this manifest itself, and how is it different for boys and girls?

Research among young people in Botswana has found that boys tend to be happier about being boys than girls are about being girls (Commeyras and Montsi, 2000). In this research, men and women aged between 14 and 20 were asked to write an essay in response to the question, 'If you woke up tomorrow and found you were a member of the opposite sex, how would your life be different?' Of the 25 men who participated, only two provided positive responses. Most of the girls, in contrast, expressed a desire to change their sex for a day, in order to enjoy what they regarded as the freedoms afforded to men, such as being able to come home late at night, visit friends, and be relieved of household duties and responsibilities. This project seeks to investigate further whether African girls and boys envy members of the opposite sex – and, if so, why.

While there has been a great deal of research on the 'policing' of girls (eg. Lees, 1986) and the tendencies for them to be labelled in derogatory ways and have their freedom curtailed, a few researchers and theorists have suggested that the identities of boys are also heavily policed. For example, it has been found that some boys attract teasing for being too effeminate or insufficiently masculine. Such boys are often referred to as 'gay' or 'homosexual' – not because they are presumed to be, but because the terms themselves are a symbol of effeminacy. These boys may be constructed as feminine for not playing football, for having too many girls as friends, for being sympathetic towards other boys, or even for working too hard.

Fear of this kind of ridicule causes many boys to avoid developing close, supportive relationships with girls and with other boys. Instead, they feel compelled to maintain the appearance of a 'hard' identity (See Epstein, 1997; Nayak and Kehily, 1996; Frosh et al, 2002; Mac and Ghail, 1994). The current project aims to investigate whether, and to what degree, the identities of boys in Africa are policed. What things do boys avoid doing for fear of being seen as too effeminate? Is this an accusation that African boys regularly face?

Some gender theorists (eg. Connell, 1995) have advanced the idea that boys and men, as well as girls and women, can be oppressed and restricted by popular versions of masculinity. According to Connell, men and boys are encouraged to aspire to a 'hegemonic masculinity' – embodied by great physical strength and sexual prowess – which few, by definition, are able to attain. This means that most boys and men regularly feel frustrated, and many are picked upon for being 'subordinate' and falling short of the 'hegemonic ideal'. This project will seek to examine what hegemonic ideals exist in Africa, and how they can affect the identities and behaviour of different types of boys. The research will also look for evidence of opposition to these ideals among boys, and what levels of frustration they may feel at being expected to live up to them.

Research in the west and in Africa (see *Changing Masculinities in Southern Africa*, ed. Morrell, 2001, and Silberschmidt, 2002) suggests that men are feeling increasingly threatened for a variety of structural and ideological reasons – particularly increasing unemployment and the growth of feminist ideas. In response to such trends, it is argued, men are retreating into and clinging onto stereotypical macho identities. This study aims to discover whether modern African boys and men feel threatened by 'assertive' girls. How does the growing focus on girls' rights affect them? The theoretical perspective informing this research undermines the common sense view that masculinity is homogeneous, strong and self-contained.

The project aims to examine the kind of masculine and feminine identities commonly articulated by young people in Africa. Gender is examined not as something that people are born with, which shapes their thoughts and behaviour in passive, preordained ways, but as something that they construct themselves in interviews and diaries by 'inventing' categories of masculinity and femininity and orienting themselves to them. This attempt to link attitudes to processes of gender identity construction can help us to understand not only why people hold particular views about sex and gender – views that may precipitate the spread of HIV/AIDS – but what they invest emotionally in these views. By focusing on how young people construct their identities in interviews, the researchers will be paying attention not only to what they say, but how they say it, and the emotions they express when talking about other boys, girls and adults and their relationships with them.

In researching the ways in which young people construct their identities, we want to focus on them not so much as authors of what they are saying – but as users and negotiators of certain positions made available to them by longstanding cultural discourses on gender. This is not to suggest that any of our interviewees are 'cultural dupes', identically manipulated by their past. Rather, a great deal of work and individual interpretation has been invested in the construction and enactment of their personal, social and sexual identities. The interviews in this study prove as much.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Selecting the Research Methods

A key consideration in the design of this project was to ensure subject centredness and gender sensitivity by positioning young people and children of both sexes at the heart of the research process. This involved providing the interviewees with ample 'space' to talk as experts, as they constructed themselves and addressed specific issues concerning them and their relationships with others. Because of its country-specific needs, the research in Rwanda combined qualitative and quantitative research approaches. However, the research in all the other countries adopted a purely qualitative approach, enabling the researchers to engage – inter-subjectively and dialogically – with their subjects, in ways that would generate insights that were 'central to their construction of the [subjects'] world' (Davies, 1982: 3, 1989, 1999).

Within this qualitative paradigm, the research teams selected methods such as individual and group interviews, participant and non-participant observation, the analysis of diaries and essays, and the drawing of sketches, to illuminate different aspects of their subjects' social worlds as they themselves constructed and experienced them.

Interviews (usually in groups) were used as the primary method through which the researchers investigated the ways that young people construct their identities in different social settings. The subjects were encouraged not only to address the main research themes – relations with and attitudes towards peers of different sexes, parents and teachers; interests and leisure pursuits; pleasures and fears; hopes and aspirations; role models; views on HIV/AIDS – but also to 'set the agenda' in pursuing issues that they felt were significant to them. In many of the interviews, the participants appeared at ease, while some of them expressed gratitude and well-being for the opportunity to talk about themselves and about issues of gender and sexuality with friendly, non-judgmental adults – sometimes for the first time in their lives. The experience of participating in loosely structured interviews designed to enhance inter-subjective and dialogical relationships among research subjects and between them and researchers is uncommon for most young people in Africa (Davies, 1999). In our research, young people and children were able to define themselves in relation to the adult researchers in ways we believe would have been impossible using other methodological approaches. Of particularly remarkable significance were the findings about child-to-child sex among Zambian children aged as young as six (see Topic 1).

In order to do justice to the subjects' participation, all the interviews were recorded and transcribed in a way that reflected accurately how, to whom and what the interviewees were saying, including pauses, changes in emotional tone, gestures, and other body and

non-verbalised language. The emotions expressed provide us with important clues as to the processes of identity construction that are taking place during the interviews (see Brown & Gilligan, 1992; Taylor & Gilligan, 1997; Frosh et al, 2002).

Observations (participant and non-participant) were loosely designed to include checklists of things to look for, such as how boys and girls mix during break-time in school or in community 'hangouts', and how usual or unusual this is. The researchers also observed tendencies of popularity among peers of the same or the opposite sex, and documented indicators to rate this perceived popularity. Such guided observations helped to focus on forms of interaction and gendered behaviour in school, at home, and in the community. In keeping with the dynamic nature of the research, the observation checklists were continually modified in the light of specific observations. The researchers showed considerable innovation in providing a variety of sites within which to conduct their observations. For example, the South African team organised a picnic on the beach for their young female and male participants, while the Zambian team observed people's behaviour in a local nightclub (see Topic 1).

Diaries were given out to older girls and boys, who were encouraged to make honest and accurate entries covering their daily actions, feelings and reflections, over a period of about two weeks. The researchers asked each of the diary-keepers to focus on several general themes, and provided them with standardised guidelines on how to record their daily activities, their emotions and feelings, and their relations with significant others. The diaries, notably those from the South African children, proved invaluable as a medium through which girls and boys presented themselves in ways that might have been difficult to express in interviews or through observations.

Among the adult participants, teachers in some schools also kept diaries of their teachings on life skills and HIV/AIDS. The researchers encouraged the teachers to position themselves consciously as women and men in relation to their girl and boy pupils, and to focus on the gender dynamics of their classes – particularly the ways that girls and boys responded to the HIV/AIDS topics they were teaching. They were asked, for example, to record any tension, laughter or moments of embarrassment among the boys and girls, as well as the criteria they used to rate the effectiveness of their teaching.

Essay writing provided a good example of the subject centredness of this kind of research. In two Kenyan schools, the boys and girls exercised their freedom to set the agenda by constructing their future selves in essays on the topic 'The person I would like to be'.

Drama or community theatre was used in the Tanzanian study as a key subject centred research method. Young people were initially interviewed in order to construct a play based around issues that were found to be pertinent for them, and then staged the play in front of a group and used it as a catalyst to generate further discussion relating to gender, sexuality and HIV/AIDS.

Pictures were used by the team in Botswana to promote discussion among younger children on specific topics, which may have been regarded as too embarrassing to introduce verbally. For example, the team showed young people pictures of naked people, asked them to point to their sexual organs, and then questioned them about them.

Drawing was used in Zambia with young children aged between six and nine. The children were asked to draw pictures of the sex acts that they spoke about in their interviews. The drawings, all of which showed a male and female being joined in the middle by a large penis, helped to substantiate their descriptions of sex in the interviews, and provided material for further discussion.

Training the Researchers

In all of the participating countries, regional consultants trained the national researchers on how to conduct qualitative research using the techniques described in the previous section. During the training, emphases were maintained on the project's overall objectives and on a clear understanding of the key concepts involved. The need was also stressed to obtain informed consent from each of the interviewees, and to give all the research subjects the right to withdraw from the process at any stage. The researchers were reminded of the importance of being sensitive throughout the interviews, and to discontinue them if they sensed that any of the subjects were becoming distressed, irritated or uncooperative.

The training sessions explained the logic of using qualitative research methods and the importance of being subject centred. To this end, the researchers were encouraged to pay particular attention to what their interviewees were saying (see Brown & Gilligan, 1992, and Taylor & Gilligan, 1997). The training also focused on recognising the subjects' *unspoken* language: their emotional tones, their facial expressions, their physical disposition, how much or how little they spoke, whether they interrupted others, and so on. The researchers were urged to be highly gender sensitive, examining whether boys and girls 'performed' differently during interviews – whether in mixed or single sex groups, or individually. The researchers were also encouraged to form mixed teams of female and male, young and older people, with varied experience and fluency in the local language – in order to 'iron out' the differences with which subjects naturally construct themselves with researchers of different ages and genders.

Throughout the training sessions, the consultants underscored the need to be sensitive to the particular sites in which the young interviewees were constructing their identities. Such sites would include not just schools, homes and community settings, but also the different gender compositions and sizes of each interview group. The need to let the subjects 'set the agenda' and dictate both the pace and direction of the interviews was stressed, and the researchers were encouraged to identify and pursue any pertinent points raised by the interviewees themselves.

Using simulated scenarios, the researchers practised conducting different types of interviews, criticising each other's performances, transcribing interviews, and comparing notes on each other's transcripts. This activity proved useful in raising awareness of the tendency to paraphrase what interviewees say, and thus to distort the interviewees' 'voices' to reflect the researchers' own interpretations or opinions. Many of the researchers also recognised how their efforts to keep up with questions in the interview guide could sometimes preclude them from listening to or following up on subjects raised by the interviewees. They were encouraged to appraise their own influences on the data generating processes, and to end each interview by asking their interviewees for their opinions on the interview, if they had any questions, and whether it would have made a difference if the researcher had been a member of the opposite sex. Such questions helped to show how the interviewees were positioning themselves in relation to the interviewer as a particular man or woman, and how this was affecting the ways in which they were presenting themselves.

Ethical concerns were also raised concerning the unpredictable findings that could arise from such research – for instance, learning that a particular interviewee was being abused or bullied. It was agreed that the researchers had a paramount responsibility to safeguard the interests of their subjects, and that it was imperative for them to maintain confidentiality throughout the research process and anonymity in the report writing. This was ensured by using pseudonyms to protect the identity of individual participants, while at the same time ensuring their identities were not lost by referring to them as 'other girls', 'another boy', and so on. However, in an instance in which the maintaining of confidentiality could pose potential harm to an interviewee (eg. in continuing sexual abuse or domestic violence), it was deemed morally appropriate to renegotiate a course of action to alleviate their suffering (eg. by reporting the matter to the relevant authorities).

Throughout the research process in the seven countries, the regional consultants monitored fieldwork progress, data analyses, and the writing of the country reports.

Potential Limitations

During the training sessions, a few limitations were noted as having implications for the study. In Francophone Rwanda, some of the researchers could communicate effectively in French or Kinyarwanda, while the regional consultant was an English and Kiswahili-speaker. There were difficulties in communicating directly with all the researchers, even though the country research consultant helped tremendously in translating the proceedings from English to French, then to Kinyarwanda, and then back to English. Nonetheless, the possibility of miscommunication was not ruled out. In Tanzania, many of the young researchers, who were excellent theatre performers and mainly primary school graduates, showed some difficulties in comprehending the process of doing qualitative research. It was agreed that, in addition to the country research consultant, some of the adult observers who had taken part in the research training would be co-opted to work alongside the

youth researchers. This provided the youth with space to be the main actors in the research process, while working in partnership with relatively experienced adult researchers.

The draft country reports revealed some difficulties among the researchers in presenting the material they had obtained in ways that allowed the interviewees' 'voices' to be clearly heard. For example, there was a tendency to omit or over-summarise extracts from the interviews, which led to the omission of important material from some of the country reports. To counteract this, the researchers were requested to include much longer extracts from the interviews – particularly from sections dealing with important, recurring or emotionally charged issues. Fuller, more detailed extracts would not only help the project to discover how its subjects were constructing their identities and their relationships, but would enable other researchers to suggest different interpretations of the project's findings. This book has thus drawn more from those country reports that provided longer, fuller extracts from their interviews.

For a synopsis of the sampling procedures used to select the sites and subjects for the study in each country, see *Annex: Sampling Procedures*.



Part Two: Research Findings



Note: Pseudonyms have been used for all the young and adult subjects in the following interviews and diary extracts, in order to protect their identities. Any resemblance to the names of actual people is unintentional.

TOPIC 1: YOUNG PEOPLE PRESENTING THEMSELVES TO RESEARCHERS

It is clear that the key elements of a particular context – the place and the people present – play a vital role in determining how young people identify themselves, and what they say about themselves and others. Research confirms the view that identities are multiple and fluid (Hall, 1992) and are enacted differently in different contexts and with different people. This has important implications for teachers – particularly life skills and HIV/AIDS educators – who need to reflect (and encourage their pupils to reflect) upon the ways in which they construct their identities and position themselves in relation to other pupils and teachers in class and in different contexts (See Topic 3).

In this study, we have focused on how young people *present* themselves to the researchers and the other interviewees. In analysing the accounts of our interviewees, we focus not just on what they say, but how they say it – including the emotions they express, and the kinds of relationships they forge with the interviewers and the

other interviewees. We compare, for example, how boys and girls present themselves in interviews and diaries when articulating their views on girlfriends and sexuality (see Topic 6). Below are several examples that illustrate the importance of examining the kinds of relations established between adult researchers and young people – and how this affects the way they present themselves and what they say.

Opening Up to Friendly, Interested, Non-Judgmental Adults

When being interviewed alone by interviewers of the same gender, boys and girls tended to ‘open up’ much more. In the same-gender interviews in **Zambia**, girls were much more critical of boys, and vice versa. However, it was striking how positively the young people responded when friendly, non-judgmental adult researchers of either sex addressed them as experts about themselves and their relations with others. One boy, for example, felt able to tell a middle-aged woman interviewee about being abused by his stepfather – something he had not been able to divulge to any other adult.

During the Zambia study, another woman researcher observed that:

The girls really had a lot of issues to raise and they said categorically that for the first time they have had a chance to talk to people who were willing to listen to their concerns at that level.

28

Young people spontaneously asked the researchers questions about sex and sexuality – subjects that some said they could not talk about with their parents. Among the questions asked and statements made by young people in **Kenya** were the following:

How can you prevent AIDS?

[I would] like more information on organisations that deal with AIDS.

How many days will the period [last] and when will it come?

I need more information on sexuality.

Six-Year-Old Children Talking about Sex

The sorts of ‘subject centred’ relations that the researchers were establishing enabled and allowed young people to put such questions to them. They also made it possible for boys and girls as young as six to speak about sex in animated ways, as they did in an interview conducted by one of our researchers in Nkana, **Zambia**. (It is important to note that, of the seven participating schools in Zambia, there were only two where children this young shared with the researchers what appeared to be experiential knowledge about sex.)

To the best of our knowledge, no research exists in this region in which boys and girls of this age talk candidly about experiences of sex. As the Nkana girls and boys talked about

sex, they showed (as we saw from our video recording) no embarrassment or shyness – apart from one boy who tended to cover his face and who the researcher did not pester to talk. Indeed the children were so keen to contribute to the conversation that they leaned forward, put their hands up and even stood up to try and attract the interviewer’s attention. The interviewer, a woman in her twenties, sat between the boys and girls and made an effort to maintain eye contact with all the pupils around her. She did not appear shocked or embarrassed, but kept smiling encouragingly and asking questions in a matter-of-fact way about what they did when they claimed to have sex. We would argue that it is precisely because of the kind of relaxed, friendly, non-judgmental relationship this interviewer established with these children that they were so keen to talk about the sexual aspects of their lives. The absence of any research literature on very young children’s accounts of sexuality may reflect the failure of researchers (including the majority of those participating in our research) to investigate this subject and to develop the sorts of subject centred relations with children that enable them to talk in the way they did in the excerpts below:



Interviewer: How do you know whether you are male or female?

Steve: By the small penis.

Bwalya, Musonda, Beatrice and Eliza: (All smiling) Penis...

Stella: (Smiling) Vagina...

Interviewer: What do you do with the penis and the vagina?

Beve (B): Sex.

Interviewer: Who do you have sex with?

Geli (G): With my husband.

Interviewer: Where do you have sex?

Beve: (Holding chin and smiling) In the bush or bathroom...

Musoda (B): (Holding his head and smiling) Under the bed...

Geli: (Playing with a bottle and looking shy) In a small house.

Interviewer: Where is the small house?

Geli: In the bush...

The children said they knew that their parents would disapprove of them having sex. They made sure that their parents did not find out; otherwise, some of them said, they would be beaten. Clearly if they had regarded the interviewer as they regarded their parents, they would not have spoken as they did – for although they spoke about sex almost as if it were play, it was something that they still hid from their parents.



- Interviewer:** When having sex, do you make noise or not?
- All in chorus:** Awe [No].
- Interviewer:** Why not?
- Beve (B):** They can beat us.
- Beauty/Eliza:** We could get caught.
- Interviewer:** Why do you have sex when you know that you can be caught?
- Beve:** (Putting his hands on his face) We feel good...
- Biggy (B):** It feels very pleasant. (Puts his thumb in his mouth)
- Steve:** It feels nice.
- Beauty:** Sweetness.
- Interviewer:** What do you do when you finish?
- Musonda (B):** We dress up and go to play.
- Interviewer:** Who do you go to tell about it?
- All in chorus:** Nobody.

By 'nobody', the children were presumably referring to adults in general. Not only were most of them keen to contribute to the discussion, but they spoke about sex and their sexual experiences in a very matter-of-fact way, mirroring the style and approach of the interviewer. In fact, they shared their experiences as if they were common knowledge within their culture. The fact that they talked about sex as explicitly as they did has extremely important implications for developing appropriate HIV/AIDS and life skills pedagogies that centre on pupil-teacher relations. If HIV/AIDS and life skills education is

to be appropriate and effective, we would argue that it must be based upon the concerns and desires of young people as they articulate them – and they are unlikely to do so unless teachers are able to relate to them in non-authoritarian and non-judgmental ways.

We are not claiming that the children interviewed here experienced and attached the same meanings to sexuality as adults or older children would. Nonetheless, it is interesting to note how these very young girls and boys talked about their identities in heterosexual relationships in a very similar manner to much older, post-pubescent children (see Topic 6). Some developmental psychologists, influenced by Freud, have argued that, while we must address young children as sexual beings, their experience of sexuality is qualitatively different from sexuality as experienced by adults. Gregory (1987), for example, argues that:

By and large the [sexual] explorations of the child are sensually diffuse rather than erotically specific, though well before the onset of puberty both boys and girls may masturbate to some kind of orgasmic experience without there being, in the boy, any ejaculatory consequences. (Gregory, 1987: 705)

While it may be the case that the manner in which the Nkana children and adults construct and experience sexual pleasure differs considerably, it was quite clear that the objects of their desires, as they articulated them, were specific people of their age of the opposite sex. In any case, it was clear that sexuality was very significant to the young people we interviewed – however it may have been experienced. As we will argue in the section on *Implication of Findings for Future Practices*, this needs to be acknowledged and addressed by developing HIV/AIDS life skills education programmes for children of this specific age group. Further, we would advise that HIV/AIDS and life skills teachers should aim to be young person centred, like many of our researchers. We would advocate that more research be conducted with children as young as six by friendly, non-judgmental adults who will enable them to talk about sexuality if this is an important issue for them (as it clearly was for the children in Nkana).

Adults Reacting to Six-Year-Olds Talking about Sex

In August 2002, when we were reporting some of the findings of our study in a UNICEF workshop in Mombasa, Kenya, many participants expressed surprise and shock when they saw the above extracts and watched a video recording of this interview. There was discernible uneasiness followed by heated discussion as the participants questioned the veracity of what these children were saying. We would suggest that such a reaction partly reflects our own tendencies as adults to wish ‘innocence’ upon young children – and our discomfort in facing up to the realities of childhood sexuality (see Epstein and Johnson, 1999). Clearly, whether we like it or not, the Zambian children were all familiar with sex – whether they actually engaged in penetrative sex or simply ‘played’ at it – and they enjoyed talking about it very much. Sex was significant to them, even if only as

something they wanted to talk about (although it also seemed to be something many of them engaged in). We would argue that it is problematic to ignore the voices of young people in relation to gender and sexuality, at a time when sexuality and HIV/AIDS are a central concern for life skills education – and for healthy nations.

Like many of the teachers and parents we interviewed, some Government institutions, such as the Ministry of Education in Zimbabwe, assumed that children under 16 either do not have sex or even think of having sex. Indeed, our Zimbabwean researchers were refused permission to interview school children under the age of 16. However, as we will report later in this book, many 16-year-old boys who we interviewed in Zimbabwe boasted about having sex with 10- and 11-year-old girls.

Talking Differently to Different Categories of Researchers

In **Kenya**, in rural Garissa, there was evidence that young people presented themselves differently – and revealed different things about themselves – depending upon whether the researchers were male or female, and Muslim or non-Muslim. This reflects the significance attached to gender and religion as aspects of their identities by young people living in an isolated village of exclusively Muslim residents. As one 15-year-old schoolgirl described herself, 'I am a disciplined girl and a practising Muslim'.

32

Mohammed, a 15-year-old boy, chose to reveal the existence of boy-girl friendships to a male Muslim researcher while withholding the same information from a male non-Muslim researcher. He revealed this despite the fact that having girlfriends and boyfriends is considered bad behaviour and is strictly prohibited among Muslim youth. To the non-Muslim researcher, he appeared to replay the social 'script' (McCoby, 2000) prescribed by the Islamic code of sexual conduct, denying that girls and boys ever have sexual relationships. In developing what appeared to be a relationship of trust with the Muslim researcher, Mohammed also proclaimed his Islamic faith, adding that he was hardworking and happy to be male; 'I like where God placed me,' he said. To the non-Muslim researcher, however, he presented himself as a secular boy who was a clever class prefect; religion or matters of God did not feature in this second construction of himself. This example clearly demonstrates the fluidity of gender within different social contexts and relationships.

Young people in Garissa also tended to open up more easily to researchers of the same sex, as exemplified by 14-year-old Fatia, who was separately interviewed by male and female researchers. Her relationship with the two researchers was clearly different: the following extracts show the various ways in which she positioned herself and responded to similar questions that were posed by the two researchers.

Interview with the male researcher:



- Interviewer:** How many are you in your family?
- Fatia:** Five children, one girl, two parents.
- Interviewer:** What do your family members do?
- Fatia:** Mother does hotel business in Garissa. Father is a farmer in Garissa.
- Interviewer:** Are you popular?
- Fatia:** All girls are equally popular.
- Interviewer:** If you were allowed to choose your sex today, which sex would you prefer and why?
- Fatia:** A girl... girls help mothers. Boys do not help.

Interview with the female researcher:



- Interviewer:** What do your family members do?
- Fatia:** My father's alone. He is a farmer. He grows fruits and tomatoes. Mother divorced a year ago. She is in Garissa, working in a kiosk shop. She sends us money to buy clothes and shoes.
- Interviewer:** Are you popular?
- Fatia:** I am popular. I have good behaviour. I respect teachers and parents.
- Interviewer:** If you were allowed to choose your sex today, which sex would you prefer and why?
- Fatia:** A girl; a girl is good. Girls are better than boys because they are clean. Boys are dirty.

Notably, neither of the two interviewers attempt to pursue issues that Fatia raises or to engage with her in conversation. Despite this, however, she clearly offers the female researcher greater scope for developing a conversational relationship. For example, when asked whether she is popular, she reflects upon herself with the female researcher, and illustrates why she is popular. With the male researcher, she simply makes a statement about girls in general and does not illustrate how she understands popularity. She provides much more detailed information about her family, including the fact of her parents' divorce, to the female researcher.

Like Fatia, many of the young people in our study were strict Muslims, for whom the mixing of boys and girls was discouraged on religious grounds. It may be that girls like Fatia were particularly reluctant to open up to male researchers because of their lack of interaction with males, especially when on their own. Significantly, Fatia describes girls as clean and boys as dirty to the female and not the male researcher. Perhaps she did not want to antagonise the male researcher, whom she may have perceived as a 'grown up boy'. Had the male researcher been less detached and shown more interest in her, responding to topics she raised and asking her to elaborate upon them, she may have been more open with him. His detachment may have reinforced her view of him, because of his gender, as an outsider.

34

In our research, when the interviewers tried to establish a conversation and close rapport with their subjects, the sex of the interviewer (except in the strict Muslim communities) seemed not to influence how the young people responded. We believe it is important that HIV/AIDS educators make sure that they develop similar kinds of relations with both boys and girls. In Topic 3, we will examine how teachers often unintentionally contribute to the quietness and shyness of their female pupils.

Confirming What Adults Want and Expect to Hear

While being 'young person centred' in our approach, we have to be careful about taking at face value what our subjects tell us, and think more about the particular context of each interview and the kind of relationships the young interviewees are forging with the adult interviewers. In Garissa, **Kenya**, young people in their mid to late teens were asked if they had changed their perception and behaviour as a result of AIDS education. All the boys and girls answered in the affirmative. The area of greatest change was in their sex lives, with most of them saying they were now being more careful and avoiding having sex altogether. Haji, a 14-year-old Standard 6 boy, reported that because of AIDS education, the boys were no longer having sex with girls. He stated:

Now we are not going to do it because it destroys our bodies. Before the subject [AIDS education], boys used to have sex with girls. Now we are not going to do it.

(See views expressed on AIDS education in Topic 3)

This was actually contradictory, as most of his classmates had denied having any sexual relations whatsoever before sex education. So how had their behaviour actually changed? Having been told by teachers of the horrors of AIDS and the dangers of sex, it seems hardly surprising that when they were asked by another adult if their behaviour had changed in the light of this information, they invariably said 'yes'. This does not mean they were lying; rather they were relating to adults in ways that were expected of them.

One striking finding from our research concerned the discrepancy between how boys (and occasionally girls) talked about their sexual relations and their enjoyment of sex in quite giggly ways, and the moralistic positions they took up when asked for examples about what should be done to curb the spread of AIDS or what advice they wanted from parents and teachers about sex. They were, it seemed, assuming two very contradictory identities. Aspects of 'modern' culture (see Topic 10), such as movies, magazines and certain types of music, came in for particular criticism. As can be seen in the following extract from an interview with teenaged **Zambian** boys, these were constructed by many young people as 'bad influences', as if they could easily be manipulated by them:

Longani: R & B songs are bad; they carry sex messages, which influence the boys and girls to have sex.

Shanzi: Dancing by girls confuses men.

It may be that they were implicitly identifying with the adult (male) interviewer and presenting what they expected he wanted to hear. For they quickly switched from their moralistic stance when asked if they enjoyed the dances and songs, with everyone in the group of 10 boys saying 'yes'.

These examples of the contradictory positions taken up by young people have important implications for HIV/AIDS and life skills educators. We would suggest that, by taking a moralistic line, educators may elicit what they see as 'good' responses from pupils in class, which conflict with the ways that they construct their identities and their behaviour in other contexts – for example, with friends or outside school. Life skills education must not contribute to this 'splitting' of identities, but should aim to address and encourage young people to talk frankly about their sexual feelings, desires and concerns. One of our recommendations is that teachers in general – and life skills and HIV/AIDS educators in particular – should be trained to relate to young people in more democratic ways, so that their pupils do not experience and regard HIV/AIDS education as a form of moralising.

Researching Subjects by Reflecting Upon Their Relations with the Researchers

Rather than attempting to create conditions of 'objectivity' by minimising our presence and influence as researchers, we should recognise that we will inevitably affect the behaviour of the people we are researching. Indeed, we would argue that we should be

self-reflexive and examine how the people we are researching are positioning themselves in relation to us. This should provide us with powerful insights into their behaviour and assumptions about gender and sexuality, as illustrated in the following account by a researcher in his early 20s in **Zambia** who was, along with some other young men and women, conducting observations at the Sulas Nightclub:

The boys/men and the young females noticed that the researchers were new people in the club. In welcoming Exilda, [she was] proposed for love. One man flashed 30,000 Kwacha at Luchele, saying that if she agreed to have sex with him he would give her all the money. He also asked to dance with her. The girlfriends of these men were not happy when they saw what was happening. They noticed that these young and beautiful female strangers [the researchers] had grabbed the men's attention; they wanted to be friends with them. This was when the young male researchers came to protect them. The male researchers were equally in danger because men and boys who patronised the nightclub wanted to fight them too. They thought they would grab their girlfriends. They also thought they had a lot of money: hence girls would flock to them. The gate bouncers had to be sought in order to come and control the patrons, and they brought the situation under control. The male researchers who were proposed by the girls were at a loss because they had no money to entice them. All they could do was to dance with them, although they had no money to buy them beers. The girls were not amused by this behaviour.

36

This passage provides a rich account of the ways in which heterosexual relations are negotiated between young men and women in nightclubs, with males and females – including our researchers – being constructed, respectively, as economic providers and recipients. This is an important theme that emerged in many of our interviews, and has important implications for HIV/AIDS education (see Topics 6 and 7). In this passage, we can also see examples of violence – or at least the threat of it – arising from sexual jealousies, which was another prominent issue for the young people in our study, particularly for boys (see Topic 9).

Constructing Identities in Interviews and Other Contexts

In Topic 1, we have given examples of how some of the young people who participated in our research *presented* themselves to our researchers. These examples illustrate the importance of conceptualising identity not as an unalterable and unitary quality that people possess and describe when being interviewed, but as something that is *constructed* and *performed* in particular ways in specific contexts. We have examined here how the young people in our study were performing and constructing themselves in relation to the ways in which they positioned and interpreted our researchers. Addressing identity in this way has important implications for research. One of these is that researchers need

to reflect upon their own identities and relations with the people they are studying (as we have tried to do here). Throughout this book, we are investigating the ways that young people present themselves in interviews, diaries and other contexts, paying particular attention to how the context influences and affects what they say.

TOPIC 2: IDENTIFYING AS BOYS AND GIRLS

We will now turn to examining the kind of masculine and feminine identities commonly articulated by the young people in our study. We will be addressing gender not as something that they possess, which shapes their thoughts and behaviour in passive and preordained ways, but as something that they are constructing themselves in interviews and diaries. This means investigating the emotional investments that boys and girls make in their gender identities (Hollway, 1989), as well as the ways that these identities are negotiated and contested. We recognise, of course, that people are not free ‘authors’, simply inventing their gender and changing it at will. Rather, they live in communities characterised by marked differences in expectations for girls and boys. In these communities, boys and girls are expected to perform different duties, are treated in different ways by their teachers and parents, and are often encouraged to stick with friends of their own sex. In this topic, we will be looking at how boys and girls *construct* their identities within these social and cultural parameters. As we discussed in Part 1, our approach is influenced by discourse theory, which leads us to address what boys and girls say about themselves and others as constructions rather than descriptions of their identities.

