

This is a very accessible book, with many examples illustrating important conceptual points about the everyday construction of gender and sexuality in schools. It also contains a very informative review of literature which addresses historical articulations of gender, sexuality, education, culture and youth among various groups in Botswana.



Gordon Jonathan Lewis  
Representative  
UNICEF Botswana Country Office

It is encouraging to see how this book, echoing the voices and identities of Botswana children, actually puts the country on the map in relation to critical research on the views of children on issues of gender and sexuality within the context of the curriculum and school environment.



Festina Shale Bakwena  
Permanent Secretary  
Ministry of Education  
Botswana

This vibrant book that resonates with the voices of young people should be read by education policy makers, educators, young people, parents and anyone else with a commitment to the rights of young people and development. I recommend the book for teacher education, universities and other institutions of learning.



Per Engebak  
Regional Director  
UNICEF ESARO

THE VOICES OF BOTSWANA'S SCHOOL CHILDREN

Africa: Young Voices Series N° 4

# THE VOICES AND IDENTITIES OF BOTSWANA'S SCHOOL CHILDREN

## Gender, Sexuality, HIV/AIDS and Life Skills in Education



Africa Young Voices Series N° 4

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**The illustrations were selected from the many drawn by Botswana's  
school children.**

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# The Voices and Identities of Botswana's School Children

Gender, Sexuality, HIV/AIDS and Life Skills in Education

Lead Researcher: Bagele Chilisa

Researchers: Musa W. Dube, Nnunu Tsheko and Bontshetse Mazile



Africa: Young Voices Series N<sup>o</sup>. 4



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# Botswana Map



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## Glossary:

Botswana – country, nation

Batswana – the people of Botswana

Motswana – a person who is a national of Botswana

# Botswana Country Fact Sheet

## Demographic Data

Population (Current year estimate, in millions): 1.7m	% Rural population: 46%	Urban: 54%
Population density per km <sup>2</sup> : 2.9 persons	IMR: 55	U5MR: 73

Source: 2001 Population and Housing Census

## Education Indicators

Item	Total	Female	Male
Adult Literacy rate	68.9	70.3	66.9
Number of primary school age** children	331,456	49.4	50.6
% of primary school age children out of school	8.8%		
Gross Enrolment rate (GER)	111.4		
Net Enrolment rate (NER)	87.2		
Repetition rate	30.4	23.8	36.9
Drop-out rate	1.76	1.37	2.1
% Passing Primary Leaving Exam	77.7		
Transition rate (primary to secondary)	96.0		
Number of Primary school teachers	13,153	79.9	20.1
Percentage of trained primary school teachers	91.2	79.6	20.4
Number of children in pre-primary institutions			
Number of teachers in pre-primary institutions			
% of Pre-primary teachers trained			
Number of Pre-primary schools	478		
% of orphans in primary	73.0		
Special Education enrolment	1004		
Number of orphans in secondary			
Number of Primary schools (all types)	770 (695 Gvt. 62 Prvt. 13 Grant Aided)		
Education expenditures as % of GDP	9.9%		
Educational expenditures as % of national expenditures	22.4		
Budget allocation within Ministry of Education	Pre-pri: - Pri: 15.7	Sec: 2.2	Tert: 4.2
Unit cost per primary pupil per year	US\$: 119.71		

Source: Education Statistics (2000, 2001, First Term 2003), Central Statistics Office, Gaborone.



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Last but not least, UNICEF and the researchers would like to thank all those not mentioned by name, who contributed to the success of this research. Your efforts are appreciated.

Changu Mannathoko  
Regional Education Advisor  
UNICEF ESARO

# Foreword

The lead researchers, all lecturers at the University of Botswana and experts in the field of gender and education, have produced an immensely rich, penetrating and accessible account of the lives and identities of 14-16 year old schoolgirls and boys in Botswana.

What makes this document so unique is the way it combines young people's accounts of schooling, gender and sexuality with observations of how boys and girls interact in school, where they sit, how they talk, how much space they occupy and how teachers conduct life skills education, what messages they convey about gender and sexuality through the texts they use and the ways they address boys and girls.

This document demonstrates that schools are not neutral institutions concerned only with developing the potential of pupils, but that they also play a key part in creating and reinforcing inequalities between boy and girl pupils. But the researchers also address the young people as active beings, who construct and negotiate their identities in school. The young people's views on topics such as sex and gender, sexual harassment, corporal punishment and, relations with teachers, clearly emerge in the engaging and loosely structured interviews they conducted with them; and their resulting voices are reproduced and analysed in the document. In order to stimulate discussion around 'sensitive issues,' the researchers used innovative methods like presenting drawings to young people and asking them to respond to these.

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This type of research, which focuses so powerfully on how gender and sexual identities are constructed in everyday interaction in schools, is quite unusual in African countries; yet, as the book shows, is extremely pertinent and pressing at a time when the HIV/AIDS pandemic shows no signs yet of stabilisation. If schools are to play their part in mitigating the impact of HIV/AIDS, they must not, themselves, unwittingly contribute to the formation of hierarchies around gender and sexuality, but develop self-reflexive, gender sensitive and young person-centred practices. These practices should inform and influence, as the researchers recommend, all facets of school life, including the organisation of classroom space, concerns about 'managing' pupils' behaviour, and the teaching of life skills.

This is a very accessible book, with many examples illustrating important conceptual points about the everyday construction of gender and sexuality in schools. It also contains a very informative review of literature which addresses historical articulations of gender, sexuality, education, culture and youth among various groups in Botswana. This book should be read by policy makers, educationalists, academics, parents and anyone else with an interest in young people, schooling, gender and HIV/AIDS in Africa and Botswana. UNICEF, within the context of the Country Programme of Cooperation with the Government of Botswana, will be accelerating its responses to these issues through its Integrated Girls Education and Integrated Early Childhood Development projects.

Gordon Jonathan Lewis  
Representative  
UNICEF Botswana Country Office

# Preface

As in many other countries in Sub-Saharan Africa, Botswana has been hit very hard by the HIV/AIDS epidemic. The impact of this disease is being felt throughout the country as people from all walks of life continue to die in large numbers. More shocking are the statistics pertaining to children where it was revealed that during the 2001 population census survey that child mortality rates increased from 16 deaths to 19 deaths per 1000 live births in 1991 thereby heightening under five mortality from 66 deaths to 73 deaths per 1000 live births in 2001 (2001 Population and Housing Census). Gender disparities continue to be reported as existing in all the childhood mortality, with higher rates observed among this time, male children.

The current Sentinel Surveillance report (2003) also paints a bleak and worrying future for Botswana's youth. Although Botswana's youth constitute 47% of the total population, HIV prevalence among pregnant women aged 15-19 years stands at 22.8% and 38.6% for the 20-24 year olds. The 2004 Botswana AIDS Impact Survey (BAIS II) results continue to show that the virus has a very acute gender dimension, where for every HIV positive boy aged 15-19 years, there are three HIV positive girls. Although education statistics (2001) show a general decline in primary school dropout rate, pregnancy alone contributed to 1.8% of all dropouts nationwide. Although one may argue this is not a significantly high figure, it highlights prevalence of unprotected sex among Botswana's school-aged girls and remains a cause for concern, when one looks at transmission rates of HIV/AIDS in Botswana.

These frightening scenarios have provided a rationale for Botswana government to solicit support and join hands with development partners to try and arrest the situation. To this extent, with the signing of the current Government of Botswana/UNICEF Programme of Cooperation (2003-2007), Girls' Education Programme has become a high priority for both the Government of Botswana and UNICEF. In this partnership, Girls' Education will not only contribute to achieving gender parity in primary and secondary schools in Botswana; but will also promote equity in access to education, quality of education and improve learning achievement so that the national goals of an "Educated, informed nation" are also reached. Under this programme, UNICEF and the Ministry of Education recognizes "gender" as a feature that should be used to address problems associated with Botswana's culture on "masculinities and feminities" which places the girl-child at the most vulnerable end of the scale.

Despite encouraging enrolment rates and the fact that gender parity has been achieved in Botswana's schools, the learning environment in our schools is still characterized by a fixed natural endowment that corresponds with being female or male. Feminism, thus continues to be polarized by masculinity in both the values and attitudes enshrined in the school systems.

It is encouraging to see how this book, echoing the voices and identities of Botswana children, actually puts the country on the map in relation to critical research on the views of children on issues of gender and sexuality within the context of the curriculum and school environment. It is my hope that, this book like many others to come, will provide guidance and informed interventions for the joint Ministry of Education/UNICEF Girls' Education Programming that is responsive to the needs of Botswana's school children.

Festina Shale Bakwena  
Permanent Secretary  
Ministry of Education

# Introduction and Background

## Researching Young People at the Time of the HIV/AIDS Pandemic

It was at a UNICEF workshop held in Malawi in 2001 on the theme of Gender, Sexuality and HIV/AIDS in Education that the aims of this study were developed. This workshop was attended by young people, researchers, officials from NGOs and Governments from various countries in Southern and Eastern Africa. Current HIV/AIDS and life skills programmes were discussed and some of the delegates had serious misgivings about the didactic ways these were being taught with little or no attempt to engage with the pupils themselves and the significance which they attached to gender and sexuality. The point was made that life skills education would only be effective in mitigating the impact of HIV/AIDS if it was 'relevant.' In other words, it must be based upon an understanding of the concerns, fears, pleasures and desires of young people, and of the identities and relationships they forge as boys and girls. At the meeting the nature of a multi-national qualitative research project focusing on the lives, identities and cultures of young people was discussed and the aims and methods were formulated. It was agreed that seven countries would take part: Botswana, Kenya, Rwanda, South Africa, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

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## Purpose of the Multi National Study

The broad purpose of this study, then, was to investigate the lives and identities of boys and girls as they articulated and presented them, with a particular focus on the significance they attached to gender and sexuality. And on the basis of this, we hoped to be able to inform curriculum designers on ways to develop effective life skills teaching materials and life skills educators on practical activities and teaching strategies that address their pupils' gendered and sexual identities.

## Specific Objectives of the Multi National Study

The study had the following specific objectives:

- To review country specific and regional literature on gender, sexuality, young people and HIV/AIDS, as well as methodologies informing this type of research;
- To assess how HIV/AIDS has impacted on the identities, experiences and relationships of girls and boys;
- To analyse how gender power relations can influence the spread of HIV/AIDS;
- To investigate ways in which boys and girls construct their identities and develop relationships in different environments – at school, at home, in the community – and whether and how these can mitigate against or facilitate the spread of HIV/AIDS;

- To explore how boys and girls understand and experience relationships between themselves and their duty bearers (significant adults, such as parents and teachers), and whether and how these relationships facilitate or inhibit their human rights and individual potentials;
- To examine what kind of lessons and resources are addressing life skills, sexuality and reproductive health, what sorts of messages are being conveyed about gender and sexuality, how pupils are being positioned, and how they experience and understand these lessons;
- To investigate how 'culture', 'tradition' and 'modernity' are understood by boys and girls, how these understandings connect with the ways they construct themselves and others as gendered and sexual beings, and whether and how these constructions make them more or less susceptible to HIV/AIDS;
- To probe teachers' constructions of their male and female pupils, and the ways they identify themselves in relation to them, with a view to exploring their sensitivity to gender power relations both inside and outside the classroom.

## Assumptions about Identity, Gender and Sexuality Informing the Research

Our view is that our identities are not fixed but are constructed from the cultural resources available to us and are constantly being negotiated as we interact with others, even as we talk about ourselves and others. The sorts of characteristics which our interviewees attributed to themselves and people of the same and opposite sex do not reflect some sort of essence of masculinity or femininity which boys and girls are born with and which determines how they feel and behave. Girls, for example are not naturally more domestic or less sexual than boys, rather they may appear to be so because they are expected to be so, because males are expected to talk publicly about sexuality and to 'propose' to girls rather than the other way round, and females are expected to be primarily responsible for the execution of domestic activities.

In investigating the gendered and sexual identities of young people, then, we need to examine the sorts of messages about what girls and boys are expected to be like which are conveyed in their everyday routines. These become so routine, and gendered patterns of behaviour become so habitual that they are usually taken for granted. The researchers in the various countries investigated the gender and sexual identities of young people, by focusing, in part, and making explicit the sorts of institutionalised practices and spaces through which gender identities were forged and constructed. For example, in the Botswana study we investigated aspects of schooling - curricula materials, classroom interaction between pupils and teachers, selective application of corporal punishment and seating arrangements and their role in helping to produce and regulate particular sorts of gender identities and relations among pupils. Our identities are not just the products of contemporary cultural expectations. These have long histories, and in Chapter 1, in the literature review, we explore these, and investigate the ways 'traditional' rites and

rituals constructed gender and sexual identities and the salience of these constructions of gender and sexuality in contemporary Botswana.

While our identities as male and female are strongly influenced and constrained by our cultural and social environments, we also play an active part in constructing our identities. And one of the key aims of the research in the various countries was to examine how boys and girls, as active beings, constructed their identities as particular sorts of boys and girls through the ways they spoke about each other in the interviews we conducted with them. Here we were drawing on the work of Foucault and other writers influenced by 'Discourse Theory' who argue that the language people use to describe themselves and others does not reflect essential characteristics they possess or are born with, but that we actually construct and forge our identities in particular ways through the language we use. The researchers on this multi national project tried to address young people as active beings in this sense, by developing 'young person centred methods, for example conducting loosely structured interviews in which young people, themselves, were encouraged to set the agenda and talk about issues which concerned them. We have tried to encourage a 'voice' for young people and have quoted extensively in this study from our interview transcripts. We have, however, taken their accounts not simply at face value but analysed them, also, in terms of the ways they are constructing and presenting themselves as particular kinds of girls and boys. (For a good account of this kind of 'young person centred research' and approach to analysis, see Frosh, Phoenix and Pattman, 2002)

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A major concern in our work is whether the sorts of identities boys and girls routinely construct and inhabit in their everyday lives makes them more or likely to enter risky relationships with regard to contracting HIV/AIDS. This is a theme which we first raise in Chapter 1 in the literature review, and runs throughout the study. In Chapter 7, in the Summary and Recommendations, we draw on our findings about the gendered and sexual identities of the young people we studied, and also reflect upon the sorts of 'young person centred approach' we adopted which enabled our subjects to talk so freely about themselves to make suggestions about pertinent, relevant and effective educational and social policy responses to the HIV/AIDS pandemic.

## The Botswana Study

In the Botswana study we focused on boys and girls aged 14-16 (the age range varied between countries, with the maximum 18 and the minimum 6). Our research was school based, focusing on the lives of children and the cultural environments in four schools. (In other countries some researchers explored the lives of young people outside school). Like the researchers in the other countries, we used loosely structured interviews as our main method of investigation, combining these, however, with detailed observation of classroom and playground practices and curricula materials. Triangulated research

techniques and data sources were used to investigate young people and their sexual and gender identities in relation to HIV/AIDS.

The Regional Coordinator, Rob Pattman, working with Lead Researcher, Bagele Chilisa, conducted a workshop at the University of Botswana Jan 2002 to standardise the research methodologies so that a comparison of the seven country case studies could effectively be made, and to discuss and practice participatory and 'young person centred' forms of research. The researchers were trained to listen hard to their interviewees and to pick up on issues they raised, asking them to elaborate on these and to provide illustrations. Crucially, they were trained not to be judgmental, and in this respect, perhaps, to be different from most adults in conversations with children and young people about topics especially about gender and sexuality.

**Lead Researcher:**

Bagele Chilisa

**Researchers:**

Musa W. Dube, Nnunu Tshoko

Bontshetse Mazile





# Chapter 1: Literature Review

## Theoretical and Cultural Background

### Sexuality and Gender

According to Geeta Rao Gupta, “sexuality is distinct from gender yet intimately linked to it.”<sup>1</sup> Gupta holds that while gender is a culturally specific construct that “refers to the widely shared expectations and norms within a society about appropriate male and female behaviour, characteristics and roles,” sexuality is “a social construction of a biological drive.” Ken Stone concurs that “sexuality assumes different forms in relation to such changing variables as kinship structures; gender relations and ideologies; patterns or residence, mobility, and occupation; economic and class relations; structures of ethnicity and ‘race’; access to and use of contraception; demarcations of public and private spheres and a host of other elements of social life.”<sup>2</sup> Gupta argues that sexuality is a social construct imbued with relations of power:

**We talk about the components of sexuality as the Ps of sexuality – practices, partners, pleasure/pressure/pain and procreation. The first two refer to aspects of behaviour – how one has sex and with whom – while the others**



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<sup>1</sup> Geeta Rao Gupta, 2000:1.

<sup>2</sup> Ken Stone, 2000:235.

refer to the underlying motives. But we have learned through data gathered over many years that there is an additional P of sexuality that is the most important – power. The power underlying any sexual interaction, heterosexual or homosexual, determines whose pleasure is given priority and when, how and with whom sex takes place.<sup>3</sup>

The above definitions suggest that sexuality happens within various power relations based upon gender, class, age, ethnicity and race. This literature review seeks to explore how sexuality, gender and age interact in Botswana's cultures and within Southern African cultural thinking, and how they affect the wellbeing of young people in the HIV/AIDS era. The review will do this by:

- Briefly outlining the historical and cultural background of Botswana and the impact of HIV/AIDS on its young people;
- Exploring the historical/cultural space of gender, age and sexuality, with particular focus on young people in Botswana;
- Highlighting the advantages and disadvantages of youth gender and sexuality identity and how they relate to the spread of HIV/AIDS;
- Describing the colonial impact on the cultural sex educational space of Botswana's youth and how this affects them in the AIDS era.

## Cultural and Historical Background

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Botswana is a landlocked country in Southern Africa, sharing borders with South Africa, Zimbabwe, Namibia and Zambia. The country's semi-arid grasslands sustain a successful beef industry, a thriving diamond business, growing tourism, a nascent manufacturing sector and a struggling agricultural sector. Economically, Botswana is ranked as a middle-income country with a GDP of U\$ 3,200.<sup>4</sup> Nonetheless, its wealth is unevenly distributed, with 47% of Botswana's households living beneath the poverty line – particularly rural households and those headed by women.<sup>5</sup> This means that economic class is a major category for determining social relations – and consequently for shaping the sexuality of the Botswana and the progression of HIV/AIDS prevention and care.<sup>6</sup>

Botswana is occupied by various Bantu-speaking ethnic groups, including the Bakgalagadi, Bakalaka, Babirwa and Batswapong, the eight Setswana-speaking groups, Wayeyi, Bambukushi and Basubiya. There are other ethnic groups not from the Bantu speakers, including Khoisan, Baherero and Damara. The sparse population of 1.6 million is dominated by youth, with under-18s constituting at least 50% of the total. The youth of Botswana are confronted by several social problems, including high unemployment, insufficient secondary schools and tertiary institutions, lack of entertainment facilities, high teenage

<sup>3</sup> Geeta Rao Gupta, 2000:2.

<sup>4</sup> UNICEF 2000:6-9.

<sup>5</sup> BIDPA 1993:94.

<sup>6</sup> Shaibu and Dube, 2002:9-11.

pregnancy rates, risky sexual behaviour, high school dropout rates, and discriminatory cultural practices.<sup>7</sup> Unemployment among 15-24-year-olds is estimated at 37%.<sup>8</sup>

## Constructions of Youth and Age in Botswana

Among the social factors that most affect gender and sexuality in Botswana is age. While in some cultures youthfulness is highly valued, in others old age is associated with greater wisdom and power. The word of the elders is final, capable of bringing a blessing or a curse, and must be obeyed by all who are younger. This is particularly the case among the Bantu groups of Southern Africa, to which most of Botswana's ethnic groups belong.

In traditional Setswana cultures and thinking, age is a major category defining the borders of social relations between different generations: between age-mates, between parents and siblings, in the home and in public. In such cultures, age often overrides female gender categories of inferiority. For example, an elderly woman may have power over some male family members on the basis of her age. In some cultures, such as Xhosa, where women are not allowed to become priests, they are allowed to hold such positions in their old age. Often, however, this situation also means that elderly women are increasingly associated with evil in their old age. And so one finds that *boloi* (witchcraft) in many Setswana and Southern African cultures is associated with female senior citizens.<sup>9</sup>

The centrality of age, and in particular the association of old age with power, means that youth are socially constructed as a subordinate group on the basis of their age. They are therefore socially powerless and required to obey all elders in society – be they their parents, teachers, neighbours or other members of the community. Although much has changed due to modernisation, in a typical Setswana culture, the youth are expected to listen and to obey their parents and elders without question. In his comprehensive anthropological study, *A Handbook of Tswana Law and Custom*, Isaac Schapera writes:

**Children must be at all times subservient to their elders. Motsala-motho ke modimo wa gagwe, it is said: 'A child's parent is its god.' They are expected to fear and honour their parents, to address and speak to them politely and with the use of appropriate relationship terms, to behave towards them and in their presence with considerable respect, and to seek their permission before going anywhere. Above all, unquestioning obedience is demanded from them... Children are further taught numerous rules of etiquette and correct behaviour in regard to social life generally, including particularly the payment of respect towards all their seniors, whether related to them or not.<sup>10</sup>**

<sup>7</sup>UNICEF 2000:13.

<sup>8</sup>UNDP 2002:29.

<sup>9</sup>Chilisa et al. 2002:31.

<sup>10</sup>Schapera, 1938:179-180.

However, the Setswana cultures also have a space for the recognition and rights of the youth, exemplified by such sayings as '*Susu are ilela Suswana gore Suswana a tle a go ilele*', ie. 'The elders must respect the young so that the youth will respect them.'

### The Importance of Addressing Historical and Cultural Perspectives on Sexuality in Developing HIV/AIDS Educational Programmes for Young People

The 2003 Sentinel Surveillance report (NACA 2003) figures suggest the youth are the most affected by HIV. HIV prevalence among pregnant women aged 20-24 is 38.6%, and 42.8% among those aged 25-29 while prevalence for 15-19-year-olds are estimated at 22.8%. Moreover, the virus has a very gendered face, where prevalence trends among the 15-19 year olds in the 2004 Botswana AIDS Impact Survey (BAIS II) show that for every HIV positive boy, there are three HIV positive girls.

In order to account for this, we must address, in part, the significance attached among many people in contemporary Botswana to cultural and historical beliefs regarding sexual practices and relations. For example the continued symbolic significance, which we examine later, of traditional puberty rites in framing popular constructions of gender, sexuality and youth. While a lot has changed, the philosophy behind these cultural practices continues to inform present thought on sexuality and gender among the Batswana and other citizens of Southern Africa. Some historical and cultural beliefs have undergone particular reinterpretations in the HIV/AIDS era. A good example is the practice of '*go itlhatswa madi*'.<sup>11</sup> (cleansing one's blood), which has taken a deadly turn, facilitating intergenerational sex, rapid transmission of sexually transmitted infections and making it difficult for the 'window of hope' to remain clear of HIV/AIDS. In this, older men have sex with virgin girls because they believe they will be cleansed of sexually transmitted diseases. Young girls are also sexually targeted by older men because they believe such girls are less likely to be infected. While young men, in particular, are often constructed as 'bulls' and notions of "culture" and "tradition" invoked to legitimate this, young people are also criticised for violating what are construed as "traditional" values by engaging in sex, and discouraged even from being open about their sexual feelings. Reflecting this is the youth-unfriendly nature of health facilities and clinics in Botswana, discouraging youths from visiting them to pick up condoms, and increasing their chances, therefore of engaging in high risk, unprotected sex.<sup>12</sup>

It is imperative that popular and current interpretations of cultural and historical constructions of gender, youth, sexuality and HIV/AIDS are explored in order to facilitate the development of programmes that address the needs of youth in HIV/AIDS prevention and care.

<sup>11</sup>UNDP 2000: 26-27; UNICEF 2000:11; Seloilwe and Ntseane, 2000:30 & 40.

<sup>12</sup>Fidzani et al, 2000:39 & 42.

## The Vulnerability of AIDS Orphans

Young people who become AIDS orphans are particularly vulnerable for the following reasons:

- They face an uncertain future as their parents die after a long, impoverishing illness related to AIDS;
- They can be psychologically traumatised by the process and grief of nursing their dying parents;
- They lose the economic and moral support of their parents;
- They face hostile neighbourhoods and school environments due to HIV/AIDS stigma;
- They often lose their inheritance to property grabbing relatives;
- Once orphaned, they may face sexual exploitation and abuse, and a high risk of infection.<sup>13</sup>

In Multi Indicators Cluster Survey (MICS 2002), it was estimated that there were 78,000 orphans in Botswana, primarily due to HIV/AIDS related deaths. Yet, because of the intensity of HIV/AIDS stigma, only 47,725 of these are currently registered according to the Government of Botswana's 2004 Department of Social Services.<sup>14</sup> Most orphans live in poverty-stricken households and are subjected to child labour and frequent sexual abuse. They are thus much more likely to drop out of school, fall pregnant and be exposed to HIV/AIDS infection. In addition to these risks, the girl-child is also more likely to be withdrawn from school to care for her sick parents as well as other siblings, or when funds are not sufficient to send all the orphaned children to school. She may also be drafted into sex work, or to be married to raise funds for her surviving siblings.<sup>15</sup>

## Social Class and the Vulnerability of Youth

As well as age, social class influences the different gender and sexual experiences of girls and boys, men and women. Those from a relatively affluent background are much more in a position to determine how, when and with whom they have sex, while those who are less privileged have fewer choices. Thus women who have no access to income generating resources or other forms of support are much more likely to become involved in sex work, or to remain in abusive relationships.<sup>16</sup> Countrywide research carried out in 1999-2000 confirmed that a low-income status definitely increases the vulnerability of youth to HIV infection. The research indicated that the 'sugar daddy' phenomenon is widespread among young females, especially those from low-income groups. These girls have sexual relations with older men for material gain and to receive gifts such as cell phones, clothes, rides, and hairstyles.<sup>17</sup> Fidzani's research on HIV/AIDS in the North East District confirmed this and found that:

<sup>13</sup>ASU 1998:16-20.

<sup>14</sup>UNICEF 2005 Annual Report: 6.

<sup>15</sup>Shaibu and Dube, 2002:10.

<sup>16</sup>Shaibu and Dube, 2002:13-14.

<sup>17</sup>Seloiwe and Ntseane, 2000:27.

