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**Agency or Structure?  
Nigerian University Students' Perspectives of  
Influences on Sexual Risk Taking.**

Submitted by  
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Submitted to Swansea University, in fulfilment of the requirements for the Degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy –Development Studies.

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Sept, 2009

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## **ABSTRACT**

This thesis is about influences on young people's sexual risk taking. It is situated within a complex context of young people's sustained structural/self-sexualisation, significant sexual activity, unwanted outcomes such as sexually transmitted infections (STIs), intended benefits such as pleasure, and recurrent interventionists' promotion of abstinence-until-marriage sexual norm to young people.

The above conceptualization is tested with a mixed-methodology that recruited fifty-six students with a snowball sampling technique. McCracken's long-interview and Stones' empirical research brackets for structuration theory facilitated narrative data collection, which were subjected to structural-hermeneutic analysis.

Respondents identified four broad influences on their dominantly heterosexual behaviour. They include external influences (mass media), internal influences (positive pre-dispositions to premarital sex), agency (purposeful sexual action), and (un)intended outcome (STI and pleasure). Respondents emphasize that influences are non-hierarchical, differentially combine, and are dependent on individuals, contexts and seasons.

They also infer the Nigerian context concurrently constrain and enable their sexual conducts via three normative sexual behaviour options. These are (1) the dominant Nigerian culture promoted abstinence-until-marriage. (2) Modernity sanctioned safer-sex with contraceptives. (3) Collective/individuated preference for unprotected premarital sex, periodic abstinence and contraceptive use. Respondents admit they practise the latter, which is a hybridization of option (1) and (2) and is illustrative of the co-influence of structure and agency on action.

The conclusion is drawn that sexual risk taking is influenced by young people's concurrent structural/self sexualisation and their pursuit of contextual, personal and collectively meaningful goals. Consequently, dominant linear conceptualizations of sexual risk taking, e.g. problem behaviour, will continue to be limited in effectiveness because they neglect these complex, recursive and interrelated influences. Thus, pragmatic efforts to manage risk-prone sexualities must concurrently engage their complex structural and agential sources, governed by safer-sex promotion, a recognition of multiple influences and individuated/collective value that both society and young people attach to sex.



## DECLARATION/STATEMENTS

### Declaration

This work has not previously been accepted in substance for any degree and is not being concurrently submitted in candidature for any degree.

Signed ..... (candidate)

Date 30th Sept. 2009

### Statement 1

This thesis is the result of my own investigations, except where otherwise stated. Where correction services have been used, the extent and nature of the correction is clearly marked in a footnote(s).

Other sources are acknowledged by footnotes giving explicit references. A bibliography is appended.

Signed ..... (candidate)

Date 30th Sept. 2009

### Statement 2

I hereby give consent for my thesis, if accepted, to be available for photocopying and for inter-library loan, and for the title and summary to be made available to outside organisations.

Signed ..... (candidate)

Date 30th Sept. 2009

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

Although I am the author of this thesis, its completion benefited from the advice, constructive criticisms, reading and listening skills of many willing supporters. Among these are my wife, Unoko, and son, Zulu. Together, they forced my redefinition of multi-tasking.

To the young Nigerian university students who graciously shared parts of their sexual histories with me, I owe a great debt. Without them, my thesis will have taken a different turn. I kept my promise to hide their identities, and consequently replicated their stories as evocatively as they told it.

To Professor Neil Price, who analyzed various drafts of this thesis, I say thank you. His critical support and suggestions were immensely encouraging in moments of discursive confusion and doubt. Dr Krijn Peters also lent his support, through patient and thoughtful re-reading of the final draft for editorial finishing.

I also owe a debt of gratitude to Dr Philip, A. Oyelaran of University of Ibadan, Nigeria, my Bachelor Degree project supervisor, for encouraging me to think outside the box. And to Dr Mike Jennings of the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, my MSc degree supervisor, while at Swansea University. He also emphasized independent thought and creative application of research methodologies.

My thesis also benefited from the thoughtful encouragement of Dr Chimaroke, O. Izugbara of University of Uyo, Nigeria, who I have never met. I am also grateful to Dr Kgomotso, M. Masemola of Walter Sisulu University, South Africa, and my cousin, Ngozi J. Okenyi for their perennial encouragement.

To Professor Rob Stones, my external supervisor, and Dr Nicola Piper, my internal supervisor, I say thank you. Their insightful suggestions made my thesis more theoretically and hermeneutically robust.

Nevertheless, any error of fact and conception in thesis is mine.

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## **LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

AIDS	- Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
ART	- Antiretroviral therapy.
BCC	- Behaviour Change Communication
CDC	- Centre for Disease Control and Prevention
CSR	- Corporate Social Responsibility
CSW	- Commercial Sex Workers
CUP	- 100% Condom Use Programme (Thailand)
DfID	- Department for International Development
FBOs	- Faith Based Organisations.
FHI	- Family Health International
FMCG	- Fast Moving Consumer Goods
NGOs	- Non-Governmental Organizations
FMoH	- Federal Ministry of Health
NACA	- National Action Committee on AIDS
PLWHA	- Persons Living with HIV/AIDS
PSI	- Population Services International
PPFN	- Planned Parenthood Federation of Nigeria
PPP	- Public Private Partnership
SFH	- Society for Family Health
STD	- Sexually Transmitted Diseases
STIs	- Sexually Transmitted Infections
TEIs	- Tertiary Educational Institutions
UNDP	- United Nations Development Programme
UNFPA	- United Nations Population Fund.
UNICEF	- United Nations Children's Fund
UNAIDS	- Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS
USAID	- United States Agency for International Development
VCT	- Voluntary Counselling and Testing
WB	- World Bank
WHO	- World Health Organization

## WRITING CONVENTION

- Harvard referencing system 2007<sup>1</sup>.
- “Double quotes” for third party ideas/concepts.
- ‘Single quotes’ and italics for emphasising ideas or concepts.

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<sup>1</sup>Available at; [http://libweb.anglia.ac.uk/referencing/files/Harvard\\_referencing.pdf](http://libweb.anglia.ac.uk/referencing/files/Harvard_referencing.pdf) [Retrieved June 2008].

## Introduction

### What the thesis is about

#### i Background

This thesis is the product of a practical application of theoretical grounding and empirical research techniques, acquired as a student in Swansea University, towards understanding one of the perennial social problems that development<sup>2</sup> studies is occupied with, which is known as young people's sexual risk taking. I adapt UNAIDS' categorization of sexual risk behaviour to define sexual risk taking as behaviour and acts that predispose young people to unwanted pregnancies and sexually transmitted infections (STIs), which can lead to disrupted development, ill-health and death. Such activities include early age at sexual debut/marriage, sexual intercourse with multiple/concurrent partners; engagement in cross-generational sex and inconsistent use of contraceptives, including condoms (see UNAIDS, 1998a, p.9).

My choice of topic, theory and methodology are influenced by social discourse, especially the dominant linear conceptualisation of sexual risk taking in literature. The most insidious and influential among this class of sexuality literature is Caldwell and colleagues (1987; 1989; 1991), generalisation about sub-Saharan African sexuality.<sup>3</sup> Caldwell and colleagues claim that unlike their Eurasian counterparts, which are imbued with moral and religious constrain, sub-Saharan African societies “do not

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<sup>2</sup> Two dominant views of development thrive today. One is President Harry Truman of United States classic conception of *development* as “a bold new programme for making the benefits of our scientific advances and industrial progress available for the improvement and growth of underdeveloped areas” (Truman, 1949). The second view is associated with Amartya Sen's definition of *development* “as a process of expanding the real freedoms that people enjoy” (Sen, 1999, p.3). Such freedoms are interconnected and include economic, political and social freedom among others (see Sen, 1999, for discussions of development as freedom).

Both conception of development bestow the discipline of development studies with the complex task of illuminating interconnected constraints and opportunities for globalising western European scientific, industrial , social advances and values to third world countries, especially in Asia and Africa.

<sup>3</sup> The World Health Organization (WHO) defines sexuality as the “central aspect of being human throughout life and encompasses sex, gender identities and roles, sexual orientation, eroticism, pleasure, intimacy and reproduction. Sexuality is experienced and expressed in thoughts, fantasies, desires, beliefs, attitudes, values, behaviours, practices, roles and relationships. While sexuality can include all of these dimensions, not all of them are always experienced or expressed. Sexuality is influenced by the interaction of biological, psychological, social, economic, political, cultural, ethical, legal, historical, religious, and spiritual factors (WHO Draft working definition, October 2002).

regard most sexual relations as sinful or as central to morality and religion, and, at the most, have fairly easily evaded prohibitions even on female premarital or extramarital sex” (1989, p.222). Sex for Africans, is likened by Caldwell and colleagues, to a “worldly activity like work or eating and drinking” (Caldwell, 1989, p.203). In essence, Africans are promiscuous. Promiscuity, Caldwell and colleagues infer, is the principal reason for sub-Saharan African significantly higher sexual drives, fecundity and STIs prevalence rates, compared to Eurasia.

Nearly two decades after Caldwell and colleagues study, this stereotyped<sup>4</sup> notion of highly sexed Africans still pervade academic and lay circles. I deduce, and often debated this notion in sexual reproductive health conferences, seminars, workshops etc., that I attended in the last two years. I disagree with Caldwell and colleagues. Contrary to their conclusions about sub-Saharan African sexuality, there are evidence that the dominant Nigerian adult privileging sexual culture historically attempts to, but unsuccessfully constrain young people’s sexualities. For example, the dominant adult privileging culture historically, and continuously, prescribe and promote sexual abstinence-until-marriage for all young people, who do not often abstain due to complex structural pressures, individuated and collective benefits derived from sexual activity.

Other structural constraints on unprotected premarital sex in Nigeria include the culture of silence surrounding sexuality, cultural prescriptions for female virginity and cultural association of sex with marriage and reproduction to mention a few (see Gupta, 2000; see also Izugbara, 2004; Weiss, Whelan, and Gupta, 2000; Weiss, and Gupta, 1998). Young people’s selective internalisation of enabling sexual norms and tendencies to undermine their constraining counterparts, which are outcomes of their knowledge, active and purposive agencies, are more plausible explanations of their risk-prone sexualities. Another plausible explanation is the varied and recursive structural pressures on them to engage in nonconformist behaviour.

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<sup>4</sup> See discussion of Western stereotyped response to African HIV/AIDS epidemic depicted as “widespread in the European subconscious, of the promiscuous, highly sexed African,” which “contributed greatly to the perception, shared by many African observers, that the real cause of the AIDS epidemic in Africa was immorality and promiscuity” (Lyons, 1999, p.97; see Obbo, 1999; King, 1999 also).



The preceding contradictions, in addition to systemic challenges inherent in Caldwell and colleague's methodologies, leave little room for the over-generalisation that African cultures do not prohibit premarital sex, or worse still, condones its youth promiscuity (see Caldwell, 1989). Indeed, a recent global comparative study of sexualities unequivocally state that young Africans are no more promiscuous than their Eurasian counterparts are who are not similarly labelled (see Wellings, et al., 2006, for discussions). In essence, instead of linear conceptualisations, such as Caldwell and colleagues' (ibid) cultural promiscuity thesis, I am swayed by the counter-intuitive assumption that young people are simultaneously enabled and constrained by the Nigerian structure to take sexual risks.

Anthony Giddens structuration theory, which describes the configuration of social practices and "social relations across time and space, in virtue of the duality of structure" is most amenable to the deconstruction of structural influences on young people's risk-prone sexualities (Giddens, 1984, p.376). To presume the structuration of sexual risk taking (a social practice within a social system), is "to study the ways in which that system, via the application of generative rules and resources, and in the context of unintended outcomes, is produced and reproduced in interaction" by virtue of structural duality (Giddens, 1979, p.66)

Duality of structure "*relates to the fundamentally recursive character of social life, and expresses the mutual dependence of structure and agency*" as properties of the social systems, and as mediums and outcome of practices, such as young people's sexual risk taking, which they influence, (re)produce and maintain (Giddens, 1979, p.69, original italics). I adopt Thompson's definition of social systems as:

"regularised patterns of interaction involving individuals and groups; they are not structures in themselves, but ...'have' structures, in the sense that they are *structured by* rules and resources" employed by social agents for action (Thompson, 1989, p.60, original italics).