‘Changing Sex for a Day’

Young people were asked if they would like to change sex for a day and what they imagine it would be like. The common revulsion expressed by both boys and girls when asked about this prospect suggests that many of our subjects are strongly invested in constructing themselves in opposition to their views of the opposite sex. In **Zimbabwe**, a Ministry of Education official seemed to share similar sentiments, saying the question about changing sex ‘suggested an unnatural change’. In group interviews with schoolboys in **South Africa** and **Tanzania**, those boys who expressed a wish to become girls for a day were categorised as ‘homosexual’. In South Africa, homophobia also seemed to play a significant part in the ways that boys tried to assert themselves as masculine by warding off possible accusations of femininity. Simply declaring an interest in becoming girls clearly posed an imagined threat to their male identities – implying just how fragile those identities were. This is supported by research on boys and masculinity in Britain and other western countries, which notes how preoccupied boys are with distancing themselves from girls and activities and characteristics that they define as feminine (eg. Epstein, 1997; Nayak and Kehily, and Frosh et al, 2002). Adult men responded similarly at the Mombasa workshop, ridiculing the question as one that was quite inappropriate for them as ‘normal people’ who were satisfied with ‘who we are’. Some of them specified that only men with ‘hormonal abnormalities’ could imagine being women.

This is how some boys and girls from **Zimbabwe** and **Kenya** responded when they were asked if they would like to change sex for a day:

Extract 1: Zimbabwean Girls



Interviewer: You will be sad if you were a boy – why?

Chipo: Yes, because I will be having attitudes of a boy when I am a girl.

Interviewer: What are the attitudes of a boy?

Chipo: Drinking beer.

Nyasha: Taking alcohol.

Japera: Being attracted to simple things.

Extract 2: Kenyan Boys

Young teenaged boys, when asked why they liked being boys:



Wakesa: Girls respect you and I will inherit property from my father.


Chege: Boys are brave and girls keep on laughing – I hate that.

Gichinga: They are not easily raped.

Kagai: They don't get pregnant.

Mbui: They will be head of the house.

Mukiri: Girls wash dirty things in the house.

Extract 3: Kenyan Boys and Girls


Absco: Sometimes I'd like to be a boy. For example, if you want to go [out] with your friends, if you are a boy you just go. If you are a girl, you have to get permission first... of course, they are concerned about you... but at times you will just be wanting to go with your friends and just talk... sometimes you will just be wanting to visit your friend, a girlfriend...sometimes it is boring, because if I was a boy I would just come back anytime!

Interviewer: Boys, do you ever want to be a girl?

Boys: Ah, no...

Owino: We only thought of it as kids when we were playing home... as kids ... and were cooking. (Laughter from the group)

Warui: It's unimaginable...

While all the Zimbabwean boys and girls wanted to remain members of their sex, it was significant that this Kenyan girl expressed a desire to change her sex – in contrast to the Kenyan boys, who laughed at the very suggestion.

Clearly the boys and the Kenyan girl associate masculinity with certain privileges and freedoms (see Commeyras & Montsi, 2000). But many of the girls in our study spoke about boys as being immature and troublesome, and, like the Zimbabwean girls, balked when asked to imagine what it would be like to change sex. As we shall see in Topics 6 and 10, many girls are keen to present themselves as 'good' by distinguishing themselves from other girls who are seen as behaving too much like boys by being too sexual, going out, drinking and attracting people of the opposite sex. This may explain why the Zimbabwean girls characterised boys in the way they did, distancing themselves as 'good' girls from these popular characteristics of boys.

But the strong desire of most girls to remain girls, despite the attractions of being a male outlined by the boys and the Kenyan girl above, may stem from a sense that girls are more supportive of each other than boys and are able to develop closer relationships. Evidence of this came from the diaries that our researchers asked boys and girls to keep.

Differences in Boys' and Girls' Relational Styles

In **South Africa**, there were significant differences in the ways in which boys and girls presented themselves in their diaries. The boys tended to write much less about their relationships with other boys than girls did with other girls; when they did, they usually wrote about them in cryptic and instrumental ways. Unlike the girls, who often referred to their friends by name, the boys' accounts were less personalised, mentioning other boys as people with whom they did things such as play football and/or who caused them anxieties. For example:



James: 'Not joining my friends for soccer strained our relationship.'

Sipho: '[I was] angered by a boy beating younger boys for no reason.'

Thandiwe: '[I had] a confrontation by some boy while I was with my girlfriend.'

Edward: 'My friend made a pass at my girl and I could not pretend to be happy.'



While some boys indicated in their diaries that they were popular with other boys, none of them provided examples of how friendly they were with specific boys. Being popular was, rather, regarded as being superior to other boys, with football prowess being mentioned as an important criterion of popularity and masculinity (cf. Frosh et al, 2002).

The following excerpts from the diaries of some South African boys show why they consider themselves to be popular:



Agize: 'Playing soccer for my team and scoring at matches.'

Nkosi: 'Being captain of my soccer team in Ga-Thoka.'

Nelson: 'Because I was chosen to play middle field in our soccer team.'



When boys did elaborate on their positive feelings for others, it was usually when they were writing about their girlfriends in a highly romanticised manner. By contrast, many of the girls wrote about giving and receiving advice from other girls, and about the pleasure they derived from each other's company – laughing, singing, playing games – as well as joining clubs such as the Girl Guides. There was nothing about such subjects in any of the boys' diaries. For example:



Thulu: '[My friends] all promised they will always be my friends...'

Annah: 'We went into the toilet to see whether some clothing suited her and we stayed in the toilet sharing jokes.'

Nande: 'I made my friends beans and eggs when Mum was out.'

Siphiwe: 'I was told [by my friends] I was beautiful with my tunic on and I was proud of myself.'

Grace: 'We share the problem of boys proposing [to us] and advise each other that... what they need is sex, and will dump you after.'



The ways the girls and boys presented themselves in relation to others in their diaries supports Carol Gilligan's claim that, once adolescence is reached, girls' style of identifying and behaving is 'relational' and limited by the centrality of their relationships. Their morality becomes structured around an 'ethic of care'. By contrast, separation and individuality are the predominant styles of adolescent boys. Unlike their female peers, boys are generally reported to be able to ignore the needs and desires of others and to make decisions independently (Brown, 1995) – often dominating young women and those young men who struggle to manage such instrumental individuality. We discuss some of the problems that boys themselves experience as a result of trying to be powerful in these ways in Topic 4.

However, researchers on girls' friendship groups in Britain have noted how small and insular these can be compared to boys' friendship groups (McRobbie, 1994; Hey, 1996). Other girls are often seen as potential threats who may 'gossip' and spread rumours, especially to do with their sexual feelings. As we see in Topic 6, many girls in our study were very concerned to identify as 'good' by distancing themselves from girls who were perceived to be overly 'sexual'. As can be seen in the following extracts from the diary of

Victoria, a teenager in **South Africa**, this can generate conflict between girls and circumscribe their friendship groups:



January 26th: 'It was a Saturday afternoon, I met an unknown sister on the way, approaching me badly, saying that she heard that I am in love with one brother staying in Naledi. I questioned her whether she was just fishing for news or trying to get me.'

January 30th: 'It was on Wednesday at school, there was a certain sister there, she looked at me, I don't know what I did bad to her... She is a gossip, she likes boys, she likes to be closer to boys, even though she insist herself to be around the boys.'

February 5th: 'It was on Tuesday at school, there was a certain sister who likes gossiping about people after classes. One day she was explaining to my friend that, the way I look, I must be in love... I don't like to lie about somebody in front of me. If you want to take a walk with me, let's stop gossiping to one another please, because I am aware that you like to gossip, so please avoid to gossip because I see danger for you, please don't ever talk about me with your friend please.'

'Gossips' were constructed not only as bad girls who might spread false rumours about one's relationships with boys, but were themselves blamed for being too close to boys.

Boys Constructing themselves as Stronger than Girls – and Girls' Resistance

Boys were often described as strong (usually by boys), and indeed football was presented as something boys did because of the assumption that boys (in contrast to girls) were physically strong and active. As we have seen, being good at football was an important criterion of male popularity – a marker of how 'masculine' boys were. We want to argue that 'strength' here was taken to symbolise male superiority, and that, in describing themselves as strong, boys were not simply referring to attributes or characteristics they already possessed, but were constructing or making themselves superior to girls.

This was particularly apparent, for example, when one young, very thin boy from **Zambia** suggested that 'mopping is a girl's job because they are too weak to lift up the tables [whereas] we are strong', and as he said this, he squeezed his fist and tried to show his biceps. Ironically, this boy looked much weaker than the girls who were being interviewed with him. Yet he was constructing or making himself stronger than the girls simply because he was a boy.

In some mixed gender interviews in which boys constructed themselves as stronger than girls, the girls resisted this. In another mixed interview with late teenagers in Zambia, a gender-polarised argument broke out on the question of whether women should be allowed to become miners. The volatile discussion generated strong emotions on either side – because the issue at stake was one of clarifying and asserting gender identities. One boy, Chilufya, posed mining and nursing babies as gendered opposites, stereotyping masculinity as strong and hard and femininity as soft and gentle.



- Chilufya:** Yah... things like mining, going underground. You find most of the times just men going underground... women can't do it, and their job's like nursing a baby. Those jobs can't be done by a male. It's almost impossible.
- Interviewer:** Almost impossible? Are you agreeing? (Murmurs of 'No' among the group) Yes – what do you say?
- Chilufya:** On that thing of saying (clears throat) doing things equally, I think we should also consider... talking of a woman going underground, we should consider things like the composition of muscles in a woman's body. (Laughter) It's not just a matter of talking. It's just that it is easy to say but it's hard to do. You know, look at the woman's composition of muscles in the body – they are less than a man's composition of muscles in the body. It's easy for a man to work with a spade, but give a spade to a woman... you will see what's going to happen. So I think we should consider such things.
- Interviewer:** Can we know what will happen? If you give them a spade...
- Chilufya:** You give a woman a spade, every two minutes she says 'I am tired'...

However, a girl, Chaku, was quick to challenge Chilufya's assertions, saying she could easily fit into the 'man's world' – and do 'their' jobs.



- Chaku:** I mean, if a boy or a man can go underground and do that kind of stuff, I mean work, what kind of a girl... what makes you think that she can't go underground? And if a girl can nurse a baby, what of a boy? 'Cos it's gender... all you animals are equal! (Everyone laughs) Me myself, I can do it...
- Chilufya:** It's easy.
- Interviewer:** That what you think? Have you ever handled a shovel?
- Chaku:** Yah, I have done it before. I have done that before, because I even dig at my place...

The boys were constructing themselves as physically stronger than the girls, arguing that girls were incapable of mining. The important point here is why they were so keen to argue this. It seems that physical strength – which many boys in other countries also refer to when distinguishing themselves from girls – took on a symbolic character. It was taken to characterise boys and men, and to signify superiority over girls and women. Thus, in some boys' accounts, it came to stand for emotional and intellectual strength. The girls who argued that women were capable of being miners were resisting the ways that the boys were positioning girls and women as generally inferior.

Following the challenge from the girls, some of the boys seemed to realise that they did not have any rational reason to support their hard stance with regard to mining as a 'man's domain'. Nonetheless, they continued to assert themselves by appealing to some unwritten rules that they felt should govern gender relations, with men taking charge of what women should or should not do (see Silberschmidt, 2002) – in addition to insisting that women respect a man's word. In the following excerpt, Kennedy stammers a little, perhaps because he is 'scraping the barrel' for more reasons why girls should not be miners. However, his stammering may also reflect anxieties created by associating girls' fantasies about being miners with a desire to usurp male power:



- Kennedy:** Now for the issue of saying that girls can go underground... alright, it's totally al... al... alright, girls can go underground, but the rule just says that girls shouldn't go underground. Sometimes, like,

girls might feel dizzy and it's just one way of showing respect for men. So that they can boast around, say... uuh, 'we work on the mines'. Girls shouldn't go on the mines and that kind of stuff.

Boys Constructing Themselves as Free and Girls as Tied – and Girls' Resistance

In the group interviews in **Zimbabwe**, when girls were being constructed as being 'weaker' than boys, the girls were sometimes seen as being in need of protection by their parents – or even by boys. As illustrated in the following extract, this can have the effect of restricting girls' movements and contributing to the view that girls are timid and 'tied', while boys are confident and free. Furthermore, when the girls resisted being positioned in this way, the boys tried to assert themselves by sexualising girls, constructing them as objects of their free desires and as prone to pregnancy. In this interview, the boys attempt to justify why girls should be beaten or even starved for demanding equal rights. One boy, Hondo, who tries to assert himself over his sister even identifies with his father's expectations that his meals should be ready when he arrives home, and that the females in the household should serve him:



- Interviewer:** OK... how do your parents treat boys and girls? Is it in any way different?
- Rufaro (G):** Girls are expected to be home by 7pm; otherwise, they are chased away from home or beaten. Boys are left to do as they wish.
- Farai (B):** Ah... that's not true!
- Maiba (G):** It's true. Boys can even spend the night out and no one will ask, but girls will be told to go back where they spent the night.
- Rudo (B):** It's true: girls are chased away from home but boys can come home anytime, even after 10pm. It's understood. But a girl has to explain where she was.
- Interviewer:** What if she was with her friends?
- Clever (B):** What happens is, us guys don't get pregnant, so we have an advantage. Girls, however, can get pregnant

and they bring their pregnancy home and then they get chased away.

Interviewer: What if she doesn't get pregnant?

Rufaro: A girl can get beaten or they don't leave any food for her.

Zuka (B): Ah... you... you want to eat? Who do you think should prepare the food when you are not there?

Maiba: Now if you say I should do everything for myself, I will end up going out with sugar daddies so that I come home after being bought some food.

Interviewer: So you are saying parents treat boys and girls differently?

Rufaro: Yes, parents are easy on boys, but make life tough for girls.

Interviewer: So who is at an advantage?

Girls: (All together) Boys, boys, boys...

Interviewer: But don't you think, when parents say girls should be indoors by six, it's to protect girls?

Jackie (G): Yes, but sometimes it's just too much.

Interviewer: So boys don't matter?

Farai: When a girl elopes for a boy, the boy can go and look for a job and he will fend for his new wife. But girls hang on around the home. Boys can do something for survival.

Sibongile (G): Ah... even myself as a girl, I can do something...

Hondo (B): Yes, of course, but the way you look for money, you don't do it properly, since you end up going to pubs to solicit for paid sex.

Interviewer: So you boys are saying girls should be over-protected?

Mudada (B): No, we are saying life will be tough for her since she is *just a girl*.

Maiba: But we want equal rights, especially on treatment by our parents.

Zuka: This issue of equal rights, we don't want to hear about it.

Jackie: (In a loud voice) Yes, we want equal rights!

Rudo: Would you want to work in the garden as I do?

Jackie: You guys... but you guys don't cook.

Interviewer: You mean boys don't cook?

Garai (B): That's not true. Don't you see me cooking at home?

Jackie: But there is no girl at your house. But this one (referring to her brother in the group), when he comes home late he actually demands for food to be served.

Interviewer: OK... so this is your brother?

Jackie: Yes.

Interviewer: Good, so how does he treat you?

Jackie: If its 6 pm and I'm not yet at home, he shouts at me and at times almost beats me.

Hondo: If she is late, then we have to see to it that *we discipline her*. We want to see her at home before 6 pm. She can't be anywhere else after 6 pm unless she is at the market. If she is not found there too... ah... but I can get home, even at 10 pm or even sleep out. My dad won't even ask for he thinks I am also *a father, a man, in the house too*. At times, I would have been looking for money just like he does. Anytime he comes home, no one asks about his whereabouts.

As this extract vividly illustrates, far from being protected from sexual exploitation, pregnancy and HIV/AIDS by the popular construction of boys and men as protectors of girls, girls become vulnerable precisely because boys and men position themselves as free, hedonistic males in relation to women – although not their sisters, daughters or wives – as sex objects. Not only is their behaviour controlled and regulated by their protectors; it also makes them sexually vulnerable. A major aim of HIV/AIDS and life skills education should be to encourage young people to become critical of, and much less invested in, sustaining and enacting these gender-polarised identities (see *Implications of Findings for Future Practices*). This could, for example, involve promoting the possibilities – and natural benefits – of friendships with people of the opposite sex (see Topic 5), mixing sexes on the football field, or encouraging boys to develop closer, more supportive relations with other boys.

Allocation of Duties and Tasks to Boys and Girls

While boys and girls are *active* in the process of differentiating themselves, they do so in particular social contexts and environments in which they are already categorised in different ways – by, for example, being allocated different tasks and duties. We want to emphasise, however, that gender socialisation is not a passive process, as it is often portrayed, and that girls and boys automatically identify themselves with roles that are ‘given’ and which they are expected to play. While many girls and boys may take these roles for granted, when asked to reflect upon them during our research, some girls became quite critical of how much domestic work, including service to others, they are expected to do.

Domestic Work as ‘Girls’ Work’

In **Zimbabwe**, although the number of girls participating in the group interviews dropped due to the death of a parent and another falling sick, many others fell out specifically because of the chores they had to do at home.

In **South Africa**, the interviews in urban areas showed that girls and boys were given similar tasks by their parents – whereas, in rural areas, girls were generally given many more household duties than their brothers. The rural girls’ diaries revealed that these duties were often exhausting, leaving them little time for other activities. Some girls as young as 18 were also playing the role of head of their households.

These girls usually prepare the food, wash their siblings, and do all the washing and ironing. Indeed, one girl reported that these chores left her with no recreation time whatsoever – a fact confirmed by the daily schedule described in her diary. The interviewer was left wondering when she found time to study and do her homework.

Some girls expressed resentment of their 'household duties', saying it was unfair that only girls were expected to do them. Others, however, defined themselves by their duties, and even expressed pride in them. One girl recalled how her grandfather had given her 20 rand for being a 'hardworking girl':



Norma: 'Woke up at 07.00h, brushed my teeth and washed my face. Then I started doing spring-cleaning inside and outside the house. When my grandparents arrived they did not believe their eyes. My grandfather gave me R20 and told me to keep it up, and he even told my mother that she was having a hardworking girl. I prepared lunch for them, washed dishes and then myself. My grandparents left our home at night.'



Some of the boys, by contrast, mentioned that they felt angry when they were asked to do household chores.

In **Tanzania**, pupils reported that their parents allocate duties according to 'traditional' gender roles – with girls washing up, cooking the food, sweeping the house, doing the laundry, making the beds, and fetching water. Apparently, boys are never allocated any of this housework. When not in school, their duties comprise looking after cattle and assisting in construction work.

In **Kenya**, girls also do most of the domestic work in addition to going to the market to buy food, caring for younger siblings, and sometimes fetching water – particularly when boys are not around. The girls also said that they help their mothers in trade, for instance selling vegetables and other foodstuffs.

In predominantly Muslim Garissa, the concept of free time did not appear to make much sense to young people – particularly to girls, who seemed to be occupied nearly all of the time. As Mohammed, a 15-year-old Standard 7 boy, asserted, 'girls are not allowed to be free.' Both boys and girls reported that they attended Madrassa (religious instruction) classes during their free time, and that boys played (mainly football) during their free time. Boys also said they swam in the river, slept, visited friends and relatives, read, and played with their male friends.

The boys perceived the roles allocated to girls as dirty and more demeaning than those allocated to them. Another Standard 7 boy said girls were responsible for washing 'dirty things in the house'. Rather than sympathising with the girls, the boys perceived their own roles to be conferring a higher status upon them.

Many of the girls said their domestic duties limited the amount of time they could spend on their homework or revision. As one said, 'if your parents are good, they will let you do your homework, otherwise some parents say, *'sio mimi unasomea'* (you are not reading for me).' The girls also said that, due to the work handed out by their parents in the mornings, they often arrived at school late – and were consequently reprimanded (see Topic 8).

In urban Nairobi, many girls complained about what they saw as the unequal allocation of duties and tasks to boys and girls. Of 17 girls interviewed in one school, 12 said boys did 'nothing' at home, with one claiming they 'just sit there and eat'. They complained that fetching water, which was what boys were expected to do, was far less work than their share of the housework. However, the boys defended their privileged domestic position, with 13 of the 15 interviewed saying they disliked doing household chores because these were 'girls' jobs'. The following comments from a 14-year-old schoolboy were typical of the way that most boys perceived their domestic roles:



- Interviewer:** What roles do boys do at home?
- Elijah:** Fetch water, watch television...
- Interviewer:** What else?
- Elijah:** Visit friends... urr...
- Interviewer:** How about girls – what roles do they perform at home?
- Elijah:** Wash utensils and clothes, sweep the house, cook, and other duties in the house.
- Interviewer:** How about you – what do you do in the home?
- Elijah:** Watch television and fetch water.
- Interviewer:** Any other?
- Elijah:** No.
- Interviewer:** How about household duties?
- Elijah:** I do not like... urr... I do not like washing utensils.
- Interviewer:** Why?
- Elijah:** I feel it's a girl's job.

Elijah has clearly developed a dislike for work that he perceives to be ‘feminising’. For him, the washing of utensils defines girlhood and is, therefore, a contradiction of his construction of boyhood. There were, however, a few boys who presented themselves as different, by stating that they *sometimes* contribute to domestic labour – although *mostly* when their sisters or mothers are not at home, or when they perceive particular jobs to be easy. As two such boys said:

I wash clothes and cook for myself when I am alone (Henry, 15, Nairobi)

I like sweeping the house because it is easy (James, 14, Nairobi).

Allocation of School Duties

In **Kenya**, interviews with schoolgirls in Nairobi revealed that, although a duty roster was prepared allocating duties equally to boys and girls, the boys refused to wash the classrooms and instead negotiated with certain girls to ‘swap duties’ – fetching water for them to wash the classrooms with. However, in the event, some of the boys dishonoured these agreements. In response, the girls accused the teachers of ignoring the boys’ exploitative behaviour, leaving them to mop the floors as well as fetching water. The following is an account from Mwelu, a 14-year-old female class prefect:



Interviewer: Here in school, what duties are assigned to boys?

Mwelu: Sweep the class, fetch water... girls to mop the floor.

Interviewer: Fetch water from where?

Mwelu: From the tap.

Interviewer: For girls to mop the classrooms?

Mwelu: Yes.

Interviewer: Why girls?

Mwelu: Boys don’t like mopping the floor. They will leave the class like that and go to play.

Interviewer: You are a prefect, what do you do about that?

Mwelu: Nothing.

Interviewer:	Why?
Mwelu:	I can't punish them.
Interviewer:	Why not?
Mwelu:	[It's] just like that. If I tell them to do [something], they can beat me...
Interviewer:	Do you tell this to the teacher?
	(Mwelu is silent)
Interviewer:	So you tell the girls to do it...
Mwelu:	Yes.
Interviewer:	Does the teacher know?
Mwelu:	Yes.
Interviewer:	And what do they do?
Mwelu:	I... teacher just leaves them out[side], and the girls wash [the classrooms]...

Allowing boys to get away with their share of school duties not only undermined Mwelu's authority as a school prefect, but also belittled the other girls – associating them with certain 'domestic' duties that their male counterparts did not want to do.

In rural Garissa, schoolboys cleaned the classrooms while girls cleaned the school offices and the staffroom. The reason given by the boys and girls as well as the teachers for this division of responsibilities was that there were relatively few girls – and they cleaned the offices better than the boys. One of the boys, 15-year-old Omari, also stressed the importance of adhering to religious requirements when allocating school duties, pointing out that 'it is not Islamic for boys and girls to work together'.

In **Botswana's** Nanogang School, as in Kenya, female pupils regularly complained that boys were given preferential treatment when it came to allocating school duties. As one girl, Sheila, said:

boys are not allocated duties like polishing, sweeping and other chores that are disliked by all students. They are given duties in the dining hall and picking [up] litter.

Boys and Girls Being Constructed and Constructing their Identities

In all the countries in which we conducted our research, boys and girls were allocated different duties at home and at school – with the differences being most marked in rural areas. Being given different duties was a key way of marking and constructing gender differences and, as we have seen in the previous interview extracts, gender power relations. But rather than assuming that girls and boys passively and automatically assume different identities because of the different duties allocated to them, our researchers encouraged young people to talk about whether they liked or did not like doing their duties and what they thought of this division of labour. Most girls spoke about how much harder and more time consuming ‘girls’ work’ was compared to ‘boys’ work’. Although some girls took pride in their duties, most girls complained about how ‘unfree’ they made them compared to boys. It is, of course, likely that they were able to complain like this precisely because of the kind of questions they were being asked – and their perception of the researchers as being sympathetic to their ‘predicament’. (Indeed, several of the researchers commented in their notes about how shocked they were at the quantity of domestic work that the girls were expected to do.)

We also saw that in identifying as powerful figures – which many of the boys did – they were, like the girls, actively constructing rather than passively learning their identities. For example, we saw how some boys constructed themselves as superior to girls by demeaning the latter because of their involvement in domestic work, and by ‘feminising’ domestic work and complaining if they were given domestic jobs to do.

Stereotyping Boys and Girls and Orienting Oneself in Relation to these Stereotypes

We found that boys and girls were positioned in different ways in their communities – for example, in being allocated different duties – and that they tended to make similar stereotypical generalisations about masculinity and femininity, constructing them as opposites and playing them off in relation to each other:

GIRLS	BOYS
Passive.....	Active
Quiet.....	Loud
Good.....	Naughty
Not sexual.....	Sexual
Objects of boys’ sex drives.....	Having powerful sex drives
Tied to the home.....	Free to go out with friends
Not sporty.....	Sporty
Weak.....	Strong.

As each of these pairs of characteristics is a binary opposite, one begets the other. For example, by constructing boys as strong, the young people are implicitly or explicitly constructing girls as weak. Stereotypical constructions of gender like these emphasise gender differences. Despite this, however, many girls clearly want to be free to do the same things as boys. As we saw in the example of the weak-looking boy who said mopping up was a girl's job, such 'gender stereotypes' gloss over differences between boys and differences between girls. They are not simply descriptions of what boys and girls are really like, but rather tell boys and girls what they *ought* to be like and how they *should* behave. By describing girls as weak and 'unfree', for example, boys are telling them that they *should* stay at home and cook for the men.

Our research suggests that many boys enjoy privileges that are denied to girls, and identify as powerful by constructing themselves and girls in these stereotypical ways. However, while our young interviewees were constantly alluding to, reacting to and dealing with stereotypical constructions of masculinity and femininity, they orientated themselves in particular and different ways in relation to these stereotypes. Some embodied them more than others, and some – notably girls – resisted or re-evaluated them. As well as contesting stereotypes of girls as weak and boys as strong, some girls also focused on positive versions of femininity – such as being 'good' in contrast to 'naughty' and 'immature' boys.

54

As we have seen and will elaborate on, stereotyping males and females in such ways can encourage unequal and exploitative gender relations. Such relations can also, we will argue, heighten the risk of contracting HIV/AIDS.

TOPIC 3: LEARNING ABOUT GENDER AND SEXUALITY AT HOME AND AT SCHOOL

In this topic, we will be examining young people's relations with their teachers and parents – particularly how possible it is for them to talk to these adults about themselves and issues of gender and sexuality. The topic is divided into two parts, with Part A focusing on sexuality education in school and Part B on sexuality education at home. In Part A, we focus on HIV/AIDS and life skills lessons in school and examine the kind of messages that boys and girls are receiving, the sorts of relations they are establishing with their teachers and classmates, and how they are 'performing' or 'acting' in class. We compare the ways that boys and girls interact in our interviews with how they interact in the classes that we observed.

In Part B, we examine boys' and girls' relations with their mothers and fathers, the forms of communication that commonly exist between them, and other forms that should be adopted and encouraged. We also address the sensitive issue of the sexualisation of girls at home. In both sections, we have tried to address teachers' and parents' concerns about education on matters of sex and HIV/AIDS. And we have made suggestions for

good pedagogic practices in life skills education, which we will elaborate upon later in the section on *Implications of Findings for Future Practices*.

We see the school and the home as vital arenas in which boys and girls learn about gender and sexuality – irrespective of whether their parents and teachers discuss such issues with them. As we have argued in Topic 1, children are not ‘innocent’ but are sexual beings – and they receive powerful messages about sexuality from adults *not* talking to them about these issues.

[A] Experiences of Sexuality and HIV/AIDS Lessons

Learning that Sex is Bad and Girls Spread Disease

In our research, we were interested not only in young people’s views about or experiences of sex, but also, more generally, in how they saw and defined themselves as particular boys and girls with certain interests, desires and relationships with others. Sexuality, however, emerged as an important theme in many of the interviews – whether the subjects claimed to be engaging in sex or not, or were pro- or anti-boyfriends/girlfriends. The focal point of HIV/AIDS education, taught within a learner centred framework, should not be HIV/AIDS itself, but rather the lives, identities and relationships (sexual *and* non-sexual) of young people.

Findings from our research indicate that HIV/AIDS and sexuality education in African schools, families and communities focuses specifically on sex. But this is not because the learners themselves introduce sex as a topic of conversation in class. Rather, the teachers decide to focus on sex – presenting it in an authoritarian way as something which is bad for young people and which they should avoid. However, concentrating exclusively upon sex is embarrassing for many teachers and it may be partly because of this that, when they do so, they present sex as bad. This is illustrated in the following examples of what some schoolboys and girls in **Kenya** said they learned as part of HIV/AIDS education.

Lessons that Boys Learned from School Teachers:

Girls can bring diseases to us (Lusala, 14)

Don’t have sex because of HIV/AIDS (Munene, 13)

Boys start looking for women and can be infected (Obuga).

Lessons that Boys Learned from Parents and Grandparents:

Avoid sex with girls, which are a shame and can bring diseases (Gatete, 14)

Sex is bad manners or habits – you should not have a girlfriend (Chilemba, 15)

Do not choose girls who are sexy because they may have diseases (Njau, 14).

Messages that Girls said they Received in School and at Home:

Don't walk with the boys (Anindo, 16)

Don't have sex because I may end up pregnant (Dalila, 15)

Behave well and avoid evil things (Chanya, 16, out-of-school).

From these statements, it appears that most of the sexuality education these young people are receiving takes the form of warnings about the negative consequences of relationships – disease, pregnancy, 'evil things' – without a hint that anything good may come of them. According to the pupils' testimonies, HIV/AIDS education does not address their sexual desires, feelings, fears, anxieties, or any other emotional and psychological aspects of human life (see Kasente et al, 1998).

We would suggest that this is problematic for a number of reasons. Firstly, with its emphasis on avoiding sex, HIV/AIDS education is not aimed at the many young people in our study who claimed they were already sexually active. Secondly, whether or not learners were engaging in sexual relations, sexuality was highly significant in their lives – as was apparent in the emotionally engaged ways that they spoke about relationships and feelings. Thirdly, by not responding to young people's sexual desires, pleasures and anxieties, but instead representing them in a negative light, HIV/AIDS education not only contributes to young people's worries about sex, but helps to confirm the view that sexual desires and concerns are not topics that should be discussed with adults. Yet, paradoxically, many young people expressed the wish to do precisely this.

Of particular concern, we feel, are the effects of this kind of HIV/AIDS education on boys' and girls' perceptions of each other. Not only does such education encourage boys to stereotype and stigmatise girls as potential disease carriers and girls to see boys as dangerous sexual predators, it also presents relations between boys and girls as generally bad – thus prohibiting the possibilities of boys and girls developing even non-sexual friendships. It is small wonder that young people keep secret (from adults) their close relations with people of the opposite sex, or their fantasies about them.

Didactic Styles of Teaching

In **Rwanda**, as in Kenya, there was evidence that HIV/AIDS education was not being taught in a learner centred way, or within a life skills framework. The inherent problems with this clearly emerge in the following interview with two boys, aged 18 and 16, and two girls aged 13 in Murunda Primary School in Rutsiro District, Kibuye Province:



- Interviewer:** What was the atmosphere like during those lessons?
- Felix (B):** The teacher would ask questions and we would answer.
- Interviewer:** Did you mention names of sexual organs?
- Felix:** We would mention their names in French.
- Interviewer:** Did you not answer in Kinyarwanda?
- Eleazzar (B):** Not at all.
- Interviewer:** Why were you not answering in Kinyarwanda?
- Germaine (G):** We answered in French only.
- Interviewer:** How sure were you that the names of those parts were correctly translated into French?
- Eleazzar:** In our class, there were repeaters who used to tell us the correct answers.
- Interviewer:** Why then did you deliberately avoid using Kinyarwanda while talking about sexual organs?
- All:** We don't know.

Interestingly, some teachers claimed that sexuality was taught in French classes in Primary 6 – a way of avoiding the embarrassment that would ensue from discussing sex and sexual organs in Kinyarwanda. It would seem, from the above, that HIV/AIDS lessons were taught in a rather didactic way: ‘the teacher would ask questions and we would answer.’ There was no indication here of pupils setting the agenda or being encouraged to reflect upon and discuss issues pertaining to sexuality that interested or concerned them. Responding to the last question, all of the four respondents were shy – but the girls were shier, reluctant to answer, looking down to hide their faces. Some of the teachers interviewed indicated that they found it difficult to speak about sexuality, especially in mixed-sex classes, and confirmed that, when such issues were raised, children – especially girls – became timid in class. Some teachers said that, as boys ‘discover girls’ secrets’ (relating to female sexuality), they become more ‘active’ and ‘curious’, asking questions with less embarrassment. It seems that the teachers themselves were responsible for constructing boys as active agents in sex education – and girls as its objects. In general,

as we discuss later in this topic, boys participated more actively than girls, possibly because girls had to be careful not to show knowledge and interest in this subject for fear of being seen as 'bad.'