The incidence of 'sugar daddy' or 'sugar mummy' is highly prevalent in the district. Youth no longer have fears to engage in sexual relations with adults. These adults, on the other hand, facilitate this practice. For young girls, the motive behind this practice is material and financial gain. Young girls more especially are enticed with material goods. The girls stated they go for men who have 'triple C', which means 'Cellular, car and cash'. Hence, older men and women engage in sexual encounters with young boys and girls in exchange for finance.<sup>18</sup>

Clearly, at the very heart of this intergenerational sex is the low economic status of youth in comparison to that of elderly men and women. This combination of gender, economic class and age is undoubtedly exacerbated by today's materially-oriented, media-driven culture and its unabashed promotion of consumer goods.<sup>19</sup> As in most of Africa, traditional Botswana culture holds that it is much more acceptable for elderly men to marry younger girls than for elderly women to marry younger boys. As men are cattle and land owners, such marriages can also help to elevate the economic and social status of the young brides. Elderly women, however, generally do not marry younger boys, as they are unlikely to have enough property to 'guarantee' the union.

High levels of unemployment in Botswana have disproportionately affected young people from relatively poor backgrounds making them, and especially young women, particularly vulnerable to entering sexual relations with older people. Despite the risks associated with such relationships, they are, however, often regarded as a vital source of income and poverty alleviation. According to the *Ngamiland Comprehensive Plan on HIV/AIDS*, "in some cases a love affair between a worker and a girl at least ensured the girl's family some food." As one informant of a 1999 study put it, "we condone such affairs because that is where we get our tea."<sup>20</sup> A 2000 study found that:

Due to high mobility and poverty among female-headed households and private students in particular, some respondents confessed their involvement in sex exchange activities. A private senior secondary school student had this to say: "Some of us engage in sex for money when we are out of money because our parents are in the villages as far as Shakawe and Gantsi. Unlike in the village, in Francistown, you spend money for everything, so the allowance from home is not sufficient."<sup>21</sup>

This is further confirmed by the findings of *HIV/AIDS in the North East District: Situation and Response Analysis*, which pointed out that poverty and unemployment put pressure on youth and women to get involved in sexual relationships. Some parents find themselves

<sup>18</sup>Fidzani et al: HIV/AIDS in the North East District: Situation and Response Analysis, 2000:36.

<sup>19</sup>Shaibu and Dube, 2002:10.

<sup>20</sup>Molebatsi and Mogobe, 1999:31.

<sup>21</sup>Seloiwe and Ntseane, 2000:33.

unable to provide essential services such as food and clothing to their children. Lack of employment opportunities also contributes to the separation of families. This encourages the formation of relationships which may lead to HIV infection.<sup>22</sup>

### Ethnicity and Sexual Relations

The influence of class also has a strong racial element in Botswana. A modern history of colonialism has ensured that white people tend to be socially and economically privileged throughout Southern Africa. Although sexual relations and certainly marital relations may largely have been prohibited between whites and blacks, there has been a history of whites having sexual relations with their housekeepers and gardeners.<sup>23</sup>

According to minority groups, the eight-Setswana speaking groups are privileged because their language and culture are used as the national medium of communication, while groups such as Basarwa (Khoisan), Bakgalagadi, Bangologa, Bakalaka, Bayei, Basubiya, Bambukushu, Babirwa and Batswapong are regarded as minorities and their languages not used as mediums of instruction in school – a factor that often militates against their educational performance. By far the most affected and discriminated group are the Khoisan, whose economic status as an ethnic group remains lowest. However, although their sexuality is generally constructed negatively, this does not mean that Batswana of ethnic groups do not have sexual relations with them. One common saying states that *'Mosarwa ke wa monna fela,'* ie. 'The low ethnic status of the San applies to their males only.' San women are frequently sexually exploited by – and often bear children to – their bosses and cattle owners from the majority ethnic groups.<sup>24</sup>

In traditional Setswana cultures, the impact of economic and social class on gender and sexuality was often demonstrated in polygamous marriages. While polygamy gradually became less common, it was still practiced by men of economic and social standing. Thus *dikgosi* (kings) were more likely to be in polygamous marriages due to their economic power and positions as leaders. To keep peace between different ethnic groups, women from various subject ethnic groups would be chosen as wives of the *kgosi*. Alternatively, the *kgosi* would give his daughters and sisters to his subject ethnic groups to win their loyalty. In such relationships, power is clearly the driving force, while pleasure/pain and procreation are merely the means to its end.

### Concluding Comment

All these influences have served to undermine the position of youth in sexual relationships, and to forfeit their power in negotiating when, how and with whom sex takes place. In the era of HIV/AIDS, this undoubtedly means that the youth are much more likely to be

<sup>22</sup>HIV/AIDS in the North East District: Situation and Response Analysis, 2000:42.

<sup>23</sup>Head, 1989:7-10.

<sup>24</sup>Mmualefe, 2000.

infected and affected by the epidemic than other groups. The vulnerability of the youth to HIV/AIDS infection is exacerbated by their participation – often forced or expected – in intergenerational relationships. If appropriate preventative and care projects are to be designed for the youth of Botswana, there is clearly a vital need to better understand how gender and sexuality are constructed by the country's youth, in order to ensure that more realistic and practical lessons are incorporated into the national life skills and HIV/AIDS curriculum.

## Cultural Education on Gender, Sexuality and Youth in Botswana

### Childhood: Formation of the Gender and Sexual Identities of Youth

The gender identities of young Batswana are crafted from their earliest days, for example by traditional names that communicate the roles they are expected to perform by society: Seanokeng/Segametsi (one who fetches water), Mosidinyana (one who grinds corn), Bontle (beauty) or Lorato/Ludo (love) for girls; Modisaotsile (the shepherd has come), Kgosietsle (the leader has come), Oagile (builder of the house), Mogale (the brave one) for boys. Children's gender identities are also constructed through Setswana folktales and sayings, which typically associate girls with beauty, domesticity and child care, and boys with cattle ownership, leadership, intelligence and bravery. Such folklore is usually endorsed by the tasks that parents give their children: the boys herding and rearing the cattle, while the girls work in the fields, fetch wood and water, cook and clean the house, and look after their younger siblings.

Although this early socialisation was once seen to instil discipline in children and mould them into responsible adults, the changes of the modern age have served to undermine such traditional structures – with children these days far more likely to disregard or deliberately ignore their parents' advice.<sup>25</sup> There are serious double standards evident in relations between Batswana parents and their children. According to the *Ngamiland Comprehensive District Plan on HIV/AIDS*, while many parents implore their children not to become involved in sexual relationships, "it is the very same parents who approach girls asking for sexual favours in return for money or alcoholic drinks."

The HIV/AIDS in the North East District: Situation and Response Analysis confirms this quandary:

**The youth on the other hand blame society for the prevailing situation. They contend that there are no role models in the communities to guide and direct them. For example, the very adults who complain about their behaviour are the ones who indulge in alcohol consumption and even unprotected sex. This claim was supported by evidence obtained from**

<sup>25</sup>Fidzani et al. 2000:36



all schools showing that 90% of the pregnancies are caused by men in community. In one senior school, for example, one female student indicated that men referred to the school as a 'farm', meaning they are free to come and 'harvest' a good crop of female students whenever an opportunity arises.<sup>26</sup>

Children and society in general have largely lost the structured discipline of the past – a factor that has clearly accelerated the spread of HIV/AIDS among the country's youth. In their *Situation and Response Analyses on HIV/AIDS in the City of Francistown* (2000), E. Seloilwe and P. G. Ntseane found that:

Cited alongside the erosion of cultural norms and values is the loss of parental control. Loss of parental control is viewed by adults as fuelled by the emergence of numerous organisations responsible for the advocacy of the rights of the child. An example given was the Child-line organisation... As one parent observed... it was the responsibility of parents to introduce sex education to the mature youth... Children, on the other hand, confessed that they need parental guidance because the environment they grow in gives them confusing and contradictory messages.

## Teenage to Adulthood: *Bogwera, Bojale*, Sexuality and Gender Education

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In traditional Setswana and Southern African cultures, gender education that began from birth and continued through childhood laid the foundation for education on sexuality, by further training children on reproductive roles and social power during rites of passage. In accordance with the centrality of age in Setswana cultures, education on sexuality was delivered according to age groups and administered to young people to mark their transition from childhood to adulthood when they reached puberty in what was called *bojale* and *bogwera* rites of passage. In these rites, boys' (*bogwera*) and girls' (*bojale*) age regiments were formed and their members given a joint name. Regiment leaders were drawn from the royal family and assisted by teachers from the community. The girls' regiment leader was either the *kgosi's* sister or daughter, while the boys' would be either the *kgosi's* brother, son or brother's son.<sup>27</sup> With an initiation system similar to those employed in Lesotho, Swaziland and Malawi, the regiments were responsible for teaching the initiates local customs relating to adulthood, including sex education and sexuality.<sup>28</sup>

### ***Bogwera*: Boys to Manhood!**

According to Schapera, *bogwera* rites "marked the transition from boyhood into manhood, with all its privileges and responsibilities. A man who had not passed through them was

<sup>26</sup>ibid.

<sup>27</sup>Schapera, 1938:109.

<sup>28</sup>See also Sindile Moitse, 1994:46; Isabel Phiri, 1998:131.

always regarded as “a boy,” no matter how old he might actually be; he might not sit or eat with other men at the *kgotla* (courtyard), or take part in tribal discussions; he was not allowed to marry.”<sup>29</sup> While these rites have been largely abandoned in many Botswana cultures, they remain significant in the sense that they represented the space in which education on sexuality and gender roles was memorably impressed upon teenage children as they stood ready to cross the threshold into adulthood. Describing the events and contents of *bogwera*, Schapera writes:

All eligible boys were initiated simultaneously in groups, kept secluded in one or more special ‘camps,’ *mephato*, away from all the villages for three months or so... At the camp the boys were first circumcised in order of tribal precedence. They were then systematically taught a number of secret formulae and songs, admonishing them to honour, obey, support the Chief; to be ready to endure hardships and even death for the sake of the tribe; to be united as a regiment and help one another; to value cattle as the principal source of livelihood, and so herd them carefully; to attend the *kgotla* regularly, as this was the place for men, and to look after its fire; to honour and ungrudgingly obey old people; and to abandon all boyish practices. Much of this instruction also dealt with the important topic of sex, the boys being taught the physiology of sex relations, the duty of procreation and other rules of conduct in married life and the dangers of promiscuous intercourse with ritually ‘unclean’ women... They were moreover subjected to starvation and blows, discomfort and actual torture, and rigorous and irksome taboos of many kinds, and were made to participate in strenuous hunting expeditions, all with the object of hardening them.

In the *bogwera*, a year later, a second ceremony for the same regiment would be called. At this point, the regiment gathered in the *kgosi's* kraal and was made to go over what they had learned at the first camp. This second ceremony was in fact a step towards graduation. The age regiment was “given additional instruction, accompanied as usual by many indigenous and painful forms of discipline. They were then sent to perform their first task as a regiment which could involve going on a hunting expedition where each initiate was expected to bring what they had killed. After this they were regarded as fully grown men, and were now free to marry.”<sup>30</sup>

### Swati Boys Coming into Manhood

As regards boys coming of age among the Swati, Dennis Mpassou writes:

For the puberty initiation, rituals for boys take place on an individual basis... Early in the morning after the first wet dream, the boy wakes

<sup>29</sup>Schapera, 1938:105.

<sup>30</sup>Schapera, 1938: 107.

up and goes to stand naked by the gate to the *esibayeni* (kraal) until one of the elders notices his presence. An elder who sees him... will whip him lightly with a stick as an acknowledgement that his situation is understood... The boy will then take the cattle and drive them to the farthest grazing field, and remain there with the cattle until the elder sends a party to fetch him. The *mkhulu* (grandfather) then goes to the *esibayeni* to report that the boy has come of age and ask them to make the boy strong and fertile so that he will have many children. The family *inyanga* is also contacted immediately to supply *tinhlanti* to be used for *kutfombisa*... the initiated is then given an esoteric lesson on sex, responsibility and duties of an adult man. He is particularly instructed in ways of having sex with girls without making them pregnant until they are married, by means of a sexual practice known as *kujuma*.<sup>31</sup>

In these ritual activities, the sexual formation of a boy is clearly gendered. It is notable that the boy announces his coming of age by standing at the kraal, taking cows out for grazing, and spending the day there alone until he is fetched. He is also instructed and medically treated by people of his own gender. While a Swati girl is encouraged to suppress her sexual desires, a Swati boy is given lessons on sex and taught how to engage in intercourse without impregnating a girl. It seems that abstinence is not necessarily required among boys. Rather, what is feared is pregnancy outside marriage.

Despite these individual and family approaches to puberty rites, the Swati sexual and gender formation of boys and girls is also taken to a communal level, when age regiments are formed at a later stage. Through these regiments, called under royal leadership, young men are trained in “military techniques and in defence strategies” and the “importance of carrying out their royal duties and of respecting elders.”<sup>32</sup> Swati girls age cohorts are formed and “the princess teaches the girls Swazi customs and regulations regarding food, etiquette, language, sexual skills and moral behaviour.” In both cases, sexual identity is being constructed within a clearly gendered framework.

### Analysis of Boys’ Gender and Sexuality Formation

A number of issues relating to youth, gender and sexuality are worth noting in these cultural obligations. First, an evident social marking of a boundary was undertaken at a particular age. An initiate moved from the social status of being a child to being a recognised adult with specified citizenship rights, which were accompanied by assuming particular social responsibilities. Second, the methods of teaching are notable. They involved bringing together boys of the same age into an isolated camp for an extended period, where they were brought to understand the social values and expectations of adult men. This

<sup>31</sup>Mpassou, 1998:21.

<sup>32</sup>Mpassou, 1998:22.

approach of bringing age-mates together under the same training, giving them the same name and asking them to bear each other's burdens and police each other's behaviour had a major strength. It was an approach that recognised the need of young adults to belong and to be accepted by their peers, and used peer pressure among young adults to achieve constructive ends.

A closer look at the teaching methods and content underline that *bogwera* was a space of significant gender marking. The above descriptions of the roles of boys were associated with public space, leadership, property ownership and patriotism. As adults, they were taught to concern themselves with the political issues of state welfare; to be faithful to their kgosi, to praise him and themselves. They were taught to frequent the *kgotla* court and to be ready to fight and die for their kingdom. As cattle were the major source of wealth in Botswana cultures, they were instructed to value cows as the principal source of their livelihood. The construction of their gender also encompassed their roles as husbands and fathers.

The boys were also inculcated with a particularly tough 'masculinity' during their training for manhood. This socially accepted – and expected – masculinity was characterised by bravery, fearlessness, endurance of pain, and self-defence. To this end, the boys were beaten, subjected to torture and starvation, and sent on strenuous hunting expeditions. As Schapera stresses, the objective of this training was to 'harden' them into 'tough' men. During training, the initiates were also encouraged to aspire to high praise, of the kind that compared great warriors and chiefs to strong and brave animals.<sup>33</sup>

Both Schapera and Moitse underline that the *bogwera* is a space that shapes the sexuality of young men. Although little is written about the responsibilities of marriage, the reproductive role of fatherhood is explicitly mentioned as a social expectation. While Schapera writes that young men were warned against getting involved with 'unclean women,' it appears that they were not so much warned against promiscuity as against the specific health dangers of involvement with 'unclean women'. In his treatment of family law, Schapera discusses marital infidelity and offers a window onto what might have been taught to young men in the *bogwera*:

**Husband and wife should, theoretically, remain faithful to each other after marriage. It is a breach of marital rights if either, except under such special conditions...has sexual relations with any other person.... But there is a marked difference of standard in this respect between husband and wife. If the husband is unfaithful to his wife, she appears in general to be complacent about it, so long as he continues to look after her decently, sleeps with her regularly and does not obviously favour his concubine. It is recognized that a man is inclined to be promiscuous:**

<sup>33</sup>Sindile Moitse, *The Ethnomusicology of the Basotho*, 1994: 51.

*'Monna poo gaa agelwe lesaka,' goes the saying: 'A man, like a bull, cannot be confined to a kraal' ... Adultery on the part of the wife is held to be a more serious offence, and her husband has the right to claim damages from her paramour – a right she cannot exercise against her husband's concubine.*<sup>34</sup>

It would seem, therefore, that the construction of male gender and sexuality entailed some concept of acceptable male infidelity in marriage.

While the process of *bogwera* involved bringing young men into an exclusively male social space and cultivating a lifelong commitment to each other, it appears that no room was permitted for homosexuality. Boys were wholly constructed to expect heterosexual relationships. However, according to the *Botswana Human Development Report (2000)*, "sex between men is not a new phenomenon in Botswana. The Batswana do not condone it and have kept it as an illegal act. The word *matanyola* refers to penetrative anal sex, particularly between men."<sup>35</sup> All other HIV/AIDS literature remains largely silent on homosexuality.

### Advantages and Disadvantages of Boys' Rites Relating to HIV/AIDS

While these rites have largely been abandoned in Botswana, their philosophy continues to shape the thinking of many Batswana and other ethnic groups of Southern Africa on sexuality. The question to ask, therefore, is how such rites may increase or reduce the risk of HIV/AIDS, and how they may assist us to arrest the epidemic.

Some potential advantages of these rites include the following:

- All boys were circumcised, a factor that is held to reduce the risk of HIV infection;
- Sexual education was not left to chance, with the community ensuring that every boy was instructed in sexual education and the duties of adulthood;
- Initiates were taught to respect their parents and to defend their state, a concept that can be evoked today given that HIV/AIDS is arguably a threat to Botswana's national security;
- The clear marking of a boundary between childhood and adulthood provided for the teaching of specific rights, duties and responsibilities;
- Peer pressure was given a structured social space and harnessed towards responsible adulthood;
- The rites provided a platform for teaching on religious and community responsibilities.
- Potential for "openness" and discussions with people of the same age and sex.

<sup>34</sup>Schapera, 1938: 157.

<sup>35</sup>UNDP 2000:34.

Some potential disadvantages of the rites include the following:

- The gender identity inculcated in boys was that a man must be a man! This is often associated with the subordination of women, who were seen as *mothanka*. Such gender inequalities have been shown to be one of the major driving force in the HIV/AIDS epidemic;
- Circumcision, if applied with the same instrument on all the initiates, poses a risk of HIV infection;
- The rites underlined a man's 'duty' to procreate in marriage – a philosophy that continues to hinder condom use and HIV/AIDS prevention;
- The rites cultivated a masculinity that embraced forms of violence, and notions of "tradition" and "culture" are commonly invoked by boys and men in contemporary Botswana to legitimate violence against girls and women. This makes girls and women vulnerable to abusive sexual relationships, thus facilitating the spread of HIV/AIDS;
- They cultivated a masculinity of risk taking (*'monna o bolawa ke se se jeleng'*), a factor that does not help HIV/AIDS prevention;
- Boys were taught to associate women's sexuality with danger and uncleanness – a factor that contributes to the common association of women with STDs and HIV/AIDS, and influences women to avoid declaring their HIV status for fear of being stigmatised and blamed for bringing AIDS home;<sup>36</sup>
- *Bogwera* has been largely abandoned in Botswana, and, as parents find it difficult to discuss sexuality with their children, children receive little formal sex education in their families.<sup>37</sup>

### **Bojale: Girls to Womanhood**

Isaac Schapera writes less elaborately on girls' rites of passage – a discrepancy that may reflect his own patriarchal perspective or more generally represent the subordinate position of women in Batswana society. Of the ceremonies marking the transition of girls to womanhood, the *bojale* ceremonies, he writes:

They were held in the village itself, in certain selected homesteads carefully screened off from the public view. The initiates were first subjected to some form of operation, which among the Kgatla consisted in branding the inner part of the right thigh close to the vulva. After their wounds were healed, they spent the greater part of each day out in the veld. Here they were instructed by the women in matters concerning womanhood, domestic and agricultural activities, sex, and behaviour towards men. In the evenings they danced and sang at home, semi-public masquerades in honour of various deities forming

<sup>36</sup>Visser and Mhone, 2000:44; UNICEF 2000:37.

<sup>37</sup>Fidzani, 1999:38.

a conspicuous part of their routine. Like boys they were subjected to severe punishments and other hardships; they had to observe numerous taboos; they wore distinctive dresses woven from corn-stalks and painted their bodies with white lime... These regiments, like those of men, can be called upon by the Chief to work for him or for the tribe. Their work is generally of a lighter character, nor do they work as long as often as the men. They do such tasks as putting up the walls and thatching the roof of the hut at the *kgotla*, drawing water for any tribal or royal work, getting wood for the Chief's wife, putting up huts in the Chief's homestead, cleaning the village, fetching earth and smearing the walls of the Chief's homestead and weeding his wife's fields.<sup>38</sup>

The *bojale* rites usually entailed gathering girls of the same age, the use of songs, practical applications and the use of elderly female instructors. The notable strength of age regiments in teaching sexual education was that it moved this education from a family to a community level, where all young girls of the same age were taught what would be expected and accepted of them. Once again, peer philosophy was harnessed to good intent, with girls of the same age charged with the responsibility of disciplining any member of their regiment who violated the social standards.<sup>39</sup> Peer pressure among teenagers was given space and used constructively to influence their thoughts and behaviour. The question to ask, however, is how gender, sexuality and age were constructed within the realm of these collective traditions. In posing this question we are drawing attention to the social significance and the meanings which come to be attached to age, gender and sexuality through particular institutionalised practices.

The gender identity of young initiates was interwoven into all the activities and procedures. To start with, one notes the gendered nature of the names and spaces used in Batswana girls' initiations, with the female age regiments called after the corresponding male ones. The *bojale* itself took place in the home, a tellingly female space. This brings one to realise that the *bogwera* was carried out in a very male space, as it was out in the bush, where cattle graze and where the initiates had the right and the freedom to explore themselves.

Turning to the content of *bojale* teaching, one also notes the absence of the call to political leadership, patriotism and property ownership. Cattle and the *kgotla* are not named as duties of female adults, and girls are not taught to praise themselves or to associate themselves with public leaders. Rather, they are instructed in "domestic and agricultural activities, sex and behaviour towards men." They are called to perform strictly domestic duties in the *kgosi's* court, mainly involving assisting the *kgosi's* wife.

<sup>38</sup>Schapera, 1938: 115.

<sup>39</sup>Schapera, 1938:117.

Although the girls of Botswana, and those from the Sotho cultures from this country, underwent “severe punishments and other hardships” like the boys, a question hangs over the similarities between the two – whether both sets of endurance tests had the same meaning and ends. Where boys and girls were subjected to beating and were being instructed in the difficulties of life, the boys’ initiation differed in that it also involved training in skills of self-defence. They were thus trained in what Schapera has labelled “strenuous hunting expeditions” and called “to be ready to endure hardships, even death, for the sake of the tribe.” Accordingly, their graduation prerequisite entailed being sent either on a military raid or a hunting expedition. In short, the boys were not trained to become passive recipients of violence, but rather to express their masculine identities through the use of violence. For women, the object of their hardship training and how it was administered served to prepare them to accept a femininity that portrayed them as rather vulnerable. Indeed, in his discussion of family law, Schapera writes that, “If husband and wife quarrel, and the wife is at fault, the husband may beat her. Wife beating is common and considered quite justifiable if the woman is unfaithful, stays out late at night, or neglects her ordinary domestic duties.”<sup>40</sup> While Schapera was writing more than half a century ago, a recent study on violence against women in Botswana indicates that “three out of five women have been victims of assault, sexual harassment, sexual exploitation, severe beating, rape, incest, socio-economic abuse, murder or verbal and emotional abuse. In most instances, the perpetrators of these acts of violence were husbands, boyfriends and male family members.”<sup>41</sup> This cultural acceptance of violence against women continues to inform sexual relations in present day Botswana – and obviously thwarts effective HIV/AIDS prevention and care.

During their initiation rites, girls were also taught to embrace their reproductive roles as wives and mothers. Writing about the Sotho tradition, Sindile Moitse says that, “the need to provide a man with sexual gratification is emphasised in the female institution of initiation. Towards this end, the female initiate undergoes a ritual in which the labia minora is pulled to hang loosely. This is believed to increase the area of sexual sensitivity around the vagina, also bringing overwhelming excitement during sexual intercourse to both man and woman. Besides enhancing the sexual powers of the initiate, the pulling of the labia minora is believed to loosen the muscles of the birth canal, thus facilitating easy passage of the child during birth.”<sup>42</sup> This, however, is highly debatable.

Both sexual duties to ones’ male partner and motherhood were central aspects of constructing the sexuality and gender identity of teenage girls in Botswana and elsewhere in Southern Africa. Among the Malawian Chewa, for example, sexual training involved ritual engagements with the young girls by men they have never met before. A question can justifiably be posed if such gender orientation left any room for young girls to see themselves as independent human beings, whose lives were not necessarily purely for pleasing their partners or for motherhood.

<sup>40</sup> Schapera, 1938:158.

<sup>41</sup> WAD 2001:72.

<sup>42</sup> Moitse, 1994: 46; see also Chakanza, 1998:158-159.



Similarly with the songs of initiation, while boys were encouraged to compose songs and poems in praise of the *kgosi* and themselves, thereby recognising their own capacities and potentials, it appears that girls were never permitted such 'self-praise'. This is quite serious, as it indicates that the young women were encouraged from the outset to adopt and accept a subordinate state. Unlike the boys crossing into manhood, they did not have individual rights but communal ones. Indeed, as Schapera writes on the status of women in marriage, "the woman passes from legal control of her parents into that of her husband, who now becomes her guardian and as such is responsible for her actions. He is the official head of the household, while she is regarded as his *motlhanka* (servant). She cannot as a rule sue or be sued except through her father or his legal representative; while if she does wrong he is generally held liable and must pay any fine or damages incurred."<sup>43</sup> This speaks clearly: a girl who has entered adulthood and marriage is an adult without publicly recognised legal rights. She is only seen and heard through her male guardians, her father, husband or uncle.

### Advantages and Disadvantages of Girls' Rites Relating to HIV/AIDS

Some potential advantages of these rites include:

- 1) While the whole community was involved in a girl's boundary crossing into adulthood, her sexual education was not left to chance, but was taught within a socially structured space of family and community.
- 2) Girls were also instructed in their social duties and responsibilities, and peer pressure was put to constructive use among girls of the same age range.