Social systems become institutions and structures by virtue of being "deeply layered" in time and space, stretching through many decades and over large or fixed domains" that "pre-exist and post-date the lives of individuals who reproduce them, and thus, may be resistant to manipulation or change by any particular agent" (Thompson,

1989, p.61 -73). An agent, in turn, is “someone who acts and brings about change, and whose achievement can be judged<sup>5</sup> in terms of her own values and objectives, whether or not we assess them in terms of external criteria as well” (Sen, 1999, p.19). Similarly, Giddens is of the opinion that:

“agency concerns events of which an individual is the perpetrator, in the sense that the individual could, at any phase in a given sequence of conduct, have acted differently” (Giddens, 1984, p.9).

Sexual risk taking agency can be an individual and collective attribute. It is enacted to meet contextually, and recently, globally meaningful goals of individuals and collectivities, such as young Nigerian university students (see Sewell, 1992, p.21). In this regard, Goffman unequivocally demonstrates that all humans exercise agency in daily life based on the deployment of complex array of rules, norms,<sup>6</sup> etiquette, conventions, practices etc., to guide, sustain, transform and control social interaction (Goffman, 1959, p.1967). Admittedly, young people’s agencies are variable and unequal. Nevertheless, all exercise agency, which are implicated in the evolution and maintenance of “social practices ordered across space and time,” such as young people’s sexual risk taking (Giddens, 1984, p.2). This is a more holistic conceptualization of young people’s risk-prone sexualities.

Holistic conceptualisation of sexual risk taking, with structuration theory as sensitising guide, advance the multidisciplinary development studies literature and empirical sexual reproductive health research/practice stance that seek to understand young people’s sexualities and prescribe interventions that will reduce risks. I contribution to this class of literature by shifting research, discursive and development studies focus and debates from excessive preoccupation with paradigms, such as problem behaviour (Jessor, 1977), to a more holistic theory informed empirical study and practice. For example, I assume that structural and agential influences recursively and interrelatedly produce sexual risk taking. My methodological shift from paradigms to a meta-theory, such as structuration theory, is imperative for reducing

---

<sup>5</sup> Giddens also stipulates that a “purposive agent ... both has reasons for his or her activities and is able, if asked, to elaborate discursively upon those reasons (including lying about them)” (Giddens, 1984, p.3).

<sup>6</sup> My use of the term ‘norm’ encompasses all (in)formal enduring and emergent rules, conventions, behaviours and expectations in social life that are usually contextually powerful, which young people assume/believe they are obliged to observe out of duty, individuated/collective benefits and/or fear of external sanctions and loss of prestige.

development studies “paradigmatic disorientation” (Schuurman, 2000, p.8-19). I interpret this disorientation as emanating from a crisis of relevance related to development studies core mission of understanding the:

“processes of exclusion, emancipation and development - not particularly by clinging to its once treasured paradigms, but by incorporating creatively the new *Zeitgeist*<sup>7</sup> without giving up on its normative basis, i.e. the awareness that only with a universal morality of justice is there is a future for humanity” (Schuurman, 2000, p.8-19).

Thus, I refocus development studies debates and research potentials by leveraging theory and practices in the best traditions of Koestler’s (1964) biosociation,<sup>8</sup> method of social investigations. Biosociation stipulates a creative synthesis of previously incompatible paradigms of influences on young people’s sexual risk taking, rather than creating new ones. I refer to structure and agency, which were previously “self-consistent but habitually incompatible frames of reference” (Koestler, 1964, p.35). Biosociation enhanced my escape of the “more or less automatized routines of thinking and behaving” (Koestler, 1964, p.45) in academic and practice, (e.g. structure vs. agency), called associative thinking, which is entrenched in set-routines less intellectually rewarding and common to social studies.

Biosociation nurtures the quest to (re)discover, verify, interrogate, and elaborate upon the varied academic/lay concepts and values assigned to young people’s sexualities in Nigeria. Structuration theory (Giddens, 1979; 1984) facilitates the biosociation of different strands of literature, ranging from sociology, economics, epidemiology and so forth. Consequently, the structuration of sexual risk taking, described in detail in chapter 3, is non-hierarchical. Neither does it privilege structure nor agency, as independent variables, which can holistically explain *influences* on young people’s sexual risk taking.

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<sup>7</sup> Prevalent ideas, values and concepts, which are synonymous with a given period, which is often enshrined in philosophy, religion and discourse.

<sup>8</sup> For Koestler, biosociation illuminates previously discrete experiences and concept, making clear meanings and purposes of life on multiple planes simultaneously allowing scholars to escape “our more or less automatized routines of thinking and behaving” (1964, p.45).

Furthermore, my research process illuminates previously discrete influences on young people's risk-prone sexualities, weaving them meaningfully together, illuminating their interdependencies, and clarifying their varied meanings for young people and society. In essence, I specify and describe what structures, what agencies influence young people's sexual risk taking. I also illustrate their operational and (re)constitutive interrelationships. The realization of these objectives requires the testing of my research assumptions with semi-structured interviews of young Nigerian university students' based on seven principal research questions. These are,

1. How do young people define sexual risk taking, and how common is it?
2. What influence(s) sexual risk taking?
3. What is the nature of these influences, for example, are they singular, direct, hierarchical, gendered or interdependent in manifestation?
4. What is the nature of young people's sexual relationship? For example, heterosexual, sexual networking and so forth.
5. What are the intended and unintended outcomes of young people's sexual risk taking?
6. Why does sexual risk taking persist in society despite efforts at reducing it?
7. How can sexual risk taking be reduced?

My pursuit of the preceding research questions is not intended to diminish the utility of current linear conceptualisations, such as Caldwell and colleagues' (1989) cultural promiscuity thesis, Jessor and colleagues' (1977;1983) problem behaviour perspectives or Zuckerman's sensation seeking paradigm (Zuckerman, 1978; 1980; 1983a,b&c), and the safer sex interventions they influence. My intent is to subject current and emergent conceptualizations of influences on sexual risk taking to critical and empirical analysis, using traditionally neglected young people's own accounts as critique. The structure of my literature review, theoretical application, empirical research methodology, data interpretation and analysis are laid out in the next section. It should be noted that I interchangeably use the phrase sexual risk taking and unprotected premarital sex in the thesis.

## **ii. Thesis outline**

There are eight chapters in the thesis. In *chapter 1*, I briefly present a global synopsis of young people's sexualities, local conception of, and statistics about young people's sexualities in Nigeria. I also present a synopsis of national response strategies thus far,

exemplified by the Zip-up campaign,<sup>9</sup> which advocate that young people abstain from premarital sex, by literally zipping-up their pants, irrespective of complex influences on sexual risk taking. I argue for a reconceptualization of young people's sexualities due to systemic empirical and theoretical ineffectiveness of linear conceptual frameworks, such as problem behaviour or sensation seeking, in reducing sexual risk taking. These narrow sexuality research paradigms separate structural and agential influences, instead of treating them as a duality (Giddens, 1979; 1984). In essence, I argue against reductionist academic stance, such as problem behaviour, common to social science conception of praxis and social order, which are based on a dominant, but false dichotomy between human agency and structural influences.

I make a case for attributing the limited success recorded by sexual health interventions in Nigeria, thus far, to reductionist conceptualisation of young people's sexual risk taking. However, I underscore the propensities of reductionist paradigms to proceed with an incomplete portrait of the complex influences on young people's sexualities. For example, sexual risk taking from a reductionist perspective, such as sensation seeking, is due to either human agency variables or structural influences. I argue for a fusion of structural and agential influences based on a conviction that they are interdependent and mutually (re)constitutive.

In *Chapter 2*, I review the dominant literature on young people's sexual risk taking, which for presentational purposes, I arbitrarily categorize into four broad conceptual strands - with sub-strands. The first is the bio-cultural influence strand; the second is the socialisation or sexualisation influence strand; the third is the political economy influence strand; and, the fourth is the dominant problem behaviour perspective of young people's sexual risk taking. My literature review serves four purposes: (1) it illuminates and challenges the dominant perspectives of sexual risk taking, and highlight their influence on academic research and sexual health intervention practice.

(2) it demonstrates that no linear perspective, and associated influences, can accurately and exhaustively account for young people's sexual risk taking: (3) it introduces and justifies my adaptation of Anthony Giddens' structuration theory, as a

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<sup>9</sup> Zip-up is a national multi-media abstinence-only campaign, which ran in Nigeria between 2004 and 2005.

sensitising devise. Structuration theory's equal emphasis of structural and agential influences on action additionally facilitated my biosociation of previously discrete and diverse influences on young people's risk-prone sexualities: (4) finally, my literature review highlight the influence of the dominant conceptual strands on sexual health interventions, especially Behaviour Change Communication (BCC), targeted at young people.

I review structuration theory, in *Chapter 3*, specifying its strengths, weaknesses and critical challenges. For example, structuration theory postulates a (re)constitutive interrelationship between agency and structure (Giddens, 1979; 1984), which is criticized as non-propositional and conflationary (see Archer, 1995). To mitigate these criticisms, I adapt Stones (2005) rendition of structuration theory for empirical research to illuminate the substantive interdependencies and recursiveness of structure and agency. Thus, I present sexual risk taking as more than a collection of micro or macro level influenced activity. Both micro-level activities, such as individual sexual risk taking, and macro-level structural influences, such as the mass media, combine to produce and maintain sexual risk taking sub-cultures.

Based on my structuration conception of sexual risk taking, I argue that young people are perennially involved in creating and maintaining the same influential sexual risk taking structures that sexualize them, in a manner that is neither completely ignorant nor calculating. In essence, I place emphasis on interrelationships of structure and agency. By so doing, I highlight the illogicality of treating agency and structure as empirically and analytically exclusive variables.

In *Chapter 4*, I review my research methodology. The research sites were four universities, in four metropolitan cities in Nigeria. They were purposefully selected for geographical spread, which is envisaged to improve the plausibility of findings and conclusions. Stones, (2005) structuration empirical research brackets were adapted to McCracken's (1988), long-interview for narrative data collection with semi-structured questionnaires. The selection of four Nigerian universities located in different geographic regions of Nigeria, additionally, permits the testing of existing conceptual frameworks against sexual risk narratives from culturally diverse young people. For example, to what extent does Jessor and colleagues, (1997; 1983; 1984;

1987) problem behaviour theory or Zuckerman's sensation seeking theory, (1983; 1984; 1985; 1990; 1994; 1996) account for sexual risk taking in University of Lagos or Benin?

Empirical accounts were collected from young male and female Nigerian university students, 18 years and above, who admit to sexual activity. They were recruited with the snowball sampling technique. Two broad questions (with sequels) were asked. Principally, participants were asked to identify and discuss influences on their sexual risk taking, and describe how these influences function. Narratives were tape-recorded and subsequently analysed with a structural hermeneutic framework.

I present the research respondents' profile and empirical *findings in Chapter 5*, which I distilled into influential themes. In my presentations, I place emphasis on the gendered attributes of collected narratives and relate my findings to current Nigerian BCC strategies. Fifteen analytical themes are presented and discussed.

- Theme 1, covers young people's definition of sexual risk taking with examples.
- Theme 2, deals with young people's assessment of the prevalence of sexual risk taking.
- Theme 3, reports on young people's assessment of mass media influence.
- Theme 4, elaborates upon peer influence.
- Theme 5, discusses parental sexualisation influence.
- Theme 6, presents the relative influence of poverty.
- Theme 7, deals with the influence of young people's sexual dispositions.
- Theme 8, reports on the influence of commitment, love and emotions.
- Theme 9, the role of pleasure or sensation seeking.
- Theme 10, young people's agency, and its influence on sexual risk taking.
- Theme 11, illuminates young people's awareness of STIs, an outcome of sexual risk taking, and the influence of this awareness on action.
- Theme 12, how pregnancy, an outcome of sexual risk taking, influences further action.
- Theme 13, how young people's capabilities to select and accept sexual partners influences sexual risk taking.
- Theme 14, how condom and contraceptive availability/use influences sexual risk taking.
- Theme 15, how abortion, an outcome of sexual risk taking, influences further action.