Teachers' Embarrassment

Many teachers we spoke to felt embarrassed and vulnerable in HIV/AIDS lessons, and may have adopted a moralistic and didactic approach to assert their authority and protect themselves. Teachers in **Botswana**, for example, spoke about the discomfort they felt, as adults, being addressed as sexual beings by children in HIV/AIDS lessons:

Mr. Fako: They can ask whether we [teachers] have tested. They feel teachers are always talking about these things, while even they could be infected.

Ms. Sechele: I remember one student wanted to know if I have ever used a female condom, and how it feels. I told them that I have never used it and that they should not become personal when we talk about these things.

Mr. Sello: I remember there was a child at one point when we were discussing abstinence and withdrawal. The student was saying from experience he knows that withdrawal is impossible. And I was supposed to make a comment on that.

Of course, the very fact that children felt able to pose these questions suggests that perhaps these teachers were not being too didactic and authoritarian. But if teachers show that *they* are embarrassed by explicit talk about condoms, menstruation and sexuality, this must suggest to pupils that such talk is embarrassing and may inhibit some pupils from speaking (as well as possibly encouraging others to disrupt lessons by deliberately talking in ways that they know will embarrass the teacher).

Loud Boys and Quiet Girls

According to some of the girls we interviewed, girls were much quieter in class than boys because they feared being ridiculed by boys, as we can see in the following extract from an interview with boys and girls in **Zimbabwe**:



- Sekayi (B):** Girls – you don't have self-confidence, so you think you are treated differently.
- Interviewer:** Do you girls agree? Do you not have self-confidence?
- Nehanda (G):** Yes, it is true. Sometimes when a girl knows the answer she does not raise her hand, so the teacher thinks she does not know.
- Florence (G):** Yes, it is because the boys laugh at us if we get the answer wrong.
- Sundai (B):** Of course, if the answer is way out, we laugh...
- Florence:** But that will be the answer I think is right.
- Sekayi:** As I said... you don't have self-confidence. You come to school to learn, so why should you worry if a boy laughs at you. You should not bother because you are there to learn.
- Interviewer:** But do you boys laugh when other boys get the answers wrong?
- (Inaudible murmur from the boys)*
- Nehanda:** They only laugh at girls.
- Banga (B):** That's not true...
- (More murmurs from the boys)*
- Nehanda:** All the boys laugh when we get the answer wrong, even those who don't know the answer also laugh.
- Suko (G):** Girls should just ignore the boys and get on with their work.

Quietness and loudness are not natural female and male characteristics, according to these girls, but are constructed as if they are through the interaction of boys and girls in class. The boys attribute the girls' quietness to what they assume is a general and natural feminine failing – lack of self-confidence. This allows Sekayi to accept that girls may be quiet because they are laughed at by boys, while still blaming girls for their lack of

confidence and their inability to withstand this. (Although, of course, these girls showed confidence in challenging the boys in this interview.)

In other interviews, it emerged that girls are sometimes insulted sexually for getting answers wrong in class. In **Kenya**, for example, teenaged girls reported boys making 'dirty jokes' when this happened. The girls found this particularly abusive and threatening – and, therefore, an effective way of silencing them and 'putting them in their place'. It was, as we can see, particularly problematic for girls to speak about sexuality – and therefore to be active contributors in HIV/AIDS classes.

Marginalising Girls in Classes and Groups Addressing HIV/AIDS

1) Life Skills and HIV/AIDS Classes

One of the key findings in our study concerned the application of sexual 'double standards' to girls and boys. In every country, a distinction was drawn (by both boys and girls) between 'good' and 'bad' girls, which centred on sexuality. 'Bad' girls were described as wearing miniskirts (and, because of this, 'inviting rape'), being too 'modern', drinking, staying out late, and having boyfriends. Girls could also be insulted for appearing to transgress perceived traditional models of femininity, being 'too knowledgeable', or even speaking 'too openly' or confidently in mixed gender interviews – as in class. Our researchers reported that boys tended to participate much more in school, to be much louder – and more likely to assume positions of responsibility in HIV/AIDS and life skills classes.

a) AIDS Awareness Lesson in a School in Kenya:

There was a lot of whispering among the learners during the lesson. Girls sat separately from the boys. Boys participated more than the girls and when asked to answer a question the girls answered in very low tones, and when asked to repeat their responses, they kept quiet most of the time. Girls were quiet and shy, reserved, looked down when certain words were being mentioned, ie. 'sex', 'sexually active', 'sexual intercourse'. Boys got most of the attention from the teachers throughout the lesson. No attempt was made to engage girls in discussion; they were often forgotten. One girl was active but not noticed by the teacher. The girls looked down when asked to answer a question and there were incidences of laughter, especially when a boy mentioned the use of condoms and when another boy narrated the day his father called for a family meeting to discuss HIV/AIDS.

b) Moral Education Lesson in a School in Botswana:

Girls occupied most of the front seats while boys sat at the back. Some of the girls did not appear eager to contribute and the teacher made no effort to invite them into the discussion. They passively stared at learners on the other side of the class, who were contributing. During

a discussion on whether women could be leaders, a girl asserted that men were created to be leaders, although they are to lead with women's assistance. The teacher commented that, in Tswana culture, 'men are the heads of the family and everywhere' – to which a boy at the back shouted, 'Yes, it is true.' The teacher gave an example of the ZCC (Zionist Christian Church), where women having their monthly periods are not allowed to attend the church, and posed the question: 'What if the woman was the leader of the church?' The boy burst into laughter and some commented that there would be no service.

c) Life Skills Lesson in a School in Botswana:

For group work, there were single-sex groups and mixed-sex groups. In the mixed-sex groups, girls were seen doing mostly secretarial work while boys chaired the group discussions. The boys would discuss among themselves and then tell the girls what they were discussing. The girls just sat there and waited for the boys to tell them what to write. In the single-sex groups, there seemed to be equal participation.

It is important that teachers – particularly those teaching HIV/AIDS and life skills – are taught to reflect upon the gender dynamics in class, and to think of ways of challenging rather than reinforcing popular views of girls as quiet, shy and subordinate and boys as active, funny, loud and dominant. Not only do teachers, we suggest, have an obligation to encourage the participation of *all* learners, but, by focusing on boys rather than girls, they are contributing to a culture in which boys are expected to take the initiative and to subordinate girls (sexually as well as in other ways) – resulting in girls having difficulties negotiating relationships with boys. This increases the chance of boys and girls engaging in relationships with little communication and perhaps little respect and empathy for each other, which may lead to a greater risk of unprotected sex and HIV/AIDS infection. We are not suggesting that the teachers here were consciously intending to promote such gender stereotypes – rather that they were taking it for granted that boys are naturally more demonstrative and girls naturally more shy, and were responding accordingly. But one of the key lessons that emerged from the interaction between boys, girls and teachers was precisely that girls were quiet, passive and shy (even those who tried to contribute) and boys active and loud, and that boys were sexual beings and girls the objects of their desires.

Teacher training in life skills and HIV/AIDS education must involve sensitising teachers to aspects of this 'hidden curriculum' (Spender, 1982; Posada, 1999), and the sorts of messages about gender identities and relations that are commonly communicated through it. It should also encourage teachers to think creatively of ways of changing their practices so as not to unintentionally reinforce the sorts of stereotypical gendered positions that the boys and girls were taking up in the classroom observations above. This could, for

example, involve experimenting with single-sex group work as a way of encouraging girls to develop stronger voices in mixed-sex discussions about gender and sexuality. However, as we will argue later, it is also important that this methodology is not used alone, but in conjunction with mixed group teaching.

2) Anti-AIDS Groups

One important finding in **Zambia** and **Zimbabwe** concerned the male domination of anti-AIDS groups and drama groups in schools. The researchers found not only that many more boys than girls were members of these groups, but that they occupied nearly all the important leadership positions. In both countries, it was reported that girls who joined their schools' anti-AIDS clubs were viewed as 'bad' by other pupils – and even by teachers – because it was assumed that they were joining them in order to establish sexual relations with boys. In one girls-only school in Zimbabwe, members of the anti-AIDS club were denied funding to organise meetings with young people in other co-educational schools because it was supposed that they just wanted to meet boys. This reflects the prevalence of sexual double standards, through which girls speaking openly about sex in the presence of boys are regarded as overly sexual and 'bad'. The relative absence and invisibility of girls in anti-AIDS clubs is very problematic and has important implications for the kinds of materials and messages that such groups are producing (see *Implications of Findings for Future Practices* in Part 3). It is vital that boys and girls work together to develop the kinds of relations and social skills that will help to protect them from HIV/AIDS.

Boys Asserting Themselves and Girls Withdrawing in Mixed Interviews

Many researchers in western countries have observed how boys try to assert themselves in relation to girls in the classroom by 'performing' their identities in certain ways – for example, by monopolising group discussions, being loud or 'funny', or being 'naughty' and making various types of threats to girls (see Francis, 1998; Connolly, 1998; Gilbert & Gilbert, 1998). Some of the interviews we conducted with mixed groups were characterised by such 'performances' by certain boys. We want to examine two of these interviews.

1) Boys Performing as Leaders and Upholders of Culture – and Silencing Girls

The first was an interview with two girls and two boys (all in their mid to late teens) at a workshop in Mombasa, **Kenya**, in which we were disseminating the findings of our research to researchers, educationalists and young people from the participating countries. Interviews were conducted with the participants around particular themes emerging from the research – in this case the theme of 'modern' and 'traditional' practices, and whether the latter infringed upon or protected the rights of girls (see Topic 10).

What was striking about the responses of the young people was how loud and assertive the boys were, and how quiet and disinterested the girls became. Though the facilitator, a young woman in her 20s, tried to draw the girls in by asking them specific questions,

the conversation was mainly between her and the boys. Rather than communicating their lack of interest by becoming disruptive or talking to each other, the girls merely sat quietly, sometimes with glazed expressions, occasionally smiling slightly when they perceived one of the boys to be saying something outrageous. The conversation involved the facilitator asking provocative questions and the boys supporting each other and asserting what they saw as their 'traditional' right to lead and subordinate girls and women.

Like many of the boys in our study (notably from Zimbabwe and South Africa), these boys blamed girls for being too 'modern' and wearing miniskirts and tight trousers that 'invited' rape – rather than boys and men for carrying out such rapes. When asked by the facilitator how they would feel if their sisters were raped, the boys constructed themselves as 'protectors' and derived from this a sense of their superiority as males. Throughout the discussion, they identified boys and men as alternating between two powerful positions: one as subjects of an insatiable heterosexual drive, the other as protectors of girls (from boys and men with such drives). They constructed themselves not only as protectors of girls from boys and men – but also from the girls' own tendency to forget 'tradition' and 'culture' and become too assertive and sexually active. In doing so, they were identifying themselves as the upholders of 'tradition'.

As in the mixed group discussion in Zambia when the boys were so keen to assert how physically incapable girls were of becoming miners, the boys here focused on grave digging as an activity that was completely incompatible with frail feminine physiques. This was one of the few occasions when one of the girls challenged the boys – asserting that she could dig a grave if she wanted to. The boys tried to maintain their superiority by retorting loudly and quickly that females would not do such a thing 'voluntarily', unlike males who were 'naturally' stronger and for whom such work was presumably vocational. Physical strength, as in the Zambian interview, was treated as a symbol of male superiority, as well as emotional, moral and intellectual strength – the latter manifested in the boys monopolising the discussion and 'putting down' any challenges from the girls. Not only were these boys assuming powerful masculine identities; they were also performing them in relation to the girls.

2) Boys Performing Outrageously and Embarrassing and Silencing Girls

In the second mixed interview with a group of 16-year-olds in **Zimbabwe**, the boys not only asserted themselves in relation to girls by dominating the conversation, but also by speaking about them in contemptuous and provocative ways. Whether they actually engaged in the sort of behaviour they were describing or not, they elicited a great deal of laughter from the other boys by talking in self-consciously outrageous ways about girls as sex objects, as things to be 'opened' and then thrown away:



- Canaan (B):** These days, kids have big bodies. By the time she gets to Form 1, she will be having affairs.
- Interviewer:** Even those in Grades 4 and 5 [aged 10-11 years]?
- Kokayi (B):** Er, yes... those in Grade 4, yes. Those are the ones we are jumping for these days. (Laughter)
- Interviewer:** Why do you go for such young girls?
- Kokayi:** You know what, yes, us boys have an oppressive nature. Once I sleep with a girl I lose interest in her, so usually I want to go for those who still have 'intact closed presents'. (Laughter and grumbles)
- Interviewer:** What presents?
- Kokayi:** Official opening – when you sleep with a virgin!
- Interviewer:** So how do you feel about it?
- Kokayi:** I feel good – it's nice. After the official opening, you can just ditch her...
- Interviewer:** So if a boy dumps you, what do you do?
- Daya (G):** It depends on how much you loved him. If you really loved him, you will be pained.
- Kambo (G):** I... I won't feel that way. I will actually look around for a replacement boyfriend, and I will show off to the boy who dumped me.
- Moyo (B):** That's when I will beat you.
- Chipiwa (G):** Why should you beat me? Isn't it you would have dumped me?
- Canaan:** Yes, I will beat her because what she will be doing to me is painful, showing off to me...
- Chipiwa:** But it is you who would have ditched me.

Group dynamics such as those demonstrated in the excerpts above pose serious ethical dilemmas for teachers who are committed to a learner centred approach. If teachers are to encourage young people to speak openly about sex and sexuality in class, they must work hard – like our researchers – to develop friendly, non-judgmental relations with their students. Nevertheless, as we have seen in these excerpts, this approach can also lead to boys dominating discussions at the expense of girls, as well as abusing them. In the extract above, the Zimbabwean boys were forging a common identity as powerful, funny, hedonistic males by talking outrageously about girls. The presence of girls in the interview only served to make them appear, in each other's eyes, even more outrageous and funny. It may be that the girls were silent because they were so uncomfortable and did not want to be humiliated and abused further. However, the interviewer was concerned to give them the opportunity to respond to the boys. Significantly, he had to put questions specifically to the girls to draw them into the conversation – leading to a heated and gender polarised exchange in which the girls resisted the boys' constructions of them as 'used goods' while the boys tried to reassert themselves. What was apparent in this exchange was how quickly the boys' tone changed from humour to hostility when the girls started challenging them. This and the initial reluctance of the girls to challenge the boys no doubt reflected, in part, the ubiquity of sexual double standards – through which boys derive status while girls are condemned for speaking explicitly about their heterosexual needs and desires.

It may be useful to establish some 'ground rules' for HIV/AIDS and life skills education, whereby the class agrees to certain rules of behaviour, such as not speaking in abusive ways about others, not interrupting others while they are speaking, not laughing at others. This may encourage boys and girls to relate to each other in new ways, and to see life more from the point of view of the 'other'. However, we would also argue that teachers of HIV/AIDS and life skills education should avoid being seen as censors, and that young people should be able to talk about how they see themselves and the opposite sex during lessons – even in ways similar to those illustrated in the excerpts above. What is essential, we feel, is that more opportunities are created for girls to talk and to assert themselves.

One of the main aims of HIV/AIDS and life skills education must be to encourage boys and girls not to see and define themselves in opposition to each other. This means encouraging them to challenge popular stereotypes of boys as loud, assertive, funny and highly sexual, and girls as quiet, unassertive and non-sexual (or as sexual objects for boys and men). We would contend that such 'gender performances' do not reveal characteristics that boys and girls are born with, or that they naturally exhibit. Indeed, boys and girls (as well as men and women) can and do change – both their behaviour and their perceptions of themselves – when talking about their pleasures and anxieties with people of the same or the opposite sex. Indeed, after some of our group interviews, several interviewees reported thinking about themselves differently and seeing people of the opposite sex as 'less opposite'.

Single-Sex or Mixed-Sex Group Work?

Our research – in particular the experience of interviewing young people in single-sex and mixed groups – suggests that single-sex group work should form an integral part of all life skills and HIV/AIDS education. In such groups, girls in particular feel more able to participate with confidence and to express their desires and concerns without being labelled in derogatory ways. Life skills and HIV/AIDS education needs to encourage girls to talk about sexuality, not merely in a negative way but about their own positive feelings and desires. It needs to address the question: how can girls assert themselves without being constructed as bad or overly ‘modern’? Our research suggests that this is often more possible in single-sex classes. However, such classes also tend to reinforce assumptions that boys and girls are essentially different and in opposition to each other. In the mixed group discussions, boys and girls are in a better position to learn from each other about their problems, concerns and views. For this reason, we would advocate a carefully weighted combination of single-sex and mixed group discussions as part of a comprehensive strategy for HIV/AIDS and life skills education (see Pattman, 2002).

As the following comments from teachers in **Botswana** suggest, both boys and girls can be inhibited by the presence of members of the opposite sex – particularly when teaching about male and female condoms, menstruation and teenage pregnancy:

66

Ms. Legae, Moral Education teacher: Girls are not comfortable when they are taught about teenage pregnancy in the presence of boys.

Ms. Bontle, Social Studies teacher: When teaching them about using condoms, the boys feel offended, and when teaching about female condoms, I as a teacher and girls feel uncomfortable. Talking about menstruation, for instance, is like talking about oneself.

Ms. Nlesa, Guidance & Counselling teacher: We were discussing factors of hormonal imbalance, whereby during [their] menstruation periods, females may be moody. The boys then became embarrassed in a way. I think it is a problem of culture, whereby we cannot discuss female issues in the presence of males.

While young people and their teachers may find it easier to talk about such issues in single-sex groups, it is vital that such topics do not become characterised as exclusively male or female. Condom use (whether male or female) and pregnancy affect both sexes, and one of the aims of HIV/AIDS education must be to encourage boys and girls to talk about these issues in the presence of each other. While single-sex groups could be used initially to address issues that boys and girls may consider too embarrassing in mixed company, it is important that this does not become an end in itself.

One research practice adopted by the **Zambia** team that generated a great deal of critical reflection among young people was to organise group work in two stages. First, same-sex groups were asked to identify the sorts of gender-related problems they thought they and people of the opposite sex experienced, together with the causes of and possible solutions to these problems. Then the boys and girls came together to present and discuss their findings. We suggest that this could very effectively be incorporated as a learner centred and gender sensitive pedagogy into broader HIV/AIDS and life skills education. Not only does it make the learners' views the key resource; it also encourages critical self-reflection, empathy and communication with others on issues that are rarely articulated. Furthermore, the experience of working in a single-sex group may encourage girls to be more outspoken in the mixed group discussions that follow. The **Zambian** researchers found that, in some of the mixed plenary sessions, the girls were as outspoken and critical as the boys – a fact they attributed to the confidence and support they had gained in the single-sex group.

Other Problems Reported in Teaching HIV/AIDS Education

As well as the embarrassment that many teachers reported due to 'cultural' prohibitions on adults and children discussing issues of sexuality, several other common problems were also identified in the development and teaching of HIV/AIDS education:

1) Teachers are unclear about what 'life skills' are, and how to teach them in relation to HIV/AIDS and life skills education. In **South Africa**, teachers seemed to be unclear about how to teach life skills, regarding it as a discrete subject that should be covered in a few lessons, rather than an ongoing, long-term programme. Most of those interviewed said they lacked the necessary skills to teach the subject. In **Tanzania**, teachers at Dar es Salaam's Mji Mwema Primary School seemed uncomfortable talking about issues related to sex, raising strong concerns about their preparedness to deliver practical HIV/AIDS and life skills education. In **Rwanda**, the majority of the trainee teachers interviewed felt they were not being adequately prepared to teach about HIV/AIDS, which was not included in their training curriculum. However, more than 90% of them said they were confident they could deliver HIV/AIDS lessons with information they had received through the media and anti-AIDS clubs. That teachers have to rely on the popular media for their 'training' as HIV/AIDS educators is clearly a worrying situation. In addition to the lack of an HIV/AIDS component in teacher education, there is no course on sexuality in Rwandese schools.

2) According to some teachers, pupils themselves are quite hostile to HIV/AIDS education because they are suffering from what is sometimes called 'HIV/AIDS fatigue'. This refers to a feeling of being so bombarded with messages about the horror of HIV/AIDS and images of death and suffering that they do not want to hear anything more about it. As the following teacher from **Botswana** notes:

The students are always complaining that they are tired of HIV/AIDS because wherever they go there is HIV/AIDS – in the newspaper, on the television, is all HIV/AIDS. Some are saying we should not bother about HIV/AIDS because it is their business, not ours. Like last week, I called the drama group. The play was to be about HIV/AIDS. I did not tell them the theme, because I knew that if I mentioned HIV/AIDS, no one was going to turn up. I even told the teachers that they should not tell them that it was about HIV/AIDS. So they came. When they arrived and realised what we were going to deal with, some left the place... Whenever I came to teach them in Guidance and Counselling class, they would say, 'she is coming again to teach us about AIDS'. We normally go to them so that they choose topics that they want to learn about, in particular problems that affect them in school. But whenever we mention HIV/AIDS, they say that they don't want that one. They say, 'you go to Moral Education there is HIV/AIDS, you go to Religious Education there is HIV/AIDS, in the Guidance classes there is HIV/AIDS, on radio, on television... we are tired.'

3) In some countries, notably **Rwanda** and **Kenya**, teachers reported that parents oppose their children being educated on how to handle relationships with the opposite sex, and dismiss the idea of friendships between girls and boys as a 'foreign' cultural phenomenon that encourages young people to engage in premarital sex.

Addressing these Problems

Given the common taboos that surround talking about sexuality – especially between adults and children – it is clearly not easy to be an effective HIV/AIDS and life skills teacher. On the question of appropriate terminology, it may be that teachers can adapt and use the children's own words and phrases to describe sexual organs and sexual acts, as our researchers did when interviewing children.

'HIV/AIDS fatigue' is a serious problem and may, as shown above, lead to young people rejecting HIV/AIDS education out of hand because they feel they are being overloaded with warnings through the media, their church or their school. The constant stream of gruesome images and warnings about engaging in sex of any kind may induce boredom at best, resentment at worst. It is extremely important that HIV/AIDS educators recognise this and try to develop HIV/AIDS programmes that do not simply reproduce these feelings (see also Alex de Waal, 2002, pp. 181-183).

Such programmes, we would suggest, should not focus exclusively on HIV/AIDS nor on sex, but more generally on what it is like to be a young person in Africa today. When we adopted this approach in our research, our interviewees did not show signs of boredom or resentment, but rather were engaged, reflective and animated. This, of course, does not mean that the nature of HIV/AIDS and its modes of transmission should not be addressed

in HIV/AIDS education. However, the focal point of HIV/AIDS education within a life skills framework should not be the disease itself, but the lives, identities and relationships (sexual and non-sexual) of young people. It is also important to convey this message to parents, to assuage their fears that HIV/AIDS education focuses purely on matters of sex.

Teachers should wherever possible persuade parents of the need for HIV/AIDS education by appealing to the concerns that many of them have for their children in the light of the pandemic. The aim of HIV/AIDS education, it must be stressed, is not to encourage young people to engage in protected sex, but to help them form relationships and make decisions that will make them less vulnerable to contracting the disease. Many young people we interviewed indicated that sex was generally a taboo topic between them and their parents, and expressed a strong desire for more open communication with their parents. While we found sex to be an important subject in the lives of these young people – whether as a worry or a desire, whether they engaged in it or not – many of the parents we spoke to denied associations of sex with childhood and even early adolescence. It is clearly vital that teachers encourage parents to think of their children as people who, like them, have sexual feelings. They need to be persuaded that, rather than transforming their children from ‘innocent’ to sexual beings, HIV/AIDS education aims to encourage and enable them to talk openly about their anxieties, concerns and pleasures, some of which relate to sexuality.

Material and Logistical Difficulties

Mitigating against the possibilities of teaching HIV/AIDS education in a learner centred way are material and logistical difficulties, such as the limited time allocated to the subject and large class sizes. In **Kenya**, HIV/AIDS lessons generally last for 5-10 minutes and are taught once a week. The teachers claim to cover topics on the causes, transmission and prevention of HIV/AIDS, as well as issues of friendship, drug abuse and other STIs. It is clearly difficult, if not impossible, to generate the kind of pupil led discussions required in such a limited timeframe. In our interviews, the richest discussions emerged when the interviewees were given sufficient scope and time (at least 30 minutes) to talk about themselves and others.

Regarding class sizes, in **South Africa**, it was reported in some schools girls and boys sat two or three to a seat in classes of 50 to 60 pupils. Clearly, this is not conducive to learning, especially where we want to put the onus on pupils as active participants.

[B] Learning Sexuality Education in the Family

Lack of Sex Education from Parents

Talking about their sexual feelings, concerns and relations with adults was something that was impossible for most of our young interviewees who spoke about their relations with adults. In **Tanzania**, the majority of children reported that they seldom shared their worries on issues related to sexual matters with their parents. Instead, they were much more likely to share such information with their friends. Many interviewees said their parents were hostile to discussing sex-related matters. In most countries, parents did not discuss sex with their children except in a negative sense and in the context of rebuke. Grandmothers, who in many cases took on the role of guardians, especially in rural areas, were often closer to children than their parents. Both boys and girls appeared more easily able to discuss issues that concerned them with their grandmothers. Many said they wanted to discuss issues related to sexuality with their parents or guardians, but could not because they were too 'old fashioned' or unwilling to discuss such matters.

Boys' and Girls' Relations with Mothers and Fathers

Both boys and girls portrayed their fathers as emotionally and physically distant figures compared to their mothers. In **Zambia**, fathers, like male teachers (see Topic 8), were criticised for being hypocritical and for taking moralistic stances on issues of sexuality. Boys both identified with their fathers as powerful and were critical of them for being distant and unfaithful. In **South Africa**, fathers in urban areas were usually busy and preoccupied with other engagements. In rural areas, mothers were responsible for communicating with their children and advocating on their behalf to their fathers. Fathers were often constructed simply as providers, who occasionally discussed issues such as school fees – but never issues to do with friends, anxieties, pleasures or relationships. Fathers were rarely mentioned in the young people's diaries. By contrast, mothers featured prominently, particularly in the diaries kept by girls, who wrote things such as:



Themba: 'My mother took me and my younger brother to town.'

Nokothula: 'It was my mum's birthday. I washed myself and [got] ready to go to school, then I went to Mummy and said 'happy birthday to you and may God bless you, I love you mum'. She kept quiet, after a few minutes she said 'thank you'. I was so happy on my mother's birthday, I went to school and told my friends that today my mother is celebrating her birthday.'

Siboniso: 'I told my mother about running into a tree trunk.'



- Gertrude:** 'My mum plaiting my hair and my sister's hair...'
- Thandi:** 'My mother's pleased with me because of my knowledge of algebra.'
- Tizhani:** 'I always pray for my mother before sleeping.'
- Janet:** 'I wrote a letter to my mum to tell her I love her.'
- Catherine:** 'My mother gave me money for sandals after she was happy about my performance at school and at home.'

Boys were generally less close to their mothers than girls, and were not able to speak with their mothers in the same way. It may be then that, for most boys, there are fewer adults available than for girls to talk about matters of sexuality.

In **Kenya's** capital, Nairobi, girls and boys with a resident father viewed their fathers as providers of basic needs, such as accommodation and education. Fathers were also constructed as people who guided mainly their sons against bad behaviour, such as 'roaming around'. However, both the girls and boys described their mothers as more available for advice and guidance. For example, several boys described their mothers counselling them about how to become responsible men: to 'come home at night', to 'help in housework', to 'avoid bad company'. Some of the girls claimed that their fathers advised them not to wear 'bad' clothes such as miniskirts, in order to minimise the risk of sexual harassment. However, during the individual interviews and girl-only discussions, several of them also accused their fathers of abuse through overwork and beatings:

I do not like my father, and don't stay with him. He beats me and makes noise everytime (Wanjiku, 14, Nairobi).

Some of the Nairobi girls even expressed fear of incestuous advances from their fathers (see Topic 8). In **South Africa**, many young people also openly admitted to being abused in their families – notably by their stepfathers. A number of boys wrote negatively about their stepfathers in their diaries, saying things like:

Thabo: 'Today I did not have a good day 'cause my stepfather upset me, telling me to turn the radio off and conveniently reminding me that I don't belong in this house – this really hurt. I will not be held accountable if he gets injured by me. He should learn to handle his alcohol better.'

Sigidi: 'Someone should teach him how to carry his drink – he reminded me that I don't belong to the family. If I was not at school I would leave.'

Dingane: 'I'm lucky I do not have a stepfather yet.'

What Kenyan Girls Learn about Sexuality and Gender Relations from Their Mothers

In Nairobi, **Kenya**, mothers claimed to take responsibility for teaching their children about sexual relationships and HIV/AIDS. The girls confirmed this claim, with some of them saying that their mothers allowed them to have boyfriends as long as they did not become involved in sexual relationships. All of the girls felt that this was good advice, as their mothers were cautioning them and preparing them for the future. A 12-year-old schoolgirl said her mother provided what she considered 'good advice, because boys can rape you'. Boys also supported the education provided by their mothers, as noted in the following remarks:

Girls should be very careful and avoid being cheated by boys for money

[Okoth, 15-year-old schoolboy, Nairobi]

Mothers know what they are saying as they have passed through that stage [Kinoro, 14-year-old schoolboy, Nairobi].

Both school-going and non-school-going boys and girls said the information they received on sexuality at home was helpful because it helped them avoid situations that could lead to contracting HIV/AIDS. Because of such information, girls said they learned what constituted 'good' and 'bad' behaviour and could make informed decisions and avoid bad company or situations. However, some non-school-going girls claimed that they did not want to hear anything about sexuality, as they were still too young.

The few parents who reportedly discussed sexuality issues with their children, said they generally addressed issues of STIs, HIV/AIDS, menstruation, and the breaking of boys' voices. They also stressed the avoidance of pregnancy, even threatening dire consequences as one mother stated:

I tell them that if you give birth, it is your problem to take care of [the baby] and not me.

While girls may have been much closer to their mothers than boys and more able, perhaps, to share their emotions with them, parents also appeared to focus on their daughters' – rather than their sons' – sexuality, and in ways that strongly restricted them. This was particularly the case in rural areas such as Garissa in **Kenya**, where many parents opposed girls mixing with boys, let alone having boyfriends. Schoolgirls in Garissa reported that

some parents feared that once their daughters were in school, they would be exposed to boys. Hence, as girls approached puberty, they were withdrawn from school or even married off. (Those few girls attending primary school associated going to school with 'freedom' and saw themselves as 'heroines'.) One of the main fears was that the girls would get pregnant and bring shame upon the family. Parents in Garissa were reportedly uneasy about girls sharing classrooms with boys. They favoured segregation and wanted separate classrooms for boys and girls in order to prevent sexual relationships.

Those mothers interviewed claimed that they did not teach sexuality matters to their daughters, let alone educate them on their sexual rights as enshrined in the Somali cultural code of conduct. This traditional code holds that any word uttered by a woman against a man is 'final', and various sanctions can be administered against a man for touching a woman without her consent. However, the assumptions underlying this code – that females are at risk from predatory males – appear to reinforce parents' views that they must protect their daughters by restricting their interactions with boys. While indeed sexual harassment is a common feature of school life, it is girls rather than the offending males who are 'problematized' and withdrawn – making schools even more threatening and unsafe places for girls. Yet, despite this, essays written by the pupils about their future showed that girls also want to complete school and take up professional careers – just as much as any boy.

One of the problems that HIV/AIDS and life skills educators face – as was observed especially in **Rwanda** and **Kenya** – is the widespread perception that such education violates traditional practices, particularly when it espouses the rights of girls and women. However, we would contend that what are perceived as 'traditional values' may be reconciled with a commitment to girls' and women's rights. Rather than interpreting the Somali cultural code as indicating that girls and women are weak and need to be controlled and regulated (by being kept at home and denied schooling) to protect them from predatory males, the code could be interpreted much more positively and progressively by educators. For example, educationalists could build a case for HIV/AIDS education with a gender and sexual politics component by locating it within a localised history of gender relations as an assertion of female rights to education and free movement.