And potential disadvantages include:

- 1) Through *bojale* girls were placed in the 'second-class' category of *motlhanka*, as compared with boys, who were taught to see themselves within the high class of *dikgosi*, *marena* or *baganka*. This clearly contributes to the kind of gender inequality that research has proven to be a major driving force in the spread of HIV/AIDS.
- 2) In addition, the strong link of girl's sexual identity with procreation means that condom use cannot be fully embraced – another aggravating factor in the spread of HIV/AIDS.
- 3) As well as the risks inherent in using a shared branding instrument, there are other clear dangers and disadvantages of *bojale*. The teaching of girls to endure violence and the lack of respect for their human and individual rights can both be aggravating factors in the spread of HIV/AIDS.<sup>44</sup>
- 4) And the use of intercourse rituals has the potential to infect every one of the initiates – on the very first day of their introduction to sex.

<sup>43</sup> Schapera, 1938:150-151.

<sup>44</sup> WAD 2001:38; UNDP 2000:14-15.

## Individual-Family Rites: Alternative Gender and Sexuality Teaching

Not all Southern African cultures used age regiments as the space for sex education. In other cultures, the rituals and instructions of 'coming of age' were often individually administered as each girl or boy entered puberty. For girls, this occurred when she experienced her first menstruation period, while for boys it occurred with the first 'wet dream'. The initial occurrence of a period or wet dream thus had to be reported to the elders, and was followed by the necessary rituals, teaching and community practices. In Botswana, these were practiced by the Kalanga and Babirwa communities, which often used a combination of the age regiment and individual approaches.<sup>45</sup> Many other ethnic groups in Southern Africa also employed a combination of the two approaches. It is important to describe some cases here in order to investigate how the gender and sexuality of young people was and is formed in different Southern African settings. It is probably correct to assume that, with the breakdown of the organised community age regiment, the individual approach has become the most commonly used initiation method in Botswana and Southern Africa in general.

### Girls Coming into Womanhood

In her dissertation on the *Expression of Concepts of Personhood Among Batswapong Puberty Rites* (2000), Lizzy Dineo gives a detailed description of how a girl moves from childhood into womanhood. Dineo writes that, among the Batswapong,

a girl is said to have reached puberty stage, when she has started menstruating... she first tells her mother who will tell the relatives... Very early in the morning the girl will be taken to a designated place, which has been agreed upon by the residents of that particular village... The girl is covered with a blanket to stop her being seen by people, especially men. She is then surrounded by initiated women and girls who start singing and ululating around her. The singing can go on until sunrise. After the sunrise, the initiate will be taken home... When the girl gets home, she is put into a hut and everything in that hut is taken out... The girl is smeared with *letsoku* which is red ochre... After being smeared with *letsoku* and *phepa*, the girl is taken out and a small boy who is considered to be innocent in terms of sexual relations is ordered to come and beat the girl with a stick on the back... The girl is expected to run away from the boy into the hut prepared for her. There was a common view concerning the girl being beaten by a young boy and the reason they gave me was to make her fear men. This girl is secluded from the society for seven days.

<sup>45</sup>Chakanza, 1998:158-159; Mpassou, 1998:20-23.

Concerning the content of the teaching imparted to the young girl, Dineo writes that:

During this period she is taught all the behavioural aspects of a woman, ie. she is supposed to get up before daylight to prepare food for her family and to instruct her children what to do. She is supposed to be a hard worker, strong and industrious. She should always be busy and look after her family's needs. She should know how to work on the land. She is warned of simple hygiene, that is she is warned of the danger of sleeping with men when she is menstruating because a menstruating woman is regarded as impure and dangerous to men... The initiate is taught to abstain from premarital sex as it has the dangers of having a child outside marriage with the consequent effect of her failure to get married... The initiated girls and women sometimes beat the girl so that she can take these teachings seriously and so that the knowledge that she gets from these teachings can shape her personhood. Kgosi Maele said the girl is beaten in order to make her strong so that she can bear all the disappointments and pains of life. Child bearing is a painful experience and, therefore, by subjecting a girl to a painful experience like beating prepares her for the pains and disappointments she might experience in the future.

Of the individual girl's initiation in Swaziland, Denis Mpassou writes:

The girls' initiation ritual is carried out on the day the girl has had her first menstruation period. After this experience, the girl is confined in the *gogo's* (grandmother's) hut, while the *gogo* goes to the cattle byre to inform the *emadloti* (ancestors) that the girl has now come of age. Then a soft porridge of a mixture of sorghum flour, soot from the kitchen and a little bit of the girl's menstruation blood together with some herbal medicine obtained from family *inyanga* is given to the girl to drink. This has the desired effect of suppressing the girl's sexual urge. Then the girl is made to purify herself by washing in cold water. After this ritual, senior girls of her age cohort are called in to give the initiated lessons on sexual behaviour, social manners and feminine responsibilities.<sup>46</sup>

### Analysis of Girls' Gender and Sexual Formation

In these descriptions, it is evident that the gender and sexuality of a young girl who has 'arrived' in adulthood is a family and a communal affair. In the Setswana cultures, other initiated girls and women ensured that the girl was welcomed into adult life through singing, direct teaching, and isolation over a period of time. The hardship teaching is still evident among the Batswapong, although it is not mentioned in the Swati tradition.

<sup>46</sup>Mpassou, 1998:21-22.

As in the case of *bojale*, the place of instruction was gendered in the sense that it was largely in the home. The content of the teaching passed onto them underlines the gender and sexual identity of being a wife and a mother. Menstruation blood is associated with impurity and sexual abstinence before marriage is underlined, in order to avoid pregnancy before marriage. For the Swati, the latter entails administering medical means to suppress the girl's sexual urge. What is unclear is whether this sexual suppression was expected to apply throughout a girl's life, or only just prior to marriage. Whatever the case, it is instilled in the girl that suppressed sexual desire is an admirable quality in womanhood.

An important phenomenon surfaces among the Batswapong: we note the presence of a young boy who beats the initiate in order to instil in her a fear of males. This practice is not only limited to the Batswapong in Botswana. Rather, it is practiced among other groups who follow this form of initiation, but with a few variations. In describing this practice, Chilisa notes that,

among some ethnic groups in Botswana, when a girl reaches puberty and begins menstruation there is a ritual to mark the transition to adulthood. Activities during the ritual include a girl going into a cattle kraal and young boys below her age whipping her. The initiate is supposed to run out and hide in house. In this ritual, it is symbolically acted out that a woman's place is not in the kraal (wealth), but in the house (private sphere). Similarly, the boy's act of whipping the young woman out of the kraal symbolises their power over her and their exclusive ownership of cattle. One could also argue that the ritual encourages/tolerates violence against women: the boys are taught that it is right to beat a woman and the woman is also taught to accept that it is permissible for a man to beat her.<sup>47</sup>

### Advantages and Disadvantages of Individual-Family Puberty Rites

In addition to the advantages of *bogwera* and *bojale*, these puberty rites show us that there was a certain space and time within the family for sex education, and that it was associated with certain individuals, including grandparents, mothers, women and other peers. This approach can still be used to educate youth on their sexuality and social responsibility in the HIV/AIDS era. In addition to the disadvantages already cited, however, the individual-family approach is weakened by the fact that families have been disintegrated by rural-urban migration and growing career-oriented mobility, which have reduced opportunities for individual-family sex education. One also notes a structural baptism of male violence against women and the presence of sexual 'double standards' as taught to boys and girls: the latter are to avoid premarital sex while the latter must avoid premarital pregnancy. In short, premarital sex is not totally forbidden, especially among boys who are usually the initiators of sex with girls.

<sup>47</sup>Chilisa et al. 2002:16.

## Significant Historical and Cultural Perspectives on Sexuality in Contemporary Botswana

### *Go Tloma Letlhokwa*

*Go tloma letlhokwa* ('engaging a young girl for marriage') highlights the accepted practice of sexual relations between younger girls and much older men. In fact, the engagement could be agreed upon even before the girl was born. As Schapera notes: "It often happened in the olden days that a man would bespeak as his son's future wife a girl who was still very young or who might even not yet have been born. This form of betrothal (variously known as *go tloma letlhokwa*... or, in the case of an unborn girl, *go opa mpa*, to 'strike the womb') was practiced especially between close relatives."<sup>48</sup> According to Schapera, the man was free to marry another woman while awaiting his betrothed. The girl would finally marry her chosen partner after she had undergone puberty rites, by which time her husband would be much older than her.

It was thus clearly acceptable for older men to have sex with much younger girls – but never vice versa. While this practice no longer exists, as parents no longer choose their children's partners, it is nonetheless an important cultural framework in the quest to understand the persistence of intergenerational sex and its impact on HIV/AIDS.

### *Nkadzana/Sebare*

Among the Kalanga and some Nguni people, this belief describes a relationship between a married man and his wife's younger sisters or her brother's daughters.<sup>49</sup> The married man calls his sister-in-law '*nkadzana*', or 'young girl', and she calls him '*sebare*'. It is culturally accepted that the man and his sister-in-law can openly flirt and be playfully warm towards each other. Depending on the man and the situation, this relationship can also become sexually involved.

In fact, if the wife brought her young sister or brother's daughter to stay in her house for an extended period, it was sometimes seen as sanctioning a sexual relationship between the two, or encouraging the husband to take a second wife. This was particularly the case in polygamous families and cultures. In fact, a wife who has trouble meeting the sexual needs of her husband or bearing children could go home and ask for her sister or brother's daughter to come and help her. The relationship would develop and the second wife would bear children for him.

Within this cultural understanding two things are evident. First, sexual relationships between people of different ages and power – young girls and heads of households – can

<sup>48</sup>Schapera, 1938:130.

<sup>49</sup>Fidzani et al, 2000:33.

take place within the domestic setting. Second, given the social and economic status of *sebare*, the girl child, who could be in her teens, is obviously operating within an unequal power relationship. Third, the practice is obviously a risky one in the HIV/AIDS era, as the girl child will be introduced to sex by an elderly man who could be infected with an STD.

### *Go Tlhagana*

Concerning this traditional relationship between cousins, Schapera writes:

A man's children and those of his sister are cousins of a special category (*bo-ntsala*), differentiated from the children of two brothers or of two sisters respectively. They were linked together in a very intimate relationship known as *go tlhagana*. Such cousins were formerly and still are regarded as the most suitable mates for each other. But even if they do not marry, or are of the same sex, they may, and indeed are often expected to, practice any amount of license and familiarity on one another, such as chaffing and swearing. This applies more particularly to those of the same generation... Relations between cousins of different generations are still fairly free and intimate.<sup>50</sup>

Such a relationship is one more cultural space in which sexual relations can materialise within the family, and sometimes between people of different age groups. Certainly, some form of security, facilitated by the fact that cousins are relatives and would not wish to provoke ill feelings between their parents, was the strength of this practice. On the other hand, it also means that younger girls' sexual intercourse could happen within the family system and, sometimes, with cousins who are older. In the HIV/AIDS era, this can clearly make younger girls much more vulnerable to HIV/AIDS. It also underlines the fact that the home is not necessarily a place of safety from sexual exploitation.

### *Gala Thaka/Seantlo*

According to Fidzani, "historically, for both the Kalanga and Setswana speaking groups, the practice of '*gala thaka*' or '*seantlung*' was very common."<sup>51</sup> As sexuality in Botswana was traditionally focused upon procreation in marriage, whenever this was not possible between married couples, other arrangements were made. *Gala thaka/Seantlo* refers to a culturally accepted sexual relationship between a married woman and another man or a married man and another woman. Such a relationship is accepted only on two conditions: when the legitimate husband or wife is infertile or has died. If a wife cannot bear children because her husband is infertile, arrangements for a close relative or friend to bear children with the married woman can be secretly arranged.<sup>52</sup> If the husband has died, one of his younger brothers was supposed to take care of his widow, if she did not

<sup>50</sup>Schapera, 1938:190.

<sup>51</sup>Fidzani et al, 2000:33.

<sup>52</sup>Schapera, 1938:156.

have a son to take care of her. In both cases, the children borne of such relationships belong legitimately to the husband. The third party comes in to the house (*se ya ntlung*) strictly to bear children for him or the family.

In the case of a husband, when his wife is barren or dead, the invitation to a third party to bear children for the widower or to take care of his young children could sometimes involve younger girls: the wife's young sister or a child of her brother. It would seem that this replacement was usually promoted by the attempt to avoid paying *bogadi* (bride price) for a second time. Concerning the death of a childless wife or one who left behind small children, Schapera explains that:

*A seantlo was usually the younger sister of the dead wife. If there were no sister of a suitable age, an infant sister would be placed on the skin of the ox while the husband was eating the meat, or its lomipi (peritoneum) would be hung around her neck. This signified that she was reserved for him, and when old enough, she would be brought to live in his lolwapa... the widower did not have to pay any additional bogadi for the seantlo... The girl selected as seantlo also had the right to refuse, and could not be forced to go to the man against her will. In such cases, he could recover his bogadi, if his wife had not borne him any children, but if she had done so, he could not claim it.*<sup>53</sup>

In the *Ngamiland Comprehensive District Plan on HIV/AIDS: Situation and Response Analysis*, in an area where some ethnic groups still practice polygamy, Molebatsi and Mogobe write that,

*girls are introduced to sex at a much earlier age. If these girls are not with their male counterparts, this can only mean that they do so with men who are older than them. This practice of older men having sexual intercourse with young girls is sometimes referred to as 'go itlhatswa madi' ('cleansing one's blood'). Culturally, this is condoned as it is acceptable for men to marry women who are much younger than them. Allegations made in the district included cases of primary school pupils who have to leave school to get married as second wives.*<sup>54</sup>

*Seantlo* does have some advantages in the HIV/AIDS era. First, it continues to provide a framework that challenges surviving relatives to take care of orphaned children. Current research suggests that, when well practiced, *seantlo* is an example of how sexual relations can be contained within a small familiar circle. It is thus a better alternative in the AIDS era than multiple sexual partners or sex with strangers, whose sexual history is unknown to the family and who do not have the wellbeing of the family at heart. In their research, Seloilwe and Ntseane write that arranged partners were

<sup>53</sup>Schapera, 1938:168.

<sup>54</sup>Molebatsi and Mogobe, 1999:32.

perceived as relevant for controlling the spread of sexually transmitted diseases such as HIV/AIDS... As one participant observed, even [among] married women whose husbands had to be at the South African mines for a longer period, it would be arranged that she has intimate relationships with the husband's brother. So it was not easy to get "foreign diseases" [our quotes] like HIV/AIDS from strangers.<sup>55</sup>

Yet *seantlo* also clearly has a number of disadvantages in the AIDS era. It is another example of sexual tolerance between older men and younger girls, which facilitates the acceptance of intergenerational sex. In the case of the widow who names a young brother of her husband to take care of her, either one of these could be infected with HIV – and could pass the virus on to their new partner.

*Seantlo* also underlines the centrality of reproduction in sexuality, which means that people are less willing to wear condoms as they seek to procreate.<sup>56</sup> There is also strong pressure to conform to these practices – to the extent of making it acceptable for a couple to bring a third party into their marriage. For the woman, however, the payment of *bogadi* signifies that she has an obligation to 'give' her husband a child. If she fails to produce a child, she must find a substitute, face divorce, accept that her husband has a concubine, or face the humiliation of her *bogadi* being returned.<sup>57</sup> These economic and gender issues continue in the event of the husband's death, when the widow has to choose either a young brother or lean upon an elder son as her protector and leader.

### Menopause/*Go Itlhatswa Madi*

In the traditional cultural thinking of Botswana and Southern African cultures, women who have reached menopause are regarded as incapable of rejuvenating or cleansing a man's blood. It is also believed that menopausal women are not sexually active.<sup>58</sup> At this stage of a woman's life, she would either bring a younger girl for her husband, or he would find a younger woman to 'cleanse' himself, especially if they have grown up children. The prevalence of such cultural thinking is captured in current research on HIV/AIDS, such as that of Seloilwe and Ntseane:

Another cultural misconception is the one based on the belief that penetrating sex is essential for cleansing the reproductive system. For example, older men have to sleep with young girls to cleanse their reproductive system ('*go itlhatswa*'). It is also believed that women have to have children because that is the only time when the female reproductive system gets rid of the germs that give men STD related diseases. To observe these cultural beliefs therefore requires that both

<sup>55</sup>Seloilwe and Ntseane, 2000:29.

<sup>56</sup>Seloilwe and Ntseane, 2000:30.

<sup>57</sup>Schapera, 1938:155-156.

<sup>58</sup>Tlou, 1996:27.



men and women have to occasionally bear children or have multiple partners, and engage in unprotected sex especially with youth.<sup>59</sup>

In conclusion, intergenerational sex, which contributes to young people's vulnerability to HIV/AIDS, is catalysed by a complex combination of social factors, including:

- Historical and cultural perspectives that condone sexual relations between older men and much younger girls;
- The breakdown of historical and cultural structures that establish and maintain respect and responsible behaviour between elders and young people, leaving a society in which elders appear to have no obligations towards the wellbeing of the young;
- High unemployment, deeply feminised poverty, peer pressure and strong materialism, fuelling sexual exploitation of young girls by elderly men in exchange for money or other goods.

The incurability of AIDS and the desperation it creates in people as they search for healing means that it has also led to a reinterpretation of prevailing historical and cultural beliefs about sexual relationships. In the *Northeast District: Situation and Response Analysis*, Fidzani notes that,

It is becoming increasingly common in most parts of the North East for older men to have sexual desire for younger girls. This practice emanates from the belief that young girls are less likely to be infected with the HIV virus compared with older adults. Another misconception is that young girls rejuvenate their blood.<sup>60</sup>

The continuation of intergenerational sex, however, cannot be blamed only on social and cultural factors. The government has also not adequately addressed the problem of older 'sexual predators' who prey on young people and failed to introduce adequate legislation to protect young people.<sup>61</sup> Given the seriousness of intergenerational sex in facilitating the spread of HIV/AIDS among Botswana's youth, the *Human Development Report 2000* recommended that,

the President should initiate dialogue with leaders in Parliament, the Vision Council and the House of Chiefs on a vision for an AIDS-free generation, focusing on the issue of older men transmitting HIV/AIDS to young girls. But this dialogue must be spread throughout society – with the aim of explicitly acknowledging, refuting and condemning behaviour and myths that fuel the intergenerational transmission of HIV. Consistent and correct condom use must be encouraged.

<sup>59</sup>Seloiwe and Ntseane, 2000:30.

<sup>60</sup>Fidzani et al, 2000:37.

<sup>61</sup>Fidzani et al, 2000:42.

The *Human Development Report* also calls for “tougher sentences for sex-related offences, particularly defilement; stronger enforcement of laws protecting women and children; social mobilisation against sex between older men and young girls, and a return to tough social sanctions for moral impropriety.”<sup>62</sup> In short, current legal instruments and structures should also have a role in protecting the youth from HIV/AIDS transmission resulting from intergenerational and transactional sex.

As well as intergenerational sex, current research shows that cultural and social factors also place young people in danger of HIV infection through coerced sex. *The Situation and Response Analyses on HIV/AIDS in the City of Francistown* points out that:

**Some participants especially the students reported coercive sex in the form of rape. Some students mentioned that stepfathers, uncles and landlords sexually abuse their colleagues. Out of frustration, one girl interviewed at the taxi rank said, ‘I was sexually abused by a regular customer at my mother’s Chibuku Shebeen. I couldn’t report him because he said nobody will believe me.’<sup>63</sup>**

Similarly, a recent study on the incidence of rape in Botswana concluded that over 40% of rapes and attempted rapes occur at either the victim’s or the suspect’s home.<sup>64</sup> The study found that half of all rape victims in the country were aged between 11 and 20 years.

### The Impact of Colonialism on the Sexual Educational Space

Most of the rites and practices outlined above were systematically stopped by the church during colonial times. Puberty rites were brought to an end in most ethnic groups or altered to a watered-down or a much simpler version. “The missionaries regarded [puberty rites] as most immoral and did all they could to stamp it out,” notes Schapera. “The administration frowned upon it without actually prohibiting it; and progressive chiefs further felt it interfered with the advancement of European religion and education.”<sup>65</sup> While some ethnic groups in Botswana cancelled or changed their puberty rites, a few such as the *Bakgatla* and *Balete* maintained them – although they were hampered by formal school schedules and obligations. Many resorted to individual and family approaches, although even these were hampered by increasing urban migration from the rural areas.

Other Southern African groups were also subjected to pressure with varying degrees of resistance. Isabel Phiri, writing on the cancellation of Malawi’s Chewa initiation schools engineered by the Presbyterian church in 1903, says the latter claimed that “there were many things in the ceremonies which were in conflict with the demands of Christianity. Emphasis was put on the fact that the initiation of a pagan girl was accompanied by

<sup>62</sup>Human Development Report, 2000:27.

<sup>63</sup>Selolilwe and Ntseane, 2000:35.

<sup>64</sup>Report of a Study of Rape in Botswana, 1999:23.

<sup>65</sup>Schapera, 1938:105.

much cruelty and degradation. Therefore, to rescue Christian girls, the church thought of banning *chinamwali* (initiation schools).<sup>66</sup> However, Phiri says there were other factors that contributed to the banning of the *chinamwali*, including their association with low attendance of girls at school and “the belief that *chinamwali* was sinful.” Similarly, Joseph Chakanza, describing the Catholic missionaries’ cancellation of the initiation schools among the Yao and Lomwe in Malawi, says that the Catholics tried to introduce substitute Christian puberty rites and, when these failed, “the church unilaterally and categorically proclaimed a ban on traditional initiation with sanctions it attached to it.”<sup>67</sup> The cancellation meant that space for sex education was reduced from a structural communal approach to the responsibility of individual families. This was arguably the beginning of the disintegration of the space of sexual education in many Southern African ethnic groups, including those in Botswana.

For the Swati, Mpassou holds that “the missionaries who came to Swaziland were no different. They attacked Swazi traditional institutions and cultural rituals. But whereas in many African countries the defence for cultural rituals and institutions was weak and uncoordinated, in Swaziland these cultural rituals were very foundational to the Swazi kingdom... the missionaries could never hope to succeed at this level.”<sup>68</sup> Swati initiation schools, together with their subsequent age regiments, remain vibrant to this day. While Sindile Moitse’s book does not focus on the missionaries and colonial impact on Sotho initiation schools, her descriptions indicate that these schools adjusted to the new social order and continue to thrive in modern Lesotho for several reasons:

**From the observations made during the study, the younger initiates included mainly young girls and boys who were mostly primary and secondary school dropouts. The common explanation for this tendency is parental failure to finance their children’s education... The underlying implication being that fees paid for entry into schools of initiation are only a small fraction of that required for formal education. On the other hand, there are those who abandon schools out of choice, with or without encouragement from their parents, to take part in a cultural ritual that is considered a very significant part of their socialisation, marking the passage from childhood to adulthood.<sup>69</sup>**

It is nonetheless clear that, while these schools continue, not all Basotho children undergo traditional initiation rites. Many school-going children miss out, while others who are not encouraged by their parents or who do not insist also do not participate.

In the wake of all the church bans, it is not clear what took the place of puberty rites as the formal space for gender and sexual education. Many ethnic groups continued

<sup>66</sup>Phiri, 1998:133.

<sup>67</sup>Chakanza, 1998:163.

<sup>68</sup>Mpassou, 1998:28.

<sup>69</sup>Moitse, 1994:47.

with some form of their traditional rites, while others abandoned them altogether. This disruption and lack of replacement of puberty rites was a factor of major significance, as something systematic was lost in educating and training youth on responsible adulthood and sexuality. This loss was further compounded by continuing urbanisation. This has been something of a social tragedy, because in much of Southern Africa the initiation rites were the only space for sex education, as most societies did not have any other space or language for discussing sex and sexuality within the family. Outside the strictly marked boundaries of the puberty rites, sex was a taboo subject, and sex organs were never mentioned except as an insult.

To this day, Botswana parents continue to feel very awkward in discussing issues of sexuality with their children. As Fidzani notes, "the discussion of sex matters is regarded as a taboo in most households. Seemingly youth get mixed messages from their peers and they end up exposing themselves to vulnerable situations."<sup>70</sup> The removal of puberty rites also removed a defined boundary between children and adults, making it much more difficult for parents to discipline their children. While some youths have continued to attend surviving age regiments, or have been trained by relatives in their families, the lack of an all-encompassing age regiment system has removed a common understanding on what constitutes acceptable behaviour among young people – and a mechanism for policing their behaviour. The result has been an upsurge in peer pressure, pushing many more children into the kind of risky behaviour that makes them vulnerable to HIV/AIDS.

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While sexuality education is often presumed to be learned at school, it is in reality far more likely to be picked up from friends, magazines, radio, TV shows, movies and videos. The village institutions of the family and community administrations have lost most of their social space – and their traditional responsibility – for disciplining and moulding young people into acceptable gender and sexuality identities. A recent study in Botswana on the sexual attitudes, practices and behaviour of young people found that two thirds of young men and half of young women claimed they had spoken to a friend about sexual issues. And although most adults (over 90%) felt it was 'important' their children were taught about sexuality, only 40% said they had actually spoken with their post pubescent children about this.

### HIV/AIDS, Youth and the Modern Sexual Educational Space

Countrywide situation and response analyses carried out in Botswana indicate that the breakdown of the cultural space for sexual and gender formation is lamented by many parents and elders – and is regarded as instrumental in the spread of HIV/AIDS among the youth today. In their *Kweneng East Comprehensive District Plan on HIV/AIDS*, Molebatsi and Mguni record that,

**The erosion as opposed to the nature of Setswana cultural norms and values was cited as a factor in the spread of the epidemic. A common**

<sup>70</sup>Fidzani et al, 2000:38.

view among the groups was that, despite the abolition of cultural practices like *bojale* and *bogwera*, no adequate substitute practices were put in place. It was during such ceremonies that the subject of sexuality was introduced and the dangers of pre-marital sex revealed to the young generations. It was generally felt that the current introduction of religious studies and moral education in school was not an adequate substitute for the traditional practices mentioned above.<sup>71</sup>

Similarly, Seloilwe and Nteane's study on the *Situation and Response Analyses on HIV/AIDS in the City of Francistown* records that,

The older participants complained that due to the individualistic lifestyle in the city and the rush to work to afford the next meal and rent, indigenous or cultural sex practices and education is no longer done. For example, sex education for girls was given by grandmothers or elderly women for the first time when the girls had their menstrual periods. One elderly woman proudly shared this: 'This young girl would be confined to a hut just like a new mother. One elderly woman after the other from the extended family would give her the first lesson on intimate relations and how to behave.'<sup>72</sup>

These studies also strongly suggest that the current school systems have not fully assumed – or met – the responsibility for gender and sexuality education. In their study in Francistown, Seloilwe and Ntseane found that guidance and counselling teachers charged with teaching pupils about HIV/AIDS were often not properly trained, prepared or equipped to teach the subject. They listed several hurdles to modern teaching on issues relating to HIV/AIDS, which other studies suggest are typical of schools throughout Botswana. These common problems include:

- Inadequate content on HIV/AIDS in the school syllabus, with only a few scattered topics;
- Lack of timetabling of guidance and counselling, which is often not a formal subject, but is incorporated into other subjects and therefore taught in an ad hoc manner;
- Most guidance and counselling is offered by teachers who have volunteered to teach the subject – more out of personal concern than professional capacity – and are therefore more likely to be overloaded with work;
- Many teachers do not feel adequately prepared to handle the subject and are uncomfortable teaching certain aspects of it;
- Most schools lack the facilities to provide effective guidance and counselling services, such as discreet spaces to provide individual counselling services.<sup>73</sup>

<sup>71</sup>Molebatsi and Mguni, 1999:18.