In *Chapter 6*, I analyze and discuss my findings in relation to young people's variable agencies and structural influences on one hand, and their influences on BCC in Nigeria, on the other. My purpose is to specify what structures and agencies are recursively responsible for manifest young Nigerian university students' risk-prone sexualities. I emphasize the gendered nature of narratives, especially young people's differential *drawing on* sexual resources, and exploitation of dominant prohibitory premarital sex rules (norms). I also highlight the often-neglected collective or individuated benefits young people associate with sexual risk taking. These, I link to limited BCC success in Nigeria and the persistence of sexual risk taking in Nigeria.

In *Chapter 7*, I focus on presenting young people's hermeneutically gendered and robust accounts of their sexualities. The aim is to unpack the influences of gender on sexual risk taking. My focus on gender does not imply its asymmetries can independently explain young people's risk-prone sexual worldviews and practices. Instead, it is precipitated by the critical emergence of gender during data collection, and the methodological requirement that its meanings and trajectories be amplified (Strauss and Corbin, 1990, p.49-50; see also Bogkan and Biklen, 1992, p.27-30). In addition, deconstructing young people's gendered *accounting* of influences facilitates the presentation of robust and thick descriptions (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992).

Robust and thick descriptions are imperative for explaining and understanding the unique and common themes in young people's accounts. They also guide subsequent prescriptions evolved to mitigate sexual risk taking. To elaborate on gender and its influence on sexual risk taking, or the lack thereof, I discuss themes such as the sources of, and construction of masculinity and femininity in Nigeria; manifest masculinities and femininity among young people; masculinity, femininity and emotion; masculinity, femininity and interpretation of sexual structures of signification; masculinity/femininity and sexual health seeking behaviour and masculinity, femininity, sexual pleasure and attitude to condom and contraceptive use.

*Chapter 8*, my concluding chapter, synthesizes ideas from *Chapters 1 - 7*, paying attention to the relationships between literature, theory, empirical research process, findings, analysis and interpretation of young people's accounts of influences on their sexual risk taking. My principal conclusion is that young people knowledgeably take



sexual risks “...under circumstances *not* chosen by themselves, but ... directly encountered, given and transmitted from the past...” (Marx, 1963, p.15). In addition, I find that young people (un)intentionally and variably internalise and navigate structural influences on sexual risk taking, such as the mass media sexual habituation, which young people differentially *draw on* and *work on*, as rules, resources and conduct bundles, to model their sexualities. External structures consequently shape their conjuncturely specific knowledge of, and predispositions to (habitus) risk-prone sexualities (internal structures).

Positively predisposed youths subsequently leverage, with purposive agencies, their awareness of local and global external sexuality structures for sexual self-presentations, propositioning/acceptance of sexual propositions and maintenance of heterosexual relations with sexual intercourse, which they know produces intended and unintended outcomes. Unintended outcomes, for example, STIs, affect external structures by exciting public discourse and sexual health interventions, which disseminate both risk-prone and safe sexualities, in a bid to increase risk awareness and self-efficacies.

In essence, multiple structural and agential influences interact with one another to influence sexual risk taking. I also stipulate that individuated and collective benefits that young people derive from sexual risk taking are more often than not, positive rather than negative to their health and social development. For example, young people derive an increased sense of personal worth, emotional connectedness and relationship management skills, which are imperative for their future roles in marriage, from dyadic relationships, which have significant sexual risk taking content.

Although my core task is to explicate young people’s perspectives of influences on sexual risk taking, I make cursory policy and intervention recommendations due to word limitations. These recommendations move my thesis beyond mere criticism of current conceptualisations of sexual risk taking and BCC interventions they influence toward a utilitarian platform, where lessons learned from my critique of dominant conceptualization and allied interventions are applied to illuminate potential solutions to young people’s risk-prone sexualities. I finally make a theoretical conclusion, and call for further research and interventions, which leverages structuration theory.

## Chapter 1

### From a global to local conceptualisation of young people's sexual risk taking

#### 1.1 Introduction – a global synopsis of young people's sexualities

Young people,<sup>10</sup> globally, engage in premarital and unsafe sexual behaviour (Stover, 1998; Johnston, O'Malley, and Bachman, 2003; Alan Guttmacher Institute, 1994; Brooks-Gunn and Paikoff, 1997; Miller, Christopherson, and King, 1993; Arnett, 1992 and 1996). The pervasiveness of young people's unsafe sexualities has negative consequences, which induces global health and development concerns (Robinson and Rogstad, 2002). Not all young people's sexual risk taking, however, produces negative outcome, such as sexually transmitted infections (STIs), unwanted pregnancies, and disrupted development into well-adjusted adults (Blum and Nelson-Mmari, 2004). A significant proportion of young people's sexual practices confer social and emotional benefits, such as enhanced peer popularity, pleasure, and material rewards. These benefits are entrenched in culture, history, norms and sexual relations of societies, but problematized or neglected by sexuality literature in Nigeria.

Evidence for the universality of premarital sex is inherent in the various sexual norms, health programmes and legal frameworks evolved and deployed to manage sexualities. For example, most countries have established a formal legal age for sexual consent, and in the past, constraining norms on unacceptable sexual conducts. To these we add traditional society virginity cults, female circumcision, female exclusions from mainstream social life that involve unrelated men, forced marriage when premarital sex result in pregnancies, and honour-killings of young female sexual transgressors. In addition, there are religious prohibitions and taboos that define and curtail (un)acceptable forms of sexual engagement – providing blueprints for the why, where, how and with whom individuals can have sexual intercourse. Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS), pose additional health and development challenges to historically and globally prevalent sexual practices.

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<sup>10</sup> According to the World Health Organization “young people are defined ... as those aged 10–24 years; this group combines adolescents – aged 10–19 years – and youth – aged 15–24 years” (WHO, 2006, p.1 ). The Nigerian society, for practical purposes, conceive young people similar to WHO, with the addition of those aged 25 -30 years who are still in tertiary institutions or gainfully unemployed, and largely dependent on their family for sustenance and care.

## **1.2 Nigeria - demographic profile**

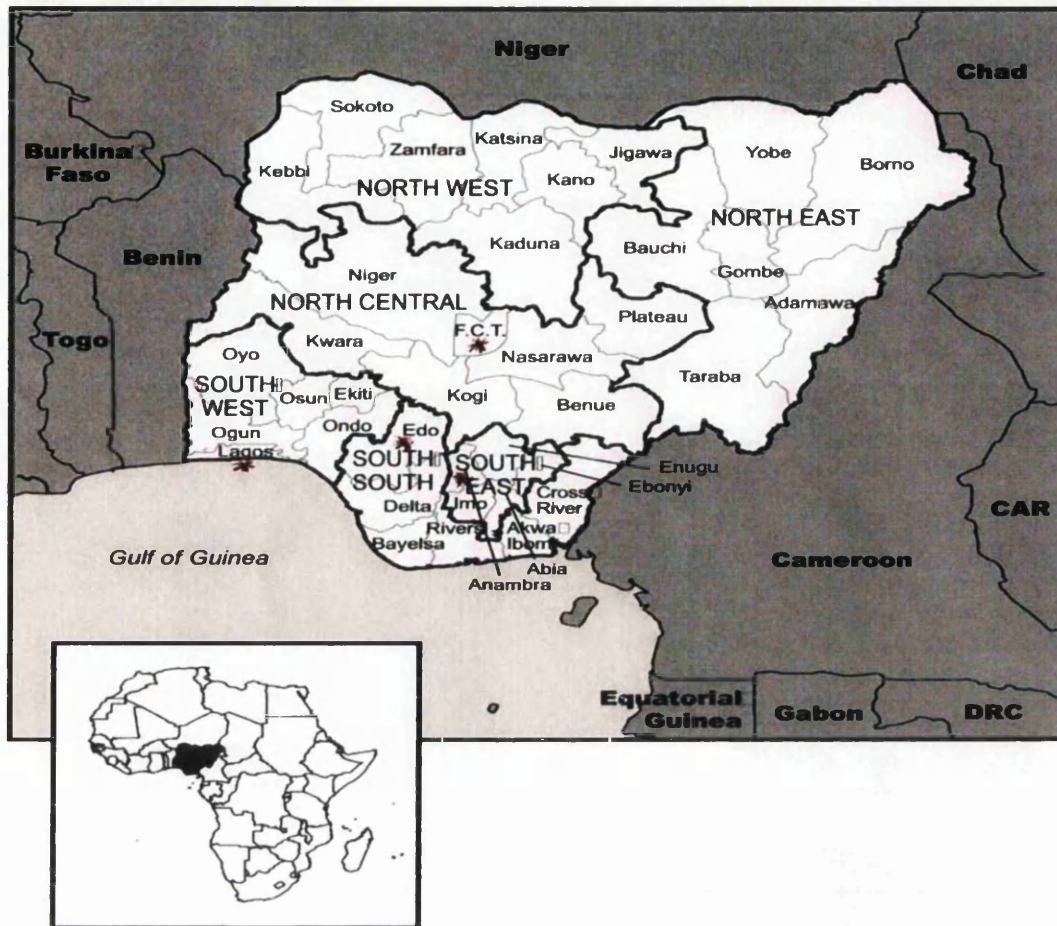
There is a lack of current health and demographic data in Nigeria. One reason for this state of affairs is the lack of data generation, storage, easy retrieval systems, and the significant incidence of case under-reporting (Ekpo, 1994; Momodu and Momodu, 1998). With this caution in mind, Nigeria's population is 149. 229,090 million people. Young females, aged between 15-24 years, make up about 15,078.000 (2007 estimate by UN Population Division, on-line), while young males total slightly over 50% of the country's total population (PRB, 2004).

The country "is composed of more than 250 ethnic groups; the following are the most populous and politically influential: Hausa and Fulani 29%, Yoruba 21%, Igbo (Ibo) 18%, Ijaw 10%, Kanuri 4%, Ibibio 3.5%, Tiv 2.5%" (see CIA World Fact Book, on-line). Two religions currently dominate in Nigeria. The first is Islam, practiced by at least half of the Nigerian population. The second is Christianity, whose adherents make up 40% of the population (see CIA World Fact Book, on-line). Agnostics, atheists, animist among others make up the remaining 10% of the population (see Esiet, et al., 2001 for detail). Forty-five per cent of Nigerians live in urban areas (Izugbara, 2004).

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I adopt the latter Nigerian conception of *young people* as individuals in the early stages of their lives, who are neither children nor productive adults, but most likely students in various tertiary institutions of education and/or dependent on parents and relatives for sustenance and care.

# NIGERIA



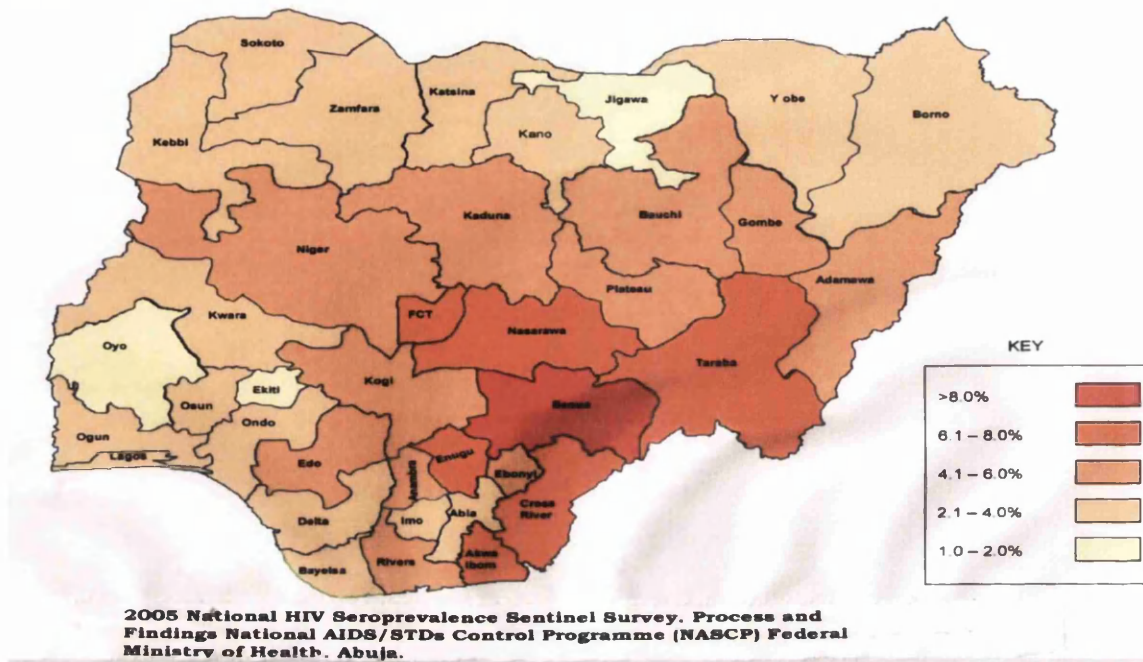
Geopositional map of Nigeria. Source NPC/DHS, 2003, p.xxviii]

❖ Red asterisk represents the study states and sites.