Parents Sexualising Their Daughters

In **Zambia**, as in Kenya, parents seemed to be far more concerned about their daughters than their sons as sexual beings. When asked about what, if anything, they told their children about sex, it was striking how the Zambian parents spoke only about their daughters. They were not simply presenting facts about their daughters' burgeoning sexuality, but actively sexualising them – constructing them as objects of desire and, having *made* sexuality a key aspect of their identity, setting out to 'protect' them by controlling and regulating their behaviour:



- Mr. Mumba:** Yes, we do talk to them that it is bad to have sex before marriage.
- Ms. Musonda:** Yes, because traditionally we have to do that in order for our children to have proper marriages.
- Ms. Bwalya:** When the girls come of age, we start teaching them to stay away from men – even boys. We tell them to be afraid of them because they have diseases.
- Mr. Musonda:** Most girls are not jumpy at 14 years. They just learn from boys in school and then they want to try what they learned. Long ago, when a boy went to a girl, the girl was taught that boys bite and when they bite, you instantly die...
- Mr. Mumba:** We have to tell our children that if you sleep around with men, you will become pregnant, contract diseases like STDs and HIV/AIDS. We even give them examples of people who are still suffering...
- Interviewer:** Mr. Chongo, what things have you highlighted to your children on sexuality?
- Mr. Chongo:** There are times when these girls grow up... they experience natural development in the body. When they reach such a level, they have to know that, once they meet a boy or a man, of course there are certain things which they are to expect – like a pregnancy... or sometimes it couldn't be pregnancy, but they may contract a disease...

These parents are sexualising girls and demonising boys as harbourers of disease, as people that 'bite'. Far from influencing their daughters to mix responsibly with boys, they are encouraging them to hate boys and to remain 'protected' from them. When Mr. Musonda describes girls of today as easily influenced by boys and contrasts them with girls of 'long ago', he seems to be invoking a common discourse that constructs females – but not males – as vulnerable to corruption by modernisation. (The same is true of the descriptions of Zimbabwe's 'Salad Girls' in Topic 10, and the concerns voiced by Kenyan parents about the effects of 'modern' schooling on their daughters.) Significantly, there is absolutely no sense of girls being active agents in this account of girls 'long ago' and in contemporary society; they are spoken about either as the pawns of authoritarian figures or, with the presumed erosion of this authority, as being easily manipulated by boys.

Producing Gender Power Relations at School and at Home

In this topic, we have examined how 'gender power relations' are produced and negotiated, for example, through the sexualisation of girls at school and at home. This is a highly problematic issue, which affects girls' relationships with boys, other girls and teachers, makes it difficult for them to develop friendships or equal relationships with males, and creates divisions between 'good' and 'bad' girls that result in the regulation of their behaviour. In relation to this, we have looked at how girls are marginalised in HIV/AIDS and life skills classes, as well as in anti-AIDS groups. Gender power relations are complex, and we must be sensitive to the different ways in which people respond to them. For instance, some girls collude in the reproduction of their lack of power – while some develop forms of resistance to it. The silence of most girls in class, while boys dominate proceedings, can be seen as a form of collusion in the sense that it enables the boys to be dominant. However, it can also be seen as a strategy that girls adopt to protect themselves from potential abuse from boys, or even as a form of resistance against a male dominated classroom. A simple binary model representing boys as the powerful oppressors and girls as powerless victims not only fails to address the various ways in which girls actively negotiate gender power relations, but contributes to the view that girls are passive. Furthermore, it fails to examine how boys negotiate gender power relations, and the kind of problems that may arise for them in competition with other boys as they try to assert themselves. This is an issue that we will be examining in the next topic.

TOPIC 4: GIRLS' AND BOYS' PROBLEMS

We now want to examine the sorts of problems that girls and boys claim most commonly to experience. We shall be focusing more on boys' problems because our emphasis so far has been on girls' problems. In addition, focusing on boys' problems challenges the stereotype of males as free and autonomous (and females as passive, helpless victims). Such stereotypes were usually seen as emanating from their relations with men and boys. As we have already seen, many boys in our study defined themselves by subordinating girls – presenting themselves as physically and emotionally stronger than girls, and as active, loud, funny, naughty, free and sexually rapacious by comparison. While the boys presented themselves as more powerful in these ways, some of our mainly female interviewees intimated that, in being expected to be like this, boys were in a sense lacking power. They pointed out that many boys experienced problems stemming directly from their efforts to live up to the stereotype of the powerful male. For this reason, we would argue strongly for 'boys' problems' to be incorporated into the agenda of all HIV/AIDS and life skills education. We will begin, however, by summarising the sorts of problems that girls were said to experience.

Girls' Problems

In the **Zambia** research activity to which we referred in the previous topic, almost all the girls' groups identified sexual harassment as the most pressing problem faced by girls.

(See Topic 8 for a detailed examination of this subject.) The girls were aged between 14-18 years old, and among their comments were:

After [male] grandparents or stepfathers pay for school fees, they want sex from you in return.

A teacher starts giving you more marks, invites you to his home and asks for [a] sexual favour. If you refuse... you get to be a victim in class.

When you are junior, seniors eat your food, use your money and clothes. They also inflict mental torture by saying things about your body if you are not pretty.

Bus drivers... use abusive language and ask for sex instead when you have no money to pay.

Bus conductors or call boys touch you and make you [feel] uncomfortable. They use offensive language. They also favour you by not making you pay the fare.

Another issue of concern raised by the girls was being treated as the weaker sex, and how this affected the ways that teachers treated them and ridiculed their future job prospects. Specifically they referred to the following matters of concern:

Teachers [both male and female] have a negative attitude against the girls. They say boys are brighter or cleverer than girls and treat them as such.

Women are given lower jobs than men, like teaching and nursing.

Parents discourage girls from striving for higher ambitions on the account that 'you are a girl'.

Where there are men, they will always be appointed for higher posts. Very few women are in high positions on [a] comparative basis.

When asked to identify the problems that girls commonly experienced, Zambian boys also focused on sexuality. Girls were regarded as sexually disadvantaged because they were identified with unwanted pregnancies, rape, prostitution, early marriages and sexual abuse. Boys also referred to the problems that girls faced as a result of being seen as the 'weaker' sex – in particular restrictions on their movements, low academic expectations, and being considered less powerful than boys.

Do Boys Have the Power?

The key problems identified by these teenage girls about boys revolved around the economic responsibilities they were expected to fulfil, the better exam marks they were expected to achieve, their presumed susceptibility to peer pressure, their presumed physical toughness and sexual proclivity, and their relative detachment from their mothers and fathers:

Boys' Problems as Viewed by Zambian Girls:

Boys' [inability] to express themselves, especially when they are under the guidance of the mother only.

Peer pressure – boys influenced into smoking, drinking and dodging classes.

Boys are not allowed to enter their parents' bedroom, while girls are allowed. So boys feel that they are not really loved by their parents.

Boys being shy when it comes to discussing sexuality with their parents, and, in particular, their mothers.

Boys face problems at home in a situation where they are considered stronger than girls. They are always given hard jobs to do [and] even when they can't do it, they will just continue because their parent commanded [them] to do so.

When he gets married, he faces problems of looking after his family.

Unemployment and school dropout [makes a man] unable to support his family when he gets married.

Boys being teased by other boys and girls for being physically small, as well as having a small penis.

Boys' Problems as Viewed by Zimbabwean Boys:

In Zimbabwe, rather surprisingly perhaps, given how the boys prided themselves in being 'free' and subordinated girls as people who were tied to the home (see Topic 2), some teenaged boys from Murehwa complained about their parents favouring their sisters over them:

Charles: If you have a sister, when she asks for money from your parents, they just give [it to] her without asking any questions. All she does is state how much she wants and she gets it. But for me, a boy, I have to explain and usually they don't give me the cash. They would rather buy me what I want than give me the money.

Owen: My parents expect [a lot] from me. When I get what I call my best results, they still expect me to have done better, so we have problems. If I try to explain, they won't listen. They simply accuse me of being playful in school. I think they expect too much from me.

Jonah: In my family, I talk to my sisters and [we go] around together. But the way we are treated is different. The girls are regarded highly and us boys are simply brushed aside as being a mischievous lot. Even though my sisters are as mischievous as the boys, it's never discovered.

Many boys and girls in our research complained that boys were much more likely to be beaten by teachers, and were beaten more harshly – for example, on the buttocks rather than the palms of the hands (see Topic 9 for a more detailed examination of this). The following extracts are taken from interviews with girls in **Botswana**:

Boys' Problems as Viewed by Botswana Girls:

Anna: It is very painful to be beaten on the buttocks. It is not fair for the boys; we are in the same class, and we do the same things. Many teachers hate boys. It seems the teachers suppose that the boys do not feel the same pain [as the girls]. If a boy refuses to be beaten on the buttocks and asks to be beaten on the hand like the girls, he is told that he will be taken to the staff room and be beaten there – or he has to go out of the class. So, in the class, girls are treated with higher regard than boys.

Thando: One time, the teacher gave back our test papers and said that the girls had performed better than [the] boys. She told the boys she was going to beat them because they were not supposed to be led by girls – and [she] went ahead and beat them.

What is notable about the boys' problems is that they all relate to difficulties that boys have of living up to the stereotypes of being strong, tough and clever. These stereotypes give rise to the following common problems:

1. Because boys are expected to be clever at school, they are often blamed by their parents for not doing as well as expected – and are beaten by some teachers for not doing better than girls;
2. Because they are expected to be big, small boys are often teased for being small;
3. Because they are supposed to be very sexual, they may be teased for having small penises;

4. Because they are expected to become the breadwinners and heads of their houses, they may be blamed for being unemployed;
5. Because they are expected to be 'emotionally strong', they may be less able to express their emotions with their parents, their teachers and even their girlfriends;
6. Because they are expected to be physically tough, they are more likely to be given 'hard' jobs to do;
7. Because they are expected to show independence, they may be influenced into doing harmful things, such as smoking, drinking and playing truant;
8. Because they are expected to be 'naughtier' than girls, they are more likely to be punished and less likely to be given money by their parents;
9. Because they are expected to be physically strong, they are more likely to compete with other boys through fighting.

Hegemonic Masculinities and Boys' Anxieties

Rather than regarding masculinity and femininity as if there is only one way of being male and one way of being female – on the assumption that we are born with either male or female characteristics – many contemporary writers argue that there are different and changing ways of being male and female. The gender theorist Bob Connell (1995) argues not only that there are different kinds of masculine identities, but also that these are ranked hierarchically. His description of 'hegemonic masculinity' refers to the dominant cultural stereotype of masculinity, which is associated with toughness, heterosexual attraction, confidence, aggression and sporting prowess. As we have seen in our study, many boys identify with these ideals and 'perform' their gender by asserting themselves and subordinating girls. However, Connell warns that these 'hegemonic' ideals are fantasies to which men and boys are encouraged to aspire, but which few are actually able to attain. He suggests that such ideals impose unrealistic expectations upon boys and men, leading to frustration and anxiety for many – and leading to some boys being picked on by others for being 'subordinate' and falling short of particular ideals.

The Importance of Addressing Boys' Problems in HIV/AIDS and Life Skills Education

It is important that, in addressing issues like sexual harassment or the exploitation of girls, HIV/AIDS and life skills programmes do not simply criticise boys. This would have the effect of further alienating boys from girls. Rather, these programmes should aim to encourage boys to reflect upon the problems that *they* experience in trying to define themselves as tough, highly sexual, macho and dominant, in opposition to girls. Life skills education should focus not only on the problems that girls face as a result of boys distancing themselves from their versions of femininity and trying to live up to cultural stereotypes of tough men, but on the difficulties that these expectations present to boys – and the competition that they generate between them.

We saw in Topics 1 and 3 how angry some boys became when they were challenged by girls asserting their 'rights' to move freely and dump boyfriends who abused them. This confirms how threatened many boys feel by 'assertive' girls. Rather than simply attacking boys for becoming more macho and aggressive in response to this perceived threat, HIV/AIDS educators should try to explore with boys why they feel so threatened, and why they are so invested in distancing themselves from their versions of femininity. This may open the way for discussing alternative, less restrictive and less anxiety-provoking ways of being boys, which are not predicated on opposition to girls' and boys' versions of femininity. The possibility of boys and girls identifying in ways that allow them to relate to each other as friends – rather than as opposites with little in common – should be an important component of any practical and effective HIV/AIDS education programme.

TOPIC 5: BOYS AND GIRLS AS FRIENDS

We are interested in exploring the possibilities of friendships between girls and boys because of the overwhelming number of interviewees who described themselves as 'opposites' with nothing at all in common. Due to the deep entrenchment of the gender stereotypes described in the previous topic, we have found that being seen as 'weak' creates problems for girls, just as being seen as 'strong' creates problems for boys. For this reason, there is clearly a fundamental need to bridge this 'gender gap', and to bring boys and girls together on an equal footing – as friends. We would argue that this objective should form a core component of a responsible HIV/AIDS and life skills programme.

Most of the young people who we interviewed reported having close friends of the same sex, but only very few said they had close friends of the opposite sex. One of the reasons given for this was precisely that they had so little in common – and would find it difficult spending time together. The following girls from **Zambia**, for example, commented on how differently they acted with boys than with girls, and how this made it difficult for them to become friends with boys:

Luchele: It is different. When I am with boys, they never talk about love affairs, whereas girls are always talking about boys.

Harriet: Yes, it's different. When I am with girls, we quarrel about petty things, but with boys, they never really talk. They use their hands [fists] to beat and communicate.

Alice: I never relate with boys, but I guess it's different because I am much [more] at ease with girls. Boys are very rough. They do not know how to relate and talk. I never relate with boys at home and in school... because they are rude [and] sometimes they remain quiet.

Boys Praising Girls

Some boys in **Zimbabwe** seemed to agree with these girls that boys were 'rough' and difficult to talk to. While Zimbabwean boys generally spoke in derogatory ways about girls – accusing them of being fickle, 'not having a mind of their own', and being less intelligent than boys – as many as six of the 12 boys interviewed at Hatcliffe praised girls for the sound advice that they offered and their 'sympathetic' natures. These boys said they found it easier to confide in girls or to befriend them. As one 14-year-old boy, Julius, said:

If I am naughty, the girl will say 'what you are doing is wrong' – but not the boys. Girls advise you, so it's good to play with girls.

Some of these boys actually preferred girls' to boys' company – at least on some occasions. They also extended these feelings to female teachers, who were said to be better listeners than male teachers, to be more sympathetic, and to offer better advice (see Topic 9). It would seem that this idealisation of girls and women reflects some dissatisfaction with popular ways of being boys and males in general (cf. Frosh et al, 2002). It may be though that in these friendships boys and girls were not equal, and that girls were helping boys more than the boys were helping them. Furthermore, by idealising girls in this way, more was 'expected' of them than of the boys – a position that, we would suggest, was not very positive for the girls.

Can Boys and Girls be Friends Without Being Boyfriends/Girlfriends?

Another reason it seemed that so few of our subjects had close friends of the opposite sex was the common assumption that boys and girls who were seen together must be boyfriends and girlfriends. This emerged in the following discussion about mixing with girls with schoolboys in **Zimbabwe**:



Interviewer:

Is there anything different in the way that you interact with boys and girls?

Runako:

I see no difference, but the only problem is the belief that if people see you with a girl, then they think that's your girlfriend. So I don't feel comfortable, but there is no difference...

Mashama:

I see a big difference with girls. There are some issues that you can't discuss with her but [only] with your boyfriends.

Chenzira:

I see no difference between boys and girls... I discuss private things with girls – for example, what I do



during the holidays, watching movies like horrors and love movies. I find it easier talking to a girl I know has a boyfriend.

Petiri: I think getting along with girls is good, but you can have problems in the future when you get married. Your wife may be jealous because of your habit of getting along with many girls. So I think the point is not to get along with women too much. Women cannot keep secrets, so this can have a bad effect on your marriage.

What is interesting about this passage is that, while three of the boys (Runako, Mashama and Chenzira) suggest that it is relatively easy to get on with girls – and that there are no major differences between them – they all refer to difficulties that arise from the ‘belief that if people see you with a girl, then they think that’s your girlfriend’. Runako does not ‘feel comfortable’ in the company of a girl because of what other people may read into their relationship. This is also why Chenzira finds it ‘easier talking to a girl I know has a boyfriend’, and why Petiri expresses only qualified support for ‘getting along with girls’.

In the following extract, Zimbabwean girls aged 13 and 14 were asked if they played with boys just as they played with girls. They appeared surprised to be asked such a question, and were quick to deny that they played with boys:



All: No! (Surprised tone)

Shoorai (G): We can’t play the same way because the boys have feelings and they may end up doing what they are not supposed to do. (Laughter)

Interviewer: What kind of feelings? (More laughter)

Jendayi (G): I think the kinds of feelings are touching each other, caressing and kissing.

Interviewer: Don’t girls have feelings?

Shoorai: They do, but boys and girls should not be too close, touching...

Interviewer: But we are talking about boys who are just friends!

Sitembile: Ah, but they are the same (laughter), and the end result will be...

Even though the interviewer asked about playing with boys whom she stressed were ‘just friends’, the girls still suggested that the boys would have sexual feelings. The girls seemed to be saying that it was impossible for girls and boys to have friendships because of boys’ sexual feelings. Only when pressed by the interviewer did they admit that they also had sexual feelings – although they were clearly constructing boys as the subjects and girls as the objects of sexual desire. In this way, they also presented boys as potentially naughty in relation to them: ‘they may end up doing what they are not supposed to do.’ As ‘good’ girls, they need to protect themselves from boys, whom they stereotype as sexually motivated and naughty ‘opposites’. Significantly, there is much laughter when the girls are speaking about the boys’ feelings. No doubt this reflects embarrassment and implies that the girls share these feelings – but are not supposed to articulate them.

In **Tanzania**, Primary 8 girls reported mixing only with girls in order to deter boys from enticing them to have sex with them. As one of the girls said, ‘Girls fear boys because of their behaviour of initiating sexual relationships.’ As with the Zimbabwean girls, they constructed boys as bad and the possessors of powerful sex drives – and themselves, by contrast, as non-sexual. Yet, ironically, they were also drawing attention to themselves as sexual beings by not mixing with members of the opposite sex because it would be construed as ‘bad manners’. Notably, both girls and boys in Tanzania and **Kenya** argued that academic assistance, especially from boy classmates, was the main reason that boys and girls associated in school. In such relationships, boys were positioned as powerful and intelligent. Our interviewees described how they worked with people of the opposite sex, making it clear that this excluded any kind of attraction. Only in this context did they think it was legitimate for boys and girls to mix (even though some girls still claimed to feel uncomfortable in the company of boys). They observed that such closeness could be misconstrued as implying sexual attraction, which would consequently dent their image as ‘good’ girls.

Most of these young people were strict Muslims, in whose culture mixing between boys and girls was discouraged on religious grounds. A 15-year-old schoolgirl from Garissa, for example, said she felt afraid ‘when I see boys and girls walking together, because it is not allowed by religion.’ The girls and boys were expected to grow up separately until marriage. When he was asked about girl-boy friendships, 14-year-old Abdi denied outright the possibility of such relationships:



Interviewer: How is the relationship between boys and girls?

Abdi: Boys and girls, no relationships. Parents of girls beat them if they go with boys...

Interviewer: Why is that so?

Abdi: Parents don't like them to walk together.



As we discussed in Topic 3, many girls reported parents withdrawing their daughters from school as they approached puberty because they did not want them to mix with boys. Some Kenyan Somali girls seemed surprised that the researchers even dared to enquire about their relationships with boys. The researchers responded by asking similar questions in different ways, emphasising that they were not insinuating the existence of the boy-girl friendships that were forbidden by their culture. Despite this assurance, however, many of the girls appeared reluctant to discuss issues regarding relationships across the sexes – in many cases through spontaneous outright denials.

For example, when Zainab, a 14-year-old girl, was asked to describe how girls and boys related in her school, she answered curtly: 'They don't relate!' A 15-year-old schoolmate added, 'they don't relate except for academic purposes.' Other girls said it was advisable to avoid relationships with boys because they were verbally abusive towards girls and women. One girl, Makema, observed that even female teachers seemed powerless in the presence of boys' insulting behaviour, and had to turn to the headmaster for help:



- Interviewer:** What can you say about the relationship between boys and girls in school?
- Makema:** They [boys] abuse girls.
- Interviewer:** Can you give examples?
- Makema:** '*Wewe ni bibi yangu*' ['You are my wife'].
- Interviewer:** When and why do the boys abuse girls?
- Makema:** When I don't know certain subjects [ie. I'm unable to answer a question], some boys abuse girls. [They] make dirty jokes...
- Interviewer:** What do the girls do about it?
- Makema:** Girls get annoyed and tell madam, who then tells the headmaster.
- Interviewer:** Then what happens?
- Makema:** They are beaten in parade.

These girls were teased by their male classmates in ways that suggested that their value was only in their potential as wives. Given the sexual connotations of this, and the pressures on girls to avoid shame and to safeguard their family honour, it is reasonable to assume

that the girls found these sexist jokes repugnant. Furthermore, as only 18% of the Garissa school population comprises girls who are usually determined to benefit from their education, jokes from boys about being valued 'only' as wives are probably perceived as a threat to their academic achievements – and, by inference, to their future success in adulthood.

During the focus group discussion in Nairobi, all of the girls accused the boys of humiliating and embarrassing them by laughing about their growing breasts and hips – so much so that several of them claimed that they feared going to school. Instead of appreciating their changing bodies, the girls resorted to hiding their breasts with their sweaters to avoid attracting the attention of the boys or male teachers.

Sexual harassment, as we have already mentioned, is a major problem for girls – and one that clearly reduces the possibilities of boys and girls establishing friendships with one another. While it is understandable why girls withdraw from boys to avoid sexual harassment, gender segregation on these grounds is unlikely, in our view, to change the kinds of gender relations that give rise to sexual harassment in the first place. On the contrary, by not mixing socially with boys because of boys' presumed rapacious sexual nature, girls are contributing to the stereotypes of boys as strong, naughty and sexually active, and themselves as weak and passive objects of desire. Their parents, too, are exacerbating the situation by 'protecting' them from boys, by restricting their movements, and even withdrawing them from school. Indeed, it is precisely because girls and boys are stereotyped in this way that sexual harassment occurs on the scale that our female interviewees suggested.

Encouraging Boys and Girls to Mix

In contrast to the Muslim boys and girls in Kenya, parish councillors from a church in **Zambia** expressed a desire for boys and girls to mix. One of them, Mary, argued that, far from promoting sexual relations between boys and girls, the effect of mixing the sexes during pastoral teaching was to remove sexual feelings between them – replacing them with a feeling of brotherliness and sisterhood. Mary said she believed that if boys and girls came together as friends, sex would cease to be given such importance:

Now they [boys and girls] will have no feelings for each other... despite the fact that they are a boy and a girl. Now it is the same when you mix these boys and girls, you know that feeling goes away. They are now friends. We want to make them feel they are brothers and sisters, which should be the case. I remember when I was growing up... sorry to take you back some 50, 60 years (laughter)... we used to bathe with boys in a stream with no costumes and we didn't see each other's nakedness, because [of the way we] were brought up like. That is the culture we want to bring to these children... that there is really nothing peculiar or strange about each other. Ya, that is my feeling.

As Mary implies, by separating boys and girls so that they do not engage in sex, the relationship between them is actually constructed as essentially and only a sexual one. Hence segregating boys and girls, in her view, made them ultimately more likely to engage in sex when they did mix.

Raising Possibilities of Boy-Girl Friendships in HIV/AIDS and Life Skills Education

Questions about the possibilities of boy-girl friendships – what forms they can take, how similar they can be to same-sex friendships – need to be given far greater prominence in HIV/AIDS and life skills education. Such relationships are clearly only possible if boys and girls become less invested in seeing and defining themselves in opposition to one another. And they may be less likely to do so if same-sex friendships are placed on the agenda of HIV/AIDS and life skills education. Many of the parents we interviewed, particularly the Muslim parents in Kenya, argued that gender segregation lessens the possibility of sexual relations between young people. However, this theory is problematic for three main reasons:

1. It encourages boys and girls to construct themselves in quite stereotypically different ways from one another, which as we have seen makes them vulnerable in different ways;
2. Ironically, it succeeds in sexualising any kind of relationship between boys and girls, as the parish councillor, Mary, intimated;
3. It makes it difficult for young people, especially girls, to talk about sex, their desires and concerns, in addition to making communication with adults over these issues virtually impossible.

While HIV/AIDS and life skills education must challenge gender segregation and inequality, it is important that it is not 'evangelical' in its approach to the extent of alienating parents. As we suggested in Topic 3, teachers need to meet with parents to address their fears and discuss appropriate forms of HIV/AIDS and life skills education.

In focusing upon the possibilities of friendships between girls and boys, we are not advocating that HIV/AIDS and life skills education should adopt a moralistic line and discourage boyfriend-girlfriend relations, or relations between boys and girls mediated by sexual desire. Rather it should aim to encourage young people to consider the possibilities of relating closely to people of the opposite sex as friends – not *just as* girlfriends or boyfriends. It must, of course, address the sexual harassment of girls as a serious problem, but in a way that challenges rather than reproduces stereotypes of boys as sexual aggressors and girls as passive objects (see Topic 8).




TOPIC 6: BOYFRIENDS AND GIRLFRIENDS

Having examined the possibility of friendships between boys and girls, we would now like to focus on boyfriend-girlfriend relationships. Given what we have discovered about boys and girls not mixing and the relative absence of friendships between boys and girls, how

do boys and girls actually become boyfriends and girlfriends? When they do, how do they get on? In our interviews, the view often emerged that boys have much stronger sexual feelings than those of girls. This profoundly affects not only the kinds of relationships that young boys and girls can have (or imagine having), but also how they speak about these relationships.

Gendered Constructions of Heterosexual Attraction

When boys and girls were asked about what influenced young people to engage in sex, the boys usually spoke about beautiful girls arousing their desires, whereas girls were said (by both boys and girls) to be more influenced by the material benefits that may accrue from such relationships. The following extract comes from an interview with a group of deaf children in their late teens in **Zambia**:

		
Interviewer:	What situations can lead you and other people to sexual acts?	
Gibson (B):	Girls look beautiful.	
Ruth (G):	Because we need money...	
Daniel (B):	Girls wearing miniskirts.	
Zindaba (B):	Just the feeling...	
Kennedy (B):	The way girls move.	
Chris (B):	Naturally girls are attractive.	
Konie (G):	The perfume boys wear.	
Penny (G):	Love of money by some girls.	
Kamone (B):	[For] some, it's just a habit of having sex.	

These comments suggest not only that boys are powerful and sexually active, but that they have the financial 'power' to 'buy' sex.

While several of the boys we interviewed joked and boasted about how many girlfriends they had had, hardly any girls spoke about their boyfriends – let alone having sex with them. The interview with the six-year-old boys from Zambia, which we mentioned in Topic 1, was unusual in that both girls and boys were keen to talk about their sexual relations. However, there were striking similarities in the kind of gendered positions that

boys and girls were taking up in relationships at this age with those they were adopting at later ages – notably boys asking to have sex with girls and doing chores for them or giving presents in return:



Interviewer:	What do you do for your 'wives' to have sex with them?
Musonda:	Sweep the house...
Steve:	Wash plates...

What Young People Want in Boyfriends and Girlfriends

When boys and girls in **Botswana** and **Zimbabwe** were asked about the kinds of girlfriends and boyfriends they imagined having in the future, boys mentioned physical beauty as well as goodness as important attributes of girlfriends, while girls wanted boyfriends who were working and in a strong financial position. This indeed suggests that girlfriends may gratify boys' sexual desires in exchange for material goods – the assumption being, of course, that boys are sexually desiring beings and girls are objects of their desire. The Botswana and Zimbabwean boys and girls below were all aged between 16-18 years.

What Botswana Boys Want from a Girlfriend:

- Thabo:** A girl who loves me for what I am, not what I have. The girl should be pretty and have nice straight legs. The girl should be well behaved, not very talkative.
- Thuso:** Should be open, trustworthy and have widened hips and nice buttocks and breasts.
- Boipelo:** She should be pretty, have a good attitude, and have inner beauty.
- Neo:** My girlfriend should be intelligent and beautiful.

What Zimbabwe Girls Look for in a Boyfriend:

- Mudiwa:** I would look for one who is working... otherwise there will be problems.
- Prisca:** Working, honest and also smart.
- Martha:** Yes, one who is working, but he must also be able to plan for a future.

Sangeya: A guy who is not cruel to others, is sociable, and does not have other girlfriends.

Joyce: A smart guy in dressing and behaviour.

Wanting themselves but not girls to be sexually desiring, many boys said they looked for 'good girls' as girlfriends – in other words, girls who were not loud and sexual, as they expected boys to be (see Topic 3).

Many of our interviewees structured girlfriend-boyfriend relationships around boys' power as sexual beings and as economic providers. But the assumption that boys were 'buyers' and girls 'sellers' of sex created conflict and resentment between some girls and boys, with the boys complaining that girls were only interested in them for their money, and girls protesting that boys were bribing them to have sex by buying them presents:

Zimbabwean Boy:

Goddard: Some of the girls are just time pushers. They just waste your time. All they want is your money and so they look for a boy who has money. All girls just want money.

Batswana Boy:

Arthur: Boys call girls 'parasites' [but] they go out with boys... They know that the man has to provide. He has to have money.

Batswana Girls:

Bakanyani: Some use [presents] as a trap to take the girl to bed. The girl after receiving all these feels that she owes the boy something. Girls like flashy cars and all such things. A guy may come with a BMW [and] she will say, 'Wow! I will go out with this guy. Then she will get into the car, and end up going out with the guy.'

Tumelo: The boy gives the girl money, dates her, buys her chocolates. Some chocolates when you get someone to buy for you, you feel high, feel loved.

Tebogo: For most people, the gifts are a form of bribery to have sex with them. If one does not agree to sex, she feels that the boy may think that she does not love him, [she] just wanted his presents.

Lerato: Yes, the giving of presents is a way of securing the love relationship. People are afraid that if they do not give their girlfriends some presents, the girlfriends will abandon them or they will not allow them to kiss them.

While these girls see boys' presents as expressions of their power and 'bribes' for sexual relations, Lerato also implies that boys' tendency towards such bribery suggests a *lack* of power. They are giving out presents, she says, because they fear their 'girlfriends will abandon them'. The boys, too, suggest that boys and men lack power, characterising girlfriends as 'parasites' who drain their resources – and boys and men as their inevitable hosts. The assumption that girls want boys as providers is taken, as we see in the following extracts from interviews with boys in **Zimbabwe**, as a source of boys' power, as well as a cause for some anxiety:



Interviewer: What type of boyfriend do you think girls like?

Maideyi: I think those who have money... because if you have money they flock to you.

Chionesu: A girlfriend who doesn't want to squander... must know I am not working and so where do I get money from? Otherwise, I may end up stealing so as to get money...



While Chionesu wants a girlfriend who will not be a drain on his financial resources, he nonetheless sees himself as someone who, if he was working, would be the main provider.

The anxieties that many boys feel about being viewed as potential providers often causes them to distinguish between a materialistic and a romanticised version of love, with the former seen as 'unauthentic' and the latter as 'real'. It is always girls who are blamed in these accounts for loving 'unauthentically' or for material gain. In the following mixed interview with 16 to 18-year-olds in **Zambia**, a boy named Musa is concerned about having 'nothing' materially to 'offer' girls – and so wants a girl to 'just love me and not the material things'. All the interviewees expressed a commitment to 'authentic' love in this sense. It would, of course, have been virtually impossible for any girl to say publicly (especially in the company of boys) that they prioritised love of material things over love for a boyfriend as the basis for the kind of relationship they sought. This would have invited accusations that they were 'bad' – and prostituting themselves – which all the girls made every effort to steer clear of.

Musa (B): I think even before I get into a relationship I have to tell that person my status, like I tell her that I have

nothing to offer where material things are concerned and that she should love me the way I am. She should just love me and not just the things that I give her or the way I flatter her and stuff like that; but she should just love me and not the material things or money.

Kennedy (B): But some girls love a [boy] for what he is, not what he is for. What I mean is like when... maybe a guy is rich and that kind of stuff, girls will maybe even love him for that but maybe for just the materials. Those situations happen and are happening right now!

Nelly (G): That doesn't mean you love the person. You're just following a person for the material things that he has. If someone is rich [and] you are the girlfriend just because he is rich, then it means that's not love.

Having Multiple Girlfriends

While boys derive power as boyfriends and providers, this, as we have seen, carries obligations – and is often regarded by boys as hard work. As Thomas, a Zimbabwean boy, complained:

We went out for about two months... in the two months she would say 'I want this' and I would run around. In time, I realised it's problematic because what she wants you must do.