<sup>72</sup>Seloilwe and Ntseane, 2000:28.

<sup>73</sup>Seloilwe and Ntseane, 2000:47-48.





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## Chapter 2: Study Methodology

### Research Design and Tools

The Botswana study was conducted by a team of four female researchers, who each worked at a different school site. Two of the sites were in an urban area while the other two were in semi-urban areas. Each researcher worked with at least four research assistants: two females and two males. The study took place between March and July 2002.

At each of the four schools, data was collected using individual interviews and focus group discussions for students, student diaries, teacher interviews, and classroom and school observations. The student interviews were divided into two age groups: 14-16 years and those over 16 years of age.

**Individual interviews** with six girls and six boys were conducted at each school, resulting in a total of 48 individual interviews being carried out. The interviews were designed to establish the kind of relations that exist between boys and girls in the school, together with attitudes pertaining to student sexuality, including the use of condoms, homosexuality and sexual harassment.

**Focus group discussions** were conducted with single- and mixed-sex groups. There were six discussions at each school, making a total of 24. Selection for the group was made on the basis of the following categories: prefect; choir member; athlete; ball-sport; PACT; member of Student Union; drama; high achiever; problem student; or bullied student. Each focus group consisted of at least six boys or girls for the single-sex discussions and three boys and three girls for the mixed-sex groups. A total of 240 students gave their views. Table 1 shows the number of sampled schools and the number of respondents in each school:

**TABLE 1: NUMBER OF SAMPLED SCHOOLS AND RESPONDENTS**

Schools	A	B	C	D	Total
Focus groups	4 of 6 persons each	4 of 6 persons each	4 of 6 persons each	4 of 6 persons each	96
Individual	6	6	6	6	24
Diaries	30	20	30	40	120
Total	60	50	60	70	240

**Diaries** were given to an average of 30 students in each school, to keep for two weeks. The diaries sought to capture the different emotional highs and lows that the students experience on a typical day. They served to track their gendered identities, sexuality and vulnerability to HIV/AIDS. Most of the girls completed their diaries and wrote at length about their experiences, while boys were less likely to complete them and those who did wrote very briefly about their activities during the day.

Further data was collected through **school and classroom observations and interviews with teachers** of Moral Education, Social Studies, Science, Guidance and Counselling, and Religious Education. The latter sought to track how much space is given to life skills and to analyse the methods used, how both gender and sexuality are constructed in these subjects, and how they are related to HIV/AIDS. Six teacher interviews at each school were conducted, making a total of 24 interviews. Observations of each subject were made for a minimum of three days. At least 15 classroom observations were made in each school, making a total of about 80 observations during the study.

The research team observed general behaviour of girls and boys inside and outside the classroom. During teaching, special attention was paid to how girls and boys conducted themselves. Outside class, particular notice was taken of the type of cleaning done by girls and boys, the punishments handed out to each sex and who administered them. The general demeanour and grouping of girls and boys during breaks and meals was also scrutinised. Particular attention was also paid to any gender construction that takes place within the course of extramural activities.



**Pictures** with sexual connotations were also used to discover young people's knowledge on aspects of sexual behaviour. As discussions on sex belong to the private sphere in most societies, these pictures were used to introduce particularly sensitive topics and to encourage students to talk more freely about them.

In addition to these research tools, the researchers also sought to analyse the **curricula and textbooks** used to teach students about HIV/AIDS, reproductive health, and other aspects of life skills education.

The following table outlines the research objectives and how the data was collected to address each of these objectives. The second and third objectives in the list above were addressed in the interpretation of data obtained to address the remainder of the objectives:

**TABLE 2: RESEARCH OBJECTIVES AND THEIR SOURCES OF DATA**

Research Objective	Source of Data
To review country specific and regional literature on gender, sexuality, young people and HIV/AIDS, as well as methodologies informing this type of research	Review of literature
To investigate ways in which boys and girls construct their identities and develop relationships in different sites – at school, at home, in the community – and whether and how these can mitigate against or encourage the spread of HIV/AIDS	Individual student interviews, focus group discussions, student diaries
To investigate what kind of lessons and resources are addressing life skills, sexuality and reproductive health, what sorts of messages are being conveyed about gender and sexuality, how pupils are being positioned, and how they experience and understand these lessons	Individual student interviews, focus group discussions, student diaries, classroom and school observations, teacher interviews
To investigate teachers' constructions of their male and female pupils, and the ways they identify themselves in relation to them, with a view to exploring their sensitivity to gender power relations both inside and outside the classroom	

<p>To explore how boys and girls understand and experience relationships between themselves and their duty bearers, and whether and how these relationships facilitate or inhibit their human rights and individual potentials</p>	<p>Diaries, focus group discussions, individual student interviews.</p>
<p>To investigate how 'culture', 'tradition' and 'modernity' are understood by boys and girls, how these understandings connect with the ways they construct themselves and others as gendered and sexual beings, and whether and how these constructions make them more or less susceptible to HIV/AIDS</p>	

### General Methodological Reflections

A general observation made when analysing the students' *personal diaries* was that girls seemed to record more activities and seemed to keep up with daily recordings. Boys, on the other hand, were very brief and left a lot of questions unanswered. In their diaries, the students were asked to record how they spent their days between 6am and 10pm. They were also asked to elaborate upon things that made them happy, sad or angry. As the students were supposed to record activities throughout the day, they carried the diaries to their different classes. However, some teachers were not happy with students bringing the diaries into their classes. In one instance, a teacher tried to read a female student's diary but the student refused.

Although both girls and boys responded to questions during the *interviews*, in the single-sex groups it was evident that most girls were not as comfortable as the boys. Many of the girls seemed shy, biting their nails, avoiding eye contact or staring at the floor. They talked less and in low voices, as if not too sure of their answers. On the other hand, most of the boys stressed their points and used more gestures. During the girls' interviews, there was often a more tense and formal atmosphere than in the boys' interviews. Some of the questions generated laughter, embarrassment and even a few disagreements. For example, some girls claimed not to know about condoms and denied having boyfriends, while other members of their groups accused them of having boyfriends. The individual and group interviews with the 16-year-olds were generally more open and vocal than those with the 14-year-olds, who claimed less knowledge about sexual activities and relationships.

Most boys who participated in the single-sex interviews seemed comfortable with most of the questions. They made eye contact, leaned back and relaxed in their chairs and the mood was cheerful, with a lot of animated discussion and laughter. There were more arguments and disagreements between the boys than the girls. Some of the boys used vivid descriptions and explicit language in their talk about sex, or when describing

their ideal girlfriends. The boys generally volunteered more information in response to the questions about their own relationships. One boy even went to the extent of asking to be interviewed again because he felt that he did not say enough and argued that the duration of the interview was too short.

Boys also talked more than girls in the mixed group interviews. There was some teasing between the sexes. Girls seemed to take longer 'settling in' to the interviews than did the boys. Overall, most information obtained from the girls was recorded in their diaries, while boys provided more information in the group interviews. The reluctance of girls to talk about sexuality might have reflected cultural stigma attached to girls who are sexually active. Sexually active girls tend to be described as 'loose' and 'cheap', while sexually active boys are seen as being 'cool' and natural boys. Girls are not supposed to brag about having sex with a boy, while boys are actually expected to do so. Given the prevalence of HIV/AIDS in modern society, this type of attitude does not help boys, especially because, in most cases, their laxity does not come with much information on how to protect oneself from STDs or HIV. Although girls were more frank in their diaries, even in these not one of them admitted ever having had sex.





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## Chapter 3: Study Setting

In this chapter, we provide a background to the education system, a description of the schools' settings, and an analysis of how these contribute to the construction of their students' gender identities. We show the number of teachers and students by gender in each school, the posts held by teachers and the subjects taught by gender. We also discuss students' subject choices, extra curricular activities and school uniforms.

### The Education System

Botswana has almost achieved the universal standard of 10 years of basic education. The policy on basic education requires that every Motswana child proceeds to Form 1, regardless of the grade they obtain in the Primary School Leaving Examinations. From Independence in 1966 up until 1989, the education structure followed a 7-3-2 system. The first seven years were spent on primary education, followed by three years of junior secondary education and two years of senior secondary education. In 1985, with the launching of the universal standard of nine years of basic education, the educational structure changed to 7-2-3. On the recommendation of the second National Commission on Education (1994), however, the structure reverted to 7-3-2.

All of Botswana's Junior Secondary Schools are run by the Government in partnership with local communities, which act through Boards of Governors. The Boards play a pivotal part in the schools' development, raising funds, providing accommodation for teaching staff, maintaining and developing school property, and appointing assistants. Most schools have a Parent and Teacher Association (PTA), which falls under the auspices of the Board of Governors. All parents and guardians of pupils are ipso facto members of the PTA. Parent and Teacher Associations help to raise funds for the school and encourage active participation of the parents in school activities.

## The Curriculum

Following the second National Commission on Education in 1994, and the reorganisation of the education structure to 7-3-2, all community junior schools were required to offer the following as core subjects: Mathematics, Setswana, Science, English, Agriculture and Social Studies. Moral Education was added to the list of core subjects in 1999, bringing the total to seven. Optional subjects that are also offered include Religious Education, Art, Physical Education, Design and Technology, and Home Economics. Optional subjects are grouped into two: practical subjects (eg. Home Economics and Design and Technology) and general subjects (Religious Education and Art). Students choose one practical subject and one general subject. Computer Awareness and Physical Education, although recommended by the National Commission on Education, are still being piloted in a few schools. Life skills education and HIV/AIDS are incorporated into both core and optional subjects. Subjects still to be included in the curriculum include: Music, Commerce, Office Skills, Third Language and Principles of Accounts/Book-keeping.

## Gender Access and Equity

Since the recommendations of the first National Commission on Education in 1977, Botswana has espoused a policy of educational access for all children, irrespective of their ethnicity, gender, location, physical ability or age. The Second National Commission on Education and Vision 2016 have reiterated these principles. Despite these policies, however, there are still significant differences between boys and girls in the subjects they enrol for and performances in national examinations. Transition to Form 4 (Senior Secondary) is based on performance in the Junior Certificate Examinations. A trend analysis of the Junior Certificate Examinations in 1998-2000 shows that girls did significantly better than boys in Setswana, English and Home Economics in all three years, while boys did significantly better than girls in Integrated Science and Design and Technology in all three years.<sup>74</sup> Moreover, only a small number of girls enrolled for Design and Technology. For example, in the year 2000, only about 26% of the students who sat for the JCE in Design and Technology were girls.

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<sup>74</sup>Chilisa et al, 2002.

## Description of the Schools

School A is a Community Junior Secondary School established in 1989 in the capital city, Gaborone. The school has 45 teachers, of whom 28 are women. Table 3 shows the classification of teacher posts by gender, while Table 4 shows the teachers' subjects by gender. These unequivocally demonstrate that the school management is firmly in female hands, with a female head-teacher and three female heads of department. There is an over representation of female teachers teaching English, Home Economics, Mathematics, Music, Religious Education, Science and Social Studies, whereas there is an over representation of male teachers in Art, Business Studies and Design and Technology.

TABLE 3: CLASSIFICATION OF TEACHER POSTS BY GENDER (School A)

	Head	HoD	ST1	ST2	Teacher	Assistant	Total
Female	1	3	1	3	9	11	28
Male	0	0	2	2	5	8	17
Total	1	3	3	5	14	19	45

TABLE 4: SUBJECT ALLOCATION BY TEACHERS' GENDERS\* (School A)

	Agr	Art	BS	DT	EN	HE	MA	ME	MC	PE	RE	SCI	SE	SP	S/S	Tot
F	0	0	0	0	5	2	4	1	2	0	4	2	4	0	4	28
M	2	2	3	3	1	0	2	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	2	17
Total	2	2	3	3	6	2	4	1	2	1	4	2	4	0	4	45

\* Agr (Agriculture), BS (Business Studies), DT (Design and Technology), EN (English), HE (Home Economics), MA (Mathematics), PE (Physical Education), RE (Religious Education), SCI (Science), SE (Setswana), SP (Special Education), SS (Social Studies), ME (Moral Education), MC (Music).

**Students:** There are about 720 students, with an almost equal number of boys and girls. There are 12 subjects taught at the school, six of them core and the other six optional, with each pupil offered two of the optional subjects. The six core subjects are Agriculture, English, Integrated Science, Mathematics, Setswana and Social Studies, while the optional subjects are Art, Business Studies, Design and Technology, Home Economics, Music and Physical Education. Students' subject choices are gendered, with more girls opting for Home Economics and Moral Education, while boys show a preference for Design and Technology.

**Extramural Activities:** The school provides a variety of extramural activities, such as a debating club, music club, traditional dance group, and scripture union classes. All pupils are encouraged to participate in these activities. These are usually held on Wednesdays from 2.30-3.30 pm.

**Uniform:** The school has a dress code. The girls must wear maroon skirts and white shirts. It is strongly emphasised that the skirt must be of knee-length. In winter, girls

are given the option of wearing grey trousers or grey tracksuit pants. Black shoes are to be worn but they may not go above the ankles. Make-up, fancy jewellery and 'stylish clothes' are not allowed. Girls may plait their hair, provided they do not resort to the use of extensions or artificial hair. Girls are also prohibited from braiding their hair, having 'fancy puffs', or dying or tinting their hair. The only pieces of jewellery that are allowed are small earrings and ear knobs. Shirts must be tucked in at all times.

The boys' school uniform consists of grey trousers (grey tracksuit pants may be worn in the winter) and a white shirt, and black shoes that do not exceed the ankle. The prohibitions that apply to girls are also applicable to boys. Boys may not under any condition braid their hair. The trimming of the hairline is not allowed, nor is the 'S-Curl' fashion, which leaves hair looking shinier and straighter than normal. The boys may not wear jewellery of any kind.

**School B** is a Community Junior Secondary School located at the centre of Mochudi, an urban village in Kgatleng District. The school was founded in the 1970s by a group of locals, including the Chief, after whom the school is named. The school was started as a private school to offer those who were not admitted into the local secondary school an opportunity to continue with their formal education.

**Teachers:** There are 44 teachers in the school, of whom 25 are female. Table 5 shows the classification of teacher posts by gender, while Table 6 shows their subject allocation by gender. The distribution of subjects by gender appears to be fairly balanced. The school head and deputy are male, while females are found in positions of head of department and senior teacher. The subjects taught are Home Economics (HE), Science (SC), Agriculture (Agr.), Mathematics (MA), English (EN), Social Studies (SS), Moral Education (ME), Guidance and Counselling (GC), Computer Studies (CS), Setswana (SE), Art, Design and Technology (DT), and Business Studies (BS).

TABLE 5: CLASSIFICATION OF TEACHER POSTS BY GENDER (School B)

	Head	Deputy Head	Head of Department	Senior Teacher	Teacher	Total
Female			1	3	22	26
Male	1	1		2	18	22
Total	1	1	1	5	40	48

TABLE 6: SUBJECT ALLOCATION BY TEACHERS' GENDERS (School B)

	Agr	HE	MA	SC	EN	SS	ME	GC	CS	SE	Art	DT	BS	Total
Female	0	2	2	1	3	2	1	3	1	3	1	1	2	22
Male	2	0	1	1	3	2	1	3	3	0	1	1	0	18
Total	2	2	3	2	6	4	2	6	4	3	2	2	2	40



**Students:** There are 404 students enrolled at the school, with an almost equal number of girls and boys. Students take all the core subjects and two optional subjects. The core subjects are Agriculture, English, Integrated Science, Mathematics, Setswana, Social Studies, Moral Education, Guidance and Counselling and Computer Studies, while the optional subjects are Art, Religious Education, Business Studies, Design and Technology, Home Economics and Physical Education.

**Extramural Activities:** The school provides a variety of extramural activities, such as a wildlife club, music club, traditional dance group, environmental education, chess club, and scripture union classes. All pupils are encouraged to participate in these activities.

**Uniform:** The school has a dress code. The girls must wear grey skirts, tunics or trousers and white shirts. In winter they are given the option of wearing gray tracksuits. Boys wear grey trousers and white shirts. Black shoes are to be worn by both girls and boys.

**School C** is a Community Junior Secondary School situated between the villages of Oodi and Matebele. These two villages are located approximately 30 kilometres north of Gaborone. The mission statement of the school is “to strive to produce knowledgeable and skilful citizens with positive attitudes towards life.” Consciousness of personal and environmental cleanliness is of great importance to the school and is reflected in its clean surroundings and classrooms.

**Teachers:** There are 31 teachers, of whom 17 are male. The head is a male, who is deputised by a female. There are no males teaching Home Economics or Setswana. Table 7 shows the classification of teachers by gender and subject taught.

**TABLE 7: CLASSIFICATION OF TEACHERS BY SUBJECT AND GENDER (School C)**

	HE	Math	Eng	SS	ME	Sets	Art	DT	Agr	PE	Sci	Total
Female	3	1	2	1	1	3	1	0	1	0	2	15
Male	0	2	2	3	1	0	1	2	2	1	0	14
Total	3	3	4	4	2	3	2	2	3	1	2	29

**Extramural Activities:** Every student is expected to participate in extra-curricular activities, including at least one sport and one club. The activities include: Football, Netball, Softball, Volleyball, Table Tennis, Badminton, Athletics, Scripture Union, Wildlife and Conservation Club, Scouts and Girl Guides, Traditional Dance, School Choir, Maths and Science, Chess, and an Art Club.

**Uniform:** The girls' uniform consists of a skirt, a tunic and a white blouse. Girls are also expected to have a pair of grey trousers. Boys are required to have two pairs of grey trousers, and a long and a short sleeved white shirt. Both girls and boys should also have V-neck jerseys, ties and black shoes.

**School D** is a Community Junior Secondary School, also operating on the basis of a partnership between the community and the government. Built in 1987, the school's multicultural catchment area covers a significant part of Gaborone. There is a tradition of a strong Parents and Teachers Association at the school. Although the school is located in a low-income residential area, students come from different backgrounds, with most from the low to middle socio-economic classes.

**Teachers:** There are 56 teachers, of whom 39 are females. The administration is predominantly female. Most of the male teachers teach Agriculture, Design and Technology, Art, Mathematics or Science, as can be seen in Table 9.

TABLE 8: CLASSIFICATION OF TEACHERS BY POST (School D)

	Head	D/Head	HOD	ST1	ST2	Teacher	Assistant	Total
Female	0	1	3	4	1	8	22	39
Male	1	0	0	1	4	5	6	17
Total	1	1	3	5	5	13	28	56

TABLE 9: SUBJECT ALLOCATION BY TEACHERS' GENDERS (School D)

	Agr	Art	BS	DT	EN	HE	MA	ME	MC	PE	RE	SCI	SE	SP	S/S	Tot
F	2	2		1	7	4	3	2		1	2	4	6		5	39
M	3	2		3	0	0	3	0		0	2	2	0		1	16
Tot	5	4		4	7	4	6	2		1	4	6	6		6	55

**Uniform:** The wearing of full school uniform is compulsory for all school events and functions. Girls wear check dresses, black shoes, white socks, grey slacks and ties. Boys wear white long sleeved shirts, ties, black shoes, grey trousers and grey/black socks.

**Curriculum:** Every student in the school has to do six core subjects: Moral Education, English, Mathematics, Science, Setswana, Social Studies and Agriculture, together with two optional subjects from the following: Art, Design and Technology, Home Economics, and Religious Education.

**Extramural Activities:** Sporting activities include ball sports, indoor games and athletics. The ball sports are netball, football, softball and volleyball. There are also a number of clubs, including Scripture Union, Home Economics, Science, Mathematics, Social Studies, Design and Technology, Chess and Red Cross.

## Reflections on Aspects of School Culture

### Reflections on Gender and Dress

School uniform is compulsory at all of the four schools – a policy that holds true for all Community Junior Secondary Schools in Botswana. Some gender stereotypes are perpetuated through uniform requirements. The colour of the girls' uniform is generally bright (e.g. turquoise or maroon), while that of the boys is grey or black. This follows the traditional stereotype which dresses girls in bright colours and boys in duller colours. A bright colour for girls reinforces cultural expectations that girls should always look bright, presentable and beautiful. Another stereotype associated with the physical appearance of girls is that of physical cleanliness. It was observed that usually, when topics related to hygiene were discussed, some teachers emphasised the importance of girls keeping themselves clean to the extent of telling girls to wash more than boys. It is therefore not surprising that, as part of the school uniform, girls' socks are white, as it is easier to tell when they are dirty. In contrast, boys are generally expected and permitted to be more untidy and less clean – hence their socks are grey or black.

As part of the school uniform policy, both sexes are asked to present themselves in some formal 'power dressing' style by being required to wear ties. Power dressing is generally regulated by businessmen in three-piece suits and ties. The implication is that women who want to look serious should copy this way of dressing by wearing suits and ties. It should also be noted that, as in most societies, it is far less acceptable for men to dress in a 'feminine' way. The school policy on uniform reflects this stereotype. Girls are allowed to wear trousers and a tie – a traditionally masculine accessory. Thus, it is more acceptable for girls to cross the dress gender barrier than for boys.

### Reflections on the 'Informal Curriculum': Extramural Activities

Every Community Junior Secondary student is expected to participate in at least one sport and to be a member of one of the school clubs. Both girls and boys are encouraged to participate in all sports, except soccer and netball, where participation is divided along gender lines. Although there is a national female soccer team, most schools in Botswana still do not recognise or value soccer as a mixed-sex sport. Thus it is that boys and girls are not provided with equal opportunities to participate in Africa's most popular sport. It should also be noted that boys do not play netball, so there are no boys' netball teams. Even in those sports in which both girls and boys participate, teams are usually separated into girls' and boys' teams. In most cases, boys' teams are more valued and are thus allocated more resources and prestige. If more mixed sports teams were encouraged in schools, the chances of favouring boys' teams at the expense of girls' would be reduced. Segregation by sex is also practiced in many of the school clubs, such as Scouts for boys and Girl Guides for girls.

Another observation made in these schools was the lack of female teachers participating in sports as coordinators or coaches. Even netball, which is an exclusively female sport, is coached by a male teacher in at least two of the schools. This seems to be the current trend in most primary and secondary schools and community clubs, where males have penetrated 'female sports' as decision makers, team leaders and coaches. The same cannot be said of females, who are usually only involved in 'male sports' – particularly community soccer – as fundraisers. A couple of female teachers who spoke about this trend believed that most female teachers do not participate fully in sports not because of lack of interest or commitment but because of time constraints. They said that after work, most female teachers have to go and perform domestic duties, such as picking up kids from school, fixing supper and helping the kids with their homework. They also pointed out that most male teachers do not have such responsibilities.

It can be argued that most female teachers, like most career women, play a 'triple role' in juggling their productive and reproductive roles at work and home and, in their communities, as fundraisers for churches, cooks for weddings and funerals, and other community related activities. It is worth noting that, with the current rate at which people are becoming sick from HIV/AIDS, the role of women as caregivers is also intensifying. Deaths from AIDS also keep women more busy cooking at funerals, especially on weekends. It may be that, because of the culturally constructed roles of women and men in society, it is becoming increasingly difficult for women teachers to become effective role models for girls by participating in sports, clubs and other extramural activities.

It is also common to find that, in most educational institutions, there is a gender bias in subject allocation and the level at which one teaches. This scenario is not surprising as in most cases through their school career both females and males are channelled and pushed into certain areas that teachers, parents and guardians believe are appropriate for their gender. Based on this data, it is clear that it is only in Mathematics, Agriculture and Social Studies that women have made some breakthroughs – although the majority of teachers are still usually male. Female teachers are usually concentrated in Home Economics, Languages, Art and Moral Education. In the four schools studied, there are no males teaching Home Economics or Setswana, where the gender gap remains widest. English, Moral Education and Art have a balanced number of female and male teachers. Clearly, more male role models are needed to encourage boys to enrol in these subjects, just as female models are needed to encourage girls to take subjects that are viewed as masculine. Both 'masculine' and 'feminine' subjects need to be taught in a more gender friendly and sensitive manner in order to promote greater equality of opportunity.

The background descriptions of the schools provided us with valuable information about the schools as 'socialising agents', playing a strong role in influencing the development of girls' and boys' gender identities. Through their formal and informal curricula, policies, regulations and role modelling, the schools can perpetuate or challenge gender roles and occupational stereotypes.





## Chapter 4: Life Skills Education<sup>75</sup>

In this chapter, we discuss the coverage of life skills education in the Junior Secondary School curriculum, in the textbooks, the teaching of life skills, and teachers' views on its teaching. The Junior Secondary syllabi of all core and optional subjects were analysed to identify the content and topics of the life skills education taught. One textbook was analysed to find out what life skills messages are being conveyed through these materials.

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### The Life Skills Curriculum

The incorporation and integration of HIV/AIDS and life skills education into the curriculum started in Botswana in 1996. In September 1998, the Ministry of Education formulated a short policy document on developing effective HIV/AIDS education for students. The key objective was "to equip all [students] with skills, to develop attitudes and practices to curb the spread and manage HIV/AIDS." The following are among the main objectives that this policy seeks to address:

- HIV/AIDS education should be integrated at all levels and made compulsory;
- The content and methodology of this education should be age appropriate;

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<sup>75</sup> For the purposes of this study Life Skills Education is defined as education which is primarily concerned with imparting skills which help young people to live as 'good' citizens and interact with others in responsible ways. Among these skills are ones such as self confidence, articulacy and empathy, which have come to be seen by many educationalists as important in helping them develop positive relationships with adults and contemporaries of either sex which minimise their chances of contracting HIV/AIDS.

and

- All teaching staff should share in the responsibility of HIV/AIDS education.