Nigeria's HIV prevalence rate estimate<sup>11</sup> for 2007 is 3.1%, and 2.6 million Nigerians have HIV/AIDS (see CIA World Fact Book, on-line). HIV prevalence rate estimates for young people aged 15–24 is 0.8% for males, and 2.3% for females (UNAIDS, 2008). Nevertheless, the FMoH indicate that Nigeria's adult infection rates do not reflect regional variations, which varies between 0.5–21% (FMoH, 2002). For example, even though HIV/AIDS is prevalent in the 36 Nigerian states, Benue State exceeds 8% prevalence estimates. Other states with 6.1–8.0% prevalence rates include the Federal Capital Territory (FCT); Nasarawa; Taraba; Enugu; Cross River and Akwa Ibom States (see prevalence map below).

<sup>11</sup> Although the FMoH estimates that 5.5 million Nigerians will have HIV/AIDS 2005, only 2.6 million Nigerians are said to have HIV/AIDS by 2007 (see FMoH, 2002). Better control of infection rates or the paucity of data may jointly account for projection disparity.

## HIV Prevalence by state (Nigeria 2005)



**2005 National HIV Sero-prevalence rates by Nigerian States. Source: Federal Ministry of Health, Abuja, Nigeria**

Furthermore, only 21.0% male and 18.0% female young people, aged between 15-24 years old, have the correct knowledge of HIV/AIDS prevention methods (NPC/DHS, 2003). Regardless, 7.9% male and 20.3% female young people have sexual intercourse before the age of 15 years; and 8.4% males and 2.2% females had sex with more than one partner in the last 12 months (NPC/DHS, 2003). In relation to condom and contraceptive use, 38.4% male and 17.3% female young people aged 15-24 years used condoms during premarital sex with multiple partners in the last twelve months (NPC/DHS, 2003). The general population condom and contraceptive prevalence rates estimate is low. It is estimated, in 2003, to be 12.6% and 1.9% respectively (UNAID, 2008; citing UNPOP, 2008).

Based on the preceding statistics, it plausible to state that young Nigerians are predisposed to sexual risk taking. This accounts for their significantly higher experience of unwanted pregnancies, abortion and STIs, such as HIV/AIDS (Izugbara, 2005a). STI in Nigeria is driven primarily by heterosexual sex, which is also common among young people aged 15-29 years old (see Ohiri-Aniche and Odukoya, 2004, citing FMoH, 2001a; UNDP, 2004; Izugbara, 2005a; Ransom and Yinger, 2002). Furthermore, at least two-thirds of sexually active young Nigerians

contract at least one STI before their twenty-fifth birthday (Kinoti et al., 1995). This is in addition to the fact that nearly half of new HIV infections are recorded among young people between the ages of 15 to 24 years (UNICEF, 2002). These statistics fuel adult Nigerian society normative prohibition of premarital sex for young people as immoral, purposeless and risk-prone. They also excite public interest and outcry against young people's sexual activities. Regardless, this dominant conceptualization of premarital sex as immoral, purposeless and risk-prone is not altogether accurate. I will demonstrate the basis for this claim by unpacking the influences on young people's risk-prone sexualities, their recursive interrelationships, multiple meanings, trajectories and outcomes.

### **1.3 A critical review of dominant discourse on young people's sexuality in Nigeria**

The preceding STI statistics in Nigeria informs adult society and sexual reproductive health intervention industry over-emphasis of “the dangers of sex and sexuality –in relation to population control, disease and violence...filtered through a view of gender which stereotypes men as predators, women as victims” (Jolly, 2007, p.3). This, however, is one side of the story. The other side of young people's sexuality story, which is often ignored by literature and interventions, is that young people's sexual behaviour is contradictory, entailing:

“pleasure and danger ... not least because for many, seeking pleasure entails breaking social rules...There are other fears to do with sex such as anxieties about loss of control, merging with another, intense sensation, triggering emotions, invoking previous experiences, about not being satisfied, fear of losing the object of love or lust, fear of catching sexually transmitted or other infection” and so forth, individually and contextually combine to produce what is at least, the ambiguity of consensual sex” (Jolly, 2007, p.3).

The preceding (re)conceptualisation of young people's sexual behaviour is missing in the dominant problem behaviour paradigm<sup>12</sup> of young people's sexualities in Nigeria and the abstinence-until-marriage and safer-sex interventions they generate. As a result, my challenge is to test this reconceptualization of young people's sexual risk taking bearing in mind its duality, as fields for pleasure and danger, personal and shared benefits, and a structured and agential activity. Consequently, I define sexual risk taking as all forms of unprotected premarital sex with single, multiple and concurrent sexual partners. As in other parts of the world, sexual risk taking among young people begin

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<sup>12</sup> Paradigms are “coherent and mutually supporting pattern of concepts, values, methods and behaviour, amenable to wide application” (Chambers, 1997, p.189).

early (Meekers, 1994; Blanc and Way 1998; Singh 1998; Izugbara, 2005a). This is partly because of the “dismantling of sturdy, stable, and lifelong loyalties in the interest of increasingly fragile and fickle forms of selfhood...” (Bailie, 1995, p.14). It is also because young people are positively predisposed to sexual risk taking because of the personal (individuated) and shared benefits it endows on practitioners who hold subjective sexual risk values.

Subjectivity is also reflected in researchers and programme managers accounts of young people’s sexualities, which rarely embody young people’s perspectives. A general trend is to attribute influence<sup>13</sup> to linear variables as peers<sup>14</sup>, family structure, gender, age, ethnicity, values, love/affection and levels of education (see Spear and Kulbok, 2001, Aalsma, et al., 2006, Reisen and Poppen, 1999). In addition, the personal habits of young people as alcohol consumption, early sexual debut, sensation seeking, drug use and addiction have also been cited, often individually (World Young People Report, 2003, Novak and Karlsson, 2005; Hoyle, Fejfar and Miller, 2000). Rarely are both structural and agential influences seriously considered co-influences. It is conceptually difficult, and of limited empirical utility to approach influences on human action, such as young people’s sexual risk taking, in linear and disconnected terms. For example, if we presume that the mass media is influential, the question may be asked, where does the mass media get its sexualised programming ideas? The obvious answer is from extant sexual practices in society.

As a result, I propose that rather than conceptualise sexual risk taking in linear terms, a broad combination of influences, i.e., external and/or internal<sup>15</sup> to young people, should be considered interdependent influences. Unfortunately, sexual health literature, lay beliefs and interventions in Nigeria rarely reflect the reality of multiple and interrelated

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<sup>13</sup> Influences are external (e.g. the mass media) and internal (e.g. predispositions to sexual risks) variables that have the capacity to affect the cause, course and outcome of young people's sexual risk taking (conceived after Stones, 2005).

<sup>14</sup> As I use the term, peers connote persons who are of similar age, share similar interests, voluntarily interact with, and monitor one another, daily and/or intermittently, in a more organic and informal manner than with other population sub-groups. Peers are so-recognized and ranked by society into social/learning groups such as *young people, classmates, playmates* etc.

<sup>15</sup> These include *social change* amplified by risk perception in modern societies (Beck, Giddens and Lash, 1994, p.107). Social change in Nigeria is exemplified by what Giddens, (1992) calls plastic sexuality, which is sexuality freed from traditional constrains of male domination and unwanted pregnancies, by modern reproductive health products/technologies and human rights projects.

structural and agential sources of young people's sexualities. Probably due to linear methodologies and research findings, sexual reproductive health interventions in Nigeria are typically problem behaviour<sup>16</sup> in orientation. The linearity of interventions partly account for their limited effectiveness "despite substantial sums spent on information campaigns and on marketing of condoms" (Cleland and Watkins, 2006, p.2). Linear approaches combine with dominant sexual risk constraining cultural values to inspire concepts as abstinence-until-marriage campaigns, as intervention goals. Abstinence-until-marriage approaches render young people's sexualities problematic, ignore their structural sources, neglect their benefits and excessively place the burden of change on young people's agency alone (see Dowsett and Aggleton, 1999; Gausset, 2001).

The dominant Nigerian culture also over-amplifies the unintended outcomes of young people's sexualities, while simultaneously overlooking their intended benefits. Yet, the negative outcomes of sexual risk taking, which manifest mainly as STI and unintended pregnancies, are not as common,<sup>17</sup> as projected by lay beliefs and literature, among sexually active young people (see Ohiri-Aniche and Odukoya, 2004, citing FMOH., 2001a; Izugbara, 2005a; Ransom and Yinger, 2002). Regardless, STIs and unwanted pregnancy burden, however minimal, is a reasonable cause for public health concern because it disrupts the development of young people into socio-economically productive adults, and may lead to untimely deaths (Aggleton, 1999). This negative outcome is comparative rare in the developed world.

It is possible to speculate about the variables that influence the differential negative sexual risks outcomes between the developing and the developed worlds. The most persuasive of these variables are the sheer ineptitude of stakeholders as politicians, parents and young people themselves, to prioritize and manage sexualities sustainably. In addition, unintended sexual health outcomes in Nigeria are compounded by poverty,

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<sup>16</sup> See Jessor and Jessor, 1977; Jessor, Costa, Jessor, & Donovan, 1983; Jessor, 1984; Jessor, 1987; Jessor, 1992.

<sup>17</sup> Nonetheless, it is possible to speculate about the variables that influence the differential negative sexual risks outcomes between the developing and the developed worlds. The most persuasive of these variables are the sheer ineptitude of stakeholders such as politicians, parents and young people themselves, to prioritize and manage sexualities sustainably. In addition, unintended sexual health outcomes in Nigeria are compounded by poverty, perhaps ignorance, which predisposes young people to risk-prone sexualities, in comparison with their developed and affluent society's counterparts who enjoy social, legal and medical protection from sexually risk prone behaviour.



perhaps ignorance, which predisposes young people to risk-prone sexualities, in comparison with their developed and affluent society's counterparts who enjoy social, legal and medical protection from sexually risk prone behaviour. It is my contention therefore, that sex, for Africans is not like a "worldly activity like work or eating and drinking" as Caldwell and colleagues claim (Caldwell, et al., 1989, p.203; see also 1987; 1991; 1992). The reasons for sub-Saharan African significantly higher fecundity and STIs prevalence rates must lie elsewhere, such as the variables I speculated about in footnote number seventeen. Indeed, empirical evidence are beginning to emerge that premarital sex is more prevalent in more affluent societies than Nigeria. According to the authors of a recent survey to collate global sexual behaviour data:

"people who fear a tide of young people's promiscuity might take heart from the fact that trends towards early and premarital sex are neither as pronounced nor as prevalent as is sometimes assumed...the comparatively high prevalence of multiple partnerships in developed countries, compared with parts of the world with far higher rates of sexually transmitted infections and HIV, such as African countries, might hold some surprises" (Wellings, et al., 2006, p.1723).

Nevertheless, the high STI burden on Nigerian people necessitates the expenditure of extensive resources to reduce or discourage young people from taking sexual risks. Speculatively, the justifications for the expended efforts and resources are threefold. First, young people's sexualities are inherently risk-prone. Second, young people's sexualities are immoral, and without purpose, and third, young people's sexualities challenge the dominant adult privileging sexual order. These considerations currently drive the unrealistic abstinence-until-marriage initiatives in Nigeria. Abstinence-until-marriage initiatives are counter-intuitive, assuming that the assignation of adequate resources to communicate sexual abstinence, morality, and negative outcomes of unprotected premarital, conceived and executed by technical experts will lead young people to adopt sexual abstinence.