An alternative and popular way of being a boy or young man involved refuting obligations, which tied them to particular girls, and deriving a sense of power through being hedonistic and free and having multiple relations. (See Pattman, 2001 and 2002, on the significance of this, and how it was enacted among male students in institutions of higher education in Zimbabwe and Botswana.) Some 16 to 18-year-old boys from Porta Farm, **Zimbabwe**, seemed to derive much pleasure from talking explicitly about their multiple sexual relations and about how they deceived girls. Far from talking about their obligations to girlfriends, they spoke about how they enjoyed themselves precisely by deceiving them and taking advantage of them. Many of these boys boasted of having more than one girlfriend – and were encouraged to do so by the other boys' laughter. The girls present did not challenge the boys, presumably because they were so loud and assertive. But significantly, they also did not join in the laughter:



Interviewer:

Boys, is this a fact – that you are having several girlfriends?

Edgar (B): Yes, it's happening. If I go out with three girlfriends, when I am with one, if the others see me with the others, I simply tell her she is my sister or aunt. That way I would have lied to her.

Interviewer: Can you tell us about your girlfriends?

Dakarai (B): I have none that I can really call special.

Interviewer: Are you suggesting that you have several?

Dakarai: Yes, several. My girlfriends are those I spend time with and they are... urr... the ones I sometimes fondle and take them to bed. (Group laughter).

Romanticising About One Girlfriend

Boys were much more misogynistic and likely to talk about girls in derogatory or impersonal ways when being interviewed rather than when writing diaries – and when being interviewed in groups rather than when being interviewed individually. In single-sex interviews, for example, some boys boasted about sleeping with and dumping girls, yet in the individual interviews they kept quiet about this. In the diaries they kept, where they were asked to record everyday details about significant events, emotions and relationships, many of the boys – particularly in **South Africa** – wrote highly romanticised accounts of their girlfriends or potential girlfriends, as well as heartrending pieces about being dumped by them. These were conspicuous by their absence in the interviews. The following are some examples of the South African boys' entries in their diaries:



Henry: Dear diary, you won't believe what I saw, neither did I – I saw an angel, she looked like heaven on earth, every boy's dream. I don't even know her name but I know she is wonderful, but she was everything a healthy guy can wish for.

Archie: I just stayed at home thinking about what happened between me and the girl I love. My heart was broken and I thought it would break into pieces. She was my one and only lover. She was one in a million, my number one priority.

Mpumelele: I was disappointed by the bad news she told me. She told me that she did not love me anymore. I thought of slapping her, but I did not see any use in hurting her, so I left her and went home. She is the only girl I truly love. She has all the qualities I need in my dream girl.



George: I must say she is beautiful. I watch her until it popped into my head that if I could make her mine this would make me happy. It was the first time I even wanted someone so much.

Andrew: Having sex with the girl you love, it was the most happy moment, my ears were ringing, we kissed until our lips got swollen, our eyes turned red, and our bodies stiffened.

Seeing Boyfriends as Bad

Like some of the boys, many girls said they were opposed to having boyfriend-girlfriend relationships at their age because it would distract them from their schoolwork. Unlike the boys, however, they also mentioned that they were afraid of being persuaded – or even forced – into having sex, as well as drinking and going to the movies, as we see in the following extract from an interview with teenage girls from **Zimbabwe**:



Interviewer: But do you have special boyfriends?

All: No!

Chemwapuwa: We are still underage.

Gamuchirai: Because we fear that they can spoil our future.

Celia: I think we are not ready to get into relationships, because right now I want to concentrate on my schoolwork.

Kamali: Some of the boys... if you get one, they will kill you if you refuse their moves, so I will be in danger.

Interviewer: What kind of danger?

Kamali: They will want you to do things you are not expected to do, like having sex and sometimes you can catch AIDS.

Gamuchirai: You can end up taking alcohol and going to the movies.

Interviewer: Is there anything wrong with going to the movies? (Some girls say "Yes" some say "No")

Kamali: If you are underage, you will not be

concentrating on your schoolwork and you will be leading a bad life... and you will not respect your parents.

Diniwe: Some of the movies lead you to have sex with your boyfriend. But... urr... could you imagine going without a boyfriend?

Kamali: I don't like boys or girls who misbehave, cheat or lie, who bully other children, those who take drugs and go around having sex with anybody, doing all sorts of bad things, and those children who do not honour their parents.

Diniwe: Ah, I dislike those girls involved in club patronising.

Boasting about having multiple sexual relations was not something that was done by any of the girls we interviewed. Indeed, it seemed that most of the girls were keen to present themselves as 'good' (as opposed to sexual) by criticising girls with boyfriends, girls who had sex, and girls who went out – as we see in the following extract from another interview in **Zimbabwe**:

94



Elisabeth: I go around with good girls because when I do something wrong they tell me that it is bad.

Nyeredzi: I get along only with good girls because they tell me about life, because they know that my parents are both dead so they tell me how to survive.

Sarudzai: I like going out with friends who have good behaviour and whom I tell my secrets to and share ideas.

Forgette: I go around with my friends who have good ideas and can give me good advice.

Interviewer: What is it that you don't like about some friends?

Elisabeth: Some friends will cause you to do something that is wrong, like going to bars or something that makes me uncomfortable.

Sarudzai: Some of the girls... if you join them, they start talking about their boyfriends.



- Interviewer:** Their boyfriends? What is it that you don't like about that?
- Sarudzai:** They will influence me.
- Interviewer:** Like how?
- Sarudzai:** She wanted to influence me to be involved in those things, like having a boyfriend, going out, going to movies and clubbing.
- Grace:** I've got a friend who is now married, she still comes to school but now I refuse to play with her.

The absence of positive stories from girls about girls with boyfriends was striking. Most girls characterised these as inevitably oppressive relationships, which interfered with schoolwork, ended up in pregnancies and abuse, and conflicted with biblical or Islamic teachings. While boyfriend-girlfriend relations were very negative in the ways the girls described them, we would suggest that these girls had a powerful interest in presenting them like this. By doing so, they were showing themselves publicly – in the context of a group interview – to be good girls who resisted such relationships, contrasting themselves with bad girls who did not. Whereas boys could acquire status from their peers by speaking openly about their sex drive and by demeaning girls as objects for them, girls had to be careful not to talk about their sexual desires or about boyfriends for fear of being labelled as 'bad'.

As girls but not boys are expected to be 'good', girls are less free to stay out and visit friends – or, as in the above passages, to go to the movies. 'Movies' were associated by many young people in our study with sex and pornographic images, and were often presented as symbolising bad, 'modern' or 'western' influences (see Topic 10), which girls ought to resist. The embarrassed laughter, later in this interview, when one of the girls said she would like a 'good-looking' boy as a future boyfriend, implied that desire was not something they should talk about – at least not with an adult present. The other girls had all said they wanted 'nice', understanding and 'church-going' boyfriends.

In characterising teenage sexual relationships as abusive and exploitative, as many of the girls in our study did, they were not simply presenting themselves as 'good'. The construction of sexually active girls as 'bad' meant, as we saw in the interviews with 16-year-old Zimbabweans in Topic 3, that boys could talk contemptuously about girls as usable objects with whom they had sex. Many girls, like the 17-year-old **Zimbabweans** in the following passage, assumed that if they had sex with boys they would be treated in the same way. They were asked what they thought about girls of their age having sex:



- Mwaurayeni:** It is wrong because maybe your guy will give you a sexually transmitted disease or get you pregnant, and if he was interested in you he will not marry you.
- Everjoice:** I think it's bad because, if you have sex with someone, that someone will not love you and then you go out with someone else and have sex with him, at the end you will get AIDS and other STDs.
- Mabel:** I think it's wrong because you are still too young to know anything about life, you won't have your 'O' level certificate [let alone] 'A' levels, so if you just get pregnant, you won't have any ambition in future.
- Everjoice:** All you should know is that the boy is just using you and, after you have sex, he will dump you.
- Nora:** I think if you sleep with one boy then he dumps you, the other boys would also want to use you because they think you are a bitch.

These girls spoke – as the 16-year-old boys had done – about girls being transformed by sex into consumable objects, and becoming extremely vulnerable. Interestingly, some of the girls distinguished between 'love' and 'sex,' claiming they wanted boyfriends (in the future) who 'loved' them rather than only desiring them sexually. Boys, too, wanted girlfriends who 'loved' them – although this was due more to their anxieties about being wanted only for their money.

Seeing Boyfriends as Good

What was interesting about the diaries kept by the girls, in contrast to their interviews, was how many wrote about their boyfriends and their enjoyment in having them. As one of the researchers in **Zimbabwe** noted:



Some of the girls actually started their diaries by talking about their boyfriends. And the girls seem to enjoy the fact that they are attractive to boys. For instance, several of the girls mention being proposed to by a number of boys over a short period. Apart from the girl who was proposed to by three boys in the space of only two days, a girl in Murewa was also proposed to by two boys in just two days.

Whereas for the boys the diaries seemed to provide a safe space to be 'romantic', and to show how much they were affected by girls who dumped them, for the girls they seemed

to provide an opportunity for articulating sexual desire. Indeed, the stereotype of boys as highly sexual and girls as non-sexual was clearly contradicted by the accounts of boyfriends and girlfriends that appeared in the diaries. Despite this, however, many of the young people believed in these stereotypes, which affected the ways they could act and the kind of relationships they could have. One notable example was 'asking out' or 'proposing' to someone of the opposite sex, which, as we see in the following section, was extremely difficult – if not impossible – for many girls.

Can Girls Ask Boys Out?

In the following extract from an interview with teenage girls in **Zimbabwe**, they were asked if they could 'ask boys out' for a date. What we learn from this extract is that these girls are as sexually interested in boys as boys are in them, and that their failure to 'propose' to boys does not mean that they have a lower sex drive than boys at all:

	
Elsbeth:	When you are a girl, it's not easy. You could like a boy so much but you cannot propose. So if I were a boy, I could be able to tell the girl that I love her.
Interviewer:	So are you saying that there are no women who can propose to men?
Elsbeth:	Ah... there is none.
Interviewer:	Why?
Agnes:	It's embarrassing to ask a man out.
Interviewer:	What's embarrassing about it?
Elsbeth:	When I grew up, I was made to believe that a woman couldn't propose to a man. It's the man who is supposed to ask you out.
Interviewer:	So what do you do when there is a boy you like? How can you let him know that you want him?
Agnes:	You simply do a lot, make some moves, actions, or even dress attractively and let him notice you, and greet him so often, especially when wearing a miniskirt to attract him.
Interviewer:	When he proposes to you, how long then should he wait for the answer?
Sharon:	There and there. (Group laughter).

Who Makes the Decisions in Boyfriend-Girlfriend Relationships?

Almost all the girls who we spoke to said that dating was the boy's responsibility. Some girls in **Botswana** revealed that a few girls asked boys out and even asked boys to have sex with them. In most cases, this resulted in the girls being ridiculed as boys told other boys about the girls who had 'made moves' on them.

The majority of the young people we interviewed said that boys were the ones who made the main decisions in boyfriend-girlfriend relationships because they (and many girls as well) believed in the stereotypes of boys as sexual, active leaders and girls as non-sexual, inactive and shy. Because of these stereotypes, it was very difficult for girls to show their sexual feelings, and this helped to confirm the false view that, unlike boys, girls did not really have sexual feelings. The following are extracts from interviews with Botswana boys and girls discussing who makes decisions in relationships:



- Molefi (B):** Boys should make decisions like where and when to have fun, like going for swimming and also when to have sex.
- Kym (B):** Boys should make decisions because girls are [too] shy to talk. I make decisions on when the girl should call or phone me.
- Phemo (G):** I think boys should make decisions most of the time, but I can make decisions in rare cases. The boyfriend should make decisions concerning sexual matters, ie. when to have sex, but I turn him down sometimes when [I'm] not feeling like having sex.

'Proposing Love' – A Test of Manhood

'Proposing love' appeared to be something that boys might do to girls when they did not know them well – or even had just seen them for the first time. Such a situation could be annoying for some girls, as we can see in the following extract from the diary of a teenaged girl in **South Africa**:

- Mary:** It was on Sunday at the shops [that] a certain boy looked at me as if I was similar to his younger sister. He saw me again on the way, he greeted me, calling me 'baby', and I have no clue why he is calling me a baby, everybody was looking at me as if I am a baby. I told him, 'I don't want to be closer to you, because others will think that I am in love with you. I fear your girlfriend, leave me alone in peace...'

Some boys, as we see in the following example from a teenaged boy's diary, reflected on the success of their proposals:

Israel: 'I was relaxing at home, then I decided to take a walk [and] immediately I saw a girl that I wanted to talk to. I went to her and greeted her. I talked to her about my love for her. She refused because she said she had another boyfriend. I told myself that I cannot be defeated by this girl. I persuaded her for a long time until she said she is still going to think about it. I also persuaded her until she accepted me. I did not feel anything that day because of excitement. When I went to see my friends, I told them about my new girlfriend. In that afternoon, I saw this new girlfriend in the shop and she told me that she has rejected her old boyfriend and then I was excited that I am alone with this girl now. I felt that I was in the moon. My friends confronted me that I was really a man...'

The implication here is not only that 'proposing love' is something that boys and not girls do – but that it is a test of manhood. Part of the pleasure and excitement that Israel feels derive from telling his friends about his new girlfriend, and his friends affirming that 'I was really a man'. He writes about how he 'cannot be defeated' by this girl, as if, through his persistence, he will conquer her. This suggests that the stakes are high in 'proposing love', that it carries with it the prospect of 'defeat' – not only in failing to 'win' a girl, but also in failing as a man.

Black Boys 'Proposing' White Girls

While boys may be expected to take the initiative and make the decisions in heterosexual relations, we should not interpret this as showing a simple binary opposition between powerful males and powerless females. For, as we have argued in Topic 4, boys, in being expected to take the initiative and 'propose love', run the risk of rejection. As we see in the following extract from the diary of Victor, a teenaged boy in **South Africa**, when the girls are white and the boys are black, rejection may take a devastatingly racist form:

I went to town with my friends. I enjoyed that day very much but there was one thing that broke my heart as we were strolling in town. We saw four white ladies. We stopped them [and] they shouted at us saying we must leave them alone. They called us 'Kaffirs'. We went back very sad, we went back home... we went to check on our girls...

This extract vividly illustrates the importance of addressing how gender intersects with race as an aspect of identity, especially in the context of a black majority society with a legacy of white political and economic domination (see also Pattman, 1998). We see in this encounter how the black boys (as powerful boys) stop the girls, and how the girls (as

powerful whites) resist their advances by constructing them as an inferior race. Significantly, the boys did not retaliate or assert themselves in the face of such racism. They were clearly not in a position of power in relation to the girls; on the contrary, they became sad and deflated and went home. They then went 'to check on our girls' – 'our' presumably, in this context, referring to black girls.

Same-Sex Attraction

In this topic, we have seen evidence of how boys and girls construct and live out stereotypical gender identities in boyfriend-girlfriend relationships or through fantasies about ideal boyfriends and girlfriends. (We have also seen how some girls resist these stereotypes by rejecting the idea of boyfriends while they are at school.) The familiar gendered dichotomies in the boys' and girls' accounts seemed to preclude the possibility of friendships between boys and girls, but were also constructed as making heterosexual relationships possible in that 'difference' was constructed as sexually desirable (compare with Frosh et al, 2002). Some feminist writers, notably Butler (1990), have argued that it is by constructing themselves as heterosexual beings that people emphasise their gender differences, and that it is in those societies where sexual desire is presumed to be synonymous with heterosexual desire that gender identities tend to be most polarised. In those countries where our researchers asked about same-sex sexual attraction, it was clear from the responses of shock and surprise that desire was always presumed to be heterosexual. In **Botswana**, when asked whether they knew of any instances of same-sex sexual relationships, all the boys and girls were adamant that they did not – with some constructing 'gayism' as a foreign or an alien phenomenon:

100



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| Tiro (B): | We only see it on TV. |
| Kabelo (B): | I don't think there is gayism in Botswana. These things are for alien countries; they are sick down there. |
| Kgosi (B): | But I have seen it in South Africa – a man was dressed like a woman, and the police came and picked him up. |
| Interviewer: | How about here in Botswana? |
| Tau (B): | No. Here if a man is seen doing that, people will jump to conclusions and start calling you names, or stone you because they don't like it. |

The surprise of hearing about an ‘incident of homosexuality’ in South Africa, which immediately followed the assertion that homosexuality was ‘for alien countries’, suggests that what this boy had in mind were not African but western countries. It is hardly surprising that all the boys claimed to know of no instances of gay relationships, given the hostile reaction towards anyone who was seen to be gay.

Boys’ Fears Expressed Through Homophobia

In **South Africa**, certain boys expressed fears about befriending other boys lest they be called ‘gay’ or ‘homosexual’. This was an issue initially raised by the girls – probably because it was too contentious for the boys to be seen to be doing so. Boys also spoke in derogatory terms about ‘mama’s boys’, from whom they differentiated themselves as tough, macho boys (see Connell, 1987; Frosh et al, 2002; Nayak and Kehily, 1996; Epstein, 1997).

In **Tanzania**, it appeared that boys had to be careful not to be seen to exhibit what were constructed as feminine qualities, for fear of being ‘accused’ of being homosexual. Like the South African boys, they were constructing themselves as tough in opposition to girls by policing their masculine identities.

Addressing Inequalities and Contradictory Accounts of Boyfriend-Girlfriend Relationships

As we have seen in this topic, boyfriend-girlfriend relationships were not usually relationships between equals. Both boys and girls expected future boyfriends to be workers and breadwinners, as well as making key decisions like proposing in a relationship. This was because boys were stereotyped as sexual and girls as non-sexual. Many boys and girls did not want boyfriends or girlfriends because they viewed the sexes as having little in common, and thought such relationships would interfere with their lives and schoolwork. Unlike boys, the girls were keen on showing they were ‘good’ by not having boyfriends. Some boys, by contrast, boasted of having several girlfriends.

While boyfriends were seen as powerful in the sense of being economic providers, sexual initiators and decision makers, these very identities were difficult for boys to live up to – and clearly generated personal anxiety. As we saw, boys were particularly anxious about being rejected by girls who were looking for more material comforts than they could provide.

HIV/AIDS and life skills education, we argue, should focus on the sorts of inequalities in boyfriend-girlfriend relationships that the young people in our study described – and start them thinking about the possibility of more equal and mutual sexual relations, in which sexual desire is not seen as predominantly male and boys and men are not always expected to take the sexual and financial lead. It is important, as we argued in Topic 4, to encourage young people to reflect not only on the costs to girls of constructing boyfriends and

girlfriends in these stereotypical ways, but also to boys. The costs to girls include a lack of decision-making power in these relationships, harassment by boys and older men, being unable to publicly express desire about boys, and being subject to controls that do not apply to boys. The costs to boys include anxieties about girlfriends rejecting them for older, richer and more sexually experienced boys and men (an issue we will examine in the next topic), and being unable to publicly express feelings of love and intimacy.

Boys and girls described people of the opposite sex in quite different, sometimes contradictory ways when being interviewed in groups and when writing their diaries. We would argue that this is connected with the different ways that they present themselves in different contexts, and we contend that HIV/AIDS and life skills educators should try to find ways of exploring and addressing these 'multiple identities' (see Hall, 1992). For this reason, we would advocate various kinds of group discussions – both single- and mixed-sex – as well as diary keeping as teaching methods and ways of generating resources for HIV/AIDS education. Using what people say in mixed classes as the only inputs for HIV/AIDS and life skills education risks reinforcing the impression that boys are naturally loud and sexual, while girls are naturally quiet and non-sexual.

Rather than allowing boys to assert themselves in relation to girls in class (or criticising them for doing so), HIV/AIDS and life skills educators could perhaps explore with them what would seem to be their contradictory views about girls in different social contexts. We would suggest that boys often 'perform' very differently when they are with other boys (and girls) than when they are on their own (ie. writing a diary) or alone with an adult. A continuing challenge for HIV/AIDS and life skills educators will be to encourage boys to 'perform' in groups in ways that do not involve subordinating girls, but draw on the affection for girls that they express so vividly in more private contexts. We are not arguing here, for reasons outlined in Topic 4, that boys should be encouraged to *idealise* instead of subordinating girls. On the contrary, one of the aims of HIV/AIDS and life skills education should be to raise possibilities of boys and girls relating to each other not as stereotypical opposites, but as potential equals and friends.



TOPIC 7: AGE, SEX AND SUGAR DADDIES

As we have seen, boys are usually seen as the initiators of sex, as well as 'buyers' of sex in instances in which they provide girls with presents or money. Even boys as young as six in **Zambia** reported having sex with girls and exchanging presents for it. While this means that boys can be seen as having sexual and economic 'power' over girls, it also means that boys face the chance of being rejected by girls of their own age who seek out older richer boys and men who are better able to buy them presents. This was a major concern for the boys in our study. Like the other boys' problems we examined in Topic 4, this issue came about because of the way that boys and men were stereotyped as having more money and power than girls.

In this topic, we will focus on age-gender hierarchies and the so-called 'sugar daddy' phenomenon. Boys and girls in all the countries where we conducted our research spoke about sugar daddies, or older richer men with whom girls have sexual relations. We want to examine what our interviewees said about relations between girls and sugar daddies, how they explained them, and what they thought about them.

Age-Gender Hierarchies

We will begin with an excerpt from an interview with 16-year-old boys at Nanogang School in **Botswana**, on the issue of teenage boys engaging in sexual intercourse with relatively younger girls:

	
Modupi:	Boys of our age have sex with girls our age, but girls sometimes have sex with men who are older.
Kefentse:	Sometimes they go out with men twice their age.
Gaone:	For boys our age, it is difficult to have sexual intercourse with girls our age because in junior school, you go for senior secondary or first year university. Girls our age have relationships with seniors because you have to be high, well knowing, so girls go for these because they see you as immature, and that you wouldn't know some things.
Moetapele:	That is why boys after school remove their ties, because they know that no girl will go for them when they recognise them.
Gaone:	Even here in school, like us Form 3s, it's easier to get girls in lower classes because they think we know everything, it's easier proposing to a Form 1, and she is likely – 90% she will say 'yes' – because she will be afraid or because she thinks I am hard.

Many people we interviewed (both boys and girls) were opposed to sugar daddy relations and blamed both sugar daddies and girls for these. The boys were particularly angry, blaming girls for 'going after' older richer men and for being 'materialistic' and 'loose'. However, while the boys blamed girls for chasing sugar daddies, they were themselves developing sexual relations with younger girls, and, as we see in the above extract, presenting themselves as knowledgeable, sexually mature, powerful and 'hard'. Although these boys were trying live to up to the stereotype of the powerful boyfriend, this meant

that girls of their age tended to reject them, turning to boys and men who were more mature and economically and sexually powerful. In order to attract girls of their own age, the boys had to remove their school ties outside school in order not to be recognised and also, presumably, to be seen as more mature than they actually were.

Boys' Anxieties about Being Rejected

In **Zambia**, boys' concerns about being rejected by girls for older richer men surfaced in an interview with boys and girls in their late teens at Chati High school. The girls suggested that girls prefer older men because the penises of boys of their age were too small. This implication that their age mates were not sufficiently developed provoked considerable anxiety among the boys, who replied that they bruised their penises on young girls' vaginas because the latter were so much smaller than their penises. The girls only deserted them for 'old men' because the latter were richer, the boys said. This seemed a much 'safer' reason for them, as it did not question their own heterosexual prowess, which was more fundamental to their sense of being powerful men than their economic power:



- Tabo (G):** Girls go to have sex with old men because young boys have got small penises.
- Chanda (G):** Some girls go to old men because they want to enlarge their vagina.
- Thandi (G):** Some girls hate young boys because their penises are small. That's where you find a situation whereby you are busy thrusting up and down, even sweating on top, while she is busy plaiting her hair and chatting you up.
- Sondo (B):** Even young girls have small vaginas, so when you force yourself you end up having bruises on your penis.
- Sindi (B):** Girls prefer old men because, they say, they have have the 4Cs – Cell phone, Car, Cash and four Cornered shoes. With these they know that they have all the necessities... when you are stranded on the way, you can just call him on his cell because he is always with it. Then he can come and pick you up with his car, and buy you lunch since he has got cash. And when he comes out of the car, the first thing you will see are his four cornered shoes...

Interestingly, Thandi uses the third person pronoun to refer to the nonchalant girl having sex with the boy of her age, who she refers to as 'you... sweating on top'. Presumably, it was too embarrassing and provocative for her to consider saying 'I'. Sondo and Sindi spoke with much emotion as they responded to what they clearly construed as a slight on their masculinity.

Many boys told stories about girls eventually being rejected by their 'sugar daddies' after becoming pregnant and/or contracting HIV/AIDS. It seemed they were presenting these as 'just desserts' for the girls for rejecting them. Significantly, even though these boys despised sugar daddy figures, it was the girls who were blamed for seducing them in order to gain material things – and they were also blamed as the 'spreaders' of HIV/AIDS. In a mixed-sex group interview in **Botswana**, pictures were shown of a schoolgirl being stopped in the street by an elderly man and the girl was blamed, not only by boys but girls as well, for wearing a short skirt. The view was that she did this purposely to seduce the man so that he would give her money.

Laughing at Sugar Mummies but Not Sugar Daddies

Unlike sugar daddy relationships that were considered shameful, relationships between boys and older women ('sugar mummies') were viewed as amusing, as we can see in the following extract from a mixed interview with 16 to 18-year-olds in **Zambia**:



- Chilufya:** In most times, boys don't even agree – they just find themselves there whereby they can't even escape. You can't even... you've nothing to do...
- Interviewer:** It's like you find yourself in prison?
- Chilufya:** Yah, more like you are in prison...
- Interviewer:** How?
- Chilufya:** How? Maybe you, somebody calls you [to come to her house]. At the house, she manipulates you. You see what I mean? She calls you maybe in her bedroom to come, and maybe just come and kill this lizard for me (lots of laughter)... and you go there.
- Interviewer:** You don't find a lizard?
- Chilufya:** You go there... just to find a big lizard naked. (Hoots of laughter)

Interviewer: You don't run away?

Chilufya: By the time you start thinking of running away, the door is closed.

Musa (B): You can't reject... you can't reject these things. Once you see that thing is arose, then there is no turning back.

Nelson (B): In such cases, if you are a principled person, then you cannot do that. (Laughter)

Chilufya: You tend to lose principles...

Nelson: It is difficult. It is difficult. So the best way is not to go there... not to go there!

Whereas discussions about sugar daddy relations, especially in mixed groups, were serious and sometimes provoked heated exchanges, the 'lizard lady' here was treated as a joke figure. Chilufya spoke, as if from personal experience, about being with a 'big lizard naked'. This was described in graphic detail and was a source of much amusement for both the boys and girls in the interview. It was funny because it so clearly violated the popular assumption that only males initiate sexual relations. But rather than presenting her in the story as a human being initiating a sexual encounter, she is constructed as a lizard and becomes a figure of ridicule as the boys elaborate on how she ensnares and manipulates them and prevents their means of escape. Partly this is funny and not serious, because the subtext is that, as boys with huge sex drives, they are not being forced into the situation at all.

Defending Sexual Relations Between Girls and Older Men

As we saw in the last topic, girls were viewed as bad (by both boys and girls) for wanting to have boyfriends for their money and not because they loved them. This was how many girls we interviewed characterised their contemporaries with boyfriends. In the mixed interview in **Zambia** to which we referred in the last topic, some girls continued to criticise other girls for not showing 'authentic' love, suggesting they went out with older and more powerful men so they could 'show off' to their friends. Girls' identities were shown here to be dependent to some extent upon the status of their boyfriends or lack of them.



Selina:

I think that some girls just go to older persons just to show off to their friends that they don't go out with school-going guys, but they go out with older persons.



Interviewer: Yes?

Sara: Sometimes it's because of peer pressure, when you are with your friends they like boasting that 'I am going out with a guy who gives me anything that I ask for', and you might think that you are doing nothing when you are going out with a schoolboy so you also do what your friends tell you. They boast that 'I have this, my boyfriend bought it for me – I don't go out with school guys, I go out with working class'.

One confident and assertive girl, Chaku, dissented from the general critique of 'materialistic' girls, arguing that there was nothing wrong with younger girls having a relationship with older men, as they could also be 'in love'. The implication was that their relationship might not be 'materialistic', but that the girl might love the older richer man simply for who he was – and vice versa. An emotionally charged dialogue ensued between Chaku and the other girls:



Chaku: Can't you go for an older person just because you love him the way he is, [if] he is older than you... maybe 13 years older...

Sara: When you go for an older man than you, that man is going to demand for things that you are not ready to do... he is going to think that you are big enough to think the way he thinks.

Nelly: Yes, not only that – don't you think that person is only going to abuse you by using you and leaving you?

Chaku: No, because why I am saying this is because you are saying you involve yourself in a relationship with that guy just because you love him the way he is...

Nelly: Why [are you] going for an older man when there's these guys around here? (Gesturing around her)

Chaku: Just because you love him the way he is. (Widespread commotion and laughter)

Sara: He is not going to ask [you out] because he loves you. He's going to ask you because he wants to use you.

Defending boyfriend-girlfriend relationships between girls and older men was an unusual and difficult position for a girl to take, especially in a mixed gender interview. Significantly, Chaku justified relationships between girls and older men by arguing that they could be based on love and not on the material benefits girls could accrue from them. In other words, she too expressed a commitment to 'romantic love', and, in this sense, was presenting herself as 'good'. Throughout the interview, Chaku was very keen to assert girls' rights. It may have been that she was condoning relationships with older men because she was critical of the suggestion that contemporary girls were to blame for going after older richer men. In this interview, as in almost every other that broached the subject of sugar daddies, it was girls who were being blamed for pursuing older richer males – not the men for attracting the girls.

Of course, the sugar daddy phenomenon exists precisely because boyfriends are popularly constructed as sexually and economically powerful and as providers for girls. Chaku did not challenge the idea of boys as providers, but asserted girls' rights to enter into relationships with older men in the face of popular views that characterise girls as prostitutes for seeking out such relationships. The effect of such views is to control and regulate the behaviour of *all* girls, making it difficult or impossible for them to move freely in the evening, to wear certain clothes or to speak about sex and sexuality, for fear of being seen as 'bad'. Chaku, we would suggest, was expressing her opposition to these ways in which girls are commonly constrained.

Girls' Vulnerabilities in Sugar Daddy Relationships

The behaviour of all girls is controlled and their freedoms curtailed by the threat of being labelled as 'bad' girls trying to attract sugar daddies. This is, of course, not to suggest that many girls are not attracted to males who are older and richer than them, and are not exploited in these relationships. In sugar daddy relationships, young girls are more vulnerable to being dumped and rejected by sugar daddies who have wives. These girls are also particularly vulnerable to HIV/AIDS, as such men are likely to be more sexually experienced and thus perhaps more likely than most people of their age to carry the virus. According to teenage girls in **Kenya**, sugar daddies are attracted to them specifically because they think younger girls are less likely to carry the HIV virus. In **Zimbabwe** and **Tanzania**, young people spoke about poverty influencing girls to have sex with older men. One Zimbabwean girl also linked this to the spread of HIV/AIDS:

I think poverty is the main cause for AIDS, because we see schoolgirls... when they see others buying lunch, because they are poor and cannot afford lunch they will certainly go to sugar daddies so that they can get the money to buy all they want, because their parents cannot afford to give them everything they want.

Sex for economic survival, commonly referred to as 'food for work' by the **Zimbabwe** girls, was said to be pervasive in many countries in the study. As well as providing food

(or the money to buy food), older men are said to pay for school fees, sweets, cell phones and clothes in return for sex. In the following passage we see how vulnerable girls are in such relationships:



Interviewer:	And this food for work is with who? Are they using condoms or what?
Olivia:	With Kombi drivers, businessmen. Condoms... ah, no, they are not.
Idaishe:	Some of them use condoms but some do not.
Rita:	(Whispering) They get pregnant...

In **Tanzania**, lack of reliable transport to and from school in the study municipalities was also reported to put many girls at risk, with some engaging in sexual relationships with bus conductors in return for free transport (Wamahiu and Chege, 1996).

Sugar Daddy Relations: the Consequence of Unequal Relations between Boys and Girls

109

As we have seen, the construction of boys as powerful, as initiators and economic providers in sexual relationships, generates the 'sugar daddy' phenomenon for which girls themselves are often blamed. It is important that boys and girls are discouraged from having sexual relationships with partners who are much older or younger than them – and, instead, to establish equal relationships as boyfriends and girlfriends. Young people need to be encouraged to contemplate the possibilities of boyfriend-girlfriend relationships in which boys are not expected to provide economically and to take the sexual initiative.