In the Junior Secondary School curriculum, HIV/AIDS and life skills education appears in the syllabi of the following subjects: Science, Moral Education, Religious Education, Guidance and Counselling, Design and Technology, and Art. An analysis of the curricula of these subjects reveals that HIV/AIDS is covered most extensively in Moral Education and Science, with some coverage in Guidance and Counselling.<sup>76</sup> Apart from scientific facts on HIV/AIDS, the curricula also covers myths about the virus, the need for acceptance of HIV-positive people, safe ways of caring for HIV/AIDS patients, and the management of STDs and HIV.

Ideally, we want to argue, Life Skills Educators should pay attention not only to the official curriculum but also to the ways teaching is organised, and the kinds of relationships that are encouraged as a result of this. For example to what extent are boys and girls in class encouraged to talk, to be creative, to work in groups with people of the same and opposite sex, to challenge the teachers in positive ways etc. In assessing life skills teaching in the schools in our study, we shall be focusing, to a large extent upon aspects of the 'hidden curriculum,' or the kinds of messages that are routinely and often unintentionally conveyed to boys and girls about what they should be like and how they should behave as a result of the ways teaching and learning is organised and the sorts of curricula materials used.

### Life Skills Textbooks

In Botswana, as in many African countries, textbooks are the main source of information in school. In most cases, teachers and students who use these texts consider them to hold true and incontestable facts. In most schools, teachers depend solely on prescribed facts. Through their written content and picture and cartoon illustrations, textbooks send both intentional and 'hidden' messages to the user. Because textbooks in Botswana play such a crucial role in education, it is important that any study dealing with the views of students examines them in some detail.

In order to determine the treatment and coverage of gender, sexuality and HIV/AIDS in the school curricula, a content analysis was conducted of a key text used in life skills education at the schools under study. This textbook, *Pathways: A Junior Secondary Guidance and Counselling Course Pupil's Book 2*,<sup>77</sup> consists of nine chapters and 75 pages, and is used in all Junior Secondary Schools in Botswana.

By counting the number of female and male characters represented in illustrations in the text, it was found that females represented 41% of the characters and males 59%. Of the

<sup>76</sup>Bennell et al, 2001.

<sup>77</sup>Mphele, 1999.



voices in the cartoons, 50% were males, 44% females and the other 6% of no discernable gender. While the imbalance here is not perhaps striking, females are, nevertheless, less visible and vocal. Illustrations, whether in the form of cartoons or pictures, are supposed to help students remember the content of the text. Students also associate characters with roles they play in the illustrations. It is logical to argue that if male characters dominate the illustrations, students are more likely to associate the content with males.

There were also several instances of male characters being more active than the female ones. For example, the cover page shows a girl and a boy sitting on a coach. The boy is talking and using his hands while the girl is sitting passively listening and paying close attention. In another scenario, a female student is used as an example of someone who goes to see a counsellor because of mental and emotional problems. This character goes to see the counsellor because she failed Mathematics, a subject traditionally designated to boys. In the scenario, the girl improves her marks from 15% to 40%. Such a scenario has an element of gender bias, in that the girl continues to perform poorly in Mathematics despite seeking help. A boy also accuses her of copying, thus perpetuating the stereotype that Mathematics is too difficult for girls. In the text, boys are also portrayed as the only children who get into trouble – for example, for drinking and coming home late. They are therefore punished more than the girls.


The text sometimes quotes traditional stereotypes as examples without clearly explaining that these stereotypes are not true. The effect of this is to perpetuate these stereotypes. For example, the text states that “some cultures believe that a woman’s place is at home, or that boys and men should never cry,” without further analysing or discussing this statement.

The text is also inadequate in its discussion of HIV/AIDS. It neglects discussing HIV/AIDS in the context of gender and sexuality, especially issues of sexual abuse, incest and sexual harassment, and how they exacerbate transmission. Nor does it offer the reader sufficient information to empower them to make informed decisions. A content analysis of all the texts used in life skills education in Botswana would provide a better picture on the coverage of gender, sexuality and HIV/AIDS education.

## Messages Conveyed in Life Skills Education

Classroom observations were conducted in Moral Education, Religious Education, Guidance and Counselling, Science and Social Studies in order to find out how life skills education is taught. In a number of these classes, discussions between teachers and students reproduced stereotypes about opposite attributes that society ascribes to boys and girls. This was particularly the case in one of the Moral Education lessons, in which the subject of discussion was ‘self concept.’ At the beginning of the lesson, the teacher gave instructions on how students should write positive attributes about each other. The boys finished faster than the girls and raised their hands to read out their answers. The

main qualities that girls attributed to each other were beauty, politeness, kindness and caring. Boys mainly wrote about each other as being masculine and intelligent, although they generally provided fewer answers. The girls seemed to be very happy when told they were beautiful. One girl, for example, said she felt happy about what her friend had written about her:



**Teacher:** What did she write?

**Tale:** 'I like you because you are beautiful.'

**(The whole class bursts into laughter)**

**Tale:** I am not surprised because so many people tell me that.

In contrast, a boy expressed surprise that one of his friends had written, "I like you because you are masculine." Again the class burst into laughter and the boy seemed to be embarrassed, as if he did not consider himself particularly masculine. The emphasis on beauty as an important attribute for girls is also reflected in the folklores that boys and girls learn at school and at home. The most popular of these are Masilo and Masilonyana, in which boys fight for cattle, and Tsananapo, in which girls fight for beauty.<sup>78</sup> There is thus also a clear emphasis on economic autonomy as a defining attribute of manhood, and beauty as an important commodity for women.

Leadership is also constructed as an exclusively masculine attribute. Biologically determined characteristics such as menstruation are often cited as reasons why women cannot take up positions of leadership. This was revealed in one of the Moral Education lessons on 'inequality and social institutions.' Although girls occupied all of the front seats while boys sat at the back, many 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 the other side of the class and occasionally lay on their desks. During a discussion on whether women could be leaders, a girl asserted that men were created to be leaders, although they should lead with women's assistance. The teacher commented that, in the Tswana culture, "a man is head 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), in which women having their monthly periods are not allowed to attend the church. When the teacher asked, "What if the woman was leader of the church?" the boys burst into laughter and some commented that there would be no church service. The girls appeared intimidated by this, although the girl who had earlier asserted that women should assist again said:



<sup>78</sup>Chilisa et al, 2002.

“Men are supposed to lead alongside women.” Some of the boys supported this girl’s argument, while the other girls did not comment.

In a Social Studies lesson on the role of *mephato* (tribal regiments) in maintaining peace and tranquillity, the boys laughed off the teacher’s suggestion that women could also help to maintain peace by killing animals that terrorise the villagers. One boy commented that the women would be killed themselves – an assertion that none of the girls challenged or commented upon. In the same discussion, the teacher gave an example in which *mephato* members had assaulted delinquent boys who were terrorising villagers in Molepolole. Some boys cheered and seemed to revel in this example of boys’ ‘toughness.’

In the lessons observed, both the teachers and students invoked current practices and societal expectations to justify a ‘gender order’ or hierarchy that positioned girls and women as second to men. Leadership was thus constructed as a masculine attribute, which women cannot acquire without societies risking some form of crisis. These gender stereotypes are also perpetuated in the language, including proverbs that ascribe leadership to men and the traditional children’s names that ascribe gendered roles to boys and girls.<sup>79</sup> Leadership is also associated with the maintenance of discipline and order through force, and the protection of families and communities from invaders or animals. Boys invoke these ideas of anatomical strength to justify why girls cannot participate in defence related roles – and hence to assert male superiority. Leadership is thus associated with physical strength and violence – attributes that, from the boys’ perspective, also define masculinity.

Interviews with Religious and Moral Education teachers also revealed the presence of a ‘gender order’ in their lessons, which places boys first in the social hierarchy. Boys use verses in the Bible relating to male leadership to justify a hierarchical division of roles between boys and girls. Women’s and girls’ subordinate roles are justified on the grounds that women in the Bible are portrayed as short-tempered and easily tempted. An interview with a Moral Education teacher revealed the following:

	
<b>Interviewer:</b>	Is there any difference between what boys and girls say concerning HIV/AIDS and life skills topics?
<b>Teacher:</b>	Mostly, they disagree on topics that concern females and males. For example, we had a topic that was on Morality and Religion, and I asked them about the fact that all religious leaders are males. I was enquiring from them whether that shows a factor of fairness or inequality. The boys said that

<sup>79</sup>Ibid

the females should be at home. The reason being that if God wanted females to be leaders, he could have made the first woman to be a leader. The first person was a man, Adam. The woman was made from the rib of Adam. Even Jesus was a male. So we ought to follow the trend. The girls are saying we can change from that. Again, the people who wrote the Bible are males, so they would portray Jesus as a male and not a female.

**Interviewer:** This idea of males as leaders, where do you think it came from?

**Teacher:** I feel it comes from home. They even mentioned the Setswana proverb, '*Ga di nke di etelelwa ke manamagadi pele*' ['Men are born leaders']. They disagree with the situation where an educated woman gets married to an educated man. Again they argue that the reason why women cannot lead is because they like bragging and are short-tempered and easily tempted. They gave an example of Eve, who was the first to be tempted and influenced by the Devil to do evil. They also gave the example of Delilah who tempted Samson. The girls would at the same time disagree. One of them said she was hurt by what the boys were saying and said that women were meant to help men make decisions and not men to make decisions alone.

Interestingly, we also see here that these girls were contesting the assumption of male superiority, which the boys invoked by quoting the Bible.

### Teaching Life Skills: Teachers' Voices

Teachers were interviewed to investigate what kinds of lessons are addressing life skills, HIV/AIDS and reproductive health, what sorts of messages are being conveyed about gender and sexuality, and how pupils are experiencing and understanding these lessons. The teachers revealed several examples of life skills lessons in the syllabus, including coping skills, decision-making skills, communication skills and personal relationships. Although the teachers said they do teach their pupils about HIV/AIDS and reproductive health, they indicated that the pupils laughed a lot when reproductive issues were raised – and the boys often made inappropriate jokes about HIV/AIDS. However, they said that these lessons were usually well received and stimulated a lot of participation – even from pupils who were usually more reserved.

However, a major problem in teaching about HIV/AIDS was that many students became tired or bored with the subject, as the following teacher observed:



**Interviewer:** What problems do you encounter as you teach these topics?

**Teacher 1:** A lot of them, especially HIV/AIDS. The students are always complaining that they are tired of HIV/AIDS because wherever they go is HIV/AIDS: in the newspaper, on 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 [the students] the theme, because I new that if I mentioned HIV/AIDS no one was going to turn up. I even told the teachers that they should not tell them it was about HIV/AIDS. So, they came. When they arrived and realised what we were going to deal with, some left the place.

**Interviewer:** Do you experience any other problems in the teaching of HIV/AIDS?

**Teacher 1:** As I said earlier, there is much problems in the teaching of HIV/AIDS. They do not even listen to what you say. 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 the school. But whenever we mention HIV/AIDS, they would 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 the radio, on television, we are tired of it.

Some teachers said they felt uncomfortable when teaching about HIV/AIDS and reproductive health issues, although others said this was not a problem. Several teachers said they felt particularly uncomfortable discussing such topics with mixed-sex groups. These teachers usually separated the two sexes when these topics were going to be discussed. Several teachers also said they were embarrassed by some of the questions that their students raised:



**Interviewer:** Do students relate to you differently as life skills and HIV/AIDS educators, and do you have any problems teaching these topics to people of the opposite sex?

**Ms Legae:** Yes, girls are not comfortable when they are taught about teenage pregnancy in the presence of boys.

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

**Interviewer:** Do you think you relate differently to boys and to girls in discussing the topic of HIV/AIDS? Do you have problems with teaching students of the opposite sex?

**Ms Nlesa:** Not really. As a mother you have to raise both boys and girls. Although in some case the boys themselves are a bit uncomfortable (laughs). We were discussing factors of hormonal imbalance whereby during menstruation period the 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.

What is also interesting to note is that students often challenge teachers to practice what they teach. They ask teachers to relate their own experiences to the topics they are teaching. However, in all the cases in which teachers were asked about their experiences, they were not practicing what they were teaching. For instance, they admitted that they had not personally tested for HIV, nor had any of them used a female condom:



**Interviewer:** During the teaching of such topics, do students ask questions which you would say were embarrassing?

**Mr Fako:** Sometimes they do. For example, they can ask whether we have tested. They feel teachers are always talking about these things, while even they could be infected. Students always think that they are negative.

**Ms Sechele:** I wouldn't say they are embarrassing. But they like saying

**“you”. I always discourage them from using the word. 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.**

**Interviewer:** How do you deal with such embarrassing situations? Do you tell them that you have tested or not?

**Ms Sechele:** I answer them. I tell them that I have not tested. It’s a way to encourage them.

**Mr Chilisa:** Sometimes they do. For example, 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...

**Interviewer:** How do you deal with such embarrassing situations?

**Mr Chilisa:** In most cases I try to be neutral. Not that I feel that the child is provoking me, but I just attend to it straight away.

Overall, the teachers were not against teaching about HIV/AIDS in their schools. They said that most parents do not have a problem with the teaching of HIV/AIDS, although they are against the distribution of condoms to students – which they believe encourages them to have sex. Guidance and Counselling teachers were unhappy with the one hour per week allocated to the subject, arguing that more time should be allocated to it. They also complained of a lack of teaching resources, such as textbooks and workbooks. All the teachers complained about a lack of teaching aids. One male teacher had this to say:

**With reproductive health, we taught the use of contraceptives, like the condom, the pill and sterilisation. There were some demonstrations by the teacher. At times, the students volunteer to demonstrate. We did not have the apparatus. We used a broomstick (laughs). And I told them that the condom is not inserted on the broomstick. It is inserted on the male organ. We used the male condom. We did not have the female condom. I asked the nurses concerning other contraceptives, and they said the ‘Norplant’ was no longer in use, together with spermicides and the diaphragm, because of the side effects of these.**







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## Chapter 5: Tradition, Culture and Modernity

In this chapter, we discuss the influence of culture on the construction of gender. Interviews about the kind of chores that pupils perform in school and at home are discussed. Girls and boys were also observed both in and out of class, in order to see how they construct themselves as gendered and sexual beings.

### Culture and the Construction of Gender Identity

In order to determine how culture influences the gender identity of girls and boys, the roles they play at school and at home were observed and extracted from their interviews and diaries. Botswana women are often presented in popular culture and understood as homemakers, care givers and the 'weaker sex', as emotional and less intelligent than men. By comparison, masculinity is associated with being strong, brave, unemotional, decision-making, leadership, and being less involved in domestic chores such as cleaning and cooking. We wanted to determine whether young girls and boys are influenced and act according to these expectations at home and at school.



Individual and focus group interviews with girls and boys were conducted to find out about their roles and chores at home. The roles listed by girls included washing dishes, cooking, cleaning, watching TV, listening to the radio, sweeping the house on weekends, fetching water, doing the laundry, and cleaning the yard. These roles were confirmed by their one-day diaries, which listed all of the above roles, together with reading and studying, shopping for vegetables, visiting friends, partying and listening to music. Parents also reinforced these roles by rewarding girls when they were happy with the duties they had performed. As one girl wrote in her diary:

'On this day my Mum made me very happy because when I got home, from Mary's house, I found a wrapped parcel and my Mum told me that it was mine. I excitedly unwrapped the parcel and found that it was a big chocolate and some roses. When I asked her why she bought these things for me, she said I had cleaned the house to my best in the morning... I was the happiest person on earth.'

On their roles and chores at home, boys listed the following: cleaning the house, taking care of the surroundings, watering the lawn and flowers, cleaning the yard, doing the dishes on certain days, doing the laundry, reading books, gardening, chopping wood and doing homework. This was further confirmed by their one-day diaries, in which most boys listed washing and ironing their uniforms, watching TV and movies, doing homework, reading, playing soccer, listening to music, shopping, playing video games, reading magazines, and carrying goods to the home. The responses from the interviews indicate that girls generally cook, clean the house, look after babies in the family and do the laundry, while boys usually do any chores outside the house, such as gardening, chopping wood and pruning trees.

Regarding how our subjects feel about boys' and girls' chores at home, and whether they should be different, their responses can be categorised into three groups:

1. **Boys and girls should do the same things.** Some argued for greater 'gender equality' and complained that boys never really do very much, while girls often "do too much."
2. **Boys and girls should do different things.** Several boys and girls argued that tasks such as digging trenches were not appropriate for girls. They portrayed girls as "too weak" for some chores, while boys were more fit for heavier duties. For example:

	
<b>Baruti (B):</b>	<b>Boys can look after livestock and stay in the bush starving while looking after livestock, while girls cannot endure such conditions.</b>
<b>Lesego (G):</b>	<b>There are roles meant for girls and those meant for boys at home.</b>

**Kungo (G):** Roles should be divided amongst boys and girls since boys can do rough jobs which girls cannot do.

**Modise (B):** Roles should be divided because there are some things which girls cannot do.

**Fenyang (B):** Roles depend on one's masculinity and femininity. Girls are weak to do tough jobs, while boys are rough.

**3. Boys and girls should do similar and different things.** Some subjects oscillated between the two. While some girls said there should be greater equality, they still held that, when it came to herding livestock, it would not be appropriate for girls, especially when they were menstruating. They also considered it inappropriate for girls to be walking or running outside in the sun.

While these responses indicate that girls are regarded as weak and not capable of performing some chores, this view was nevertheless challenged in various ways by many of the subjects.

## Observations at School

Observations were made at the four schools in order to determine the acceptance or otherwise of the 'traditional' and 'cultural' definitions of females and males based upon the roles and behaviour they are supposed to embody. Students were observed during cleaning duties, feeding time and extracurricular activities. During cleaning, it was obvious that girls and boys assumed different roles. Girls swept and mopped the classrooms, while boys cleaned the windows or moved desks. The moving and lifting of desks was looked upon by both as a heavy task that was more suited to boys, who were viewed as naturally stronger than girls. One young, thin-looking boy at school C said: "Mopping is girls' job because they are too weak to lift up the tables. We are strong." Outside, boys cleared the grass and some girls raked for them. In some instances some boys swept – although none of them used the traditional brooms, which require the user to bend over. They said these brooms were only for girls – an argument undoubtedly based on the fact that they are usually used by girls and women in most Botswana homes.

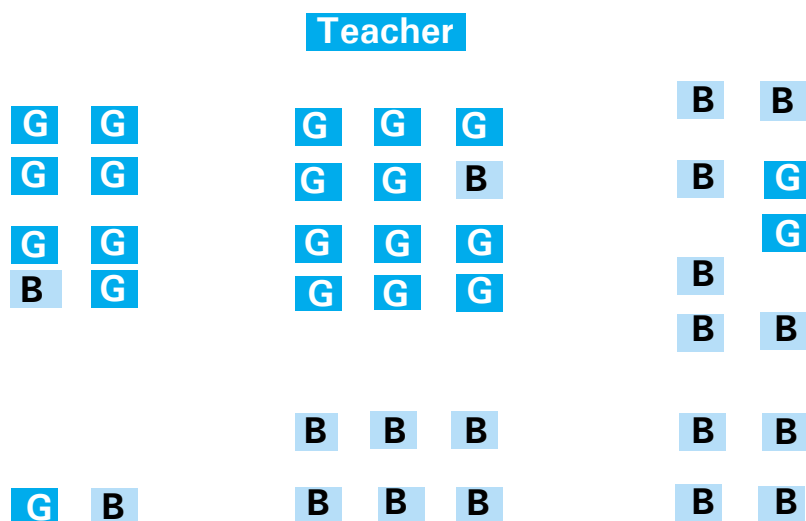
In one school, for extra-curricular activities, the boys played soccer and were coached by a male teacher, while the girls played netball and were also coached by a male teacher. This was interesting because the current trend is of males coaching both soccer and netball, which is traditionally viewed as a female sport. A male teacher also coached volleyball, which is a mixed-sex sport. In general, female teachers were responsible for supervising the cleaning duties and clubs such as the Student Christian Union and Traditional Dance, while male teachers dominated all the ball sports.

During meals in all of the schools, it was common for boys and girls to queue separately to collect their food. One common pattern observed was that the boys' queues were less organised than the girls', with the boys pushing each other trying to circumvent the queue. In School A, for example, two teachers supervised the boys and occasionally yelled or resorted to physical force to straighten out their queue. By contrast, the girls' queue was meticulously organised, although it was not supervised. What was particularly different during feeding time was the accessories boys and girls had brought from home. In School C, when the students were served chicken and rice, some girls produced tomato sauce that they had brought from home, while none of the boys had any such extras. When *papa* (mealie meal/maize meal) was served, several girls bought bread at the school tuck shop and threw away their *papa*, while many of the boys went for a second helping. Most of the boys ate very quickly, while the girls ate slowly as if they did not want to. Students brought their own dishes, and there was a significant difference between the dishes brought by girls and boys. Most girls brought glass or ceramic plates while boys had old, uncared for dishes. In one incident, a boy who failed to get a second helping when the food was finished put his dish down, kicked it and left it lying on the floor.

### Gendered Spaces and Identities

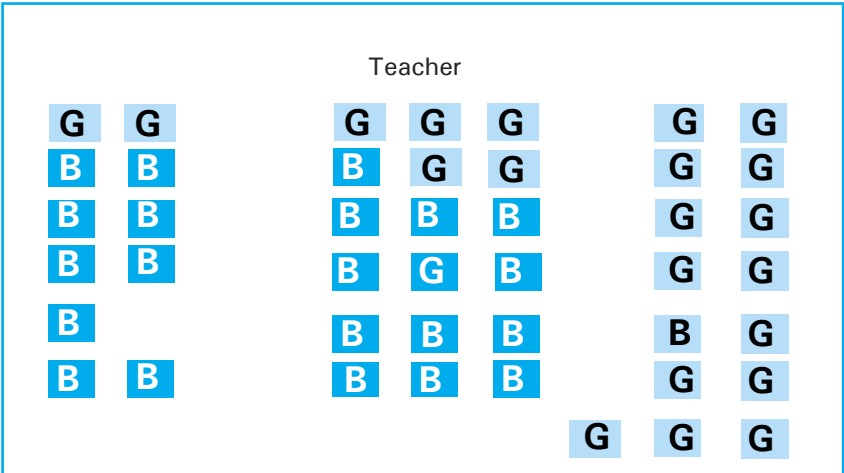
School and class observations both revealed that boys and girls generally group themselves and occupy spaces at a distance from each other. Most seating arrangements in the classroom were segregated according to gender, with girls mostly occupying the front seats while boys sat at the back. Chilisa has observed that boys choose the back seats so that they can play and make noise without the teacher noticing.<sup>80</sup> They also tend to choose spaces where they can get fresh air in the summer or sunshine in the winter. The following figures illustrate the natural gender segregation in the two classrooms observed:

Figure 1: School B Form 2E Seating Arrangement



<sup>80</sup>Ibid

Figure 2: School A Form 2F Seating Arrangement



These spaces are sites for the construction of different behaviour and attributes for girls and boys. It would seem that the daily experiences of boys at school – competing with each other for better space and food – teach them to be more assertive and aggressive. Among the girls, there is less hustling and they are learning, it seems, to be more cooperative and calm – although also, perhaps, to defer to noisy and assertive boys.



These gendered differences in the construction of behaviour and attributes are further manifested in the different punishments received by boys and girls. Boys generally get harsher punishments, while girls are treated more leniently. This stems in part from government policy on corporal punishment and the way it is implemented.

**Punishment and the Construction of Masculinity**



According to the Botswana Education Act, punishment in the country’s secondary schools may be by way of corporal punishment or expulsion. The Act specifies that corporal punishment should be administered to a pupil only on reasonable grounds and only when it appears that alternative disciplinary measures would be inadequate or ineffective. Although the Act stipulates that corporal punishment should only be administered by a headmaster or a teacher or boarding master to whom authority has been delegated, the reality is usually that any teacher can administer such punishment in the absence of the headmaster.

Both boys and girls can receive corporal punishment. This takes the form of caning on the buttocks, on the palms, or sometimes on another part of the body. However, boys are generally punished more frequently than girls. During this study, boys were observed being caned during meal times and during cleaning. Individual and group interviews revealed that boys were not only punished more frequently than girls, but also with more severity. Some girls explained that boys were punished more frequently because they were more

naughty, rude or disobedient to their teachers. However, others felt that the teachers punished boys more frequently because they "hate" them:

	
<b>Interviewer:</b>	Do you think boys and girls are treated differently or the same in class?
<b>Lelentle:</b>	They are treated differently. Some teachers, when they try to discipline a boy, they beat them very thoroughly. Maybe the girl did something more wrong than the boy did, [yet] they will still beat the boy very hard as if he is the [only] one who did the wrong thing. Some teachers actually never punish girls. I don't know why. Girls are gently punished: ' <i>Ba kgongwa fela.</i> ' 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.
<b>Interviewer:</b>	What do boys and girls think about this?
<b>Lelentle:</b>	When the teacher is disciplining, he's got to discipline in one form [for both boys and girls]. 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 asks to be beaten on the hand like the girls, he is told that he will be taken to the staff room and beaten there. Or he has to go out of the class. So in the class girls are treated with higher regard than boys. However, in other things like cleaning, they do the same things. 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.
<b>Naledi:</b>	I think it is not right. All of us should be punished in the same way. The boys suffer more pain than girls do because they are beaten on the buttocks.

The girls' group interviews revealed that boys are sometimes punished for being outperformed by girls, as the following extract from an interview with 16-17-year-old girls reveals:

**Interviewer:** Do you think that girls are treated differently from boys in class?



**All:** Yes!

**Palesa:** Academically speaking no, but socially yes. Like in our Setswana lesson... 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 and yet 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 the problems that arise not just for girls because of the construction of boys as superior to them, but also for boys themselves.<sup>81</sup> 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 subject to punishment for 'poor' work performances. Rather than criticising teachers for treating girls as subordinate to boys, most girls and boys indicated that they were showing favouritism to girls – as manifested in punishing the boys. Even Lelentle, who suggested that punishing boys and not girls for 'poor' work might not be in girls' educational interests, focused much more on how boys were disadvantaged. However the assumption that boys were the naughty ones could result, as Lelentle explains below, in particularly harsh punishments being meted out to girls who were deemed to be naughty.