Abstinence-until-marriage goals are currently executed under Behaviour Change Communication (BCC) programmes in Nigeria, which is underlined by structure-agency separation policies. Within the structure-agency separation framework, the sexualising institutional structures, ideas, practices and conventions are neglected by interventions that inordinately focus on young people's agencies (Odets, 1994). The

reasons for this inordinate focus on young people's agencies via BCC, and the concurrent neglect of other structural influences often go unexplained.

#### **1.4 Synopsis of national response strategies – from IEC to BCC**

According to ILO/FHI<sup>18</sup>, BCC “is an interactive process for developing messages and approaches using a mix of communication channels in order to encourage and sustain positive and appropriate behaviours. BCC has evolved from information, education and communication (IEC) programmes to promote more tailored messages, greater dialogue and fuller ownership” (ILO/FHI, online). IEC interventions are underlined by two interrelated variables. The first is that young people take sexual risks because they are ignorant about the modes of STI transmission, the cause of unwanted pregnancies, and their prevention (see Liskin, Church, Piotrow, & Harris, 1989). The second variable, which underscores IEC, is that mass media driven presentation of concise and persuasive negative sexuality outcomes, via audience relevant channels and language, will influence sexual risk avoidance or the adoption of risk protective measures from STIs and unwanted pregnancies (UNFPA, 2001a).

In Nigeria, the level of HIV/AIDS awareness, is significant (see Arowujolu et al., 2002; Meekers and Klein 2001), despite IEC neglect of structural forces influential on young people's sexual risk behaviour (see Izugbara, 2005a; Eyre, Davis, and Peacock, 2001). A relatively high STI and unwanted pregnancy awareness level in Nigeria, however, has not translated into higher self-efficacy,<sup>19</sup> which is a constituent of human agency and behaviour change. Low sexual self-efficacy among young people probably informs the US Centre for Disease Control (CDC) comment that “IEC campaigns are often better at imparting knowledge and information than they are at inspiring behaviour change” (CDC, 2005).

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<sup>18</sup>See ILO/FHI: HIV/AIDS behaviour change communication - a toolkit for the workplace, for details.

<sup>19</sup> Bandura defines self-efficacy as an individual's belief in his/her personal capacity to succeed at a given task (Bandura, 1989). In relation to sexual risk taking, self-efficacy approximates young people's confidence and ability to engage in safer sex - measured with self-identified consistency in practising ABC – Abstinence, Be Faithful and/or Consistent condom use.

Increasing sensitivities to the disjunction between knowledge and behaviour, otherwise called the KAP-Gap<sup>20</sup> (knowledge, attitudes and practices gap), influenced the calls for, and the adoption of participatory communication approaches, which are governed by multiple, and interpersonal sexual health information sources, products availability, communication and usage promotion through social marketing<sup>21</sup>. The core logic of social marketing is that corporations and citizens, motivated by vested interests, are more capable and willing to trade sexual health knowledge, skills and products based on commercial marketing techniques. In Nigeria, this phase of development communication is dominated by Society for Family Health (SFH) program, which principally distributes and markets subsidised *Gold Circle* condoms (see Meekers, Van Rossem, Zellner, & Berg, 2004). More than two decades later, success is at best, mixed for a number of reasons.

The first is that social marketing fails to reach the most vulnerable in society (see Price, 2001): (2) social marketing is prone to excessive consumerism, which inordinately focuses on the agential component of sexual risk behaviour and neglected, in varying degrees, the structural sources of young people's sexualities (see PSI, 2000): (3) the availability of affordable sexual health products such as contraceptives do not translate into the anticipated consistent usage, mostly because social marketing initiatives sought to alter what I call the 'natural sexual act' – seeking to replace it with 'safety barriers,' such as condoms. I propose that young people do not consistently use condoms because they interfere with their 'innermost sexual sensations.'

Furthermore, unintended sexual risk outcomes, as STIs and unwanted pregnancies, do not inevitably occur after every risky sexual act. The non-manifestation or delayed manifestation of unintended outcomes is due to three interrelated variables. The first is the different reproductive physiologies of young people, especially women, who are comparatively more prone to acquiring STIs than men, but have comparatively delayed

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<sup>20</sup> Westoff originally applied the KAP-gap concept towards the study of "apparent inconsistency between women's childbearing preferences and their practices of contraception" (1988, p.225). As used herein, KAP-gap approximates the inconsistency between young people's normative preference for abstinence versus their actual risk prone sexual activities deduced from their interview narratives.

<sup>21</sup> Andreasen (1995, p.110), defines social marketing as "the adaptation of commercial technologies to programmes designed to influence voluntary behaviour of target audiences to improve their personal welfare and that of the society of which they are part" (see also Andreasen, 2002; Kotler, et al. 2002; Population Action International (PAI), 2002; Price, 2001; Price and Pollard, 1999; UNAIDS, 1998b; Bloom, Hussein and Szykman, 1997 for similar arguments).

manifestation of most STIs (excluding AIDS). The second interrelated reason is the latent incubation period of STIs, such as HIV, and delayed manifestation of unintended pregnancies. The third is that young people deploy varied personal initiatives to mitigate unintended outcomes with practices such as careful partner selection, periodic condom use and sexual abstinence. To complicate the above scenario, rational behaviour models, especially the health/profit interest maximising assumption of social marketing, falls short of addressing the complex mix of (ir)rational influences on young people's sexual risk taking. These are exemplified by affection, love, trust, emotions and romance. Most likely because of the preceding, the SFH by 1998, shifted focus towards:

“BCC activities aimed to increase safe sex practices and condom use in non-marital relationships... *With the* new focus, resources shifted to mass media and interpersonal communications, and program activities changed from brand-specific advertising to general safe sex and condom promotion... SFH also transformed its sales force from a team primarily dedicated to condom distribution to a team primarily dedicated to interpersonal communications about HIV and acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS) and the generation of self-empowerment among potential condom users...” (Meekers, Van Rossem, Zellner, & Berg, 2004, p.15-16, words in italics are mine).

The ideal environment for BCC requires a national openness, where sexual behaviour is realistically discussed for reducing sexual risk behaviour. This shift is especially important in Nigeria because the bulk of new STI infections are associated with unprotected premarital sex, normatively discouraged as immoral in Nigeria (see Izugbara, 2007 for details). Open discussions of young people's sexualities, I speculate, is supposed to proceed through the confrontation of unrealistic cultural ideals (in relation to modernity) about premarital sex in a manner that factually highlights the costs, benefits, fears, stigma and associated discrimination against persons who experience unintended outcomes of their sexualities. Through public discourse, the argument goes; attention will be invariably drawn to the structural sources of young people's sexualities, associated risks and mitigation measures. I contend that BCC's lofty ideals<sup>22</sup> remain incompatible with dominant Nigerian conceptualisation of young people and premarital sex. Probably as a consequence, the evaluation results for

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<sup>22</sup> BCC in Nigeria is saddled with five major goals. Firstly, it is supposed to increase population knowledge of sexual risks and protective measures. Secondly, it should promote advocacy of protective sexual health measures. Thirdly, it should stimulate community dialogue. Fourthly, it should provide services, products, care and support and fifthly, it should reduce associated stigma, discrimination and vulnerabilities of People Living with HIV/AIDS (PLWA) and their dependants. I argue that none of these goals have been met in Nigeria, mostly due to incompatibility of the dominant adult privileging sexual culture and modern young people's sexualities.

Nigeria's SFH-BCC initiative are mixed. While the overall HIV/AIDS awareness and condom prevalence increased, there were:

“modest improvements in the understanding of HIV risk factors, confidence in the effectiveness of condoms for HIV prevention, and perceived condom affordability... By contrast, self-efficacy showed no improvement over the campaign period” (Meekers, Van Rossem, Zellner & Berg, 2004, p.24).

Furthermore, national response to young people's sexualities in Nigeria practically neglects the UN, (1994) ICPD<sup>23</sup> conference call for a:

“response of societies to the reproductive health needs of adolescents ... based on information that helps them attain a level of maturity required to make responsible decisions. In particular, information and services should be made available to adolescents to help them understand their sexuality and protect them from unwanted pregnancies, sexually transmitted diseases and subsequent risk of infertility” (UN, 1994, Article 41, paragraph,7; see also WHO/UNICEF., 1978; UNDP. 2003 for similar propositions).

I speculate that an important reason for the dominant adult oriented society in Nigeria inability to factually confront young people's sexualities is the contradictions nurtured by her cultural heterogeneity<sup>24</sup>, and pressures from modernity. Consequently, despite tenuous interventions claims to success, there is minimal evidence that unprotected premarital sex is reduced or abstinence-until-marriage norms enthroned in Nigeria. This mainly because the erstwhile instrumental primacy of the human sexual act has been transmuted by modernity into a cultural and personal end. Concurrently, the transmutation of sex from instrumental reproductive ends to a cultural and personal ends perennially challenge and reconstitute local moral and institutional arrangements that are supposed to regulate sexual behaviour.

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<sup>23</sup> In 1994, an International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) was held in Cairo, Egypt. The conference adopted a series of resolution on population and development, which member nations, including Nigeria, agreed to uphold. For example, Chapter 7, sub-section 7.2 of the conference resolution states that “...Reproductive health ... implies that people are able to have a satisfying and safe sex life and that they have the capability to reproduce and the freedom to decide if, when and how often to do so. Implicit in this last condition are the right of men and women to be informed and to have access to safe, effective, affordable and acceptable methods of family planning of their choice, as well as other methods of their choice for regulation of fertility which are not against the law, and the right of access to appropriate health-care services that will enable women to go safely through pregnancy and childbirth and provide couples with the best chance of having a healthy infant” (ICPD, 1984, Ch. 7, sub-sec 7.2).

<sup>24</sup> The evidenced of cultural heterogeneity lies in the divergent and often incompatible indigenous moralities of over 250 ethnic groups in concert with modern religious decrees derived from practicing Islam and Christianity.

It is not surprising, therefore, that interventions evidence for success in Nigeria relies more on condom sales data, metropolitan centred KAP surveys, and most recently, sentimental and unreliable<sup>25</sup> claims about the morality of abstinence-until-marriage<sup>26</sup> as the principal sexual health intervention, preferred by young people. Paradoxically, another reason for intervention failure to enthrone the impractical abstinence only ideals in Nigeria is that both young people and change agents inevitably look for assistance and relief in the same dominant structural institutions or “establishment(s) still wedded to the theoretical misconceptions that helped fosters the crisis in the first place” (Baillie, 1995, p.14, word in parenthesis is mine). For example, the popular abstinence-only *zip-up campaign* was orchestrated by powerful local and international structural institutions<sup>27</sup>, under the assumption that young people can avoid sexual risk taking literally, by *zipping up* their pants. This assumption is inaccurate and linear.

Zip-up campaign’s sole emphasis of abstinence through self-control exaggerates young people’s agencies and neglects the ubiquitous structural influences on their sexualities. For example, adult society controlled structural institutions, such as the mass media and fashion industry contributes to young people’s sexualisation<sup>28</sup>. Paradoxically, the same structural institution, the mass media, is leveraged to communicate sexual abstinence only. Abstinence only initiatives are partly responsible for negative outcome of young people’s sexualities because they encourage/maintain a culture of silence around

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<sup>25</sup> The unquestionable virtue of sexual abstinence initiatives targeted at young people in Nigeria revolves around three tenets. The first tenet suggests that ensuring young people are sexually inactive is fundamentally in their and society’s interests. The second is that the focus on getting the questions, answers and techniques right will principally ensure success. The third is an assumption that the insidious influences of divergent values, politics, power and vested interests of stakeholders do not contribute to young people’s sexualisation and the (in)effectiveness of interventions.

<sup>26</sup> Abstinence-until-marriage stakeholders are now organised and called *The Nigeria Abstinence Coalition* (Human Rights Watch, 2004, citing Okechukwu, 2004 and Monwuba, 2004). The coalition enjoys extensive financial support from the Nigerian government, religious institutions and U.S. President’s Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR).

<sup>27</sup> Zip-up campaign was orchestrated by influential structural institutions such as SFH, Nigeria’s leading faith-based organizations (FBOs), Nigeria’s National Action Committee on AIDS (NACA), United States Agency for International Development (USAID), Department for International Development (DFID), Action Aid Nigeria, and the United Kingdom based Crown Agents.