TOPIC 8: SEXUAL HARASSMENT

We have already pointed out that forms of sexual harassment were reported by the young people in our study as constituting major problems for girls. By sexual harassment we mean repeated and unwanted verbal and physical sexual advances that are embarrassing or humiliating. In the examples reported, boys and men were overwhelmingly the perpetrators of incidences of harassment, asserting themselves as powerful figures over girls as the victims. In Topic 3, we saw how boys 'make dirty jokes' when girls contribute or make mistakes in class, and how this can result in girls being marginalised. It is important to note that our interviewers did not ask young people directly if they were sexually harassed. Rather, when they addressed this, it was in the context of how young people related to their parents, teachers or classmates, or what they liked or disliked about being boys and girls. In this sense, sexual harassment emerged spontaneously as an issue of pressing concern for many of the girls.

The examples given were mainly of sexual harassment at school – either from teachers or fellow classmates. A few girls also mentioned being touched by conductors or call-boys when taking public transport, or being offered free rides by Kombi drivers in exchange for sex. Some girls in Kenya also spoke about sexual harassment in the home. It was striking how many girls (and a few boys) were keen to talk about their experiences of sexual harassment to our researchers, which they said they had been unable to divulge to their teachers or other adults. This implies that our interviewees were developing the sorts of friendly, young person centred relations with these pupils that enabled them to talk openly about their concerns.

Harassment At Home

In interviews with teenage girls in Nairobi, **Kenya**, some accused close relatives – stepfathers, uncles, and even fathers – of sexually harassing girls. However, they tended to blame these men in general, without implicating their own stepfathers, fathers or uncles. For example, one girl said ‘step fathers are not to be trusted’. But although no one actually admitted to being sexually abused themselves, some of their accounts suggested that they might have been. For example, some girls when talking about girls in these relationships spoke in the more personal second-person tense, as opposed to the less personal third-person:

Wangu: I fear being raped, because one can be raped anytime and anywhere. Uncles are very bad; they can rape you if your parents are not there. They ask you to give them a glass of water, follow you from the back, hold you and rape you.

Kanika: [Fathers should] not take daughters as their wives, [they] should behave as fathers... When left home alone they tell you, ‘do you know my daughter, I love you...’ Fathers have sex with their daughters, and tell them not to tell anybody.

Fathers, it appears, can be powerful sugar daddy figures, a position no doubt reinforced by girls’ economic dependence on them – and also by their identities as relatively subordinate members of the family (see Topic 2).

Harassment At School

Girls in **Tanzania, South Africa, Zimbabwe, Botswana** and **Zambia** spoke about being sexually harassed not only by boys at school but also by teachers – some of whom were constructed as sugar daddy figures, offering various inducements accruing from their power as teachers in exchange for sex. Many young people, mainly girls, provided specific examples of teachers in their school trying to court sexual favours with girls or putting girls down by referring to their sexuality. Whether many male teachers actually had sexual relationships with female pupils, it was certainly the impression of both boys and girls that this was a common occurrence.

In **Kenya**, several schoolgirls complained about male teachers sexualising them, making comments such as 'the girl is cool' and 'you have been tasted', and addressing them as 'ma girls' (my girls). Some of the girls complained that if they arrived late at school – as many did because of their domestic chores – the teachers were not only unsympathetic but often exploited the situation by insulting them in front of the class. During one such confrontation, a girl recalled a teacher calling her a 'crook' and interspersing his insults with the following ill-disguised sexual connotations:

'Do you have children at home that you were washing napkins for? Or where did you pass? Umetoka disco? Umetoka kuonjwa-onjwa? [Have you come from a disco?] Umetoka kuonjwa-onjwa? [Have you come from being tasted, ie. sexually?]'

The girls accused one male teacher of asking them to parade back and forth in front of the class, while examining them from head to toe and looking into their eyes. They said that, based on this parading exercise, the teacher would proceed to award high marks to the girls that he liked. Although the girls protested about sexual harassment by teachers, they seemed aware of their lack of power in these circumstances. Some of them observed that, if a girl dared to retort, the teacher would refuse to mark her book and she would be the 'loser', both in the academic and social sense (see Chege and Mati, 1998). How sexual relations were established and sustained through male teachers' ability to fail the girls they desired, or alternatively to provide them with exam 'leakages', was raised as an issue by young people in several countries.

Kenyan Girls and Boys in Their Mid-Teens:



Mdletshe:

Sometimes you are afraid that if you refuse, the teacher will punish you or fail you, and sometimes you get teachers punishing you by pinching you on the thighs.

Interviewer:

How do you feel about teachers demanding sex from girls?

Innocent:

It is really bad because girls are sometimes afraid that teachers will fail them.

Zambian Girls in Their Late Teens:



Kelita:

They [male teachers] discourage us. When they do find you with a boy, they tell you to stop but they

are also interested in you. Here at school some teachers propose and, when you don't respond positively, they stop talking to you...

Charity: Some teachers even give exam papers to finalists – even mock exam papers may be involved.

Interviewer: What would you do if you were faced with such a situation?

Catherine: Just receive the paper and run away. What is important is not to allow him to have access to your body.

Interviewer: What is not good about receiving exam papers?

Faith: The teachers want something and then they only give girls. It is better to write only what you know in exams, otherwise you become addicted to leakages.

Boys' Reactions to Teachers Sexually Harassing Girls

Some of the boys interviewed in Nairobi, Kenya, alleged that during the lunch break, male teachers often sent girls to buy them lunch at nearby shops and then followed and sexually harassed them. One boy claimed that, although some male teachers accused the girls of being lazy, the same teachers were observed sending them on unofficial errands. (When interviewed, a male teacher claimed that they preferred sending girls to buy them snacks or lunch as girls were cleaner and less clumsy than boys.)

Ironically, these boys viewed this sexualisation of girls by male teachers as unfair favouritism. Although they acknowledged that some girls feared and hated male teachers and the subjects they taught, and were afraid to ask them questions (see Mathangani, 2001), they still thought the girls were receiving special treatment – which they described as 'kindness' – and felt unfairly discriminated against. Clearly, the girls and boys interpreted the classroom culture differently and in gendered ways, with boys portraying their female classmates as domestic and sexual 'servants' of the teachers. Some boys appeared to rejoice over the girls' psychological and physical suffering – perhaps because they did not have access to those girls sexually, and were thus jealous of their teachers and hateful of the girls for stealing the limelight in class. The girls, however, constructed their male teachers as social and sexual antagonists, with whom they had to coexist for the sake of securing an education.

While highly critical of relations between male teachers and girls, some boys in **Botswana** asserted that because they were 'men', they understood what the male teachers were 'going through'. They were identifying, as fellow males, as people with huge sex drives, and this partly legitimised, in their minds, teachers' sexual advances to female pupils.

Girls' Fear of Reporting Sexual Harassment from Boys

In **Tanzania**, **Botswana** and **Kenya**, girls in most of the schools we visited complained about boys fondling them against their will, and sometimes peeping at or touching their 'private parts'. Few, however, reported such incidences to their teachers, partly because they feared being beaten by boys, but also because they knew they would not be taken seriously – and might even be rebuked – if they made such reports. The following is an extract from an interview with a group of girls aged 16 and above in Botswana:



Onalenna: Yesterday something happened. There was this girl in class whom some boys were touching and she kept on hitting them with books and telling them to stop; and then all of a sudden she started crying as if something, part of her, had been taken away.

Interviewer: Do they report it to anybody?

Mapule: Some teachers don't take it serious. Teachers think we encourage it, we send a signal...

Gorata: At one time some people in my class were harassing me, though not sexually, and I reported it to my Guidance and Counselling teacher, and she told me that I thought too much of myself, and it never stopped.

Onalenna: At one time a boy kissed me on the cheek and I didn't like it, it felt so wrong and painful, and I thought of reporting [it] but I felt teachers will think that I was joking or I wanted it to happen.

Because girls are not supposed to express sexual desire in the same way that boys do, this leaves them open to accusations that they may have 'encouraged' or 'sent a signal' to boys who harass them. It is not just that they might be disbelieved that may make them reluctant to report such incidences, but that they may be seen as 'bad' girls for speaking openly about sex in this way. In the same interview, some of the girls claimed that some girls actually enjoyed 'sexual harassment' or being touched by boys:



- Gorata:** I have witnessed a case where a boy was touching a girl's breast, but the girl seemed to like it.
- Rachel:** I think the girl doesn't want it – it's only that there is nothing she can do.
- Gorata:** I think the girls like sexual harassment; some take it as play, which I find wrong. Maybe it's because of their hormonal change in puberty, and they want to please men.
- Mpho:** They don't fight it off.
- Interviewer:** Do girls ever touch boys?
- Gorata:** Yes, and by doing so they encourage the boys to touch them in turn.

Significantly, these girls all used the third person when referring to girls who encouraged harassment, and referred to themselves only when they were complaining about being harassed. They were constructing these girls as 'bad' for being overly sexual, for enjoying being touched by boys – and were implicitly presenting themselves, by contrast, as 'good'. The other girls were regarded as siren figures wanting to 'please men', attracting sexually active males and enjoying being the objects of their affections. While such girls may 'touch' boys, this was only significant in so far as it 'encouraged boys' – who were being constructed here as the really sexually active ones – to touch them. While criticising sexual harassment, these girls were doing so, like many young people in our study, in a way that reproduced stereotypes of boys as sexual predators and girls as either good and non-sexual or bad and sex objects. Any kind of sexual relationship between boys and girls was thus seen as boys sexually harassing girls, and girls who wanted sexual relations with boys were blamed for inviting such harassment.

Blaming Girls for Being Raped

So strong was the stereotype of boys and men as sexual predators with a huge sex drive, and girls as objects that aroused this drive, that girls were sometimes blamed for dressing or behaving in ways that provoked male desire to such an extent that it caused boys to rape them. As we see in the following extract from a mixed interview with teenagers in **Zimbabwe**, girls as well as boys blamed girls for being raped:



- Interviewer:** OK, are there any other groups [who help to spread HIV/AIDS]?
- Tendai (G):** Yes, girls who dress in sexy clothes.
- Shuvaj (G):** I wanted to say something about miniskirts... you know when I put on a miniskirt that leaves all this out (referring to her lower body), you will see this division – the other part is dark and the other light...
- Augustine (B):** You get there and bend down and 'Africa is exposed'.
(Group laughter)
- Shuvaj:** When I put on a miniskirt, I will attract all boys – maybe the boy won't approach me formally, but will just rape me. If he had AIDS, in that way, the virus is spread.
- Interviewer:** But that's rape?
- Shuvaj:** Yes, but the way I dressed would have caused the man to rape me.
- Augustine:** Even without that. When I see 'Africa exposed', I will feel stimulated, I will come and talk to you.
- Interviewer:** What is this 'Africa'?
- Augustine:** Urr... 'Africa' is a *masemutings* [somethings].
- Precious (G):** Urr... say what you want to say.
- Augustine:** Well, what I am saying is, when you bend down, because you're putting on a mini, your private parts will be exposed and on seeing that I will be stimulated – my engine then boils [and] I will approach you and talk to you nicely. We then go into a corner then we hit it – we have sex, without protection.

The boy is speaking here in an almost comical way about rape, using euphemisms such as 'Africa exposed' and 'my engine boils', which elicit much laughter from the group. By doing so, not only is he deflecting from the seriousness of rape, he is also minimising

responsibility for his own actions. It is his 'boiling engine' that is to blame – as if this is part of him over which he has no control, which is inevitably and mechanically triggered by the stimulus presented by the girl bending down.

Boys' Fear of Reporting Sexual Harassment by Girls

While most boys said they enjoyed being touched by girls, others like, Lesego, the 16-year-old boy from **Botswana** who is quoted below, did not. This boy also said he felt too embarrassed to report such an incident, but not because he would be seen as 'bad' and promiscuous like the girls. Rather, we would suggest, it was because of the assumption that, as a macho young man with a powerful heterosexual drive, he would be laughed at and ridiculed for presenting himself as the victim of sexual harassment:

Some girls demand to touch us. For example, at one time a girl came to me and told me that she wanted to touch me there (pointing at his private parts). I just left her, but I felt disturbed the whole day; I didn't tell anyone. However, for boys to do this they think about it before because girls will report it but boys won't.

Boys Accusing Girls of Touching Them – and Girls Denying It

In a mixed group discussion among 16-year-olds in **Botswana**, boys denied 'touching' girls and girls denied 'touching' boys. However, the boys challenged the girls on this, giving rise to much hilarity among the boys. Like the 'lizard lady' in Topic 7, the idea of girls fondling boys was comical for them, subverting, as it did, assumptions of girls as the objects of a heterosexual drive. For the girls, however, it was less funny – as, presumably, they sought to distance themselves from such a figure:

116



Interviewer:	Do you touch girls? (Addressing the boys)
All boys:	No!
Interviewer:	Do you touch boys? (Addressing the girls)
All boys:	Yes!
All girls:	No!
Mothusi (B):	In their private parts.
Dineo (G):	No, how comes it's only the boys who are saying Yes? (Laughter from the boys).

Girls Looking to a Woman Teacher for Support

Some schoolgirls in their mid-teens in Garissa, **Kenya**, reported having a particularly good relationship with the only female teacher in their school, because she was seen as supporting them by encouraging them to do well in their schoolwork. This was in stark contrast to the male teachers, some of whom, as we have seen, were said to make sexist remarks about girls for even being at school, and were criticised for sexually harassing them. The female teacher also urged the girls to avoid playing with boys – and risk contracting HIV/AIDS. Indeed, this seemed to be linked with encouraging them to do well, as we see in the following interview with 14-year-old girls:



- Interviewer:** What can you say about the relationship between girls and the female teacher?
- Shani:** She talks to us.
- Interviewer:** What does she say?
- Nyokabi:** ‘Be good girls. Be good girls. Do not let us down. Don’t play with boys [or] you may get AIDS...’

The girls, to some extent, perceived the female teacher as a source of guidance and sought information from her. They seemed to have confidence in her to take care of their needs. They also sought refuge in her house at times when they felt harassed by boys. Some of the girls even saw her as a mother figure, as one 16-year-old girl, Ngina, described:

She is like our mother. She tells us everything, to be clean every day. She checks our hair...

Ngina expressed disgust at the way that boys talked about the female teacher:

Boys backbite her when she is out. They say... she looks like she is as tall as a giraffe. They like short women... I feel angry because they are abusing our madam. I tell them that it is bad.

Here the girls are strongly identifying with the only woman teacher in the school. It would seem that this, to a large extent, relies on opposition to boys; the teacher tells them not to ‘play with boys’, they seek refuge in her house, they are angry with boys who ‘backbite’ her. She seems like a mother figure, helping and advising the girls, but in a way that – like the advice of many mothers in Garissa – reaffirms boys as ‘the enemy’. She is not facilitating communication and interaction between boys and girls; rather, she is ‘protecting’ the girls from boys who are being constructed as generally bad. Whether this is empowering or not for girls is highly debatable.

Addressing Sexual Harassment in School and in HIV/AIDS Education

There was little indication from our research that girls and boys were aware of their rights as children, nor was there any suggestion that the schools had functional mechanisms through which girls could channel their grievances. The common stories of sexual harassment perpetrated against girls by male teachers implied that figures of authority in schools did not just turn a blind eye to sexual harassment, but were actually implicated in it. Sexual harassment is a topic that must be addressed by school authorities in Africa as well as in HIV/AIDS and life skills education, precisely because it is such an important issue for girls and boys.

While sexual harassment must not be tolerated in schools, it is important that schools' responses to it do not simply involve punishing boys, and potentially making them more hostile to girls. A much better strategy, in our view, would be to focus on the benefits for both boys and girls of developing more equal relationships between them. It is important not to assume that sexual desire is mainly male and that heterosexual relations invariably involve males harassing females (as the female teacher from Kenya seemed to imply). Indeed, in order to establish more equal sexual relations between males and females, one of the aims of HIV/AIDS and life skills education should be to encourage girls to be able to express more openly their sexual desires. This would, we believe, make them less vulnerable to forms of sexual abuse.

118

In HIV/AIDS and life skills education, boys and girls should be able to explore what sexual harassment is, why it takes place, whether boys and girls have similar desires, why girls get blamed, and so on. The aim of such education should be to empower and enable boys and girls to negotiate sexual relations with each other – whether this means resisting, delaying or entering into such relations, and whether these should involve kissing, cuddling, being close or having penetrative sex. It must not reinforce the stereotype of girls as weak, fragile and passive, by presenting them as in need of protection from active, strong and sexually predatory boys and teachers.

Although male teachers are sometimes accused of harassment themselves, it is important that they do not feel debarred from becoming HIV/AIDS or life skills educators because of the fear of not being taken seriously. Men teaching life skills education can act as important role models for boys and demonstrate to both boys and girls that it is possible for males to be responsible, caring, sensitive and approachable. But in order to do this, male teachers must be as outspoken as their female colleagues in their opposition to forms of sexual harassment. Likewise, they must not be authoritarian and judgmental in their approach to teaching about sexuality, but must adopt the kind of holistic, student centred approach that our researchers took, and which we have been advocating.

TOPIC 9: GENDER AND VIOLENCE

Many of the young people in our study reported encountering acts of violence or physical assault on a regular basis. Such violence featured prominently in the diaries kept by boys and girls in **South Africa** – with the writers featuring as victims, perpetrators or witnesses – suggesting that violence is part of these young people’s everyday lives. The acts of violence were perpetrated either by boys against girls or boys against boys; sometimes, although less frequently, they were committed by adults against young people. Acts of violence by girls were almost non-existent.

In this topic, we will examine these different forms of violence in an attempt to discover what kinds of identities and relations its perpetrators are trying to establish. On adults perpetrating violence, our focus is mainly on teachers and the use of corporal punishment, as this was by far the most common form of adult violence reported by our interviewees. On the following pages are several examples of violence as presented in the diaries kept by young South Africans in their teens.

Boys’ Violence Against Girls



- Janet:** ‘At her party, some boy hit me and made a pass, it was the last person I would have suspected as I have never spoken to him, let alone seen him speaking to any woman.’
- Sally:** ‘The guy did not even ask questions, just slapped the girl. My brother arrived and hit this guy, that made me feel better.’
- Beny (B):** ‘As I was walking, I saw a boy hitting a girl – then I went there to solve the problem.’
- Nomalanga (G):** ‘I met a rude boy in a bottle store who swore at me when I refused his proposal. I just prayed God would help him.’
- David:** ‘I went to watch soccer with my friends. I was chosen to play number 6. We lost 3-2 – I hate it when we lose. I heard that my girlfriend is back and she wants to see me as soon as possible. I rushed to her, but I was disappointed by the bad news she told me, that she doesn’t love me any more. I thought of slapping/

hitting her, I didn't see any sense of beating her. I left her and went back home.'

Tebogo (G): 'My mother beat me when I told her I was raped. She believed when she was called by the police, who explained to her.' (Tebogo was raped by her step-brother.)

Celia: 'A boy called Bruce on the bus promised to beat me up. I said he will beat me if I am his child. He swore at me, I just kept quiet and asked if he is finished.'

Violence, or the threat of violence, was sometimes used by boys to keep girls in place – for example, if girls refused their proposals or, as we saw in Topic 3, if they challenged boys. Through the threat of violence, Bruce, in the last excerpt above, 'infantilised' the girl, and her refusal to be treated in this way made him swear at her. It would appear that some girls rely upon their brothers and other boys for 'protection' from boys. Some of the South African girls regarded boys who would 'protect' them as their ideal boyfriends – by which they meant boys who would ward off sexual approaches from other boys. This desire for 'protection', provided either by boyfriends or supportive networks with other girls, suggests that sexual harassment and abuse are a major problem in the lives of these girls. As feminist writers such as Griffin (1986) have argued, fear of abuse from men often reinforces girls' and women's dependence upon one boy or man to protect them. Not only does this restrict girls' movements; it also gives particular men and boyfriends enormous power over them.

The boys in our interviews appeared to attach great importance to fighting prowess, which they believed made them superior to girls as well as heterosexually attractive. In **Kenya** and **South Africa**, boys reported that they fought among themselves over girls to show their strength, and also that they liked fighting in order to be recognised by girls.

Boys' Violence Against Boys

Boys, especially those from the urban settings in Kwa-Zulu Natal, where gangsters are common, wrote a great deal about getting into fights with other boys:



Vusimuzi: 'I argued with someone over a pen of mine that had been stolen from my bag. When I confronted them, they started crying. I had hit them after warning them that they would cause me to hit them over something unimportant like a pen.'



Peter:	'We argue constantly and I hit him because he thinks he is clever.'
Matthew:	'I told him I would kick him and he replied 'kick me', so I did and we started fighting.'
Mpumelele:	'Later that day thy threatened to kill me if they were expelled from school.'
Frederick:	'A guy who used to beat me up – my uncle went to beat him, ending up by breaking his spinal cord. My uncle was arrested for assault.'
Anthony:	'When I came from school that boy beat me, he said I talk a lot and he beat me terribly.'
Desmond:	'A person insulted me and when I beat him, somebody older than me started to insult me about my private parts... I told him to come and fight me, he started to throw stones.'

Fighting appears to be a common way in which boys not only construct themselves as different from girls, but create hierarchies and assert themselves in relation to other boys. Some of the above examples read like tests of manhood, with boys competing against each other, trading insults, threats and fighting. In a recent ethnographic study of young people in Durban, Kwa-Zulu Natal's capital, Bhana (2002) found that many black boys were fixated with violence as an effective means of obtaining goods such as cake and sweets from other children (where poverty was widespread and such resources were scarce), and as a key way through which identities and pecking orders were established. In the black township schools she studied, violence was synonymous with hegemonic masculinity (see Topic 4), with some boys modelling themselves on the *tsotsi* or the local male gangsters and subordinating other boys who were constructed as 'yimus' or sheep – so called because they were viewed as 'passive,' 'quiet' and 'harmless'.

So tied up is fighting with the ways in which boys construct their identities that a number of interviewees – young people as well as teachers – suggested that fighting was healthy and normal for boys. A 16-year-old boy in **Kenya** said that boys related well together, indicating that they 'work together, sit together, eat together, fight.' Rather than being seen as dividing boys, fighting here was regarded as something that helped to bond them and contributed to their sense of being males together. Boys engage in fighting and other acts of violence as they seek to live up to the stereotype of males as big and strong. By doing this, they are showing how strong they are compared to other boys and, as aggressors

as well as potential protectors, compared to girls. This, of course, means that many boys (as we see in the following extract from the diary of a South African boy), as well as girls, are hurt, bullied, and made afraid in the process:



Hector: 'I was so happy [but] I ended up being sad. I was with other guys taking a stroll/walk until we find a snooker shop, then we played that game. Certain guys approached us, telling us that we have to buy cigarettes for them. We refused to provide them with their request – they beat us – we ended up running away. It was late afternoon, one of our friends got injured – I felt bored and sad. On the way home, we found mango and bought it. One of our friends insisted to cut off one of my mango... we ended up not giving him that mango – he beat us... I was happy [but] ended up feeling sad.'



Teachers' Violence Against Children

Some young people in groups as well as individual interviews spoke openly about being abused in their families – notably by their stepfathers (see Topic 3). But it was teachers and their disciplining of pupils that featured most often as acts of violence perpetrated by adults against children. Relationships with teachers were often described as authoritarian, with some teachers beating a whole class for making noise and singling out pupils and calling them derogatory names. In the diaries, especially those of boys, a great deal was written about being punished and insulted by teachers. Again these are taken from the diaries of teenage boys from **South Africa**:



Steve: 'Teacher gave lashes out at school, one pupil even received three stripes.'

Steve: 'The teacher beat all of us because we did not know the answers to the questions.'

Vusimuzi: 'I took out my books and had hardly started reading when our teacher returned and gave all of us a good hiding because he said we made noise. I was sad.'

Andrew: 'The fourth teacher came and found us making noise. The teacher then punished us all and my hand was swollen.'

James: 'I was made to stand still on a hot day till after school.'



In spite of the illegality of corporal punishment in schools in South Africa, it appears that such punishment is still commonly administered (see Morrell, 2001b) – as reflected in the significance attached to it in these pupils' diaries. One girl even expressed happiness at passing a day without witnessing a beating, as if this was an unusual occurrence:

Victoria: 'Today we enjoyed lessons because no one was beaten.'

Some abuse by teachers was not only physical but psychological, as the following passages attest:

Steve: 'Teacher told me I am a fool.'

Sipho: 'Teacher tried to make the boy sing in class.'

Richard: 'Teacher told me I am stupid – I should be a foreman at the sugar plantations.'

Gendered Forms of Corporal Punishment

In all three schools visited by the researchers in **Botswana**, pupils mentioned that boys and girls were subject to corporal punishment – and that it was administered more frequently and more harshly to boys. For example, boys were often caned on their buttocks, while girls were usually caned on the palms of their hands. Most boys were highly critical of this form of discrimination, with a group of 14-16 year old boys from Bokamoso school complaining that teachers 'hate' them and pick on them, even if girls commit worse offences. As one boy, Kgosi, said:

Punishment is always harsher for boys than girls (we are beaten on buttocks and girls on hands). Girls are given more marks than boys. Girls are listened to and trusted. Boys are not listened and not trusted. If you are a boy, they beat you first, then ask you to explain later. Girls' mistakes are always seen as less.

Other boys spoke graphically of how different and more positive the male teachers were with girls than boys:

David: Male teachers usually show bright faces – he is happier assisting a girl than when he is assisting a boy. He smiles when helping a girl; when it's a boy even his mood is unpleasant.

Moruti: Boys are at a disadvantage. When a teacher is bored by something, he says provoking statements just to get at the boys. If a boy says something, trying to reason with the teacher, he is told to 'shut up', but a girl is usually given a good ear.

It seems, from these accounts, as if some of the male teachers felt they were competing as males with the boys, and were asserting themselves as powerful men by humiliating them. These boys were also angry at the reaction of girls who, they said, thought there was nothing wrong with this form of discrimination. However, two girls from Nanogang school 'took the side' of the boys, criticising how corporal punishment was administered selectively according to gender. (Research in Nairobi, Kenya, yielded similar findings, with adolescent schoolgirls criticising teachers for being too harsh on boys and beating them more than the girls when both had committed the same offence; see Chege, 2001).

Lelentle: They are treated differently. Some teachers, when they try to discipline a boy, they beat very thoroughly. Maybe the girl did something more wrong than the boy did [but] they will still beat the boy very hard as if he [alone] did the wrong thing. Some teachers actually never punish girls. I don't know why. Girls are gently punished. Other female teachers favour girls, like when they are supposed to be beaten on the buttocks, they beat them on the hands, while boys are beaten on the buttocks.

Naledi: When the teacher is disciplining, he got to discipline in one form [not beating boys in one form and girls in another]. It is very painful to be beaten on the buttocks. It is not fair for the boys; we are in the same class, and we do the same things. Many teachers hate boys. It seems the teachers suppose that the boys do not feel the same pain like the girls. If a boy refuses to be beaten on the buttocks and rather asks to be beaten on the hand like the girls, he is told that he will be taken to the staff room and be beaten there. Or he has to go out of the class. So, in the class, girls are treated with higher regard than boys... Although this is the case with the treatment of boys and girls, boys are the ones who perform better. Girls just relax, knowing that they will not be severely punished for their failure.

The notion expressed here – that boys are expected to outperform girls and may be punished if they do not do so – was clearly a familiar one, which was supported in the group discussions with other girls:



Palesa:

Like in our Setswana lesson, girls performed better than the boys. One time the teacher gave back our test papers and said that girls had performed better than boys; she told the boys she was going to beat



them because they were not supposed to be led by girls and went ahead and beat them. I think this is being gender insensitive, telling boys to perform better... we are taught about equality yet teachers don't practice it. It is unfair.

Interviewer: What do you think about this?

Malebogo: I think it is okay, because girls are fragile. However, it is unfair to boys as they are always punished since they cause more trouble.

This is a striking illustration of these problems, which arise not just for girls because of the construction of boys as superior to them in a patriarchal culture, but also for boys themselves. Indeed, being expected to live up to high expectations in education and employment was identified by girls in **Zambia** as among the key problems facing boys (see Topic 3). By punishing boys for failing to outperform girls, teachers are, of course, constructing girls as essentially inferior to boys.

Significantly, however, the girls did not complain about this – perhaps because they were pleased that they were not being subjected to corporal punishment for their ‘poor’ performances. Rather than criticising their teachers for treating girls as subordinate to boys, most girls and boys indicated that the teachers were showing favouritism to girls – as manifested in their harsher punishment of boys. Even Naledi, who suggested that punishing boys and not girls for ‘poor’ schoolwork might not be in the girls’ educational interests, concentrated much more on how the boys were disadvantaged.

Interestingly, pupils’ views on the superior position of girls in relation to the selective application of corporal punishment contrast strikingly with the accounts of girls being subordinated and marginalised in the classroom in Topic 3. However, the tendency to punish boys more frequently and harshly than girls does not reflect the view that they are ‘less significant’ than girls. On the contrary, as Spender (1982) and other feminist writers have found, teachers tend to experience boys as more demanding than girls, and may control their classes by giving boys more space and attention – and punishing them more. We have also seen how boys are punished for failing to outperform girls, suggesting that they are more intelligent and academically significant than girls.

Among the boys interviewed at Nanogang in **Botswana**, there were different reactions to the disparity between punishments meted out by teachers. Some boys felt alienated, uncomfortable and anxious during lessons, which perhaps made them more likely to undermine the teacher’s authority – and therefore more likely to be punished. However, other boys derived a sense of superiority over girls as a result of being beaten, believing

that as boys they were strong enough to withstand the pain – and that the experience of being beaten harshly would mould them into stronger men (cf. Chege, 2001). As one boy commented:

Boys do not care [about being beaten], and seem to enjoy the attention, and they feel masculine about it, and they feel girls should not be beaten, as they are weak.

One girl also subscribed to the view that boys were naturally more attuned to being beaten because of their strength – or at least that girls were not so because of their ‘fragility’. These constructions of masculinity and femininity being promoted by the selective application of corporal punishment have extremely worrying implications: notably that it is through violent relations (and one’s ability to buckle down in the face of violence) that one is able to prove one’s masculinity.

Corporal punishment is highly problematic, not least because it mitigates against the possibility of friendly, constructive and learner centred relations with teachers and pupils, which we believe are essential for effective HIV/AIDS and life skills education. As we saw in the Botswana study, female teachers were idealised by some of the boys as counsellors, as people they felt able to talk to about their problems, precisely because they perceived male teachers to be hostile to them and likely to beat them:

126



Kabo:

I like lady teachers because they can also be counsellors and help you with your problem. If it is a male teacher, he will just say ‘you are a boy and you should deal with the problem’, but the lady teacher will counsel you.

Interviewer:

What do the other boys and girls feel? Do you also like teachers who can counsel you?

Neo:

The lady teachers are good. They treat you like their blood children. It is because they have their own children and look at you as their children.



Taking a Stand Against Teacher and Pupil Violence

These are exactly the kinds of qualities that are required for responsible and effective HIV/AIDS education. However, we do not want to argue that these qualities are natural attributes, that women are naturally more pupil-friendly or more suited to be learner centred HIV/AIDS educators. On the contrary, our gender identities are not fixed, but are constructed through our interaction with others – and are therefore always open to change. We would argue that one of the ways in which male teachers identify as strong, macho males is precisely by being tough against boys and beating them. This selective

application of corporal punishment is very problematic as it contributes to a culture of male violence. By witnessing and experiencing such violence from their male teachers, boys are being encouraged to use violence as a way of asserting themselves in relation to other young people. Although many of them may be hostile to the teachers for picking on them, we would suggest that these teachers still represent powerful male role models. For boys to become more sensitive and caring – and not to regard these as purely ‘feminine qualities’ – it is vital that both male and female teachers become learner centred life skills educators. Friendly, non-judgmental male teachers encouraging their pupils to speak about their pleasures, concerns and anxieties would send out a powerful message that it is possible for boys and men to be just as caring and sensitive as girls and women.

TOPIC 10: CULTURE, TRADITION, MODERNITY, AND GENDER AND SEXUAL RELATIONS

Many of the boys and girls who we interviewed spoke about ‘tradition’ and ‘modernity’ and often described themselves as ‘traditional’ or ‘modern’ individuals. Like ‘male’ and ‘female’, we would argue that these categories exist only in relation to one another, and are usually constructed and invoked in a discursive way. In this topic, we will be focusing on the different ways in which these terms are used and regarded by boys and girls, and the meanings and significance they attach to them. Why, for example, are ‘traditional’ and ‘modern’ so significant to specific individuals? Do boys and girls attach different meanings to them? We are particularly interested in the relationship between the various ways that different boys and girls invoke ‘culture,’ ‘tradition’ and ‘modernity’, and how they present and construct their gender and sexual identities in relation to them.