**Interviewer:** Do you think that teachers pick on boys or girls? Are boys or girls expected to do different things in class?

**Naledi:** Boys complain of girls being favoured by male teachers.

<sup>81</sup>See also Connell, 1985.

**Lelentle:** When a girl does a mistake in a group of boys, the girl is picked on and asked "How could you?" Instead of taking her as just one of the students, she is taken as a girl in a group of boys. Teachers expect boys to be more trouble and, if it happens to be a girl, she is more severely punished.

In the following interview with a mixed group aged 16 and over, another girl admitted that boys were often "more heavily punished" for committing the same offence:



**Interviewer:** Do you think boys and girls are treated differently or the same in class?

**Tumelo (B):** They are treated differently, although it will depend on the teacher. For example, some male teachers favour boys and others favour girls.

**Interviewer:** How is this favouring shown?

**Kabo (B):** Girls are rarely punished and boys are punished for doing nothing.

**Moswen (G):** Girls are treated in a calmer, nicer way and teachers think they are more honest. For example, if a boy and a girl are found committing a similar offence, the boy will be more heavily punished.

The responses of boys in individual and group interviews corroborated what the girls had said about disparities in the administration of corporal punishment. As a result, they said, some boys felt alienated, uncomfortable, and even anxious during lessons – a fact that, it appears, may have made them even more likely to undermine the teachers' authority. However, it was also clear that some boys derived a sense of superiority over girls as a direct result of being beaten more severely – believing that, as boys, they were strong enough to withstand the pain, and that the experience would mould them into even stronger men:





**Interviewer:** Do you think boys and girls are treated differently or the same in the class?

**Mothudi (B):** They are treated differently, especially during corporal punishment: boys are beaten on the buttocks while girls can be excused. Behaviour-wise, it is seen as normal if boys become rascals, and girls are supposed to behave nicely. It is the same treatment in all subjects.

**Interviewer:** What do boys and girls think about this?

**Mothudi (B):** Boys do not care and seem to enjoy the attention, and they feel masculine about it, and they feel girls should not be beaten, as they are weak.

**Interviewer:** Do you think boys and girls are treated differently or the same in the class?

**Tale (B):** They are treated differently – when [they are] punished, boys are beaten on the buttocks, while girls are beaten on the palm. I feel it is not fair and refuse to be beaten. When boys do something wrong, it is seen as a big issue rather than when it is a girl.

**Interviewer:** What do boys and girls think about this?

**Tale (B):** Boys refuse to be beaten, while girls do not see anything wrong with it.

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 their ability not to buckle in the face of violence) that boys are able to prove their masculinity.

## Gender Violence Inside and Outside School

Although boys and girls are physically separate and distanced, boys use these spaces and differences to establish their authority and superiority over girls. Chilisa observed that the intimidation, bullying, physical and verbal abuse, and claims over school resources – from pens and books to classroom spaces and teachers' attention – were among the ways

that boys tried to control girls and influence their perception of themselves. In the four schools, there were common trends of boys interrupting girls in class, booing them, or seizing their property. Individual interviews also revealed that boys entered girls' spaces to intimidate them and establish authority over them. These 'invasions' included boys fondling girls' buttocks, breasts and genitalia against their will. Some of the girls were clearly unhappy about this:



**Interviewer:** Do boys touch girls? How do you feel about this and how do you respond?

**Joyce:** There are people who like harassing others. There are those who feel they are not afraid of anyone, let alone the teachers. They will come and touch you and then tell you to go ahead and report [it]. They presuppose because we are of the same age, people who are growing up, then we enjoy the way they touch us. While in fact it is not the case.

**Dineo:** Boys do touch us. We are not happy about it. Imagine you are still on your locker, focusing on your book, and somebody just comes and touches you. I don't like it.

**Kagiso:** I haven't experienced this because I will never let anyone touch my private parts. It's uncomfortable. Of course, I have seen some boys touching some girls on their private parts. There are some boys who think that they are '*dibossa tsa sekole*' ['bosses of the school']. The whole thing is embarrassing. I mean they do not do it in secret. Right in front of all people, they just come and touch you in your private parts.



The seizure of girls' property and their subjection to physical and verbal abuse clearly lowers their self-esteem, forcing them into a social hierarchy that places boys above them. The following extract from a girl's diary reveals the inferiority complexes that are constructed as boys assert their authority over girls:

'You sometimes think people you know will respect you. But today what I have learned is that [you] don't put all your trust on your friends. Some friends are just here to destroy us. This morning I felt like hanging myself. Do you really know how scary it is, to be bullied by a person you regard as a friend, it's damn shaking if not killing. I tried to put up a good fight for getting my table back but almost half of the class was against me. Fighting for something that is mine, rightfully mine, instead of people trying to class. It

was just a mistake. People just hate me for my good deeds. They never appreciate who I am, they don't understand that they have the wrong mentality towards me. I just tried the best to get my desk back because they bullied me, there was no way out for me. Boys will always be boys. The whole day I was tearing apart longing to be alone. I was totally crying, it is only that I had myself. I had no desk, just sitting there by myself writing on my lap, I thought I would not make it through the day but I pulled. I was really scared of why [they] did that to me. To show the class how much I was nothing to them and how much I was scared of them. I was really angry beyond the word hurt. I always tried to be nice to my classmates but the payment I pay for being a nice girl is they bully me and talk behind my back. It is not fair to me at all. And for the dumbest part they are just empty vessels. It is in 3F that I lost my confidence. I will never forget the class. Today is the worst day of my school days, even now my eyes are full of tears. If only they understood me better. As always just hang in and hope everything will turn around, but every time it worsens. I never bully others but people like bullying, I do not know why. Not that I blame my nice nature, silence is the best way to avoid a fool. I just tell myself that 3F was not meant to be my class.'

Group interviews revealed that boys fondled girls against their will, and the girls sometimes fondled boys. Girls said that when they reported such incidents to their teacher they were usually not taken seriously, or were just rebuked. This, together with their discomfort in discussing such matters, usually discouraged them from notifying their teachers. Boys also revealed that girls sometimes caressed their chests or fondled their genitalia. Most boys did not report this to their parents or their teachers because they were too embarrassed – while others said they enjoyed the touching. Boys also claimed that male teachers often stared at female pupils. They said that, because they were also 'men', they understood what the male teachers were going through. The following are excerpts from the different group interviews:

#### Girls of 16 and over:

	
<b>Interviewer:</b>	Do boys touch girls?
<b>All:</b>	Yes... their buttocks!
	(Whole group laughs.)
<b>Interviewer:</b>	How do they do it?
<b>Janet:</b>	For example, when a girl is bending over her locker, the boy starts touching her buttocks and other parts of her body.

**Interviewer:** What do girls do – do they report it?

**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 touch boys?

**Gorata:** Yes, and by doing so they encourage the boys to touch them in turn.

**Interviewer:** Do you ever get touched by teachers? If so, how do you respond to this? (Group laughter)

**Nnunu:** Hardly...

**Gorata:** Sometimes we feel uncomfortable when teachers touch us.

**Interviewer:** What do you think about it?

**Gorata:** I think it is okay, so long as the teacher maintains that professional level and doesn't make me feel uncomfortable.

**Rachel:** The people in class notice and the news spreads.

**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, [as if] we sent a signal.

**Gorata:** At one time, some people in my class were harassing me, though not sexually. 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 but I felt teachers will think that I was joking or I wanted it to happen.

Mixed group of 16 and over:



**Interviewer:** Do boys touch girls?

**All:** Yes!

**Interviewer:** What do they do?

**Andrew (B):** They touch their buttocks, hands and hair.

**Changu (G):** Basketball players are notorious in this. They do embarrassing things.

**Mothei (B):** Not every basketball player does this. Sometimes you can't even tell, but people assume just because they are tall they are.

**Interviewer:** How do girls respond to this?

**Changu:** The older boys and girls like it and participate.

**Kefilwe (G):** Not everyone likes it or participates in it.

**Interviewer:** Do teachers ever touch girls or boys? How do you feel about it?

**Mothei:** They don't touch them but they look at their buttocks, when they pass.

**Musa (G):** We hear rumours about teachers touching girls and having relationships with them in other schools...

**Changu:** If you like it, it is fine.

**Kagiso (G):** It is not okay, especially with teachers, it makes you very uncomfortable.

**Johnathan (B):** Some girls like it – they allow you to do it, and when you are through they tell you you have harassed them.

**Changu:** There are girls who like some teachers and if that teacher comes and touches them, they feel very happy about it, so it depends.

**Andrew:** It depends on the background of the girl or boy. 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.

**Interviewer:** Where do they do it?

**All:** Everywhere!

**Kefilwe:** In the classroom, compound, everywhere...

**Interviewer:** Do you know of anyone who has been forced into a love relationship? Forced to have sex – or marriage?

**Some boys and girls:** No...

**Changu:** I heard of this girl who was going out with this boy in a school, not because she loved him but because she feared him. The relationship ended when the boy completed and left the school.

Boys of 14-16 years:



**Interviewer:** Do boys touch girls?

**All:** Yes!

**Interviewer:** Do teachers touch girls?

**Mothusi:** Yes. However, it is not easy to tell whether the teacher wants to arouse the girl. They touch them on the shoulders, buttocks...

**Daniel:** Other times they tell girls to come and sit next to them.

**Interviewer:** What do they do?

**Mothusi:** Boys and teachers touch girls on their shoulders, hands and buttocks.

**Tan:** They touch their breasts.

**Interviewer:** Do you ever touch girls?

**Mothusi:** No, because I don't like being touched.

**Interviewer:** How do girls react to being touched?

**James:** Sometimes they tell their mothers and teachers.

**Tan:** Sometimes girls are afraid of reporting to teachers because some boys refuse when they are called over such.

**Mothusi:** Girls will tell boys that they don't like it, that they will report them to their mothers or teachers, and shout at boys when they touch them.

**Interviewer:** Has anybody ever touched your private parts?

**Tan:** Yes, they have done it to me in class; some boys touch each other's private parts to check if they are grown up. Some boys did this to me.

**Interviewer:** What did you do?

**Tan:** I just felt bad. I wanted to tell my mother, but I changed my mind.

Mixed group of 14-16 years:



**Interviewer:** Do boys or teachers touch girls?

**Montsho (B):** Some boys touch girls...

**Richard (B):** Teachers don't touch girls or boys.

**Interviewer:** What do boys do to girls?

**Montsho :** They touch their hair.

**Mothei (B):** They pull girls' brassieres.

**Bontshetse (G):** They touch girls when teachers are not around.

**Interviewer:** What do you think about this?

**Montsho:** I find it rude.

**Richard:** It is unfair, especially if the girl doesn't want [it].

**Interviewer:** Do girls ever report this?

**Montsho:** Some girls tell teachers about it, when they are touched by boys. Others tell boys to stop it. Some stop [but] others don't.

**Mothei:** We don't know of anybody who has been touched on the private parts.

The extent of the abuse of girls in schools may be underestimated, as instances of the touching of girls by teachers are not clearly highlighted. Some students said that male teachers touch female students, although the majority claimed not to have seen such behaviour. Again, where such instances do occur, girls generally do not report it for the same reasons that they do not report boys touching them. However, there have been instances in which teachers have impregnated their female pupils. During individual interviews at one of the schools, a girl related a story about a girl who had dropped out of school after she became pregnant through a teacher. The teacher was reportedly



transferred from the school. Another girl was reported to have had a baby during a relationship with her teacher at a previous school. Although these seem to be isolated incidents, they cannot be dismissed as such relationships demonstrate serious power abuse on the part of the teacher. Botswana law prohibits teachers from engaging in intimate relationships with their students.

The abuse of girls extends far beyond incidents of touching and fondling at school. To establish awareness of abuse that could be happening outside school, the boys and girls in the focus groups were presented with pictures depicting potential incidents of abuse and asked for their views. The following were some of the pictures used – and the reactions they received.



### Child Sexual Abuse

One group interpreted this picture as showing a man who has had sex with a girl and is now leaving her after infecting her with a sexually transmitted disease. Some said the picture shows that a man has just raped a girl and is threatening that if she reports him he will kill her. Another view was that the man and the girl could be lovers. Students agreed that such cases do occur in modern-day Botswana. They tried to come up with answers as to why such incidents happen. Some students believed that men with sexually transmitted diseases are frustrated and want to spread the diseases. Others said that men who are afraid to

approach women and 'propose love' instead wind up raping women. There was also an argument that men rape because they are enticed by girls who wear provocative clothes such as miniskirts. Those who thought the two characters were lovers said that the man was demanding sex in return for the money that he gives the girl.

The picture also appeared to evoke some personal memories about the sexual abuse of girls by relatives, and of the abuse of disabled girls. In one of the group interviews, one boy said:

*Bomalome [mother's brothers] ba reipa ditlhogolo. Omo tshwara marago le dirope [Uncles rape their nieces. They touch their bums and thighs.] This is common. The handicapped are also raped, for they are helpless. Even sisters can rape you or they get raped. Sex between relatives is common.*

Incidents of sexual abuse at home were also raised by girls in the single-sex interviews. Stepfathers and uncles were cited as the perpetrators of sexual harassment of family members. Speaking about the above picture, one girl said:

*This is a picture on rape. It happens at home, at night, at the bars, and with stepfathers at home. Uncles abuse girls a lot. Sometimes you can tell your mother and she says, 'I will talk to him,' but by that time it's too late or she simply does not. Sometimes the girls keep it a secret because they want money from uncles.*

In identifying the man in the picture as someone who was frustrated by his inability to approach women or was aroused by a girl in a miniskirt, the perpetrator appeared to be excused for having no control over his desires. Such views perpetuate the common cultural construction of men lacking control over their sexual urges. The 'cause' of indecent dressing came up several times in the interviews, with some girls arguing that they should be able to dress as they wanted, while many boys blamed girls for provoking them with short skirts and tight pants. Provocative female dressing was also cited as one of the causes of girls becoming involved in relationships with older 'sugar daddies', as the following picture depicts.

### 'Sugar Daddies' Pursuing Schoolgirls

Most groups saw this picture as depicting an older 'sugar daddy' trying to 'pick up' a schoolgirl. They said the girl would be attracted because of the man's car, which would pick her up from school, and his money. They concluded that the girl would be likely to become pregnant because the older man would want to cleanse himself by having sex with a young girl ('*O itlhatswa madi*'). It has been argued that in many African countries, including Botswana, older men believe it is safer to have sex with young girls because they face a lower risk of being HIV-positive. In another group interview, the girl was blamed for wearing a miniskirt. The view was that she wore this purposely to seduce

the man so he would give her money. This act was described as '*go tshwara sepoko*', which was interpreted as 'using someone for one's personal benefit'.

The discussions clearly showed that the students were aware of the risks posed by older men enticing young girls to have sex with them in return for material favours. Pregnancy also emerged as a strong concern for them – suggesting a widespread belief that most schoolgirls who become pregnant do so with older men from their communities.<sup>82</sup>



Just as young girls are frequently abused by older men, it was also suggested that younger boys could be abused by older women. Groups were presented with the following picture of a 'sugar mummy' and asked to discuss it.

### 'Sugar Mummies' Pursuing Schoolboys

The groups interpreted this picture as a 'sugar mummy' giving a young man some money in return for his sexual attentions. The students agreed that such relationships do occur – although with less frequency than 'sugar daddy' relationships. They said that the writing in the picture implied that the boy was good in bed. However, the students felt that this was not a normal or good relationship because the older woman could infect the boy with a sexually transmitted disease. Significantly, the boy was not blamed, as the girl was, for seducing the woman. Girls, it seemed, were much more likely to be sexualised than boys and criticised for tempting people sexually and wearing sexually provocative clothes.

<sup>82</sup>See Chilisa, 1998.



The above discussions have shown how gender violence is manifested in and out of school and how widespread such cases are in schools. While schools often present themselves as providing opportunities for young people (irrespective of their gender) to develop their 'potential', this idealised view is often very much at odds with our findings regarding the sexual abuse of girls by teachers and boys, the frequent use of corporal punishment, and the tendency of boys to monopolise classroom space and discussions. This manifestation of gender violence in the violation of girls' space and bodies in school, and in incidents of rape, incest and defilement, can partly be blamed on cultural and economic factors. The transmission of culture through language and other channels has taught girls and boys to be obedient to adults – a fact that often makes it very easy for adults to sexually abuse children. Additionally, poverty and greed have increased the younger generation's vulnerability to adult abuse – and consequently to HIV infection.







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## Chapter 6: Gender, Sexuality and HIV/AIDS

In this chapter, we will discuss the study's findings on how boys and girls relate to each other, on the nature of sexual relationships between them, and on their constructions of femininity and masculinity, sexuality and HIV/AIDS.

### How Boys and Girls Relate to Each Other

The majority of boys revealed that they relate better with other boys than they do with girls. Individual and focus group interviews revealed that boys behave differently when they are in the company of girls. In girls' company, boys tend to play an advisory role and sometimes to act politely to impress the girls. Asked what they talk about when they are among themselves, boys said things like "the dangers of sex," "games and girls," "playing games," and "music and hip-hop." When girls were present, most boys admitted that the conversation was very different, as the following comment suggests:

**Once I am with boys, I tend to express myself better because we can say something that we can never say when we are with girls. Like sex. One can discuss some things on sex, but with girls... for one, I feel stupid, like I am a virgin and would not feel a man enough.**

In discussions with girls, boys said they “warn girls against experimenting with sex,” “discuss love issues,” “talk about school work,” “study together,” and talk about “teenage pregnancy, drugs and alcohol, saying they are better avoided.”

The majority of girls confirmed that topics of discussion are different with different genders. Girls said they talk about experiences unique to girls, such as menstruation, together with school, boys, clothes, cars, “private things,” “love affairs,” and “the kind of boys they encounter, violence, vulgar language, who has reached puberty.” With boys, however, they talk about schoolwork and other issues, never about private matters. As one girl said: “Boys never really talk. They use their hands to beat and communicate.” And another: “Boys are very rough. They do not know how to relate and talk.”

When asked whether they were better behaved when they were with friends or on their own, several boys and girls implied that they were better behaved on their own – when they were free of peer pressure:



**Goatsemodime (B):** Friends try to change me, but I retain my stance.

**Festus (B):** I change. I am better behaved alone than when I am with a friend.

**Robert (B):** When I am with friends, we tend to talk a lot, but when I am alone I tend to be quiet, read a lot or play TV games.

**Kagiso (G):** It is not really different, except that [when alone] I tend to watch TV or do something like studying.

**Rose (G):** It is different. Most of my friends in school are not Christians. They criticise the way I live my Christianity. So it is well when I am alone.

**Happy (G):** It is different, because when I am on my own I enjoy reading, so it's best if I am not with them, they might distract me. I do not even like being with them sometimes.

**Catherine (G):** If I am sitting next to my friends in class, in study time, we talk even when they have visited me. But when I am on my own, I can do my work without disturbances.





## Sexual Relations Between Boys and Girls

Individual as well as focus group interviews were held to find out about sexual relationships between boys and girls. Respondents were first asked to speak about their friends or others and then gradually to speak about themselves. The individual responses of both boys and girls confirmed that their friends had boyfriends and girlfriends. However, most boys and girls were reluctant to admit that they themselves had girlfriends or boyfriends. The majority said they didn't, but had in the past. One notes here the self-distancing, by either denying the presence of a relationship or placing it in the past. Asked what their friends say they do when they are with their girlfriends or boyfriends, the interviewees said things like "enjoying life," "having sex," "kissing," "romance," "dating," or "watching movies together."

Focus group responses were different from individual responses. The boys' focus group interviews for 16-year-olds were emphatic that they have girlfriends. In one interview, every boy said he had a girlfriend – and some said they had two or more. One boy with two girlfriends said this was "for security, in case you get dumped, or for competition on who can do a good job of getting beautiful and well-behaved girls." The girls' focus groups also admitted having boyfriends, and some girls admitted being involved in sexual relationships.

Age and gender are important factors in the constructions of "love relationships." Many girls said they prefer love relationships with older men, while boys prefer them with younger girls. There are also relationships between girls and boys of the same age, and between boys and older women. Many boys explained the girls' preferences for older men by saying that such girls see themselves as more 'mature' than boys. Whatever the reasons, it seems that heterosexual relationships are often constructed on the basis of unequal power relations based on age and resources. While girls often reject boys of their own age, boys have no problem 'proposing' to girls who are younger than them, as the following interview with girls and boys over 16 illustrates. In this extract, the four speakers were all boys.

	
<b>Interviewer:</b>	<b>Do people of your age have sex, and with what age group?</b>
<b>Modupi:</b>	<b>Boys of our age have sex with girls of our age, but girls sometimes have sex with men who are older.</b>
<b>Kefentse:</b>	<b>Sometimes they go out with men twice their age.</b>
<b>Gaone:</b>	<b>For boys our age, it is difficult to have sexual intercourse</b>

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 [as schoolboys].

**Gaone:** Even here in school, like us Form Threes, it is easier to get girls in lower classes because they think we know everything. It is easier proposing to a Form One [girl], and she is likely, 90% she will say yes, because she will be afraid or she may because she thinks I am hard.

**Interviewer:** So you are saying girls like going out with older men?

**Modupi:** Yes, they keep on saying that this guy is experienced.

**Gaone:** Girls like it.



**Kefentse:** Some boys also like it.

**Moetapele:** Because they are tall and us we are short.

## Decision Making in Relationships

With regard to decision-making in relationships, the majority of boys and girls asserted that boys make the decisions most of the time. They said there were instances in which girls made decisions, although these were rare. Some boys and girls argued that girls make decisions when it comes to sex, because they are afraid of getting pregnant. Some boys and girls said it is girls who make the decision whether a relationship proceeds beyond the boy's initial proposal. However, girls asserted that deciding on dating is always the boy's responsibility. Some girls said a few girls have gone to the extent of asking boys out and even asking to have sex with them. However, in most cases, they said that this results in the girls being ridiculed as boys run out to tell other boys of a girl 'making moves' on them.

This situation invariably leaves girls at the mercy of boys in making decisions about who to love, as well as when to have sex. As several boys categorically stated, "boys make decisions most of the time" and "they can force or even rape." Many boys (and girls) also observed that it is always their decision whether or not to use a condom in a sexual relationship.

	
<b>Molefi (B):</b>	<b>Boys should make decisions like where and when to have fun, like going for swimming and also when to have sex.</b>
<b>Kym (B):</b>	<b>Boys should make decisions because girls are shy to talk. I make decisions on when the girl should call or phone me.</b>
<b>Thomas (B):</b>	<b>Boys speak sweetly but they force [girls into sex].</b>
<b>Clever (B):</b>	<b>Girls fear boys. The boys force and insist on skin to skin. We say, 'Just once – you won't get pregnant. Coke cleans sperms out.'</b>
<b>Phero (G):</b>	<b>I think boys should make decisions most of the time, but moreover I can make decisions though on rare cases. The boyfriend should make decisions concerning sexual matters, i.e. when to have sex, but I turn him down sometimes when not feeling like having sex.</b>

## Condom Use

Another important aspect of decision-making in relationships concerns the use of condoms. Almost all of the interviewees said they had learnt about the use of male condoms in Standards 4 and 5 of primary school and in Science, Social Studies, Moral Education and Guidance and Counselling classes at Junior Secondary. The use of condoms had been demonstrated to them either at school or in school clubs. The female condom was still new and many boys and girls had not yet seen it demonstrated. Most girls and boys felt that girls should insist on males using condoms, and should not consent to sex without them. Despite their strong views, however, they said that many of their schoolmates engaged in casual and unprotected sex. The reasons given for this were to maximise pleasure, to prove one's love to a partner, and the discomfort of using condoms. Both girls and boys said that girls could be forced into unprotected sexual encounters with older men, who used their age difference to manipulate them. Even with age mates, girls sometimes felt obliged to prove their love by engaging in unprotected sex when their partners insisted. Although most girls





approved of the female condom, they, like the boys, felt they were unlikely to use it, because it was too large and too expensive. Interviews in single-sex focus groups based on pictures of the male and female condom revealed the following views.

Girls' focus group:

	
<b>Interviewer:</b>	What do you see in this picture?
<b>All:</b>	Condoms!
<b>Interviewer:</b>	How did you get to know about condoms?
<b>Bagele:</b>	In science clubs.
<b>Rosemary:</b>	Guidance and Counselling and Moral Education.
<b>Interviewer:</b>	Has anybody demonstrated to you?
<b>Attie &amp; Boitshwarelo:</b>	Yes!
<b>Interviewer:</b>	Both male and female condoms?
<b>Bagele &amp; Attie &amp; Boitshwarelo:</b>	Yes!
<b>Goitsemedime:</b>	I have only seen the female one on TV.
<b>Interviewer:</b>	Is it okay for a girl to ask a boy to use a condom?
<b>All:</b>	Yes!
<b>Interviewer:</b>	What if the boy refuses?
<b>Goitsemedime &amp; Bagele &amp; Attie:</b>	They don't have sex.
<b>Interviewer:</b>	Should the girl use a condom?
<b>Goitsemedime:</b>	I think the female condom is so big, so the man should be a gentleman and use the male condom.
<b>Interviewer:</b>	How do you feel about the female condom?
<b>Goitsemedime:</b>	It is uncomfortable – it is big.
<b>Helen:</b>	The male condom is even cheaper than the female one.