<sup>28</sup> The report of the American Psychological Association, (APA), Task Force on the Sexualisation of Girls., illustrates the meaning of sexualisation. According to the report, sexualisation “occurs when a person’s value comes only from his or her sexual appeal or behaviour, to the exclusion of other characteristics; a person is held to a standard that equates physical attractiveness (narrowly defined) with being sexy; a person is sexually objectified—that is, made into a thing for others’ sexual use, rather than seen as a person with the capacity for independent action and decision making; and/or sexuality is inappropriately imposed upon a person” (APA, 2007, p.2).

sexuality and deny/block young people's access to safe-sex information, interpersonal skills and products.

### **1.5 My reconceptualization of young people's sexual risk taking**

Today influences on, and opportunities for young people to take sexual risks have multiplied in comparison with the recent past. This trend is apparent in Nigeria where modernization<sup>29</sup> and westernization have been eroding traditional sexual norms, beliefs and practices. For example, the Nigerian media is inundated with individual narratives of adversarial love, trust, infidelity, lust etc, comparable with western societies (Smith 2001; see also Smith, 2004a, b & c). The emergent social change present young people with neo-liberal and individualistic worldviews that are contrary to the traditional and collective basis of society. Modern sexual relations in Nigeria now serve individual needs for relationships and pleasure instead of traditional marriage and procreation purposes. As a result, virginity is no longer a virtue nor socially desirable. Virginity is conceived as backward, antisocial and associated with infertility, STIs and epilepsy (Renne, 1993).

Rapid social change in Nigeria disconnects young people from their families and communities in space and time. For example, parents have to work away from home and children attend schools and colleges that are not local in the communities. Rapid social change also desensitises young people from the influences of traditional norms and mores. In place of traditional norms and mores, young people increasingly adopt individualist conducts that are in consonance with the global human right ethos which accord little regard to traditional sexual norms and mores. From this perspective, sexuality is a personal property/right that cannot be challenged by third parties, and can be dispensed at will. Often, at this time, non-traditional institutions and peers are young people's primary socialisation agents.

Furthermore, despite the normative culture of silence about sexuality in Nigeria, sexual content and themes infuse social life. Sexual themes are observable in homes, schools, the mass media, and dressing styles. Sexual themes are also discernable in young

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<sup>29</sup> According to Giddens, modernization dislocates or lifts "social relationships from local contexts" and recombines them "across indefinite time/space distances" (Giddens, 1991:242). Money, markets and globalization disembeds social relations and culture (Giddens, 1990, p.21-29).

people's normative self-presentations and conducts. The consequences are tensions between traditional sexual norms that expressly prohibit premarital sex and their pervasive/evolving modern counterparts that are more accommodating of premarital sex. Added to this mix of influences is young people's psychological immaturity and earlier sexual maturity, in comparison with earlier generations. The paradox of young people's psychological immaturity, earlier physiological maturity and increasing social pressure for sexual self-presentations influences sexual risk taking. The preceding state of affairs is reflected in the rhetorical question, "how do 10-year-olds cope with pressure to dress and act in sexually provocative ways?" (Linn, 2005, p.115).

Recognising the paradox of young people's early sexual maturity and psychological immaturity, the Nigerian society discourages premarital sex. Yet, the same society accommodates structural institutions as the mass media, and sex industry that sexualises young people. The outcome is that young people experience a persistent normative inconsistency and confusion between what they ought to do sexually (normative ideals), and what they actually do (normative reality). Commenting on this confusing trend, Jackson and Scott observe that:

"good sex has become a key life goal and a source of personal fulfilment: sex as secular salvation. Rather than being seen as a problem in itself, sex is more often presented as an individualised solution for life's problems [...] Being "good at sex" is increasingly equated with other indices of "having style" – a qualification for an indicator of our worldly success and social integration" (Jackson and Scott, 1997, p.559-561).

Giddens' makes similar observations that "sexual skills, the capacity of giving and experiencing sexual satisfaction, on the part of both sexes, become organized reflexively via a multitude of sources of sexual information, advice and training" (Giddens, 1992, p.62-63). In addition, there are other drivers of inconsistent and contradictory socialisation cues in Nigeria today similar to other societies (Awusabo-Asare, et al., 1999; Setel, 1999; Parikh 2000). They include young people's expanding access to information<sup>30</sup>, global consumerist dispositions, inter-country/intra-country migration and other related population shifts, which predispose them to external sexual risk influences. Other influences on young people's sexual risk taking are also active.

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<sup>30</sup> Perhaps more potent in their influences on young people sexual risk taking are those elements of the mass media that simultaneously deploy audio-visual communication cues such as television and the world-wide-web.



These include structural influences, such as the mass media,<sup>31</sup> peers, impaired decision because of inducement and/or intoxication, powerlessness to refuse unprotected sex, sensation seeking and the restricted availability and/or access to condoms and contraceptives among others (World Young people Report, 2003; see APA, 2007, p.5-15 also for similar conclusions about the USA). The authors of the USA study:

“acknowledge that this phenomenon and the concern about it (sexualisation of girls), is not, and cannot be, limited by U.S. borders, in part because U.S. culture is exported worldwide” (APA, 2007, p.5).

In concert, multiple influences interdependently create, exploit and maintain young people's sexual risk sub-cultures (Wyn and White, 1997, p.77). For example, female sexuality in Nigeria is historically structured as a commodity, secured with financial bargaining and transfers from the grooms' family (bride price<sup>32</sup>) to the bride's family, based on a financial estimation of bride's value, which is estimated with her family pedigree, professional training, virginity status and so forth. I, therefore, argue that sexual exchanges, involving young people, reflect, validate and reaffirm the institutionalised valuation of female sexuality in social/material terms. Furthermore, social discourse, especially the activities of sexuality researchers (including myself) are implicated in the introduction and reinforcement of new/old sexual ideas, concepts and practices to young people, during (non)legitimate 'scientific' investigations when sexual ideas, issues and concepts escape into social practice and everyday life. According to Giddens:

“in the area of sexual discourse, more far-reaching in their effects than the openly propagandist texts advising on the search for sexual pleasure are those reporting on, analysing and commenting about sexuality in practice” (Giddens, 1992, p.29).

Nonetheless, macro-structural forces and social change do not function without the duplicity, and complicity<sup>33</sup> of young people's positive attitudes (position-practices) and

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<sup>31</sup> These include television, music videos, music lyrics, movies, magazines, cartoons and animation, sports media, the internet, video/computer games, advertising, products, mode of dressing, and cosmetics.

<sup>32</sup> Meek suggests that marriage by “bride-price is found in every tribe in Nigeria, though in some tribes it coexists with a system of marriage by agricultural service or by exchange” (1936, p.64; see also Ukaegbu, 1977; and Evans-Pritchard, (1931) for opinion on debate about the appropriate term for wealth transfer from groom to bride's family.

<sup>33</sup> Giddens calls the mutual-(re)constituting process of influences structural duality. Social science research is part of this duality because of “double hermeneutics,” which Giddens describe as the “mutual interpretive interplay between social science and those whose activities compose its subject matter” (Giddens, 1984, p.xxxii).

active agency in sexual risk taking. Combined, influences on young people's sexual risk taking, broadly categorised into the push and pull factors, nurture young people's ambivalence about premarital sex, which is captured by Smith in the observation that premarital sexuality:

“is situated in a broader project of self fashioning, in which choices are made not only in relation to calculations of risk, and with regard to notions of right and wrong, but in terms of constructing and presenting oneself socially... But all of these moral assessments and actual decisions about sexual behaviour take place within a context of poverty and inequality, creating tensions between ideals and pragmatic needs, and producing situations in which contradictions are common” (Smith, 2003, p.345-346).

Also relevant to young people's sexual attitude formation and risk taking practice adoption are the benefits they associate with, have experienced from, and seek from sexual risk taking. These perceived utilities of heterosexual relationships partly account for its perennial practice. It can also explain young people's seeming laissez-faire attitude towards sexual risks (Herlitz and Ramstedt, 2005). I speculate that young people's knowledge and/or experience of intended positive benefits of their sexualities, such as sexual sensations, and peer admiration, are stronger influences than the over-amplified unintended outcomes, such as STIs and unwanted pregnancies. Besides, young people, through careful partner selection and periodic condom use have some, albeit limited, control over unintended outcomes of sexual risks.

Furthermore, young people's assessment of the risk potentials of their sexual encounters, is likely to be fluid, variable, (in)accurate and context dependent. I expect that different contexts and peer associations will elicit different sexual risk taking behaviour. For example, young people are likely to take more sexual risks on university campuses, away from closer parental supervision, than at home. Vitaly, previous contexts, safe-sex resolutions, abstinence decisions and safe sex practices will not necessarily apply to unfolding contexts and new sexual partners. In this regard, that Moore advances the idea that:

“young people do not afford health and well-being the same priority as issues of identity, autonomy and consumerism, in line with their normal social networks and “social action spaces” (Moore, 1999; see also Aggleton, et al., 1998; Aldridge Parker, Measham, 1998, for similar commentaries about the influence of consumerism on sexual risks).

To cite a specific context and example, at nightclubs or parties, facing potential sexual opportunity, few young males will postpone the sexual act long enough to purchase a condom. Similarly, few young females will be expected to refuse male socially prescribed 'gifts,' which are highly scripted declaration of males' sexual interests in females. This underlines the complex roles of young people's sexualisation, norms/scripts, dynamic contexts, resources, and agency in (re)constituting sexual risk taking. Evans eloquently elaborates the mutability of influences in the observation that:

"young people are social actors in a social landscape. How they perceive the horizons depends on where they stand in the landscape and where their journey takes them. Where they go depends on the pathways they perceive, choose, stumble across or clear for themselves, the terrain and the elements they encounter ...If policies and interventions are to be made effective, we need to sharpen our awareness of the interplay of structural forces and individual's attempts to control their lives" (Evans, 2002, p.265).

Although every society attempts to define "the age, gender, legal, and kin relationships between sexual actors, as well as setting limits on the sites of behaviour and the connections between organs" (Gagnon and Simon 1973, p.4), the same institutional structures enable young people's sexual risk taking. For example, normative surveillance and associated sanctions against young people's sexual risk taking are weak today in comparison with the immediate traditional past. Family<sup>34</sup> and community sanctions for premarital sexual activities seemingly operate today on a don't-ask-don't-tell principle. From this principle, young people are expected to indulge their sexualities as long as they do not bring it home, or flaunt its unintended outcomes. In essence, the multiplicities of networked structural institutions, with subjective and competing agendas, constrain and enable young Nigerian university students' sexualities. This is why Bhaskar insist that:

"[t]here is more to coping with social reality than coping with other people. There is coping with a whole host of social entities, including institutions, traditions, networks of relations and the like-which are irreducible to people". (Bhaskar, 1989a, p.175).

Young people's sexual risk taking is also a form of oppositional practice. That is, a self-fulfilling reaction to adult expectation/prediction about their sexualities, their

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<sup>34</sup> Dwindling family influences are evidenced in their varying incapacities to enact normative sanctions on young people who take sexual risks as would have been expected in traditional societies.

subordinate social status and social alienation<sup>35</sup> from mainstream Nigerian society. They deploy their sexuality to forcefully challenge significant adult authority and/or gain attention with premarital sex, and even unwanted pregnancies. Heterosexual dating rituals also serve as modelling grounds for young people to practise anticipated marital roles. This latter claim corroborates Scriven and Stevenson's observation that "adolescents often experiment with behaviours and lifestyles in the process of acquiring a sense of autonomy, independence and the social skills which are a necessary prerequisite into the adult world" (Scriven and Stevenson, 1998, p.91; see Gammeltoft, 2002 also for similar conclusions on Vietnamese young people). Therefore, sexual risk taking is an "experiment in living" (Fox, 2002). Although these themes are un-researched in Nigeria, I am convinced they are relevant to any initiative geared at isolating the influences on young people's sexualities.

Additionally driving sexual risk taking, as oppositional practice, are concurrent institutional celebration and vilification<sup>36</sup> of young people, their values and sexualities. Rivers and Aggleton, catalogue what they call,

"the central images to be found in the literature on young people and AIDS. These include the "unknowledgeable or ill informed adolescent", the "high-risk adolescent", the "adolescent who is unduly conforming to peer pressures", and the "tragic but innocent adolescent" who inadvertently becomes infected by HIV" (Rivers and Aggleton, 1999, citing Warwick and Aggleton, 1990, online).