Becoming ‘Modern’ or ‘Traditional’

In **Kenya**, tradition and modernity were often defined in terms of personal appearance and its accessories. Schoolgirls in both Nairobi and Garissa described as ‘modern’ the wearing of short or tight clothes, the use of hairsprays, and the wearing of high-heeled shoes, as well as the completion of one’s formal education. By comparison, Kenyan boys constructed modernity as the freedom to choose one’s wives, the sharing of housework between sexes, urban living, and access to ‘modern amenities’ such as telephones, television, video machines and radios (see also Chege, 2001). Kenyan girls and boys saw themselves as either modern or traditional and sometimes as both, as illustrated in the comments below:

I am modern because I learn in Nairobi. **(Sanura, 13-year-old schoolgirl)**

I am traditional for wearing long dresses and modern for cutting [my] hair short and attending school. **(Jebet, 14-year-old schoolgirl)**

I am traditional. Modernity is not good – it makes people go to cinemas. **(Miano, 13-year-old schoolboy).**

In Nairobi, many of the boys and girls identified modernity with a lack of respect for elders, dressing 'badly' in tight, short or transparent outfits (as in Zimbabwe, certain girls were blamed for being too 'modern'), and watching 'bad' movies – presumably those with a sexual content. Some of the young participants from Kenya and Zimbabwe viewed the participation of boys in duties at home as a positive development in gender relations in the domestic arena. Indeed, some of the Kenyan girls criticised parents for not allowing boys to participate in domestic work, even when it was clear that the boys wanted to do so. Essays from a group of Kenyan girls and boys also portrayed more girls (seven) than boys (four) constructing themselves as future professionals in the medical, legal and architectural fields, which are traditionally viewed as male preserves. None of the boys aspired to become nurses or secretaries, while only one of them wanted to become a teacher. These findings suggested that girls are receptive to 'new' ways of constructing femininity and thus changing the 'traditional' image of womanhood, while boys seemed to favour 'traditional' forms of masculinity.

Blaming Girls for Being 'Too Modern'

The girls who were described as 'bad' for being too sexual, going out, drinking and having boyfriends (see Topics 6 and 7) were often criticised for being *too modern* by both boys and girls. Only girls, and never boys, were divided into 'good' and 'bad' according to how sexual they were perceived to be. And only girls, never boys, were blamed for being too modern and turning their backs on 'traditional' African values. Perhaps because of their concern to be regarded as 'good', many girls, especially rural ones, said they liked the 'traditional' way of living, associating this with not smoking or drinking, not wearing miniskirts, and not being seen with 'many' boys. In **South Africa**, some girls admitted going to discos, but became quiet when the other girls in the group made it clear that they would not go to discos because they did not want to be associated with prostitution or being 'too modern'. Boys, on the other hand, said they liked 'modernity', which they associated with free expression of feelings and freedom of movement. Indicating that they liked 'modernity' was not a problem for boys – as it seemed to be for many girls.

In **Zimbabwe**, girls who were described as rich, who lived in the low-density suburbs of Harare, went out at night and wore 'fashionable' clothes came in for a lot of criticism. They were said to be immoral, too 'modern', 'western' and forgetful of their culture. These girls were nicknamed 'Salad Girls' because of the colourful 'spaghetti tops' that they wore. The following extract is from an interview with some teenage boys on the topic of 'Salad Girls':

I like Salad Girls but not their clothing. They lie a lot, especially about their backgrounds. They can tell you that they are only three in their family and, 'I'm the last-born. My sister is in London and my brother in America and he has a business that's doing well – selling E-class Benz. My dad when I'm home does not allow me to speak in Shona'... but if

you hit her, she will speak the greatest Shona you have ever heard (laughter)... I prefer a cabbage who is a traditional girl – who will not show me off.

The boy in the above extract was angry with 'Salad Girls' because he thought they were artificial and pretended to be western when they were really Shona-speaking Zimbabweans, which he said he could show if he hit them. Like many other young men, he was particularly angry about the 'Salads' because they were relatively independent and powerful young women. He said he preferred 'cabbage girls', who were more ordinary and less glamorous than 'Salads', because they were 'traditional'. By this, he meant they were less assertive and independent – and so did not threaten his power and authority as a young man.

In all the research sites in Zimbabwe, the boys spoke strongly against miniskirts and the 'Salads' who wore them. Many spoke of this as a 'violation of African norms and expectations', thus constructing for themselves a powerful position as upholders of these values. Research has shown how older black male students in Zimbabwe also position themselves as arbiters and spokespeople for an authentic 'black' or African culture, in relation to black women students who are constructed as its potential betrayers – and are admonished when adopting styles and ideas seen as overly 'western' (Pattman, 2001; Gaidzwana, 1993).

The appeal to people not to turn their backs on tradition and culture results in the control and monitoring of the behaviour of girls, not boys. It is girls' freedoms to dress how they please and go out when and with whom they want that are being restricted. Many girls do not do these things out of fear of being criticised in the way that the boy above is criticising 'Salad Girls'. Many of the girls we interviewed were also critical of the 'Salads', presenting themselves, in opposition, as 'good girls'. Notably, however, it was not girls from the main urban areas (many of whom identified as or aspired to be 'Salads'), but girls from rural Murehwa and peri-urban Porta Farm who spoke out most critically and with a great deal of emotion about the 'Salads'.

'Cultural Traditions' and Sexualising Girls

We have seen in previous topics how girls and not boys are sexualised or made the objects of sexual desire, and we have seen here how girls wearing miniskirts and spaghetti tops are sexualised and condemned for it. In **Zambia**, the sexualisation of girls as they reached puberty found its institutionalised expression in (what was constructed as) the traditional practice of 'confinement'. In the following excerpt, a group of girls in their late teens at the Fountain of Hope School are talking about their confinement experiences:



- Interviewer:** What were you taught when you were taken through the process of confinement?
- Sara:** After bathing, your mother's friend, who you have asked for advice on what has happened to you, will give you a *chitenge* to wrap around you and tell you to sit on a *mpasa* and then take your blood stained to your mother. She will then boil chicken with traditional medicine for you to eat. They don't put salt in the chicken.
- Idah:** Then the elders from the neighbourhood will start coming. They will beat [you] if you never used to obey them or if you were rude.
- Sara:** You are also told not to play with small girls because you have grown up.
- Patricia:** Also told not to play with young girls or boys because, when you start your periods and stain your skirt with blood, they would get a surprise and start laughing at you.
- Grace:** You are told not to play with boys because they can make you pregnant.
- Sara:** Told to respect elders.
- Idah:** Taught how to dance in bed for men.
- Interviewer:** What is the bad part of the process of confinement?
- Sara:** The part of pinching thighs and beating if you never used to obey elders.
- Felisia:** The part of teaching how to dance in bed because it encourages prostitution. You can get tempted in trying to practice what you were taught by sleeping with different boys and end up becoming pregnant or contracting STDs or AIDS.
- Interviewer:** What is good about what you are taught in confinement?
- Sara:** It is good to be *moyee* [a girl undergoing confinement] because you are taught what you did not know. (Murmurs of agreement).

What is striking is how these girls are constructed as sexual by being taught to distance themselves from younger, immature girls and boys, while also avoiding older boys who may construct them as objects of desire. Although they do not actually say it, confinement is thus teaching them that the only relationship they can have with males (apart from with elders) is with their future husbands. Their identities as girls are already being defined in relation to these males, as they are taught ‘how to dance in bed for men’.

One of the effects of sexualising girls in this focused and restrictive way is, as one girl suggests, to encourage girls to develop purely sexual relationships with boys and men – for there are no other types of relationships open to them. By so doing, they are likely to be blamed for engaging in ‘prostitution’ (as Felisia says) – a term commonly used to refer to girls who are constructed as being too modern and violating tradition and culture by being sexually enticing to men. Ironically, what is regarded as a traditional practice actually contributes to a situation in which girls are singled out and blamed for being too modern.

As we have suggested, the type of messages being conveyed to girls about themselves and boys during their confinement are extremely problematic. It is a matter of concern that pubescent girls’ identities are suddenly and overwhelmingly defined by sexuality while boys (and men) are defined not in terms of their gender or sexuality but as free and universal subjects, who do not receive much advice or help from parents and elders relating to sexuality. (See de Beauvoir, 1972, and other feminist critics of the invisibility of masculinity in patriarchal cultures.) The focus on sexuality as a defining feature of girls as they reach puberty also implies that sexuality is insignificant for young people below this age – a view that is very much at odds with our findings.

In the following mixed interview, ‘coming of age’ is firmly associated with fundamental changes in the identities of girls (in spite of the male interviewer’s attempts to subvert this by asking if *he* has come of age, given the size of *his* breasts). It is also associated with girls being taught to become self-conscious about their bodies and learning to wear ‘long skirts’ through the practice of confinement:



- | | |
|-----------------------|--|
| Interviewer: | When is coming of age? |
| Mulenga: | When the breasts droop... |
| Interviewer: | When they grow bigger? |
| All in chorus: | Ee! [Yes!] |
| Interviewer: | So since mine are big, I have come of age? |
| Junior: | They haven’t drooped, Sir. |
| Mundia: | When the nipples are outstanding, Sir. |
| Mulenga: | Even the voice changes... |

- Joyce:** You can know when you notice someone that wore short things now wearing long skirts and *chitenges* and portraying a lot of respect at home.
- Tutu:** They hide the girl and send the youngest child to take food to her...
- Interviewer:** Why do they hide her?
- Njamba:** It's a tradition where they teach them.
- Tisa:** You [can] tell because they have dots around their knees.
- Interviewer:** How do you see the dots?
- Sara:** When I am putting on my uniform and weeding, you just see them and know that that person is of age.
- Interviewer:** So what happens when one comes of age?
- Jelita:** She is taken to an elder instructor.
- Sipiwe:** They teach and advise her to stop playing with friends who like going to bars.
- Interviewer:** So if you go to the bar, you lose your coming of age?
- Joshua:** No, they protect you from getting pregnant when you have come of age.

When discussing the bad aspects of 'modernisation', the example most often given was of 'indecent' dressing – short skirts, tight trousers – worn by post pubescent girls and women. Confinement is presented here as an institution that not only inducts girls who 'come of age' into 'traditional practices' – including the wearing of long skirts and *chitenges* – but also makes them susceptible to corruption. The young women are portrayed as people who might violate 'tradition' by 'going to the bar', having sex and 'getting pregnant'. For all these reasons, they are in need of constant protection.

Male and Female Teachers Evaluating 'Traditional' and 'Modern' Values and Practices

In **Rwanda**, female teachers tended to criticise 'traditional cultural practices' for promoting the spread of HIV/AIDS. Ironically, they cited these in response to a question about how 'elements of Rwandese culture and tradition' could 'contribute to teaching about HIV/AIDS and sexuality today'. In contrast, a male teacher responded by blaming females for no longer adhering to what he regards as the norms of Rwandese culture – namely the wearing of long dresses. As with boys' criticisms of 'Salad Girls' and the previous

conversations about 'confinement', females are constructed as potential signifiers of corruption associated with modernisation. At the same time, however, the male teacher presents himself as a 'modern', gender sensitive man who thinks it is important to observe gender equality in addressing matters related to sexuality, such as pregnancy:



Interviewer: Which elements of Rwandese culture and tradition do you think can contribute to teaching about HIV/AIDS and sexuality today?

Jaclyn (F): We should discourage the use of cutting objects shared by many patients who use traditional healing practices such as *kurasaga*, [which involves] slight cutting on certain parts of the body and smearing with herbal medicine, and *kurumika*, the extraction of infected blood using an animal horn. We should also discourage *kunywana*, the linking of each other's blood as a sign of the bond of brotherhood for close and unrelated friends.

Rachel (F): We should discourage polygamous marriages.

Nyarambe (M): In Rwandese culture, it was a norm for females to put on long dresses, whereas nowadays women use short, tight dresses that expose thighs and pants to provoke males. Punitive measures meted out to girls who became pregnant before marriage were too heavy and deterrent. However, this was unfair because it punished only girls...



Female Circumcision/Female Genital Mutilation

One practice that is associated with 'culture' and 'tradition', and was strongly opposed by these women teachers, is female circumcision. This practice was opposed not only on the grounds that it poses serious health risks, including the possibility of contracting HIV/AIDS through unsterilised surgical implements, but also because it makes girls very much the objects of male desire. It must also be pointed out that, although female circumcision is often referred to in the same tenor as male circumcision, the two operations are fundamentally different in effect and procedure – and the removal of the clitoris can only be fairly compared with the complete removal of the penis.

In the following interview with a female circumciser in **Kenya**, she praises the culture of circumcision as an effective way of making the female genitals *attractive* to men. She stresses the need to even infibulate girls in order to ensure that they do not engage in

sexual activity before marriage. Here we can see an example of how traditional cultures are used to sexualise girls and to control their sexuality. The circumciser describes uncircumcised girls as 'unclean' and, when she is asked to recommend ways of combating AIDS, she argues that infibulation is the best method:



- Interviewer:** So how can we prevent this disease of AIDS?
- Circumciser:** Everyone who has to marry has to undergo a test before marriage. Women should be infibulated to control their sexuality, especially young girls. Girls in town these days are not infibulated and therefore go with any man when they feel like it and they are infected with AIDS. Any woman with a long clitoris are smelling. (Emphatically)
- Interviewer:** What do you do with girls in relation to circumcision?
- Circumciser:** I cut the entire clitoris and its sides, stitch the whole thing, and leave only a very small hole for urination. What will a man do with a woman whose vagina is so wide open like a road? Men enjoy women who have a tight and infibulated vagina. (Laughs)
- Interviewer:** Do you think the girls who hover about with men have been circumcised wrongly?
- Circumciser:** Yes, because these days they speak of '*sunna*' (cutting only the tip of the clitoris). I call it nonsense. *Sunna* will only promote immorality. In the old days, if a man sees a wide-open vagina, it was shameful and a girl was supposed to be divorced on the spot, but these days men are tolerating...

This is a graphic illustration of how 'tradition' is invoked and used to sexualise girls and to control their sexuality. Like many of the young people we interviewed, the circumciser associates modernity with sexual immorality and the status and behaviour of girls – not boys. When she begins 'Girls in town these days,' we know she is about to condemn them, for this has become a cliché – a signifier for all that is wrong with society. They are blamed, like the 'Salad Girls', for being too sexual and for contracting and spreading AIDS, as well as for having clitorises that smell. As we saw in Topic 3, girls and women (and not the boys and men they sleep with) are often presented in HIV/AIDS education as the spreaders of AIDS. What the circumciser regards as problematic is female rather than male desire. Indeed, she wants girls to be the objects of male desire, and her aim is to provide men with what they 'enjoy': 'women who have a tight and infibulated vagina.'

Significantly, she laughs at this, as if she sees desire expressed in this way as naughty, but nevertheless condones it. The only criticism that she levels against men 'these days' is their toleration, rather than their condemnation, of 'wide open vaginas'. Here it is women, not men, who are being blamed for being promiscuous.

This passage clearly illustrates how 'tradition' and 'modernity' are being *constructed* and played off against each other in ways that sexualise girls and regulate and control them. The circumciser even criticises forms of circumcision 'these days' for being, as it were, too 'modern' and not sufficiently 'traditional', for failing to stem female desire and for promoting immorality – the assumption being, of course, that it is female desire that is immoral. Notably, the circumciser's narrative reveals no concern for any violation of girls' rights over their bodies – or of their rights to equal sexual pleasure with their male partners.

It is clear that the rationalisation of female circumcision as a rite of passage to adulthood, and a basis for constructing ideal womanhood, have no equivalents in male circumcision. As girls are often circumcised while under the age of consent (16 years), and while still under the care of their parents or guardians, their basic rights to protection, care and health are automatically violated. Studies have shown that, in addition to clitoridectomies, genital incisions and infibulations that cause the deaths of numerous girls due to haemorrhage and shock, survivors continue to suffer from obstructed passage of the menses and urine, constriction of the birth canal, and further anguish when undergoing de-fibulation during the consummation of marriage (Noor, 2003; Chege, 2001; Jennings, 1994). Grounding the cultural value of womanhood in female circumcision raises fundamental concerns over how best to incorporate conventional medical knowledge and human rights education into cultural frameworks that support traditional rites of passage. One successful example has been among communities in Kenya that have adapted humane rights of passage, such as the circumcision of girls 'without the cut', or what is known as 'cutting through words' (See Nzwili, 2003).

Traditional and Modern Values and the Construction of Gender Identities

Talk about 'tradition' and modernity, as we have seen, often arouses strong emotions. This suggests that these are not simply descriptive labels denoting historical phases, but discursive constructions that are intimately bound up with how people construct their very identities. 'Tradition' is evaluated positively and 'modernity' negatively by boys as well as girls, and by adults in ways that implicate females and not males. In our interviews, it was usually – if not always – girls and women who were accused of being prone to corruption by 'westernisation'. Girls were blamed for imbibing and imitating 'western' ideas about sexuality and gender, with boys often presenting themselves, in contrast, as upholders of 'tradition' and 'culture'. The effect of this was to control the behaviour of all girls, whether they identify as 'modern' or not – and to assert male authority.

Both boys and girls, however, also constructed 'modernity' very positively. Indeed many, especially young urban boys and girls, identified as 'modern' in comparison to their parents. Some of these included the same boys who blamed girls for being 'too modern' – a contradiction that could effectively be explored in HIV/AIDS and life skills education.



Part Three: Research Highlights

Establishing Good Relations with Young People

It is noteworthy how positively young people responded when friendly, non-judgmental researchers of either sex were addressing them as experts about themselves and their relations with others. One boy in South Africa, for example, felt able to talk about being abused by his stepfather – something he had never before been able to divulge to an adult. And in Zambia, one of the researchers reported, ‘the girls really had a lot of issues to raise, and they said categorically that for the first time they have had a chance to talk to people who were willing to listen to their concerns at that level.’

Many of the young people said they could not talk about issues relating to sex and sexuality with their parents, and consequently had several questions for the researchers. The ‘subject centred’ relations that the researchers sought to establish certainly helped the young people to put these questions to them. We contend that teachers should also attempt to forge these sorts of relations with their pupils in HIV/AIDS and life skills education.

Constructing Gender Differences

Many of our subjects appeared strongly invested in constructing themselves in opposition to their particular versions of the gendered ‘other’. This was manifested in the emotional engagement of many of the interviewees when describing people of the



opposite sex, and the common revulsion expressed by both boys and girls when asked about the prospect of changing sex for a day. Versions of masculinity and femininity were often constructed in relation to each other and played off against each other. Males were commonly constructed as strong physically, emotionally, intellectually and sexually, precisely because females were constructed as being weak in these areas. In mixed interviews in Zimbabwe and Zambia, some girls resisted being positioned in this way by boys, which generated strong conflicts as the boys sought to reassert themselves. In constructing girls as weaker and boys as stronger, girls were sometimes seen as being in need of protection by parents or boys. However, this had the effect of restricting girls' movements and contributing to the view that they were timid, un-free, and incapable of making decisions.

Sexual Double Standards

One of our key findings concerned the application of sexual 'double standards' to girls and boys. In every country, the young interviewees made a distinction between 'good' and 'bad' girls, which centred upon their sexuality. 'Bad' girls were described as staying out late, drinking, having boyfriends, being too 'modern', and wearing miniskirts – a fact that 'invited' rape. In addition, girls were rebuked for expressing desire, for being seen to be too 'knowledgeable', even for speaking too 'openly' in mixed gender interviews. This policing of girls not only clearly restricted what they could do or say, but also, consequently, made them vulnerable in relationships with boys. Both the boys and girls constructed girls as less sexually active than boys (unless they were 'bad girls'), and as potential objects of boys' desires. Taking desire to mean male heterosexual yearning, girls were thus the ones who were sexualised. Boys as young as six (in Zambia) constructed themselves as initiators of sex, having a more powerful sex drive than girls, as well as buyers of sex, who provided girls with presents and money. While in a sense this meant boys had sexual and economic 'power' over girls, it also meant that boys in the 14-18 age group might be rejected by girls of their age for older, richer boys and men who could afford to buy them presents – a precursor to the 'sugar daddy' syndrome.

Tradition and Modernity

Perhaps reflecting a concern to construct themselves as 'good', most girls, particularly those in rural areas, reported favouring a 'traditional' way of life, which was associated with females not smoking, drinking, wearing miniskirts, or being seen with 'many' males. Boys, on the other hand, reported liking 'modernity', which they associated with freedom of emotional expression and of movement. Indicating that they liked 'modernity' was not problematic for boys, as it seemed to be for girls. When girls in Kenya were asked whether they preferred 'modernity' or 'tradition', there were opposing responses, with some, especially the non-school-going girls, constructing themselves as morally good in relation to 'modern' girls, and others as modern because they went to school.

Some urban girls were blamed for being too 'modern' and for attracting men: for example, the 'Salad Girls' of Zimbabwe. Some boys spoke angrily about so-called 'modern girls' and seemed to express, as well as to quell, anxieties about being rejected by them by criticising them for affecting superior airs and for being artificial. Only girls were ever blamed for violating cultural values. A few, mainly urban girls questioned the derogatory labelling of girls for being too 'sexual', wearing certain kinds of clothes, or going around with too many people of the opposite sex – when boys never attracted such labels.

'Indecent' dressing by post-pubescent girls and women – skirts deemed too short or trousers too tight – was most often invoked when discussing the bad aspects of 'modernisation'. Puberty or 'coming of age' was associated by children in Kenya and Zambia with the sexualisation of girls, the practice of 'confinement' playing a key role in this. The girls and boys in Zambia presented confinement as an institution that not only inducted girls who 'came of age' into 'traditional practices' such as 'wearing long skirts and *chitenges* and portraying much respect to elders', but also made them susceptible to corruption by 'modernity'. Girls who went through confinement were therefore seen as being likely to 'violate tradition' by dressing inappropriately, 'going to the bar', having sex and 'getting pregnant' – and were thus in need of protection.

Girls Talking About Boyfriends

Most of the girls interviewed indicated that they did not have boyfriends, and spoke about them not in romanticised ways but as exploitative and as causing them to lose interest in schoolwork. Their opposition to boyfriends no doubt reflected these fears, but it also seems to have been motivated by a desire to present themselves as 'good' (ie. not overly sexual) – particularly in the mixed group discussions. Significantly, girls did write about their boyfriends in the diaries they kept, which they probably construed as a safer place for them to present themselves as sexual beings.

There was evidence that girls constructed their *ideal* boyfriends in quite conventional ways: as tough and strong, and also intelligent. They wanted to be 'protected' by their boyfriends, by which they meant to ward off sexual approaches from other boys, which they found problematic. Indeed, their desire for 'protection' (provided by boyfriends or close supportive networks with other girls) suggests that sexual harassment and abuse is a major problem in the lives of these girls.

Boys Talking About Girls

Many boys were extremely misogynistic, with some admitting being violent towards girls in their diaries. But there was evidence too, in the Zimbabwean study, of some boys idealising girls as people who could offer sympathy and sound advice. Boys wrote in romanticised ways about girlfriends in their diaries, which contrasted with the derogatory ways that they spoke about them in the groups.

Boys' 'Power' Over Girls

Boys and most girls of all ages constructed boys as powerful, as possessors of their girlfriends, as providers of money, and as helpers with academic work. Yet there is evidence, especially from South Africa, Zambia, Botswana and Zimbabwe, that living up to these stereotypes of masculinity incurred major costs for boys (as well as for girls). In Botswana, we saw how boys were beaten for failing to outperform girls, and were more likely to be beaten on their buttocks than their palms because they were expected to be stronger than girls. The key problems that boys experience as identified by Zambian girls revolved around the economic responsibilities they were expected to fulfil (including providing for their girlfriends), the better exam marks they were expected to achieve, their freedom and presumed susceptibility to bad peer pressure, their presumed physical toughness, and their relative detachment from their parents. One way in which boys asserted themselves as 'tough', as we saw in the diaries kept by South African boys, was through acts of violence, mainly against other boys, but also against girls. Some boys wrote about their fears of being beaten up. As mentioned above, some of the boys from South Africa and Zimbabwe wanted close relationships with girls whom they idealised, in implicit contrast to the kinds of relations common with other boys.

Sugar Daddies and Mummies

140

The construction of boys as powerful, as initiators and as economic providers in heterosexual relationships seemed to generate the 'sugar daddy' phenomenon, in which girls themselves were often blamed for being 'materialistic' and 'loose'. Boys expressed anger and frustration at girls of their own age rejecting them for older, richer men. They told stories about these girls eventually being rejected by their sugar daddies after becoming pregnant. It seemed that, while the boys were presenting this as 'just desserts' for these girls for rejecting them, they were also buying gifts for their own girlfriends. This was only possible, as was made clear by some of the subjects in Botswana, by the boys themselves becoming 'sugar daddy' figures, and looking for relations with younger girls.

Kenyan girls said they feared the influence and power that sugar daddies had over them. They stated that elderly men lured girls (always 'other girls') into having sex with them in exchange for money. In Zimbabwe and Tanzania, young people spoke about poverty influencing girls to have sex with older men. In Tanzania, older women reportedly used young schoolgirls from financially poor families in brothels, while in Zambia it was reported that boys were having sexual relationships with older rich women – the so-called 'lizard women'. Unlike the relationships between girls and older men, which were regarded with contempt especially by boys, these Zambian examples were viewed with amusement.

Boy-Girl Friendships

One of the major findings of this study is how difficult it seems to be for many boys and girls to develop friendships, partly because of the assumption that if boys and girls mix regularly they are assumed to be having sexual relationships. This makes it a problem for boys and girls to develop less gender-polarised identities. The tendency for parents to withdraw their teenaged daughters from school to 'protect' them from boys' advances and from becoming pregnant actually contributes, we would argue, to the sexualisation and objectification of girls in relation to 'predatory' males. Some girls in Garissa, Kenya, reported that it was advisable to avoid any kind of relationship with boys because they verbally abuse girls and women. However, the root of this problem lies not in the presumed fact that males are natural predators and females are the objects of their desire, but in the social processes and institutions through which boys and girls learn to differentiate them in these ways.

In Kenya, girls were asked to state how boys and girls relate in school. In Garissa, most of the girls responded by expressing surprise that such a question could be asked. In this largely Islamic town, mixed gender relationships were not common and were not encouraged, either by parents or religious leaders. Both boys and girls were elusive in discussing their relationships with the opposite sex, especially when it concerned them.

Problematic Relations with Adults

In most countries, young people presented their relationships with their fathers as 'distant', while some spoke about being abused in their families, notably by stepfathers. In Zimbabwe and Zambia, boys both identified with and were critical of their fathers for being distant and unfaithful. Many of the interviewees said they wanted to discuss issues about sexuality with their parents or guardians, but constructed them as 'old fashioned' and unwilling to discuss such matters. Relationships with teachers were often described as authoritarian. Male teachers were generally said to favour girls, and some were accused of having affairs with female pupils or pressurising them into relationships in exchange for marks or money. The construction of girls as objects of their desire seemed to provide both boys and men with a license to sexually abuse and harass them. Girls in Tanzania, South Africa, Zimbabwe, Botswana and Zambia spoke about being sexually harassed – not only by boys and teachers but also by fathers and other close relatives.

Religious and Faith Organisations

To be perceived as religious, and therefore sexually *uninvolved*, was a theme that appeared important to many of the interviewees. There was discernible pressure upon young people, notably in the Muslim communities of Kenya and Tanzania, to conform to religious teachings that dictated abstinence from sexual activity before marriage. Consequently, these girls and boys appeared to invest considerable psychological and physical energy in constructing themselves in conformity to the doctrines governing sexual relationships in their communities and, by association, their schools.

However, churches were also criticised by many young people for advocating a policy of pure abstinence, and therefore cutting themselves off from their lives and cultures.

HIV/AIDS and Life Skills Education

In most countries, teachers were unclear about what 'life skills' were, and how to teach them in relation to HIV/AIDS and life skills education. Trainee teachers in Rwanda were not given training in HIV/AIDS education, although most of them said they felt capable of teaching it with the knowledge they had acquired from the media. Teachers in Rwanda and South Africa pointed out that it was difficult for them to discuss issues of sexuality because their religious and cultural norms prohibited it, and because terms related to sex and sexual organs were perceived as swear words in their native languages.

What was striking in the HIV/AIDS programmes being taught in schools was how negatively sex and sexuality were being constructed – and how these lessons almost completely ignored young people's pleasures, desires and concerns. The messages often gravitated around avoiding sexual relationships, around shame and diseases, while nothing was mentioned about companionship between the sexes or the fulfilment that this could yield to girls and boys. The majority of parents in Rwanda opposed the idea of their children being educated on how to handle relationships with the opposite sex, and dismissed the idea of friendship between schoolgirls and boys as a 'foreign' phenomenon that would encourage young people to engage in premarital sex.

In observations of HIV/AIDS lessons in Zambia and Kenya, boys dominated the proceedings, with the teachers focusing much more attention on them than their female pupils. Notably, the boys in these and other countries also subordinated girls by portraying them as disease carriers who were potentially responsible for the spread of HIV infections. Boys also dominated in school anti-AIDS clubs; indeed, in Zimbabwe and Zambia, it was reported that girls who joined these clubs were often seen as 'bad' girls who were actually chasing boys.

Some researchers reported large class sizes (sometimes as many as 50 or 60 pupils) and little space, with pupils sitting two or three to a seat. Such class sizes clearly make it difficult for teachers to develop participatory learning, instead encouraging the use of formal lectures and question-answer pedagogical styles.



Implications of Findings for Future Practices

Our research was designed within the framework of a human rights approach, which entails the development of community capacity to enable people to better understand their rights – and to claim them as they participate meaningfully in their realisation (UNICEF, ESAR, 2001). Within such a framework, as this project shows, children and young people can become active stakeholders in HIV/AIDS and life skills education alongside significant adults – with major practical benefits for both.

The recommendations outlined in the following section are conceptualised within this framework, positioning young people as stakeholders who are also subjects and actors, and adults as duty-bearers and rights holders. The activities underscore the relationships between young people and their adult duty-bearers in pursuing positive educational outcomes through methods that reflect human rights values – not just in the outcomes of HIV/AIDS and life skills education, but in the learning processes themselves. The goal of curbing HIV infection through effective education, and strategies to achieve positive educational outcomes, are necessarily complementary within this framework (de Waal, 2002).



Dissemination of the Research Findings

Practical and accessible means are now being sought to disseminate our research findings to as many interested parties as possible, including those who participated as subjects in each of the country studies. Many of the subjects expressed a strong desire to participate in our ongoing research, which was perhaps an indication of how valuable they found their discussions of issues related to gender and sexuality with non-judgmental and genuinely interested adults. For this reason alone, it is important that contact be re-established and maintained with these subjects. In discussing our findings with them, we would hope to:

- ◆ Obtain feedback (and generate more research data) about the extent to which the findings do justice to the subjects' experiences, attitudes and feelings;
- ◆ Encourage the subjects to further reflect critically upon their gendered identities and relations with others;
- ◆ Encourage them to see how 'others' – whether parents, teachers, or other girls and boys – see them and identify in relation to them. Parents need to know more, for example, about local sexual cultures, children's identities and experiences, their sense of alienation from their parents in relation to issues concerning sexuality, and their desire for greater communication with them. Boys need to know about girls' desires and their concerns about expressing these for fear of being labelled in derogatory ways;
- ◆ Encourage discussion about what can be done to minimise the spread of HIV/AIDS, involving as broad an array of interested and concerned parties as possible.

Communication Between Adults and Young People

Young people do not form their identities in a social vacuum, but in multifarious social contexts – a fact that is vital in informing effective HIV/AIDS and life skills education. Communication within and between various categories of actors, including the key structures of family, school and community, must be a core concern of all life skills and HIV/AIDS education. Parents and educators, including school and religious teachers, need to communicate with young people about sex – not in a moralistic and authoritarian way, which can serve to further alienate them from them, but in human, inclusive, gender sensitive ways (see UNICEF Swaziland, 2002: 92).