## Boys' focus group:

**Interviewer:** What are the pictures about?

**All:** Condoms!

**Interviewer:** How did you get to know about condoms?

**Tlhageng:** In school, in Standard 4, 5, 6 and 7 of primary school.

**Interviewer:** Have they been demonstrated to you?

**Michael & Reginauld:** Yes!

**Mosegi:** We have gone to many places where they demonstrated to us.

**Interviewer:** Who makes decisions when it comes to using condoms?

**Mosegi:** The boy.

**Tlhageng:** Girls don't carry condoms, but boys do.

**Michael:** Girls usually ask if the man has a condom, and if they don't they refuse.

**Interviewer:** Are there situations where boys refuse to wear condoms?

**Tlhageng:** Yes, they say if you really love me we can do it without a condom.

**Michael:** They say they want to experiment, they want to see if it is sweet or not.

**Reginauld:** They say they want meat to meat!

(Group laughter)

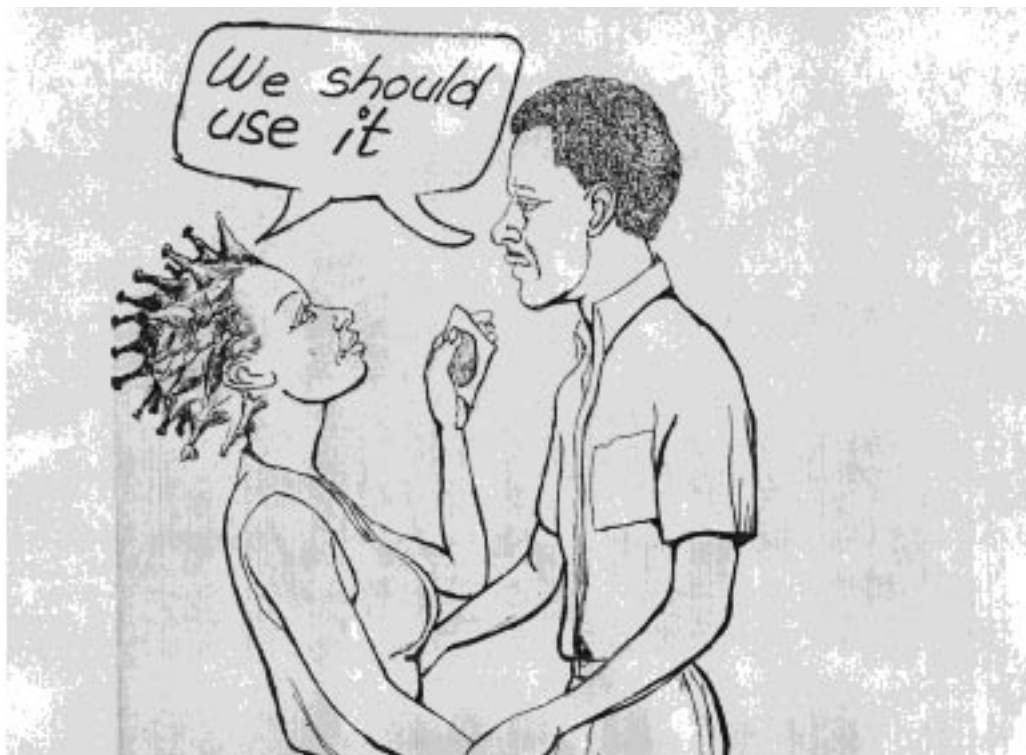
**Interviewer:** Should girls have a choice? What should they do if the man refuses?

**Reginauld:** Yes, girls should have a choice.

**Michael:** It is unfair for the man to refuse.

- Tlhageng:** In any case, it is the man who wants and he should follow the rules.
- Mosegi:** In case of pregnancy, it is the woman who suffers and therefore women should be in charge.



In group interviews based on the picture above, the students explained that the couple are about to make love and the woman wants to use a condom. However, the man's expression shows that he is against the idea. The students agreed that eventually the



woman will probably give in and allow him not to use a condom, because otherwise the man might beat her, rape her or reject her for another woman. The way the students interpreted this shows that they are well aware of power relations in love relationships. They seem to believe that usually a woman will give in, even if she does not want sex, just to please and keep her man.

### Constructions of Femininity and Masculinity

When asked about the type of girl that they would like to have a relationship with, boys generally focused on a girl's beauty and sexual attractiveness. A girl's buttocks, thighs and breasts were regarded as very important attributes in their choice of partner, as the following excerpt from an interview with boys reveals:

**Interviewer:** What kind of girlfriend do you look for?

**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:** She should be open, trustworthy and have widened hips and nice buttocks and breasts.



**Boipelo:** Look, she should be pretty, have a good attitude and have inner beauty.

**Kealeboga:** If at all I may have a girlfriend, I would expect to have children with her.

**Neo:** My girlfriend should be intelligent and beautiful.

In their construction of femininity, these boys were clearly construing the female body as a sex object. To them, girls' value lies in gratifying their sexual desires – a position that clearly makes them very vulnerable to HIV infection. It also makes girls vulnerable to sexual abuse. These boys also refer to personality characteristics they would like to see in potential girlfriends – trustworthiness, intelligence, 'good behaviour'. Thabo's desire for a girl "who loves me for what I am" seems to reflect dissatisfaction with the popular construction of males as economic providers in heterosexual relations. Perhaps this relates to anxieties about being rejected by girls of his age for older, richer men.

The girls interviewed indicated that they want boys who are kind, handsome and tall. Some of the girls said they would like a man who can provide for them financially. The boys should be loving and caring, always available for company, and ready and free to express his love. Honesty, trust and intelligence were also mentioned as qualities that girls sought in a boy, as the responses below illustrate:

**Vicky:** My ideal boyfriend is a learned one, a man of letters who has passed through UB [the University of Botswana].

**Grace:** I just want somebody to talk to, and honestly I don't expect anything in return. I want a friend, somebody who does not

**have girlfriends, who does not abuse, and who looks after himself.**

Girls were often constructed as the dependents and boys as the providers in love relationships. Both individual and group interviews revealed that in most cases boys entertain girls and give them gifts, for which they expect sexual favours in return. Such gifts include money, chocolate, teddy bears and cards, especially on their birthdays and on Valentine's Day. The interviews also revealed the existence of strong peer pressure to engage in sexual relations, with friends saying things like "sex is good" or "you will rust if you die before you have it." There was also evidence of boys accusing those who do not have sex of being "wimps," "faggots," or cowards. In one single-sex group interview, some boys claimed that they could not sit next to a girl without wanting sex with her. As one of the boys said:



*'Ga o ka ke wa bapa le dijo di budule' ['You cannot sit next to cooked food without eating'].*

This portrayal of girls as 'food' at men's disposal shows no indication that boys see girls as equals.

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The following excerpts from single-sex group interviews show how boys' and girls' views differ on the subject of boys providing for girls in exchange for sexual favours:

Interview with boys:

	
<b>Interviewer:</b>	<b>What do boyfriends do for their girlfriends to give?</b>
<b>Arthur:</b>	<b>Entertainment.</b>
<b>Kedikilwe:</b>	<b>Some of them just want to get sex.</b>
<b>Matshidiso:</b>	<b>They want to conquer.</b>
<b>Anthony:</b>	<b>Materially they also benefit.</b>
<b>Arthur:</b>	<b>Boys call girls parasites, they go out with boys. Actually in Setswana, they know that the man has to provide – he has to have money.</b>



## Interview with girls:

**Interviewer:** What do girls say their boyfriends give them?

**Jackie:** Money, presents.

**Interviewer:** Do boys get money from their girlfriends?

**Tumelo:** It will depend, if the girl is a 'cheese girl' and if the boy is a 'cheese boy' [it's] the same.

**Margaret:** My friend has a boyfriend who gives her a lot of money. Girls are looking for the most known people, they normally want to take their time, probably introduce the guy to the friends. Then [they] get the relationship for years, then [they] think about sex. But the guy, you will go with the guy and he will tell you that I love you, the next thing he wants to take you to bed. Girls are always emotional, but boys want sex as the first thing. This is because the guys like talking about sex. When a guy has sex with a girl, he will say to the other guys, "Hey guys, I had her and this is how it was," and you know, be prestigious about the whole thing. But as for a girl, if she goes to bed with someone, she will probably not mention it to anyone, except her closest friends.

**Interviewer:** What do boys expect in return?

**Lerato:** Some use this as a trap to take the girl to bed. The girl after receiving all these [presents] feels that she owes the boy something. Girls like flashy cars and all such things, a guy may come with a BMW, 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.

**Interviewer:** What do boyfriends and girlfriends do when they go out?

**Jackie:** They go to the movies at Grand Palm and at River Walk, go out to places like Mike's Kitchen, Moghul Restaurant. They kiss.

**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 have 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 love relationships. 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.

It would appear that for girls, especially those from less privileged backgrounds, such relationships are an important means of securing money and other necessities. The gift game also has a social class dimension. It would appear that when these youngsters are from a middle- or upper-class background (a 'cheese girl' or 'cheese boy'), gifts are bought by both parties. The exchange of gifts for sex is also exacerbated by non-negotiable love contracts, which presuppose that a girl's consent to a 'love relationship' is also consent to a sexual relationship. Individual and group interviewees revealed that most boys expect sexual favours as reciprocation for the gifts they give to girls.

## Sexuality and HIV/AIDS

The respondents' views on HIV/AIDS show a widespread fear of the epidemic and the dilemmas that boys and girls face in choosing between sexual relationships and postponing until a later age. Boys and girls are clearly under considerable pressure to prove their sexuality by engaging in sexual relationships. Communities have created myths to justify unprotected sex between younger girls and older men. Students' views about the myths that have been generated to perpetuate adolescent indulgence in sex were corroborated in several of our interviews with teachers.

When the students were asked for their views on HIV/AIDS, girls variously described it as "dangerous" and "serious," while one said: "At first we thought it was a myth, but now we believe." Despite this awareness, however, several myths prevailed, such as one girl who wondered if she could contract the virus on her own. Among other perceptions and feelings about HIV/AIDS were the following:

**I do not visit the hospital, since I want to avoid seeing AIDS patients.**

**I avoid even seeing HIV/AIDS videos.**

**Fear makes us think of abstaining, but friends say 'don't deny yourself. Then we have sex.**

Friends say your blood does not move due to lack of sex.

You will not bear a child if you are a virgin for too long.

They say virginity makes you sick, especially your back.

Others say HIV/AIDS is no longer there, especially when people stop talking.

Boys said the AIDS virus made them feel “fearful” and “sad and miserable,” while one said “we think about it all the time.” They also admitted to widespread fear, with one boy memorably saying: “We brag when we are with our friends, claiming to be kings of AIDS, but when we are alone we are afraid.” Some of the boys claimed that their parents warn them about AIDS a lot, and one boy said, “My mother gives me condoms every week, now I have a big collection.” Others, however, said they had reached a point where they “don’t think about it anymore.” Among the other feelings of boys were:

I even almost believe I have it.

It is a dangerous disease, we must be aware of it.

It is a killer and we should not get into unprotected sex.

A vaccine must be found.

We do not know what causes it.

It is not fair that we may get infected on the first day of sex.

Asked for the views of people in the wider community, boys and girls offered a number of revealing perspectives, including that “some people ignore it,” “some say it’s a disease like any other,” and “our grandparents think it comes from white people.” One suggested that AIDS was an acronym for ‘American Ideas of Discouraging Sex,’ while others said some people thought it was “a myth, not a real disease.” Other misconceptions on HIV/AIDS outside the schools included:

Some think it is curable, when it’s not.

Some think it is caused by witchcraft.

Some say it is God’s punishment.

Some say *ke boswagadi*.

Some think it is just a play.

Some associate it with homosexuals.

Some teens think it is [only] for elderly people.

Some say it is the end of the world.

Some say, ‘let’s have sex now, for in the future it will be airborne’.

Some boys say to girls, 'don't talk to me, you will give me AIDS'.

We are afraid of testing, for testing may give us AIDS.

Some say traditional doctors can heal it.

Some say sleeping with a virgin helps.

In the mixed interviews, some boys and girls had this to say:



**Interviewer:** What do you and your friends think about AIDS? Do you think certain people are to blame for the spread of AIDS, and what do you think can be done to stop it?



**Lesego (B):** My friends say AIDS is a killer disease and advise each other to always condomise when having sex. I feel AIDS is very bad. It kills people. It takes away breadwinners and leaves orphans behind.... [But] some people do not take AIDS seriously. They still practise unsafe sex. This is the reason why teenage girls are still exposed to teenage pregnancy. People who could be blamed are rapists, sugar daddies and sugar mummies.

**Sarah (G) :** Some people think that one who gets infected is a fool. I personally feel that AIDS can affect anyone, while my friends believe that they are too clever to be infected. Condoms should be used and encourage people to be faithful or abstain. The best thing is to abstain... No one should be blamed for the spread of AIDS since some people do not know their status...

**Tizhani (G):** Rapists and unfaithful [people] can be blamed for the spread of AIDS. Some people like traditional doctors think they can heal it. Some think it's [only] for homosexuals. People must be taught thoroughly about the dangers of AIDS.

**Mathew (B):** Some Batswana say AIDS kills you immediately. If you have AIDS and if you have sex with a virgin you will be healed. AIDS is brought by homosexuals, according to some Batswana beliefs.

The interviews with teachers confirmed that myths about sex and HIV/AIDS are widespread among their students. Several teachers complained that their attempts to teach young people about life skills, reproductive health and HIV/AIDS were negated by what they learned from their peers outside the classroom, at home and in their communities. There appear to be many common myths on how to prevent pregnancy and cure HIV, which students use to justify their continuing indulgence in sexual relationships:

**Interviewer:** Do boys and girls talk about sex when they are on their own?

**Teacher Mano (M):** I think so. There was this boy who said that someone told him that if he had sex with a girl standing up, she would not get pregnant. Or drinking water immediately after sex, or jumping up and down. This, it was said, will bring the sperms down and one would not fall pregnant. They said these ideas came from their friends, both in school and outside. It seems that from outside class they only get the positive sides of indulging in sex. They are told things like if one does not engage in sex, he or she will suffer from some kind of disease, or he or she will not be normal. [This] is against what we teach in school. There is a need to teach those who are outside [school] about abortion and HIV/AIDS. For example, one [student] was told that if you want to abort, just boil five *thebe* coins and drink the water from this. Alternatively, one can boil matchsticks and the solution from this will help commit abortion.

**Interviewer:** Do you think what boys and girls discuss with their peers is different from what is talked about in the classroom?

**Teacher Sejo (F):** In a way, yes. For example, they would say things like when you have sex for the first time you wouldn't fall pregnant. Things like, before you have sex, drink water and then you will not be affected by HIV/AIDS... They get these myths from peers and from home. We talk to them, then they realise that what they are adhering to is not true. Most respond positively to the information we give them.

When the respondents were asked if they knew anyone with HIV/AIDS, a few students admitted having lost relatives to the disease – although the vast majority denied knowing anyone with the virus. This suggested that there is a strong social stigma still attached to

the disease. A few students confirmed the presence of this stigma in their communities, including one who said: "My aunt died and my mum refused to let us see her. We never talk about it. My mum is not open."

When asked how HIV/AIDS can affect boys and girls in school, the respondents mentioned several issues, including sugar daddies, lack of knowledge, disobedience, rape, blood transfusions, students not using condoms, sexually active girls who wish to satisfy their boyfriends, and boys who claim that they are in demand. On who was to blame, they cited sex workers, students with many partners, and young girls who are HIV positive. During focus group interviews, boys blamed girls for going out with older men who provide them with material things and take them for rides in their cars. The boys said such men like schoolgirls because they believe that "schoolgirls are HIV negative and there is no risk when one sleeps with them." There was a strong feeling that such men should be punished for spreading HIV/AIDS. Girls were also blamed for sleeping with boys that they knew had other girlfriends. Significantly, it was the girls rather than such promiscuous boys who were blamed. The boys observed that sometimes they asked girls out as a "play act" but, when the girls agreed, they had no choice but to add them to their list of girlfriends. They clearly believed that the girl had the responsibility to say no – and thus abrogated responsibility for their own actions.

Boys and girls also laid some blame for the spread of AIDS on doctors who fail to sterilise needles and people who "inject" the virus into food. Some also blamed parents for not telling their children about the risks of unprotected sex. Some students expressed the view that there should be compulsory HIV testing and those who are sick should be isolated.

Although many students cited condom use as the surest way of avoiding HIV/AIDS, others warned that condoms could break during sex – and even that boys might break them deliberately. Other students focused on abstinence as the only certain way to avoid the virus. One advised his peers to "abstain from sex and in marriage use condoms," while another said, "one who has a partner should be faithful, if afraid abstain, and if one wants to do it condomise."

## Alternative Sexualities

Pictures depicting homosexual relationships between men and between women elicited some strong views from the respondents. When the picture below was shown to a mixed group of pupils, several condemned it as an "abnormal" relationship and argued that homosexuality does not exist in Botswana. However, a couple of boys said it does occur in Botswana, but usually only in prisons. Although the discussion confirmed that the students know about homosexuality, their reactions suggested that they regard it as something that only takes place in other parts of the world – or in places where life is not 'normal'.



**Interviewer:** Do you know of instances where people of the same sex have sexual relationships?

**Tau (B):** No.

**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:** 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 students who viewed this picture explained that there are two women in love with each other. However, they said that it was not a normal relationship and they were not aware of its existence in Botswana. Some said they do not know what happens in this type of relationship, while others said women in such relationships use an artificial penis when they have sex. The girls' group said that lesbian relationships do occur, but are "uncommon." Regarding male homosexuality, they said it happens, but only with men over 18 or, in some cases, between elderly men and younger boys.

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**Interviewer:** Do you know of instances where people of the same sex have sex?

**Dikeledi (F) :** It is not common but it is there.

**Joy (F):** Homosexuality is a taboo in Botswana, so such people don't make it public. It is common in prisons where men have anal sex, but for women it is a bit tricky. (Group laughter).





## Chapter 7: Summary and Recommendations

### Young People's Constructions of Gender and HIV/AIDS

An analysis of the gender identities of boys and girls indicates that gender roles tend to be quite segregated at home. Girls tend to cook, wash dishes, clean the house and do the laundry, while boys water the lawn, do the gardening and clean the yard. Boys may do some cooking or wash dishes on certain days of the week. However, there are cracks in the 'traditional' picture, for many boys and girls feel that there should be greater equality, some oscillate between wanting equality and maintaining gender differentiated roles, while even the strongest 'traditionalists' are aware that gender roles are socially constructed and therefore subject to change.

Data from both the girls' and boys' interviews indicate that they are sexually active and that most of them know about the gravity of the HIV/AIDS epidemic. They also seem to be well informed on prevention, as attested by some of their advice on prevention, such as "abstain from sex and in marriage use condoms" and "one who has a partner should be faithful, if afraid abstain and if one wants to do it condomise." These statements almost translate as: "Let's have protected sex all the time – in marriage and out."

The students' comments suggest that HIV/AIDS has cast a shadow of fear, death and insecurity over all Botswana teenagers of this generation. As two students said: "We live in fear," and "we think about it all the time." It seems, however, that there remains a gap between this knowledge and the practice of prevention. This is attested by a number of issues. First, decisions on sexual involvement are usually taken by boys, who take the initiative of saying, "Shall we have sex? Let's go somewhere." Although the boys interviewed individually generally said it was the girls who make these decisions, girls' power was shown to be limited – especially when they go out with older men, who often use their money and age to insist on sex without a condom. This desire for unprotected sex is driven by the myth of 'cleansing one's blood.' Apparently, the teenagers are aware of this myth, as they hold that some people say, "sleeping with a virgin helps."

Furthermore, boys interviewed in groups were adamant that "boys make decisions most of the time," that they "can force or even rape," that they "insist on skin to skin" – telling the girl "you won't get pregnant: coke cleans it out." Herein lies the vicious circle of intergenerational sex. Older and young men both insist on unprotected sex; gender inequality places disadvantages on young girls and the virus is carried between the ages. In addition, fear of pregnancy and assurances that "you won't get pregnant" are used to evade protection against HIV/AIDS.

Nor do the advice of parents or friends seem to make young people any less vulnerable. Although it is clear that many parents talk to their children and even give them condoms, other parents are still completely "closed" when it comes to discussing HIV/AIDS. Such stigma is confirmed by the fact that most students say they have never met or seen an HIV positive person. This stigma makes it more difficult for young people to volunteer for testing and counselling. As one memorably commented: "We are afraid of testing, for testing may give us AIDS."

Another issue that certainly makes both boys and girls vulnerable is peer pressure. Friends counteract HIV/AIDS knowledge and prevention. As some girls in a group interview commented: "Fear makes us think of abstaining, but friends say, 'don't deny yourself';" "friends say your blood does not move due to lack of sex;" or "you will not bear a child if you are virgin for too long."

As we saw in the literature review, another factor that makes pupils vulnerable are popular constructions of masculinity associated with risk-taking. This was attested by the boys who, when interviewed in groups, said they never admit to a fear of HIV/AIDS: "We brag when with friends, claiming to be kings of AIDS." While individually they admit to being scared, they will not communicate this to their friends – thus placing themselves at greater risk in certain social contexts. Lastly, the popular myths that trivialise the risks of HIV/AIDS are clearly also a contributing factor. These myths range from denying the existence of the disease to making dangerously frivolous remarks, such as: "Let's have sex now, for in the future it will be airborne!"

## Gender Constructions in the School and Classroom

As the literature review confirms, gender inequality has been identified as the major driving force behind the spread of HIV/AIDS. An essential part of HIV/AIDS prevention, therefore, should involve working towards greater gender equality and empowerment. An analysis of boys' and girls' chores at home indicates that the gender divide still exists, although with much protest from both sides. Data from the classroom unfortunately indicates that schooling plays a significant role in reproducing these inequalities. We saw, for example, how gender inequalities are constructed through classroom cleaning, feeding, and the administration of punishment and extramural activities. As boys noted in a group interview, "Girls are expected to behave, whereas boys are not" – a view confirmed by the girls, who said that "girls are expected to do better, boys are expected to be playful and less responsible, and to come to class with homework not done. Girls are expected to come to class neat, boys can come untidy."

While we have seen how girls are disadvantaged at school, in terms, for example, of the ways that boys monopolise various activities, some teachers' sexist and patronising attitudes towards girls and the more positive images of boys in school texts suggest that gender inequalities are being perpetuated at many different levels. However, data on gender construction in the classroom also indicates that the boy child is often neglected by both male and female teachers, who prefer more "controllable" girls. One of the boys' groups confirmed this view, when they said that they do not get along with their teachers, many of whom "hate us."

## Life Skills Education

Life skills, reproductive health and HIV/AIDS are incorporated into lessons in Science, Religious Education, Moral Education, Art, Design and Technology and Guidance and Counselling. Teachers revealed that they teach communication skills, interpersonal skills and decision-making. However, an analysis of the curriculum revealed that these topics do not include a gender dimension that explores power relations between girls and boys or men and women. The textbook materials are also not gender sensitive and fail to explore power relations. It is these power relations that are commonly manifested in love relationships, sexual relationships and marriage relationships in which men are empowered to make decisions for and about women. The popular constructions of girls as objects of pleasure are never addressed. Textbooks also reinforce gender inequalities because traditional stereotypes that encourage gendered roles are rarely challenged or deconstructed by teachers. Boys and some teachers continue to use these stereotypes to justify the assumed superiority of boys over girls.

Interviews with teachers that sought to establish the amount of time and space dedicated to addressing life skills and sexuality confirmed the findings of the literature review – namely, that very little time is allocated to HIV/AIDS. Moreover, gender remains a hurdle in the teaching of these subjects, as one teacher noted: "When teaching them about using condoms the boys feel offended, and when teaching about female condoms the female teacher and girls feel uncomfortable." Teachers seem to agree that discussions

outside the classroom are much more free and easy – a fact that attests to the major role of friends and peer pressure in sexual education.

## Gender, Sexuality and HIV/AIDS among Boys and Girls

Both girls and boys agree that conversation with people of the opposite sex is different both in its content and form to conversation with people of the same sex. Although some girls said boys do not know how to talk to them, many boys and girls said they feel comfortable talking to the opposite sex – perhaps suggesting a breaking down of 'traditional' gender polarised relations. Evidence for this was also provided in discussions about the kind of girlfriends and boyfriends that the interviewees desired. Although some boys conformed to more 'traditional' expectations, such as honesty, beauty and kindness, some insisted that they were looking for "intelligence" and a supportive partnership. Girls also indicated a desire for more equal relationships, with one girl emphasising that she wanted "a caring guy who respects me and my ideas."

Asked if their friends have boy/girlfriends and sexual relationships, the answers were mostly affirmative – although less so about the interviewees' own relationships. It may be that they were trying to present themselves in what they viewed as a favourable light to the interviewers. It was clear that boys give girls gifts such as money, chocolates and flowers, in return for sex. This conforms to gendered sexual identities, in which boys construct themselves as the providers and girls as their dependents. This inevitably leads to the promotion of age-gender hierarchies, as boys cannot afford to 'provide' for girls of their own ages. As we saw, they instead tend to develop relationships with younger girls, while some teenage girls develop relationships with older, wealthier 'sugar daddies'. These older men provide girls with cars, cash or cell phones, and inevitably demand sex – often unprotected – in return.

What emerged very significantly from our findings was how much girls were blamed for such relationships, by both boys and girls, who constructed them as "seducing" sugar daddies by wearing skimpy clothes and seeking out material benefits rather than true love. The irony is that the same boys who blame girls for rejecting them and turning to sugar daddies are strongly invested in taking the upper hand and identifying as providers and decision-makers in sexual relationships – a situation that compounds the formation of age-gender hierarchies and the sugar daddy phenomenon.

Discussions about sex and condom use revealed both comforting and disturbing facts. It was gratifying that the majority of both girls and boys said they would always use a condom. However, when asked if their sexually active friends 'condomise', the answers were generally very tentative and uncertain. While the only girl who confirmed using condoms suggested they were used incorrectly, among the boys there was considerable resistance to condom use. As one boy said: "Boys say, 'if you love me then let's not use a condom – and the girls agree, although they know it's a lie.'" Indeed, almost 40% of the respondents indicated that intergenerational sex was often unprotected. Of older partners, one girl said: "They do not enjoy sex with a condom...Girls agree because of money, fashion, peer pressure and food." Even if a girl insists on a condom, another girl

said, “the guy would threaten to leave, putting pressure so as not to use a condom. Girls are afraid of losing the benefits... If they had money they would not agree.”

## Sexual Harassment

Both boys and girls are subjected to sexual harassment, although at different levels, at school, at home and from strangers – a fact that regularly exposes them to HIV infection. Data from the schools suggests strong evidence of sexual harassment of female students by teachers. Although most girls reported that male teachers hardly ever touch girls, several boys insisted that male teachers “take every opportunity to touch girls” – especially during sports lessons. Incidents of schoolgirls becoming pregnant through relationships with teachers were also reported, confirming the boys’ views.