The seeming permanent negative conception of young people and their sexualities is linkable to the larger global discourse about children and sex, which casts young people as neophytes, immature, vulnerable, irrational and asexual entities whose transition towards adulthood is to be guided by competent and rational adults (Lee 2001, p.5; see Boyden, 1997; La Fontaine 1990 also). The same rational adults are themselves

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<sup>35</sup> There are claims that the effects of multiple normative institutions on young people are alienation, which has five components. The first is powerlessness. The second is incomprehension of their personal situations. The third is insecurity and normlessness. The fourth is the rejection of socially prescribed goals, and the fifth is estrangement from society (Seeman, 1959).

<sup>36</sup> One of the most important reasons why young people are denied adequate access to information, sexual health services and protective resources such as condoms, derives from the stereotypical and often contradictory ways in which they are viewed. It is popularly believed that all young people are risk-taking pleasure seekers who live only for the present. Such views tend to be reinforced by the uncritical use of the term adolescent (with its connotations of "storm and stress") in the specialist psychological and public health literatures. This term tends not only to homogenise and pathologise our understanding of young people and their needs, it encourages us to view young people as possessing a series of "deficits" (in knowledge, attitudes and skills) which need to be remedied by adults and the interventions they make" (Rivers and Aggleton, 1999, online, citing Aggleton & Warwick, 1997).

implicated in young people's sexual risk taking through transactional, cross-generational sexual relations and exploitative leveraging on young people's sexual sub-cultures by adult-controlled and privileging structural institutions as the mass media, fashion, sports and sex industry.

Furthermore, young people are diverse<sup>37</sup> and as different as their perceived needs. As a result, social influences on their behaviour should be as varied and as complex as young people themselves. For example, within the same household, peer influences will be variably influential on siblings, dependent on their dispositions. The argument can be made for other influences such as the mass media. Young people's diversity ought to negate linear conceptualizations of their sexualities, which invites a more realistic and holistic conceptualization of their sexual practices. Linear conceptualisations and management of young people's sexual risks, beyond problematizing sexual risks, are also of limited utility because most young people are happy with their sexual relationships, ascribing positive and exciting attributes, such as intimacy and pleasure to their relationships (Edgardh, 2002; see Morgan, 2000 and 2004 also).

In the final analysis, the prevalence of sexual risk taking ought to challenge stakeholders (parents, religious institutions and governments) to find effective means of rendering young people's sexual activities safer, instead of excessive concerns with sexual abstinence. Managing the negative outcomes of young people's sexual risk behaviour will therefore require more than the conventional, and hierarchical sexual health programmes that are dominated by labelling, risk concepts and abstinence (Scriven and Stiddard, 2003; Dickinson, Coggan, and Bennett, 2003; Lee, Tsang, Lee, & To, 2003; Evans-Whipp, et al., 2004). In this regard, the much-publicised Ugandan<sup>38</sup> success in sexual risk reduction serves cautionary purposes. Ntozi, et al., conclude that adolescents, commercial sex workers (CSW) and truck drivers are unable to change their risk prone sexual behaviour for varied reasons:

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<sup>37</sup> Young people's diversity and differences are in terms of their socialization, personalities, emotions, values and needs.

<sup>38</sup> Data from the USA, Canada, Europe and Australia also indicate renewed increases in prevalence of STIs, including HIV/AIDS in gay communities and the general population. This is attributed to *AIDS communication fatigue* and erroneous conclusions that emerging vaccines enhance and will indefinitely improve life quality among PLWA. (see Caldwell, 1999b; Kellog, McFarland, & Katz, 1999; Chen et al., 2002; Martindale et al., 2001; Dukers, de Wit, & Goudsmit, 2000; Van De Ven, 1998 and Dowsatt, 1999 for discussions).

“results indicate that despite the HIV/AIDS epidemic, these groups had only changed their sexual behaviour a little<sup>39</sup>, and they reported to be continuing with multiple sexual partners for a variety of reasons. The adolescents and street children were under peer pressure and a lot of sexual urge; commercial sex workers and bar maids attributed their risky behaviour to the need to survive due to the existing poverty; and the truck drivers reflected on the need for female company to reduce their stress while on the long lonely travels across Africa. Nevertheless, they are all aware and perceive people with multiple sexual partners as being highly vulnerable to contracting HIV” (Ntozi, et al., 2003, p.107).

The preceding illustrates and validates my argument that multiple variables in different combinations influence sexual risk taking. It also corroborates the futility of abstinence only initiatives. Although young people can temporarily abstain from sexual risk taking, the majority will not. Both categories of young people, those who abstain and those who indulge in premarital sex ultimately, are culturally expected<sup>40</sup> to engage with their sexualities in marriage, which is not risk free, as conventions would have us believe. Therefore, I propose that stakeholders encourage the abstemious young people to remain so, as long as they can, and empower the sexually active with knowledge, skills and products that will make their sexual experiences safe.

A reasonable starting point towards safer sexualities for young people is the collective revision of sexual risk taking epistemology and discourse by all stakeholders. Of particular importance are those epistemologies and discourse, which influence sexual health interventions, such as problem behaviour and abstinence-until-marriage. Instead of relying on the convenient, pervasive and limiting linear explanatory models, as poverty, I make an argument for more holistic models that include young people and their perspectives of sexual risk taking, elicited with McCracken’s (1988), exhaustive long interview adapted to Stones’ (2005), rendition of structuration theory for empirical research. That is, more attuned to teasing out the specifics of situated actors in contexts for the empirical substantiation of research assumptions and claims. In the critical traditions of biosociation (Koestler, 1964), I anticipate to weave together different

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<sup>39</sup> The inference is that HIV prevalence rates are on the rise again in Uganda. Avert, and international AIDS Charity working in Uganda similarly argues that “HIV prevalence in Uganda may be rising again; at best it has reached a plateau where the number of new HIV infections matches the number of AIDS-related deaths” on their website <http://www.avert.org/aidsuganda.htm> [Retrieved December 13th 2008].

<sup>40</sup> Young people who neglect to engage their sexualities through culturally prescribed marriage and/or pre-marital sex will be cast as less-than-men and less-than-women, queers and/or sexually impotent. Attributing sexual impotency to any Nigerian is a grave social insult that challenges collective interpretations of masculinity and femininity.

conceptual strands of young people's sexual risk taking and constructs to substantively illuminate and account for what I believe are varied influences on young people's risk-prone sexualities. Furthermore, even though I anticipate linear variables advanced for young people's sexualities will remain partially valid, their specificities will be relative, individual, context and time dependent.<sup>41</sup>

## 1.6 Conclusion

As I reconceptualise it, young people's sexual risk taking is influenced by, but not determined, by the powerful macro and micro forces, the modern conventions<sup>42</sup> of heterosexuality in Nigeria; in collusion with young people's unequal agencies. From this perspective, neither structure nor young people's agency, alone, can adequately account for sexual risk taking. Subject to empirical research confirmation, I speculate that young people in Nigeria are neither helpless to abstain from, or destined to take sexual risks. Instead, young people's manifest sexualities validate, engage and challenge the local Nigerian/global sexual rules, norms, resources and mores:

“with struggle, contestation and a biased infiltration” in a manner that underscores their non-passive acceptance of, and contribution to the prevailing sexual norms, beliefs and practices” (Willis, 1977, p.175).

The validation of this reconceptualization of young people's sexualities, in a manner that “make the irreducible basic elements” of sexual risk taking “as simple and as few as possible without having to surrender the adequate representation of a single datum of experience” (Einstein, 1933, online) is my next task. My holistic approach differs from reductionists' stance, such as sensation seeking or problem behaviour, which reduces “the complex and varied to the simple and standard ...” *whose* “...method is often to focus on parts instead of wholes” (Chambers, 1997, p.42, word in italics mine). I also draw critical insights from sexual and reproductive health literature, which I will compare with young Nigerian university students' sexual risk taking narrative accounts. I discuss the relevant literature next.

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<sup>41</sup> My re-conceptualisation of young people's sexual risk taking advances Denscombe's (2001), advocacy for alternative readings of young people and risk takings in a manner that does not problematize it.

<sup>42</sup> The modern conventions of heterosexuality and homosexuality are normative specifications of the who, how, why and where of sexual conduct. They can be sub-cultural in orientation, language and perception. For example, dry sex in Southern Africa and bareback sex among gay men.

## Chapter 2

### Literature review -principal perspectives of young people sexual risk taking

#### 2.1 Introduction

The most systematic research on sexuality is linked to homosexual and bisexual studies in North America, Europe and Latin America (Parker, 1991; Henriksson, and Månsson, 1995). In contrast, my review of literature unequivocally corroborates Obbo's claim that "hard studies of sexuality among African groups are non-existent and most analyses have not gone beyond looking at polygyny, promiscuity and sex work" (Obbo, 1999; see also King, 1999). Researchers also systematically fail to pre-specify their biases<sup>43</sup> and overarching assumptions, which are products of prejudice, preunderstanding and sometimes, bias about the subject under inquiry. As a result, linear perspectives such as promiscuity and sensation seeking dominate African sexual discourse<sup>44</sup> and enjoy the funding support of external donors (Arnfred, 2004, p.59), currently imperative for sub-Saharan African sexuality studies.

Regardless of the dominance of linear perspectives, a critical reading of sexual risk literature, and experience, suggests that social action is influenced by multiple and often competing variables, which are not always discursively (pre)determined, beneficial or risk-prone. This insight is easily gained from even cursory research interaction with knowledgeable social actors who sometimes "are not inherently predisposed to sustained reasoning or existential reflection on the meaning of their conduct from moment to moment in everyday life" (Cohen, 2000, p.97), but are capable of discursive rationalization their actions, when asked (Giddens, 1984). Unfortunately, sexual reproductive health literature systemically neglects young people's perspectives<sup>45</sup> of sexual risk taking.

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<sup>43</sup>Despite the non-specification of bias and assumptions, a critical reading of researcher's biographies, topics, methods, analysis and conclusions are revealing.

<sup>44</sup>My use of the term *discourse* approximates expression of thought, conversations, written or verbal exchanges that young people's sexual risk taking elicit and initiate – which are paradoxically influenced by sexual risk taking outcome, social contexts, political economic arrangements, gender, age and social change.

<sup>45</sup>I define perspectives as generalizations about action, which stakeholders such as families, religious institutions, governments, NGOs, academics and young people hold, or believe to be true about their activities, which are often derived from their socialisation, life experiences, values/norms and vested interests.



The need arises therefore; to synthesis, the varied and discrete conceptual strands on sexual risk taking that are found in literature to develop a more realistic portrait of sexual risk taking, on one hand, and circumvent linear conceptualisations of it, on the other. Based on this proposed holistic line of inquiry, four<sup>46</sup> broad conceptual strands of sexuality literature are discernable. These include (1) bio-cultural influence perspective,<sup>47</sup> with key sexual risk taking influences such as emotion, promiscuity and cultural norms, such as gendered socialisation. (2) Another perspective is young people's socialisation conceptual strand, with key indicators such as sexual socialisation, peer influence, mass media influence, parental socialisation, social learning and sexual scripts. (3) There is also a political economy perspective with key influences such as sexual exchange and plastic sexuality. Furthermore, there is, (4) the dominant problem behaviour perspective of young people sexual risk taking, with key influences such as alcohol, differential association, sensation seeking, agency and ignorance.

## **2.2 Bio-cultural promiscuity perspective of young people's sexual risk taking**

Bio-cultural promiscuity thesis, as applied to African sexuality studies, are exemplified by Caldwell and colleagues'<sup>48</sup> comparison of Eurasian and African sexual systems (Caldwell and Caldwell, 1987; Caldwell et al., 1987, 1989 and 1991). Caldwell and colleague's tried to demonstrate the existence of a "distinct and internally coherent African system embracing sexuality, marriage and much else" in contrast to with Eurasian systems (Caldwell 1989, p.187). According to Caldwell and colleagues, African sexualities evolved to maintain lineages and descent groups (Caldwell, *ibid*). The characteristics of African lineage oriented sexual systems include adult male preoccupation with sex and procreation, the widespread practice of polygon and divorce (Caldwell, *ibid*). Caldwell and colleagues also imply that conjugal bonds in Africa are weak and bereft of emotions because married couples

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<sup>46</sup> The compartmentalisations of literature perspectives and associated key influences are arbitrary, intuitive, non-hierarchical and serve presentational purposes. It is possible to conceive these arbitrary perspectives and associated influences differently.