Although young Africans develop their own sexual cultures partly by imitating adults, these remain largely hidden from adults. To some extent, indeed, these cultures are constructed in opposition to adult authority. As our research has shown, some boys view multiple sexual partners as a source of status among their peers, while some girls acquire status for 'going out' with older men. In order to facilitate communication between parents and young people about sex and relationships, we would suggest that parents and children be invited to workshops at which the country researchers present their key findings, particularly those pertaining to:

- ◆ The desire of children for open communication about sex with their parents, and the discrepancy between parental fantasies that deny associations of sex with

childhood and early adolescence and the sexual experiences and identities of the young people interviewed;

- ◆ Boys' identification with and criticism of their fathers for being unfaithful and for going out drinking;
- ◆ The relative absence of many fathers in the lives of their children;
- ◆ Parents' concerns for their children, especially in the light of HIV/AIDS and life skills education, and how these concerns differ between sons and daughters.

During these workshops, recorded extracts from our interviews could be presented to illustrate pertinent points – for example, the six-year-old Zambian children talking about their sexual experiences. However, it is very important, for ethical reasons, that the extracts used are not ones in which the parents present could recognise their children, or vice versa. Indeed, we would strongly recommend that the faces of the children be blurred to ensure anonymity just as their names have been disguised in the interview transcripts.

Addressing Adults and Young People in HIV/AIDS and Life Skills Education

One of the key findings of our research is that educational strategies need to be developed in the fight against HIV/AIDS that address both young people and their parents and teachers. When asked about what HIV/AIDS education should focus upon, the teachers interviewed tended to provide very 'moralistic' responses, arguing that it should emphasise the dangers of sex. They also made a virtue of pre-marital virginity. This construction of appropriate HIV/AIDS or sex education clearly does not address *real* sexual cultures, or the concerns, desires and experiences of young people today. Indeed, teaching HIV/AIDS education in the way envisaged by many teachers is likely to alienate pupils from them around issues of sexuality.

In developing effective and realistic HIV/AIDS and life skills education programmes, it is vitally important that:

- ◆ Curricula materials relate to and are informed by young people's genuine concerns, experiences, identities, and desires relating to gender and sexuality. The researchers can develop these, taking extracts from interviews with young people in this study and developing exercises and activities around them, which promote classroom discussions and critical self-reflection on gender and sexuality;
- ◆ Teachers are trained not only in using such materials, but also in relating to young people in ways that encourage them to be open about their concerns, feelings, desires and relationships pertaining to gender and sexuality. This will require teachers to critically reflect upon their own identities as teachers and adult men and women. The sorts of relationships the researchers established with the young people they interviewed were, in general, exemplary in this respect, and the video and tape recordings of some of these interviews should be used in training programmes for teachers on how to teach HIV/AIDS and life skills education.

It was interesting to note how positively the young people responded when friendly, non-judgmental researchers addressed them as experts about themselves and their relations with others. Like the researchers, teachers must become more aware of the processes of identity construction taking place in their classrooms, how the boys are positioning themselves in relation to girls and vice versa. They should also pay attention to how boys and girls identify themselves in relation to their teachers, and what kind of masculine/feminine identities the teachers themselves epitomise. As our researchers discovered, young people are very conscious – and often very critical – of the kind of gendered identities that their teachers represent.

Teachers must also be trained not to discriminate between girls and boys, whether this takes the form of ignoring or ridiculing girls as non-academic, treating them as objects of desire, or picking upon boys and beating them more frequently and harshly than girls. Such forms of gender discrimination, as we argued in Topics 8 and 9, tend to impact negatively upon the identities of and relations between girls and boys.

Peer Education

It is important that young people are supported as practical educators of their peers in matters of gender and sexuality, both inside and outside school – including places in which they may have the chance of sexual encounters (de Waal, 2002). Our study suggests that young people are strategically placed to understand the anxieties, hopes and expectations of other girls and boys, and as such can often communicate with their peers in ways that many well-intentioned adults cannot. (See for example, Topic Five, in which Zimbabwean boys praise girlfriends for providing sound advice and helping them change ‘naughty’ behaviour.) Children need positive influences from other young people in order to properly realise their capabilities as future citizens, and with appropriate support, training and practice, peer teaching and learning can help to bridge generational gaps with adult duty-bearers – particularly on matters concerning sexuality, HIV/AIDS and life skills (UNAIDS/9946E, 1999).

Addressing Violence in Schools

It is important that schools do not contribute to a culture of male violence through corporal punishment and its selective use against boys (see the Botswana findings in the section on *Gender and Violence*). Furthermore, teachers should never turn a ‘blind eye’ to fighting, viewing it as a ‘normal’ feature of teenaged boys, but rather encourage their male pupils to examine the costs of violence and to reflect upon alternative ways of expressing their masculinity and relating to other boys.

Making Critical Use of Popular Cultural Texts

Life skills educators should be encouraged to make critical use of popular cultural texts, such as *True Love*, *Pace*, *Drum* and other magazines. In South Africa, it was found that girls were more knowledgeable about issues relating to HIV/AIDS and sexuality than

boys, thanks largely to the information they obtained from popular magazines and soap operas. We would recommend that educators photocopy articles and use them as catalysts to promote discussions around issues relating to gender and sexuality. This does not mean that pupils should necessarily be encouraged to accept the messages being communicated in popular articles and images; rather, that critical discussions should be promoted about how males and females are portrayed in such texts.

Teachers and Pastoral Concerns

Educators in and out of school, including religious and peer educators, should be trained to take a greater interest in the home circumstances and welfare of their pupils. Peer education has, over time, proved to be a particularly important aspect of HIV/AIDS education (see UNAIDS, December 1999). Rather than simply blaming children for being tired or coming in late to class, different categories of educators can forge relations with children that may enable them to discuss problems at home or in the community, which may be linked to school-based problems. It is important that boys and girls are treated equally by their teachers, and that male teachers avoid sexualising girls – either by developing sexual relations with them or by drawing attention (as we saw in Kenya) to their sexuality.

Educating Politicians

It is extremely worrying that Zimbabwe's Ministry of Education assumes that 14- to 16-year-olds are either not having sex or not even thinking about sexuality. This fact led the Ministry to refuse us permission to interview any school children under the age of 16. One important finding from the Zimbabwe study was the accounts of young people about friends much younger than them who were having sex and babies. It was also clear in all the countries that boyfriends, girlfriends and sexuality featured prominently in the lives of nearly all of the young interviewees – even those who defined themselves against negative reference points as 'good' or 'abstainers'. We would thus recommend – indeed insist – that life skills and HIV/AIDS education should be taught to children much younger than 16, and, in cases such as Zambia, to those as young as six. Such education should not make sex and sexual relations its central issues, but rather focus upon young people's identities, relations and cultures *in general*, while recognising that sexuality is a key aspect of all of these.

Challenging Popular Constructions of Male and Female Sexuality

This research study has important implications for the issues that life skills and HIV/AIDS education should address. One of the key findings concerned the application of sexual double standards to girls and boys between the ages of 10 and 18, in ways that resulted in girls being called derogatory names for expressing desire, for being seen to be too 'knowledgeable', even for speaking too 'openly' in mixed interviews. This policing of girls not only restricted and limited what they could do or say, but also made them vulnerable in relationships with boys. Another important finding was that boys, even as young as six

years old in Zambia, were constructed and were constructing themselves as the initiators of sex, having a more powerful sex drive than girls, and as buyers of sex, providing girls with presents or money. While in a sense this means that boys have sexual and economic 'power' over girls, it also seems to explain why boys of 14 to 18 are regularly rejected by girls of their age for older, richer boys and men who can afford to buy them presents. Life skills and HIV/AIDS education programmes thus need to encourage girls and boys to critically reflect upon the problems that arise for both of them as a result of the stereotyping of girls as sexually passive and the objects of boys' economic and sexual power, and the stereotyping of boys as sexually and economically powerful.

Life skills, HIV/AIDS and sexuality education must also strive to be gender sensitive. This means not only addressing differences (and similarities) in the identities and experiences of girls and boys, but also those between girls and between boys. For instance, this education should focus on how girls construct themselves as 'good' in relation to other girls they see as too sexual, or as 'modern' in relation to more 'traditional' girls. It should also focus on how boys establish and forge their own identities in relation to other boys who are 'naughty' or 'good'. Such divisions between girls and between boys have to be understood and addressed in the context of stereotypical generalisations about femininity and masculinity, and how they are typically constructed in relation to each other:

GIRLS	BOYS
Good	Naughty
Not sexual	Sexual
Objects of boys' sex drives	Possessors of powerful sex drives
Tied to the home	Regularly out with friends
Not sporty or particularly active	Sporty and active, ie. playing football.

The reason why life skills education should not simply focus on these divisions between girls and boys is precisely because they are stereotypical constructions of femininity and masculinity. But, despite this, girls and boys construct themselves in different ways in relation to such stereotypes: some embodying them more than others, some resisting them in various ways. Life skills and HIV/AIDS education can build upon these resistances by encouraging young people to challenge constructions of gender identities that are polarised around the kind of characteristics in the box above.

It is, however, also important that life skills and HIV/AIDS education does not address boys as the common homogeneous enemy oppressing girls, because this can alienate boys and reproduce misogynistic attitudes (Redman, 1996). Rather, it must 'tease out' differences between boys and encourage them to reflect upon the problems that they experience in trying to embody popular masculine, gender polarised identities (see Topic 4). The idealisation of girls, as noted among Zimbabwean boys, suggests that boys can be encouraged to take on less oppressive, gender polarised positions by appealing to their self-interest and their idealisation of girls' apparent sense of moral judgment.

Adopting an Holistic Approach to Teaching HIV/AIDS and Life Skills Education

Sexuality concerns the way we think about others and ourselves as sexual beings. This is not derived exclusively from our biological make up. Rather, our sense of others and ourselves as sexual beings depends upon popular social ways of conceptualising and representing sex, gender and sexual relationships. For example, as we saw in our study, boys, drawing on these popular representations, often perceive themselves as having very powerful sexual drives in comparison with women and girls. If HIV/AIDS education is to address young people as sexual beings, it must not focus exclusively on sex – as if sexuality is simply the product of an instinctual sex drive – but on how the learners see themselves as particular boys and girls, and the significance that they attach to sex in defining themselves in relation to others.

Addressing Desires and Feelings Without Moralising

Desire was conspicuous by its absence in the different forms of sexuality education reported in our study. The effect of this is not only to divorce sexuality education from the ways that students think and talk about sex and their feelings outside the classroom, but also to make talk about sex and sexual pleasure seem dirty and surreptitious – and something young people should only engage in with their peers, out of earshot of their teachers. It is important that HIV/AIDS education, when addressing sexual pleasure and desire, does not simply associate this with 'bad' things, nor as something that is more male than female. Perpetuating the popular view that men have an overwhelming sex drive, from which girls and women need to be protected, will only contribute to a culture in which the behaviour of girls and women is unduly controlled and regulated. Sexuality education should thus address sexual desire as a female as well as a male attribute, in addition to the kinds of pleasures, problems and anxieties that boys and girls experience as a result of its different constructions.

Addressing Multiple Identities of Boys and Girls

It is important that boys and girls are not addressed as unitary, static, essential beings, but as individuals who are constantly negotiating their identities and constructing themselves in different ways in different social contexts and in relation to different people. HIV/AIDS education needs to encourage young people to reflect upon these multiple

identities, their investments in them, and possible contradictions between them. For example, how and why do boys write so romantically about girls in their dairies, while being so misogynistic in group interviews; while girls write a great deal about their boyfriends in their diaries, and yet present them so negatively in group interviews...

Encouraging Boy-Girl Friendships

The possibilities and potentials of friendships between boys and girls – what forms they can take, and how similar they can be to same-sex friendships – should be given greater prominence in all life skills and HIV/AIDS education. Such relations are only possible if boys and girls become less invested in constructing their identities in opposition to each other, which may be facilitated by placing this on the agenda of HIV/AIDS and life skills education. While religious leaders and some parents may argue that gender mixing increases the likelihood of sexual relations between young people, this attitude encourages boys and girls to construct themselves in stereotypically different – and damaging – ways, and succeeds in sexualising any kind of relationship between them (see, for example, the views of the parish council members in Choma, Zambia). It can also make it very difficult for young people, especially girls, to talk about sex, their desires and concerns, and make such conversations with adults virtually impossible. While HIV/AIDS and life skills education must challenge gender segregation and inequality, it is important that it does not become ‘evangelical’ in its approach, to the extent of alienating parents and religious leaders. Researchers need to take into account the concerns and fears of parents, teachers and religious leaders, and organise meetings with them to canvas their opinions on the most appropriate forms of HIV/AIDS and life skills education for their children.

152

In focusing upon the possibilities of friendships between girls and boys, we are not advocating that HIV/AIDS and life skills education should adopt a moralistic line and discourage boyfriend-girlfriend relations or relations mediated by sexual desire. Rather, it should aim to encourage young people to consider the possibilities of relating closely to people of the opposite sex as friends (not just as girlfriends or boyfriends), and to construct more equal, less gender-polarised relations with their girlfriends or boyfriends. As we saw, for example, in the Botswana study, deep conflicts can arise in relationships as a result of the construction of boys as providers and girls as the provided for, or boys as the subjects and girls as the objects of a sex drive. HIV/AIDS education needs to encourage young people to imaginatively consider alternative ways of structuring boyfriend-girlfriend relationships.

Mixed and Single-Sex Groups in HIV/AIDS and Life Skills Education

Our experiences in interviewing young people in single-sex and mixed groups, as well as the life skills exercise we conducted with our young workshop participants, suggests that single-sex group work should be a vital and integral part of all life skills and HIV/AIDS education. In such groups, girls in particular feel freer to express their desires and concerns without being labelled in derogatory ways by boys. Life skills and HIV/AIDS programmes

should encourage girls to talk about sexuality, about their feelings and desires, without feeling guilty or 'bad'. However, there remains a problem that single-sex groups tend to reinforce assumptions that boys and girls are essentially different and in opposition to each other. It is also clearly crucial to have mixed group discussions in which boys and girls can talk to and learn from each other about their problems, concerns and views. For this reason, we would advocate a combination of mixed and single-sex discussions as a key strategy in any education programme that aims to help girls and boys to address effective ways of transforming their risk behaviour and sexual vulnerability (see also IIEP Publications, April 2001; and UNIFEM, 2000).

Addressing How Young People Construct Modernity and Tradition

Our findings indicate that boys and girls are constantly situating themselves in relation to others by drawing on versions of tradition and modernity. It is important that HIV/AIDS and life skills education addresses this traditional-modern axis, but in a young person centred rather than a didactic way. By this, we mean focusing upon how young people themselves define tradition and modernity, and the significance that they attach to these polarities when constructing their own and others' identities – rather than the teachers deciding in advance what counts as traditional and modern, as if these terms simply describe existing practices and lifestyles.

In our research, particularly in Zimbabwe and South Africa, we saw how modernity and tradition are often invoked to assert boys' superiority over girls. One of the chief challenges of HIV/AIDS education must be to encourage young people not to reify the concepts of modernity and tradition, but to reflect upon the ways that they construct their identities in relation to them. One way of facilitating this might be to point to the contradictions in the ways that boys construct and evaluate modernity and tradition when they are positioning themselves in relation to their parents or to urban girls, 'Salad girls' and assertive girls. Although the boys we interviewed defined themselves as 'modern' in relation to their 'old fashioned' parents, they also identified themselves as upholders of traditional values in relation to girls who they saw as too 'modern' or 'western'. Pointing out such contradictions might help young people to see how *they* construct versions of 'culture' and 'modernity', which are tied to ways in which they construct their identities in relation to various people. This is important precisely because gender inequalities and power relations are being legitimised by boys and young men by appealing to reified 'traditional' values that are presented as emanating from an authentic black African culture.

Addressing the Significance of Drinking in the Construction of Gendered Identities

One important issue that arose from our study was the association of beer drinking with 'naughty' behaviour, and the association of drinking places with sexual temptation. In many of our interviews, women who drank beer and went to nightclubs were constructed as particularly 'bad', and as 'prostitutes', as opposed to 'good' women, who were

constructed as potential wives and mothers. The former were presented as tempters of men, the assumption being that men and boys have an enormous sex drive over which – in the presence of such women and as a result of drinking beer – they have little control. Nightclubs were also commonly viewed in opposition to the interviewees' homes, as a place where their fathers went to drink – and to be unfaithful. While most of the boys were critical of their fathers for such behaviour, they also identified with them as powerful. One important way of expressing male power is precisely through the hedonistic drinking and sexual practices in which these boys' fathers were engaged.

It is important that life skills and HIV/AIDS education addresses the significance of alcohol in the context of boys and men constructing their masculinities – as fun loving, sexually powerful, hedonistic individuals who have little control over their sex drives. In constructing themselves in this way, these boys and men are making themselves particularly vulnerable to HIV infection – as well as their partners both at the nightclubs and at home. More research needs to be undertaken on the symbolic significance of beer drinking in relation to the ways in which both males and females see themselves and construct their identities.

Addressing Faith Based Organisations

As with teachers and parents, much criticism was levelled by young people at the church for being 'out of touch' with their concerns and for persisting in advocating a policy of pure abstinence. At the same time, many young people – particularly girls – idealised the church as a symbol of the same non-sexual 'good' they themselves were aspiring to. For this reason, the church can be seen to be powerful and influential among many young people because it is symbolically related to the very ways that they are seeking to construct themselves. Rather than simply criticising the church for being 'out of touch' and excluding it from HIV/AIDS education initiatives, we should try to harness its power and influence in positive ways. The researchers should meet with church leaders and discuss their findings with them, in order to share how significant sexuality is in the lives of their young parishioners. If the church is to take a more constructive role in the fight against HIV/AIDS, it is vital that it does not continue to wish or project 'innocence' upon young people, but faces up to and addresses the importance of sexuality in their lives.

Traditional Cultures and the Rights of Girls and Women

As we observed in Rwanda and Kenya, one of the problems that HIV/AIDS and life skills educators face is the perception of many parents – and even some children – that such education can violate traditional practices, especially when it espouses the rights of girls and women. However, what are perceived as traditional values may be reconciled with a commitment to girls' and women's rights. For example, as was found in the Kenyan study, the Somali cultural code is concerned with upholding women's rights and protecting them from sexual abuse and harassment from men. Rather than interpreting this as an indication that girls and women are weak and need to be controlled in order to protect them from predatory males, it could be interpreted more positively by educators. For

example, educationalists could develop an HIV/AIDS curriculum with a component on gender and sexual politics, as an assertion of female rights to education and free movement.

Male Domination of Anti-AIDS Groups

One important finding in Zambia and Zimbabwe concerned the male domination of anti-AIDS groups and drama groups in schools. We would like to suggest that more research be undertaken on why such groups are dominated by boys, and what kinds of messages they are developing. Questions should also be asked about what kinds of anti-AIDS messages and plays these groups are producing. Are they 'male centred' and focused on men? Are women presented either as 'good', sexually passive, maternal figures or as 'bad', sexually active figures who seek sugar daddies and try to tempt men? (See Pattman, 1996, on HIV/AIDS drama produced by male dominated groups.)

Addressing Homosexuality

Every effort should be made to present and address homosexuality in a *positive* light in HIV/AIDS and life skills education – rather than ignoring it simply because boys and girls do not speak about it (such as in this study), or tend to construct it as an 'alien' or 'western' practice. It is important to give boys and girls who may be attracted to people of the same sex a sense of worth and legitimacy, even if it is impossible for them to articulate their feelings publicly. And it is also important – as supported by our findings in Tanzania and South Africa – to address and counter homophobia, and its effects in policing and limiting the behaviour of all boys.

Research on Gender and Sexuality with Young Children

One major concern, which was raised when the country research teams were reporting their findings at the Kenya workshop, concerned the ethics of interviewing six-year-old children in Zambia about their 'experiences' of and attitudes towards sex. As we saw in Parts One and Two, these children spoke openly about their lives as sexual beings. However, some of the workshop participants questioned the veracity of these findings, suggesting that these children were too young to distinguish real sex from play or imitation. Some suggested that the interviewer may have acted unethically in encouraging these children, whom they felt were too young to speak for themselves about such issues, to elaborate upon what they had done and felt when they had 'had sex'. However, as we have pointed out, these children were very happy in the interview and enjoyed talking about sex, which was largely because the interviewer adopted a friendly and easy-going relationship with them. Our aim was to be young person centred, irrespective of the age of the people we were interviewing – and this was exactly what this interviewer did. If the ethical concerns expressed at the workshop arose simply from interviewing children of this age about sexuality, this perhaps reflects our own tendencies as adults to project 'innocence' onto children and our own discomfort in thinking about childhood sexuality. Clearly, whether we like it or not, these children were all familiar with sex, whether they actually engaged

in penetrative sex or simply 'played' at it, and enjoyed talking about it very much. Sex was significant to them – even if only as something they wanted to talk about.

We would argue that it is ethically problematic to ignore the voices of young children in relation to gender and sexuality. This is something that educationalists developing life skills and sex education programmes have consistently done in the past, and explains why there are so few of these programmes aimed at children below puberty – let alone six, seven and eight-year-olds. Our aim is not to stifle young person centred and interview based research with young children on gender and sexuality by defining such research as unethical. On the contrary, we would argue for more research of this kind among children of this age, as well as slightly older children from similar and different backgrounds. Zambia was the only country that interviewed children of this age, while the other countries all focused on children in their teens – perhaps reflecting the common assumption that sex and sexuality only become significant for children from puberty onwards. We would, however, also add a note of caution that the (western) media does not use findings such as those from the Zambian study in a sensational or racist way, thus reinforcing the myth of African promiscuity.

Longitudinal Studies

We would recommend that further studies be developed to follow up the same young people interviewed in this study, in order to examine the changing ways in which they construct their gendered and sexual identities as they grow older.

156

Capacity Development

The country researchers showed high levels of commitment and enthusiasm in conducting imaginative and creative forms of qualitative research. It will be important to utilise the skills and expertise that they derived from this experience in future qualitative research projects relating to gender, sexuality and HIV/AIDS in education. We would also recommend that some of the less experienced researchers undergo further training, for example in data analysis.

Educational Resources

It should be noted that learner centred and gender sensitive forms of life skills education are difficult to implement without adequate resources that are gender sensitive and encourage participatory learning (see also Bunyi, 2000). Learning is even more difficult in classrooms that are overcrowded, which was a common finding during our research. We would thus recommend that the relevant governments urgently address their lack of educational resources as a hurdle to the effective delivery of HIV/AIDS and life skills education.



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Annex: Sampling Procedures

All of the participating countries rationalised their sampling procedures within the broader regional design, while focusing on their country specific educational needs in the areas of gender, sexuality, HIV/AIDS, and life skills education.

Botswana

The Botswana study focused on pupils in three schools: Nanogang Community Junior Secondary School, Bokamoso Community Junior Secondary School, and Linchwe 11 Community Junior Secondary School. These schools differ considerably in terms of their social class composition. Nanogang, a government aided school situated in central Gaborone, draws its pupils from mainly middle class backgrounds, while Bokamoso, which is situated between New and Old Naledi, low income residential districts on the outskirts of Gaborone, enrolls children from mainly lower class backgrounds. Linchwe, a well-resourced private school in the centre of Mochudi, caters to children from more affluent backgrounds. In each school, the following research was conducted:

- ◆ Individual interviews were conducted with six girls and six boys aged between 14 and 16, plus a few who were slightly older. Single and mixed focus group interviews were conducted with subjects selected from among the schools'

Africa: Young Voices Series



prefects, choir members, athletes and sportsmen, PACTs (Peer Approach to Counselling by Teens), members of the Student Union, drama students, high achievers, problem students and bullied students. A total of six focus group interviews were conducted, with each group consisting of at least six boys or girls. Mixed sex groups were conducted with the same number of boys and girls.

- ♦ Six teachers were observed. These were selected from those who were teaching Guidance and Counselling, Moral Education, Science or Social Studies. The researchers also observed girls and boys' activities and interactions inside and outside the classroom.
- ♦ Six boys and six girls were each given a diary and asked to record what they did in a typical day. The diaries also sought to capture the emotional highs and lows the students experienced on a typical day.

Kenya

The researchers purposely selected two districts that are distinguished not only by their geographical locations and history, but by significant differences in socio-cultural lifestyles and practices. In Garissa Town, in the politically marginalised pastoralist province of Northeastern, research was undertaken at a rural public school, while in the capital, Nairobi, the researchers chose a school where the pupils hail from one of the country's largest informal settlements or 'city slums' (Nairobi City Education Department, 1998). Apart from considering the pupils' diverse social, cultural and religious backgrounds, the researchers took into account issues of accessibility to the schools and personal security – particularly in Garissa, where sporadic bandit attacks have earned the district a reputation for insecurity.

Female and male pupils in primary grades 5 to 8 were asked to volunteer for participation in both schools. Although the official age for these classes is 10 and 14 years, the actual age range extended to 17 years. Non-school-going children between the ages of 12 and 17 were recruited to take part in the study by adult members of the community. AIDS education teachers in the sampled schools and parents of the participating children also formed part of the research sample.

At the end of the study, a total of 56 pupils (27 girls and 29 boys), 20 non-school-going children (12 girls and eight boys), 12 teachers (eight male and four female), 17 parents (14 female and three male), and 25 community leaders (21 male and four female) participated in the study. During the research, the number of pupils increased from the initially planned sample size as it was found necessary to involve more pupils in focus group discussions, essay writing and diary keeping to capture more diverse perceptions.

Table 1: Kenyan Sample By Sex, Region & Category Of Subjects

RESPONDENTS	GARISSA			NAIROBI			TOTAL
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	
Pupils	14	10	24	15	17	32	56
Non-school-going children	2	5	7	6	7	13	20
Teachers	7	1	8	3	7	10	18
Parents	1	7	8	2	7	9	17

Source: Kenya Country Report, 2002

In Garissa, 39 in-depth interviews were conducted: 22 with pupils, seven with non-school-going children, six with teachers, and four with parents. In addition, seven focus group discussions (one with teachers, one with community leaders, one with parents, three with pupils, and one with non-school-going children). In addition, 16 pupils wrote essays, 12 pupils and four teachers kept diaries, and two AIDS education lessons were observed.

In Nairobi, 44 in-depth interviews were conducted: 29 with pupils, four with out-of-school children, four with teachers, and seven with parents. There were eight focus group discussions (one with teachers, one with community leaders, one with parents, six with pupils, and two with out-of-school children), 21 essays written by pupils, 21 diaries kept by pupils, and two AIDS education lessons observed.

Rwanda

Research was conducted in five provinces covering all of Rwanda's five geographical regions: the central region (Kigali Town, Gitarama, Kigali Rural); the eastern region (Kibungo, Umutara and Byumba); the northern region (Ruhengeri and Gisenyi); the western region (Kibuye and Cyangugu); and the southern region (Butare and Gikongoro). This broad sampling was deemed important to accurately examine the relationship between teachers' qualifications and their knowledge of and attitudes towards HIV/AIDS awareness education. It was also important to discover the extent to which history and politics have affected HIV/AIDS education in rural provinces such as Kibuye, in comparison to urban areas where greater cultural diversity and access to education have influenced knowledge and attitudes with regard to gender and sexuality. A comparative study of the relationship between teachers' qualifications and knowledge and attitudes towards HIV/AIDS education was made possible by the inclusion of regions such as Ruhengeri, where 99.6% of the teachers have received formal training, and Umutara, where the rate of trained teachers is just 49.8%.

The research covered 70 primary schools in 21 districts in the five research regions, ensuring equal participation by schools headed by women and those headed by men. In each school, proportionate sampling of teachers was based upon the teacher population and their gender distribution, yielding a sample of 164 female and 292 male teachers.

Table 2: Rwandese Sample By Sex, Region and Research Activity

RESEARCH ACTIVITY BY CATEGORY OF PARTICIPANTS	PARTICIPANTS BY SEX	PROVINCES						TOTAL	
		Butare	Kibuye	Kigali City	Ruhengeri	Umutara			
Questionnaires Primary school teachers'	Males	24	12	25	54	49	164	456	
	Females	87	66	51	49	39	292		
FGD Primary school teachers	Males	1	4	5	5	9	24	52	
	Females	3	9	6	7	3	28		
FGD Primary school pupils	Males	4	5	6	11	2	28	56	
	Females	4	5	6	11	2	28		
FGD Parents	Males	3	0	1	4	4	12	18	
	Females	1	2	3	0	0	6		
FGD TTC students	Males	3	2	0	4	2	11	23	
	Females	3	2	5	0	2	12		
Questionnaires TTC students	Males	10	11	1	20	10	52	97	
	Females	10	9	16	0	10	45		
FGD TTC teachers	Males	0	4	0	4	2	10	16	
	Females	2	0	2	0	2	6		
Interviews Heads of institutions	Males	0	2	0	1	3	6	10	
	Females	0	1	0	1	2	4		
TOTAL	Males	45	40	38	103	81	307		
	Females	110	94	89	68	60	421		
GRAND TOTAL		155	134	127	171	141	728		

Source: Rwanda Country Report, June 2002

South Africa

The project selected the following urban and rural research sites in order to achieve a genuinely representative cross-section of the country's children, parents and teachers:

PROVINCE	RURAL	URBAN
Limpopo	Bolahlakgomo	Pietersburg, now Plokwane
KwaZulu Natal (KZN)	Kwelabasha	Ngwelezane (learners aged 12-18yrs)
Limpopo	Outside school site Gathoka	Sample from youth clubs
KwaZulu Natal (KZN)	Msane Village	Sample from youth clubs

The study comprised of the following subjects and locations:

- ◆ 40 students (20 rural and 20 urban, 20 boys and 20 girls)
- ◆ 20 non-school-going children (10 boys and 10 girls)
- ◆ Two life skills educators from the two sites in KwaZulu Natal
- ◆ Two life skills educators from the two sites in Limpopo
- ◆ Parents of rural and urban boys and girls in both provinces.

Tanzania

The country researchers selected a broad variety of research sites, schools and subjects in order to achieve a true sample of Tanzanian society. The following table shows the number of students, non-school-going children, teachers and parents covered by the study.

Table 3: Tanzanian Sample by Sex, Region and School

RESEARCH ACTIVITY	SEX	SCHOOL LOCATIONS									
		Mji Mwema Ward			Miburani Ward						
		Mji-mwema	Kibugumo	Cha-ng'ombe	Wailesi	Kiba-sila	Barracks	Matumaini	Mgulani	TOTAL	
Plenary Pupils	Male										
	Female										
FGDS Pupils	Male										
	Female										
Teachers	Male	2	0	0	3	2	0	0	3	10	40
	Female	6	0	7	7	6	0	0	4	30	
Parents	Male	8		13						21	51
	Female	15		15						30	
Out-of-school Youth	Male	5		17						22	41
	Female	9		10						19	

Source: Tables 1-4 of Tanzania Country Report, 2002

Zambia

The Ministry of Education selected two districts in which all of Zambia's rural, peri-urban and urban livelihood systems are represented: Lufwanyama and Kalulushi. However, these two regions were once a single district, so the cultural aspects of the study population are likely to be similar. For this reason, a third demographic area, Choma, was also included in the research.

Covering 23,072 square kilometres and with a sparse population of 61,000, Lufwanyama is the largest, remotest and least developed district in the country's Copper-belt Province. Choma is in the centre of Southern Province and covers about 7,300 square kilometres, most of it 1,200 metres above sea level. Kalulushi is a mining town 14 kilometres west of the city of Kitwe in the Copper-belt Province. It covers 115 square kilometres and has a population of 70,065 people, most of whom work in the mines, which produce vast amounts of copper and cobalt.

Zimbabwe

The Zimbabwean research team selected research sites in three of the country's ten provinces: Harare, Mashonaland East, and Mashonaland West.

170

In Harare Province, the project interviewed 10 girls and 10 boys aged between 16 and 18 at Hatcliffe High School, a co-education secondary school in a low-income urban area. The school has no life skills programme but a teacher responsible for Guidance and Counselling who supervises pupils acting as 'peer educators', who hold one period per class per week. The study also interviewed members of a group of 28 non-school-going adolescents who meet to discuss AIDS and other issues at the Municipal Social Centre in Glenview, a low-income area of Harare.

In Mashonaland West, the researchers interviewed young residents of Porta Farm, a poor, peri-urban area where most families live in cramped one- or two-room dwellings with shared toilets and water facilities. Although the Government recently provided a primary and a secondary school in the area, most social services are still provided by NGOs such as World Vision. The interviews were conducted in open sheds that are otherwise used for meetings and as churches.

In Mashonaland East, the researchers interviewed 10 boys and 10 girls aged 16-17 at Murehwa High School, a co-education school run by the United Methodist Church. The school is located in Murehwa, a growing town where local NGOs are working to sensitise the community on HIV/AIDS.