However, girls also appear to be subjected to continuous harassment by schoolboys, who touch their breasts, waists, hips, buttocks and thighs. Although girls say that they protest and report these incidents, and most boys are aware that it is a crime and makes many girls unhappy, they continue to do it because “it’s fun to touch girls” – and some of the girls themselves like it. However, some girls who seemingly approve of such harassment say they actually disapprove, but fear violence or being blamed for ‘inviting’ it. “You keep quiet,” said one girl, “for if you report it you may get beaten up or they threaten to knife you to death.” Some girls prefer to report such incidents to female teachers as they find that male teachers take the boys’ sides. Sexual violence is also unleashed on girls and boys at home, where the literature review indicates that many young people are subjected to sexual exploitation by their uncles who use the ‘traditional’ space of sexual allowance between relatives. Although boys identified girls as likely victims of uncles’ abuse, girls also said that boys are likely to be used by uncles for homosexual activities.

Popular gender discourses construct sex as a commodity that girls can ‘sell’ and boys can ‘buy’. Many girls come to believe that they can survive by using their bodies, and in a country marked by the unequal distribution of resources, girls – especially those from less privileged homes – become easy targets for men seeking sexual pleasure. The intergenerational sex of sugar mummies and daddies, who exercise power based on their superior resources and age, makes boys and girls particularly vulnerable to HIV/AIDS as they have less power to negotiate for safe sex. The belief that consent to love means consent to sex is learned by girls at an early age. This disempowers them from negotiating for protected sex, and thus exposes them to contracting HIV/AIDS.

Popular constructions of masculinity also play a major role in increasing young people’s vulnerability to HIV/AIDS. This was particularly evident in the boys’ groups’ accounts of boys bragging about multiple sexual conquests and “competition” for sexual partners. According to one boy, those who pursue a sexually active girl may later tell their friends: “*ke mo jele, ke phatlha*’ [‘I had her, she is a passage where all go through’], so everyone will shun her.” This is a classic example of the double standards through which boys take pride in ‘sleeping around’, while criticising the girls they have sex with as consumable objects. While the girl who is a ‘passage for all’ is implicitly contrasted against a pure virgin figure, the implication is that all girls should retain their virginity while all boys sleep

around – an impossible, contradictory situation that is highly oppressive to girls.

Boys' gender and sexual constructions are also notably dependent upon policing the heterosexual identity: those who do not have girlfriends and sex are labelled as 'wimps' and 'gays' who are 'afraid' of having sex. Fearlessness and bravery must thus be demonstrated by having sex. One boy confessed that he finds difficulty in talking with girls because he is afraid they will discover that he is a virgin – in other words, that he is not 'man' enough.

## The Way Forward

Fieldwork and literature reviews indicate that a great deal of work has already been done to educate young people about HIV/AIDS. However, it is also bitterly clear that a great deal more needs to be done to enable our young people to utilise their knowledge and to protect themselves. As we have seen, schooling itself reinforces through the ways classes are organised and structured and the differential administration of punishments to boys and girls strong messages about appropriate gender inequalities and relations of power. This study has shown that the gender and sexual identities of young Botswana boys and girls are still firmly constructed on a foundation of inequality. In order to address the sexual exploitation of young people and to reduce their vulnerability to HIV infection, the following issues should be addressed as a matter of urgency:

### Teacher Training

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More space and time in class should be allocated to life skills and to HIV/AIDS and reproductive health taught within a life skills framework. This means that the emphasis in this, as in our research, should be on encouraging young people to reflect on their identities, relations, pleasures and concerns. In order to facilitate this approach to teaching, it is vital that appropriate in service and pre service programmes are developed for teachers:

- Teacher training programmes should be developed and implemented to encourage greater self-reflexivity and gender sensitivity among teachers, especially in relation to the use of classroom and school spaces, the use of textbooks, and the administration of punishments;
- Educationalists and teachers should help to design and develop pupil-centred pedagogies that focus on the pupils themselves and encourage them to reflect upon their own identities and relations, fears and pleasures, along the same lines as the interviews in this study;
- Creative and formalised methods, along the lines of *bogwera* and *bojale*, should be developed to harness peer pressure in the teaching and promotion of HIV/AIDS awareness and prevention;
- Peer educators should be identified and trained to provide students with practical and accurate information on HIV/AIDS.

### Addressing Rather than Reproducing Gender Inequalities

It is important that teachers (and especially those teaching HIV/AIDS and life skills) learn to reflect on 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 where 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. Teacher training in Life skills and HIV/AIDS education must involve sensitising teachers to aspects of the 'hidden' or informal curriculum and the sorts of messages about gender identities and relations which are commonly communicated through this. 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 which we observed in classrooms. This could, for example, involve experimenting with single-sex group work as a way of encouraging girls to develop a stronger voice. However it is important, as we argue below, that this is used not alone but in conjunction with mixed group teaching.

### **Mixed and Single Sex Groups in HIV/AIDS / Life Skills Classes**

Our research, and in particular the experience of interviewing young people in single-sex and mixed groups, suggests that single-sex group work should form part of life skills and HIV/AIDS education. This is because in these groups, girls in particular felt freer to express their desires and concerns without being labelled in derogatory ways. Life skills, HIV/AIDS education needs to encourage girls to talk about sexuality, not just in a negative way but about their sexual feelings and desires without feeling bad. This may be more possible in single-sex classes. However, the problem is that these tend to reinforce assumptions that boys and girls are essentially different and in opposition to each other. As was found in the mixed group discussions, boys and girls were able to learn from each other about their problems, concerns, and views. For this reason, we would also advocate mixed group discussion as an important teaching strategy in HIV/AIDS and life skills education. (See Pattman & Chege, 2002) Moreover, ideally girls and boys should jointly address effective ways of transforming risk behaviour and sexual vulnerability. (IIEP Publications: April 2001; UNIFEM, 2000).

### **Addressing Sexual Harassment**

Schools must take sexual harassment seriously, and take a strong stand against it. Our interviewees commonly reported incidences of sexual harassment against girls in schools by boys. As we suggested above, this implied that girls were constructed as objects of male desire, for male pupils to fondle and touch irrespective of the girls' desires and wishes. By ignoring complaints of sexual harassment from both girls and boys, schools were contributing to a culture where forms of sexual violence such as rape, incest, sodomy, harassment and gender violence are largely relegated to a private space where they are marginalised and ignored.

It is important, however, not to assume that sexual desire is mainly male and that heterosexual relations inevitably entail males harassing females. Indeed, in HIV/AIDS and life skills education, we want to argue for more equal sexual relations between males and females, for girls to be able to express more openly their sexual desires. This would, we believe, make them less vulnerable to forms of sexual abuse. Precisely because girls

are not supposed to express sexual desire in the same way that boys do, this leaves them open to the accusation, even if they report sexual harassment that really they 'encouraged' or 'sent a signal.'

It was striking how keen many girls (and a few boys) were to talk about their experiences of sexual harassment to our interviewees, which they were unable to divulge to teachers and other adults. This implies that our interviewees were developing the sorts of friendly, young person centred relations with them which enabled them to talk openly about these concerns. We would argue that pupils are much more likely to voice these concerns to HIV/AIDS and life skills educators who are learner centred and gender sensitive, than other teachers who are perceived as more authoritarian and judgmental.

### Teachers Must Not Use Corporal Punishment

Corporal punishment is highly problematic not least because it militates against the possibility of friendly, constructive and learner centred relations with teachers and pupils which, we have argued, is essential for effective HIV/AIDS life skills education. As we saw, women teachers were idealised by some of the boys as counsellors, as people they felt able to talk to about problems, precisely because they perceived the men teachers as hostile to them and likely to beat them. The qualities attributed to the women teachers are exactly the ones which good HIV/AIDS educators should show. The selective application of corporal punishment against boys, and especially by male teachers, is very problematic because it contributes to a culture of male violence. It is because we want boys to become more sensitive and caring and not regard these as feminine qualities, which only female teachers can exhibit that it is vital that both men and women become learner, centred HIV/AIDS/ life skills educators.

### Promoting Friendship between Girls and Boys

Sexual harassment, we would argue, not reflects and reinforces gendered inequalities, but is symptomatic of a culture where friendships between the sexes are much less common than friendships within them. HIV/AIDS education, taught within a life skills framework needs to encourage boys and girls to reflect on developing cross gender friendships. From our observations and interviews we found that girls and boys while mixing a little, were much less likely to do so than with people of the same sex. This clearly makes it more difficult to develop relations which are empathic and marked by mutual communication. This means that the expression of heterosexual desire may take a rather detached, impulsive and sometimes coercive form, putting girls and boys at risk of HIV/AIDS. In arguing for the promotion of friendships between boys and girls, we are not suggesting that HIV/AIDS and life skills education should not address sexual desire. Rather that boys and girls should be encouraged to think of possibilities of close, friendly relations between the sexes which are not sexual, as well as sexual relations which are based on friendships, and are marked by good communication and sharing.

### HIV/AIDS Education Must Not Alienate Boys

It is important that a gender sensitive HIV/AIDS and life skills programme when addressing issues like sexual harassment or the exploitation of girls in boy-girl relationships - all



issues which our research has highlighted - does not simply criticise boys. The effect of this would be to alienate boys from girls and life skills education and reproduce their misogyny (Redman, 1996). Rather, HIV/AIDS and life skills education needs to tease out differences between boys and encourage boys to reflect on the problems they experience because of trying to define themselves as tough, highly sexual, macho and dominant in opposition to girls. It needs to focus not only on the problems girls experience as a result of boys distancing themselves from their versions of femininity and trying to live up to cultural stereotypes of tough men, but also on the difficulties this presents boys, the costs to boys which this incurs and the competition it generates between boys. These costs include, for example, competing against more 'powerful' males in terms of money and age, for the 'affections' of girls of their age; if boys and men were not expected to be initiators and providers in boyfriend-girlfriend relations, it would be much easier for girls and boys of similar ages to develop friendships and sexual relationships.

### Not Moralising about 'Bad' Girls

In the wider community, the sexual exploitation of young people was illustrated by both boys and girls in their descriptions of sugar daddy and sugar mummy relationships. While the consumerism of contemporary society may have provided an incentive for young people to engage in such relationships, it is important not to moralise about young people – especially girls – losing respect for 'traditional values', which is a popular discourse in Botswana. Rather than blaming girls, we believe we should focus on the kind of patriarchal relations that identify boys and men as providers and decision-makers in heterosexual relationships, and give rise to the formation of age-gender hierarchies in the first place.

### Summary

In summary, Life skills and HIV/AIDS education programmes should focus on the following key areas in which major needs and misunderstandings still exist:

- Encouraging young people to engage in safer forms of sex, breaking down barriers to the possibilities of non-sexual friendships between people of the opposite sex, and promoting boyfriend-girlfriend relations that do not involve penetrative sex;
- Encouraging young people to address and explore ways of being male and female that challenge popular stereotypes of men and boys as decision-makers, economic providers and the initiators of sexual relationships, and women and girls as quiet, passive, and the objects of male desire;
- Addressing the costs and pressures that are exacted from boys in being expected to live up to popular constructions of masculinity;
- Addressing the sexual harassment of girls by boys and men in school, at home and in the wider community;
- Teachers should bring community leaders and medical professionals to the schools to assist in teaching life skills in areas of their particular expertise. Such professionals could also be approached to assist in the sourcing of teaching aids and materials. However it is important that teachers do not substitute education about the biological 'facts' of sex or the medical 'facts' about HIV/AIDS for HIV/AIDS education taught within a life skills framework.
- More young person-centred methods such as demonstrations, dramas and role-plays

should be incorporated into lessons on HIV/AIDS, reproductive health and life skills.

- Teachers should seek to develop life skills pedagogies that combine and utilise both single-sex and mixed group work, in order to enable girls to discuss issues relating to sexuality more freely, while also enabling boys and girls to learn from each other. In order to break down rigid and polarised gender identities and relations, we would recommend that single-sex group work is always combined with mixed group work whatever the topic being addressed.

## Schools Should Play a Pivotal Role

- Promoting greater involvement from parents in addressing issues surrounding HIV/AIDS, helping to reduce the stigma of the disease, and promoting greater gender equality in the home environment.
- Developing and supporting youth clubs that promote peer counselling for teenagers. Such clubs provide vital training in helping teenagers develop greater self-esteem and make informed decisions about their sexual behaviour, as well as imparting lifesaving knowledge on contraceptive use and HIV/AIDS.
- Supporting and Promoting their Student Christian Unions as another important venue for teaching and empowering youngsters, and encouraging them to develop trusting and communicative relations between contemporaries and adults of the opposite as well as the same sex.
- Placing Boards of Governors and Parent Teacher Associations within the school system to work with teachers in developing interventions to address issues of gender and sexuality in conjunction with – and with the full support of – the pupils' parents.

## Good National Practices

The incorporation of reproductive health education, HIV/AIDS and life skills in some of the core subjects in the Botswana curriculum is an important step in addressing sexuality, gender and HIV/AIDS among the nation's youth. However, a good deal more needs to be done at the national level. The following steps are recommended for initiating better national practices in the teaching and dissemination of vital information on HIV/AIDS among our youth:

- The Ministry of Education's National Policy on HIV/AIDS an important instrument outlining national goals and strategies for addressing sexuality and HIV/AIDS among Botswana's youth. Policymakers should use this document as an important and consistent entry point for designing and coordinating national-level programmes and interventions that address gender, sexuality and HIV/AIDS.
- Radio and television programmes are clearly important and influential channels for disseminating information to the nation's youth. Most students have heard about HIV/AIDS from the radio, while television has recently been airing demonstrations of the use of both the male and the female condom. The Government should continue to support these vital media by providing and enhancing a liberal operating environment and licensing procedures for responsible television and radio operators.
- A youth centre, the Centre for Youth of Hope (CEYOH), has been established to help those who are infected with HIV to live positively. The Government donors and local

NGOs should support and work with this centre to provide greater tolerance towards and awareness of the needs of People Living With AIDS.

Finally our study has shown the need for the introduction of legislation to protect young people, namely:

- Legislation to curb the abuse of age and power by older men (and women) who exploit young people's sexuality, especially girls' sexuality, and the criminalisation of forms of sexual harassment perpetrated by adults.

One of the biggest challenges facing Botswana today in the fight against AIDS is to break the cycle of intergenerational transmission of HIV. For an AIDS-free generation to be secured, critical responses are required at two levels. First, a social revolution is required to revamp social sanctions against sex between older men and young girls, and to change attitudes so that open discussion on HIV/AIDS and sex can begin to take place. Girls must be allowed to grow into young women without pressure to engage in sex with older men. For this to happen, quality sex education must begin at home and continue in school, addressing issues of HIV/AIDS and sexuality openly and honestly. Secondly, the justice system must serve children better, through the promotion and enforcement of laws against sexual harassment and abuse of minors at home, at school and in the workplace.<sup>83</sup>

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<sup>83</sup>See Botswana Human Development Report 2000, pp.5-6.



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# Annexes

## Annex 1: Life Skills Education in the Botswana Curriculum

Art – JSS, Module 1, Art and Population and FLE issues: Discussing and creating artworks that confront potential crises of population and family life.

Design and Technology – Year 1 JSS, First Aid techniques: Preventing exposure to HIV/AIDS.

Moral Education – JSS, Form 2, Module 2, Personal Moral Issues: Understanding the basic elements of HIV/AIDS and STDs, behaviour that will/will not expose you to HIV, symptoms, living positively with HIV, popular myths about HIV, consequences of HIV/AIDS for the individual, family, community and nation, tolerance, positive attitudes and compassion towards PLWAs. Unit 2.4, Choices of Life and Death: Death and bereavement, suicide, etc. Module 4, Unit 4.1, Children’s Rights: Appreciation of children, child abuse, sexual abuse.

Religious Education – JSS, Form 2, Module 4, HIV/AIDS in the Community: Facts about HIV/AIDS, religious attitudes towards its causes, effects on the community, how religions can help in controlling the spread of HIV, investigating if religions are assisting in promoting acceptance of AIDS victims, roles of religions in counselling AIDS victims.

Science – Module 3, Unit 3.3, Sexual Behaviour Problems: Basic knowledge of STDs and HIV/AIDS, their nature, prevalence and seriousness, different types of STDs, signs, treatment, transmission, complications of untreated STDs, transmission of HIV, signs (and normal appearance) of HIV positive people, symptoms of advanced AIDS, prevention of infection of STDs and HIV, statistical information on STDs and HIV/AIDS cases in Botswana. Unit 7.3, Transporting Substances in the Human Body: Nature of blood, transfusions, screening for communicable diseases. Unit 7.5, Communicable Diseases: Nature and causes of infectious diseases, e.g. tuberculosis, bilharzias, malaria, polio, flu, STDs, HIV/AIDS, intestinal infections and ringworm.

Teacher's Guide, Science – JSS, Module 2, Cells, Reproduction and Family Life: Living cells, sexual reproduction in plants, sexual reproduction in mammals (including humans), and family life. HIV/AIDS: Family planning (seven modern methods and periodic abstinence/rhythm method), disadvantages of teenage pregnancy and abortion, population growth, STDs (gonorrhoea, syphilis, fungal infections), role of faithfulness in reducing chances of STD infection, nature and transmission of HIV/AIDS, symptoms, avoiding HIV infection ('If in doubt, always use a condom').

Guidance and Counselling – Family Life Education: Defining sexuality, attitudes towards sexuality, developing appropriate responses, emotional and social responses to STDs and HIV/AIDS, situations that can lead to STDs or HIV transmission (including financial inducements, treats, threats, ignorance, recklessness, sexual abuse, negligence, peer pressure, romance, experimentation, etc.), support services available for HIV/AIDS patients in Botswana, distinguishing between facts and myths about HIV/AIDS, safe ways of helping and caring for AIDS patients, stress management techniques, the socio-economic impacts of HIV/AIDS. Planning a Family: Understanding what is involved in starting a family, reasons why most people need to establish families, identifying the right partner, changes to individual lifestyles and expectations. Adolescence: Physical and emotional changes during adolescence, impacts on behaviour and personality, coping strategies for dealing with the rapidity and extent of adolescent change. Teenage Pregnancy: Causes and consequences, underlying factors, traditional practices that condone and may lead to teenage pregnancy, myths and facts about teenage pregnancy.

## Annex 2: Questions Asked During Group Interviews

### SEX AND SEXUALITY

1. What do you talk about with boys/girls?
2. Is it different or much the same being with girls or boys? If different, please explain.
3. Do you behave differently when you're with your friends than when you are on your own? If so, how?
4. Do some people of your age have boyfriends/girlfriends?
5. What do they do when they are with their boyfriends/girlfriends?
6. What do they say that their boyfriends/girlfriends give them?
7. Do some people of your age have sex? If so, with people from what age group?
8. If they have sex, do they say they use condoms?
9. In a boy/girl relationship, who makes the decisions – and what kind of decisions?

### SEXUAL HARASSMENT

10. Do boys or teachers ever touch girls? If so, what do they do?
11. What do you think about this? (To boys) Do you sometimes touch girls? If so why? How do you think they feel about this? (To girls) Do you sometimes get touched by boys or teachers? If so, how do you feel and how do you respond to this?
12. Do you ever tell anyone about this? (To boys) Do you sometimes get touched in your private parts by boys or teachers or girls when you don't want to be? If so, how do you feel and how do you respond to this? Do you tell anyone about it?

### IN THE CLASSROOM

13. Do you think boys and girls are treated differently or the same in class? If differently, how? Give examples. What do you think about this?
14. What do boys and girls think about this? Do you think teachers pick upon boys or girls? Are boys and girls expected to do different things in class? If so, what? What do you feel about this? What about you yourself? How do you get on with your teachers?

HIV/AIDS

15. What do you think contributes to the spread of HIV/AIDS?

16. How does it affect boys and girls in your school?

17. Tell me about what you and your friends think about AIDS. How do you feel about it?

18. Do people think about it differently? Do you think some people are to blame for the spread of AIDS? Can anything be done to stop it spreading?

### Annex 3: Guide for Classroom Observations

1. Who sits where? Are boys and girls seated differently?
2. When students work in groups, how are the groups determined? Are groups ever segregated by gender?
3. Where is the teacher physically positioned? Does he/she move around the classroom? Does the teacher's physical position suggest he/she is being intimidating or supportive?
4. How are teaching aids (visual, discipline instruments) used? How does the teacher address the pupils (shouting, talking softly, abusive language, tone, content)? What is the nature of his/her feedback to the students (praise, verbal/physical discipline)? What questions are asked, to whom and how often? How does the teacher respond to boys' and girls' questions? Does the teacher get annoyed with boys/girls? If so, about what?
5. Student activity: Specify whether it is boys or girls or mainly boys or mainly girls or equally boys and girls for the following questions:

Are the students working individually or in groups? What kinds of groups (single/mixed-sex)? What kinds of tasks are they engaged in? Do students initiate discussions with the teacher or ask questions? Which students participate in the lesson? Who asks the teacher questions most of the time? Do students laugh – if so, about what? Are there any disagreements or agreements between boys/girls in class, and on what issues? What kinds of interactions are there between girls and girls, boys and boys, and boys and girls (intimidating, bullying, friendly, teasing, name-calling)? How physically close are these interactions? Who initiates conversations in class? Who do the girls talk to most of the time? Who do the boys talk to? Are there any interruptions, who usually makes these interruptions, and who is usually interrupted?

## Annex 4: Classroom Observation Grid

### BASIC INFORMATION

School: \_\_\_\_\_ Class: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Name of teacher: \_\_\_\_\_ Sex: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Time: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Subject: \_\_\_\_\_ Topic: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Number of students: \_\_\_\_\_ No. of girls: \_\_\_\_\_ No. of boys: \_\_\_\_\_

### THE LESSON

Time	Teacher Activity	Student Activity	Notes
Start			
10			
20			
30			
40			
End			



## Annex 5: Guide for School Observations

### DRESS AND APPEARANCE

1. Is there a school uniform/dress code? How closely do girls and boys adhere to it?
2. How tidy are boys in comparison to girls?

### CLEANING DUTIES

1. What duties are girls and boys expected to perform?
2. How carefully and well do they carry out their respective duties?

### PUNISHMENTS

1. What kinds of punishments are meted out to boys and girls, and with what frequency?
2. Who administers these punishments?

### MEALTIMES

1. How do boys and girls group themselves at feeding time?
2. Are there any differences in the types and amount of food that boys and girls eat? In what manner do boys and girls eat?
3. Is there any evidence of boys or girls pushing in front of each other when queuing for meals?

### EXTRAMURAL ACTIVITIES

1. Are there any differences in the type of sports or clubs available to boys and girls?
2. Do boys and girls choose to play in gender segregated or mixed groups?
3. What type of imaginative games do boys and girls play?
4. What positions do they take up or assign to each other?

## Annex 6: School Profiles

### Locality, History and Community Relations

- Establishment: location, when, by whom, what level
- Size of local community
- Range of parental occupations and income sources
- Local community support (Parent Teacher Association, Board of Governors, etc.)
- Socio-economic grouping and average earnings

### School Conditions

- Number of classrooms
- Physical condition of buildings
- Furniture
- Learning resources (textbooks, teaching aids, writing materials, etc.)
- Toilet facilities
- Other facilities (eg. laboratories, library, church, sports facilities, etc.)

### Teaching Staff

- Number teachers by gender and subject
- Teachers with responsibility by gender (including principal and admin staff)
- Profile of school principal position (previous two incumbents)
- Lengths of service

### Students

- Number of students by gender
- General appearance of students
- Absenteeism by gender
- Punctuality
- Resources (pens, books, bags, etc.)
- Socio-economic status of pupils (through brief questionnaire of year group)
- Demographic information (living with whom, family income, etc.)

### School Policies, Rules and Practices

- School policy and practice on corporal punishment by gender
- School policy and practice on other punishments by gender
- School admissions
- School uniform
- School rules
- Fees/contributions policy and practices
- Relationship between school, community and parents
- School clubs and participation by teachers, students, gender and year
- School activities and routines (eg. assemblies, cleaning duties, etc.)

## Annex 7: Questions Asked During Teacher Interviews

Name of school:

Sex:

Qualifications:

Date of appointment:

Subject(s) taught:

Class:

1. Which one of the following have you taught?

HIV/AIDS topics

Reproductive Health

Life Skills

2. What problems, if any, do you encounter in teaching these topics?

3. Do pupils ask questions which you consider embarrassing? If so, give examples. How do you deal with or react to these?

4. What messages do you think are conveyed in these topics for boys or girls? Give examples.

5. Are there any disagreements or agreements between boys and girls in your class? If so, what issues do these arise over?

6. Is there any laughter in your class? If so, what generates it?

7. Do you feel you relate differently as a life skills/HIV/AIDS educator to girl and boy pupils? If so, please explain how. Do you feel there are problems teaching these topics to pupils of the opposite sex to yours? If so, what problems have you experienced?

8. Have any parents complained to you or your head about HIV/AIDS, reproductive health or life skills lessons at your school? If so, what sort of complaints have been made and how have you responded to them?

9. Do you think boys and girls talk about sex in their peer groups outside the classroom in ways that are different from how they are talked about inside the classroom? If so, what are the differences, between the ways (a) girls talk about sex outside and inside the classroom, and (b) boys talk about sex outside and inside the classroom?

10. Do you think pupils enjoy life skills, HIV/AIDS and reproductive health lessons? Please give reasons why or why not.

11. Do you encourage your pupils to talk during any of the above lessons about any of the following:

- Whether they are sexually active
- How they entertain themselves outside school hours
- Where and with whom they live

If so, why? If not, why not? Please respond for each of these.

NB. The above observation instruments were adapted from Chilisa B., Tabulawa R. and Maundeni T.'s *Gendered School Experiences: Effect on Achievement and Retention*, published by DfID, London (2002).

### Annex 8: Format of a Typical Day Diary

Kept from Monday to Sunday.

Name:

Gender:

Class:

6.00 am
7.00 am
8.00 am
9.00 am
10.00 am
11.00 am
12.00 pm
1.00 pm
2.00 pm
3.00 pm
4.00 pm
5.00 pm
6.00 pm
7.00 pm
8.00 pm
9.00 pm
10.00 pm

1. Was there anything or anyone that made you happy today? If so, please explain and describe as fully as possible what made you happy?

2. Was there anything or anyone that made you sad or angry today? If so, please explain and describe as fully as possible what made you sad or angry?