<sup>47</sup> Bio-cultural promiscuity conceptualisation of sexual risks assigns primacy to human biological sexual impulses, which are legitimised by cultural norms, practices and discourse. For example, sensation seeking and promiscuity thrive because of their cultural legitimacy even though they also have biological roots.

<sup>48</sup> I have been asked, on occasion, why I choose to revisit Caldwell and colleagues' perspectives of African sexuality. It is principally because their perspective of African sexuality remains influential and widely quoted in research, programme literature and heard discussed or whispered in conference and seminar halls to this day.

retain organic relations with their biological families. In addition, they suggest that gender division of labour within the household promotes conflict between the vested interests of wives/offspring on one hand, and husbands on the other (Caldwell 1989). They make these simplistic and linear generalizations despite the rich variation of people across Africa. In contrast, Caldwell and colleagues' conclude that unlike the unregulated African sexual systems, Eurasian sexual systems leverage asset inheritance, marriage and ideals of female purity, which are enshrined in "morality and theology" to manage sexualities (Caldwell et al., 1989, p.188-192). Thus, African sexual systems:

"neither placed aspects of sexual behaviour at the centre of their moral and social systems nor sanctified chastity" relating virtue instead, "to success in reproduction than to limiting profligacy" (Caldwell et al., 1989, p.188-192).

Any form of control, guilt and shame, as a result, does not govern sexual conduct in sub-Saharan Africa. Instead, they are likened to "a worldly activity like work or eating and drinking" (Caldwell et al., 1989, p.203). In essence, Africans "do not regard most sexual relations as sinful or as central to morality and religion, and, at the most, have fairly easily evaded prohibitions even on female premarital or extramarital sex (Caldwell et al., 1989, p.222). Sex in Africa is also depicted as promiscuous and transactional – service men are willing to pay for, which women provide at material/social cost to men. The transactional and promiscuous nature of African sexuality, according to Caldwell and colleagues, challenges the identification of commercial sex work and principally accounts for significantly higher prevalence of sexually transmitted diseases (STI) in Africa in comparison to Eurasia (1989).

History, anthropology and extant literature contradict Caldwell and colleague's depiction of African sexuality. There are criticisms for Caldwell and colleague's careless analysis of African sexuality (Heald, 1995). Furthermore, Caldwell and colleagues perspective of African sexuality have been called disingenuous. Their lack of candour have had an insidious influence on academic research and sexual health practice, principally because they uncritically transposed alien and subjective perspectives, protocols and interpretations to sub-Saharan Africa (Bolton, Lewis and Orozco, 1991, Singer et al., 1992, Herdt and Lindenbaum, 1992; Clatts, 1994; Parker

1994). A recent global comparative study of the prevalence of premarital sex, a form of sexual risk taking, unequivocally attests it is not restricted to Africa:

“the shift towards later marriage in most countries has led to an increase in premarital sex, the prevalence of which is generally higher in developed countries than in developing countries, and is higher in men than in women... having had two or more sexual partners in the past year is more common in men than in women, and reported rates are higher in industrialised than in non-industrialised countries” (Wellings et al., 2006, p.1706).

Regardless, premarital sex is associated with promiscuity in sub-Saharan Africa by literature and lay opinion. In their methodology Caldwell and colleagues demonstrate a bias in selecting sources, minimised and ignored a rich body of evidence that suggest pervasive religious and social sanctions against perceived sexual immorality (Ahlberg, 1994, Le Blanc et al., 1991; Chege, 1993). For example, among the traditional Kikuyu and Meru, sexual conduct has a puritanical edge, which was eroded by Christianity, colonial administrative policies and socio-economic changes that weakened their historic sexuality control powers (Ahlberg, 1994; Chege, 1993).

For Heald, Caldwell and colleagues had problems interpreting African sexuality because of cultural relativity, based on the assumption that “the morality of one is not easily either recognized or grasped by the other” (Heald, 1995, p.491). In Heald's view, Caldwell and colleagues denigrated African conjugal bonds and ignored cultural sexuality control norms such as unwillingness to discuss sex and sexual conduct (Heald, 1995). Heald underscores her argument by quoting an observation that sexual intercourse in sub-Saharan Africa, is conducted with the most “politest and vaguest of phrases” (Kisekka, 1973, p.149 cite in Heald, 1995) and that “marital sex should take place in the dark, as it is immodest for couples to see each other naked” (Heald, 1995, p.491). Today, secrecy and modesty still surround sexuality in Nigeria, but is increasingly moderated by modernity.<sup>49</sup> These challenges to Caldwell and colleagues African sexuality thesis evoke Merton's incisive observation that:

“in no group is there an absence of regulatory codes governing conduct, yet groups do vary in the degree to which these folkways,

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<sup>49</sup> Giddens comments that dynamic modern institutions, compared to traditional forms of social order, have an increased ability to “undercut traditional habits and customs, and their global impact...modernity radically alters the nature of day-to-day social life and affects the most personal aspects of our experience,” which is our sexuality (Giddens, 1991, p.1).

mores, and institutional controls are effectively integrated with the more diffuse goals which are part of the culture matrix" (Merton, 1938, p.674).

Specific sexual regulatory regimes and practices identified and denigrated as non-moral or restrictive by Caldwell and colleagues (1989), include menstrual and postpartum sexual abstinence, which are forms of sexual control (Heald, 1995). Caldwell and colleagues interpreted menstrual and postpartum sexual abstinence from their western experience in rational economic terms as furthering polygyny, sexual networking and promiscuity (Heald, 1995, p.492). Heald concludes that despite Caldwell and colleagues venerable attempts towards:

"establishing an explicitly alternative African sexual morality, their whole thesis is underwritten by a pervasive Euro centrality as to the nature of morality and of sexuality" in sub-Saharan Africa (Heald, 1995, p.492).

The Euro centrality of Caldwell and colleagues deductions is transparent when their bio-cultural promiscuity perspective is applied outside sub-Saharan Africa. In a North American study of men who partake in bareback<sup>50</sup> sex and explain their behaviour as attempts attain cultural masculine identities (Halkitis and Parsons, 2003), the cultural promiscuity component of Caldwell's et al., thesis are missing. Cultural promiscuity deductions are also missing from studies, which links cultural perceptions of sexual partners as socially similar, clean or dirty, with sexual risk taking (see Maticaka-Tyndale, 1992; Skidmore and Hayter, 2000).

Nevertheless, Caldwell and colleagues perspective remain influential to this day. It probably influenced research conclusions about sub-Saharan Africa, such as "the unbridled black female sexuality, excessive, threatening and contagious, carrying a deadly disease" (Arnfred, 2004, p.67) or of sub-Saharan African males who "would not use condoms if they did not have to, but would rather practice promiscuous sex without any interest in [their] partner's health" (Jungar and Oinas, 2004, p.107). The bio-cultural promiscuity perspective also influenced suggestions that young people's sexual risk taking is normative because they derive their peer status and material benefits from sexual risk taking (Schulenberg, Maggs and Hurrelmann, 1997; Shedler and Block, 1990).

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<sup>50</sup> Refers to intentional unsafe anal sex by gay men without condoms.

In Nigeria, the bio-cultural promiscuity thesis is inherent in the study of heterosexual sex with multiple partners by males in eastern Nigeria to gain popular culture masculine identities (Izugbara and McGill, 2003), and the investigation of sexual networking in south-western Nigeria, which report that sexual networking is common (Orubuloye, Caldwell and Caldwell, 1992; 1997a&b; see Oyeneye and Kawonise, 1993 also). Others are the “Armed Forces Programme on AIDS Control (AFPAC) Knowledge, Attitudes, and Sexual Behaviour among the Nigerian Military Concerning HIV/AIDS and STDs” study that suggests a high propensity for Nigeria military personnel to engage in risk-prone sexual behaviours (Adebajo, et al., 2002). There is also study of "social-structural context of HIV/AIDS risk perceptions and protective behaviour among young urban slum inhabitants in Nigeria" which indicates, “young people's sexual risk taking, largely results from a sense of invulnerability and lack of understanding of the consequences of their actions” (Adedimeji, 2005, p.27).

### **2.3 Key influences under bio-cultural promiscuity perspective**

#### **2.3.1 The influence of immature cognitive development/earlier-sexual development**

There are indications that biological dynamics such as on-going brain development in young people account for their inability to recognise and avoid sexual risk encounters (Spear, 2000a&b). Bio-cognitive studies have linked young male's hormonal turbulence with problem behaviour as smoking, intoxication, sexual risk taking and truancy (Udry, 1988, Udry, et al., 1985; Udry, Talbert, and Morris 1986; Udry and Billy, 1987). In other words, young people's emotional and experiential immaturity is linked to self-perception as invulnerable to the negative consequences of sexual risks compared with other segments of the population (Gardner and Herman, 1990; Furby and Beyth-Marom, 1992; Vinokur, 1971; Kohlberg, 1976; Heaven, 1996). The preceding claim evokes the “personal fable” syndrome, similarly associated with young people's psychological immaturity (Jack, 1989, p.334; Elkind, 1967), and social positioning as reckless, irresponsible and hedonistic beings.

Personal fables are egocentric and larger-than-life self-notions of invulnerability vis-à-vis sexual risk taking. Personal fables are illustratable with examples from adolescent girls whose personal fables hold that they will not become pregnant,

regardless of engaging in unprotected sexual intercourse, as result, they neglect to use precautions. According to Elkind:

“...at a somewhat different level, this belief in personal uniqueness becomes a conviction that he will not die, that death will happen to others but not him. This complex of beliefs in the uniqueness of his feelings and of his immortality might be called a personal fable, a story which he tells himself that is not true”. (Elkind, 1967, p.1031).

That is, an ego-centric outlook of social life (Beck, 1992; Frankenberg, 1966) and by extension sexual risk taking which is linkable to their physical and emotional immaturity and partly responsible for tendencies to ignore or minimise potential negative outcomes of problem behaviour because they are delayed in manifestation compared with the immediate gratifications (Jeffrey, 1989). The development of egocentric and reckless worldviews by young people have been traced to cognitive thought systems which evolve around the ages of 11 or 12 years, and promote young people's interpretation of peers/adults expectations and reactions to their conducts (Elkind, 1967).

Another variable neglected by Caldwell and colleagues include the influence of earlier human physiological development, compared with the traditional, on sexual risk taking. For example, the increasingly prominent and sexual early maturity of young people, hidden ovulation, absence of female oestrus and adolescents' sexual curiosity combines, and promote emotional, recreational and exchange related sexual risk taking (Alexander and Noonan, 1979; Abramson and Pinkerton, 1995). Thus, young people earlier physically maturity promotes sexual risk taking. Commenting on this trend, research indicates that the older looking young people are more prone to sexual risk taking behaviours because they are assumed adults (Silbereisen and Kracke, 1993). In addition, early maturing young people are likely to imitate adult risk-prone sexual activities that are beyond their physical and emotional competence (Oyserman and Saltz, 1993).

In addition, young females who appear physically matured are less confident, more suggestible and prone to associate with older males because they normatively dislike association with their physically smaller peers (Muuss and Porton, 1998). This often leads to earlier sexual debut and sustained sexual activity. Young males who look

matured conversely, experience the opposite. They are more confident and enjoy wide peer acceptance than late maturing boys (see Silbereisen and Kracke, 1993; Simone, et al 2000, for detail discussions). Young males who look matured are also prone to earlier sexual debut and sustained sexual activities with older sexually experienced females. This is because young people who mature physically earlier face more temptations and opportunities for earlier sexual debut and continued sexual risk taking than their late maturing counterparts.

As a result, it is prudent to analytically separate the influence of young people's early physical and sexual maturity from culture as an influence on sexual risk taking. Regardless of this caveat, dominant linear research approaches, such as sensation seeking, mostly explain sexual risk taking as a means of reaching biological, but habitual needs for sensation and stimulation (Hovarth and Zuckerman, 1993; Zurkerman, 1979). Bio-cultural promiscuity perspective is embodied in research that approach young people sexual risk taking as adaptive for social interaction and positive identity (Baumrind, 1985: 1987; 1991). As true as these perspectives are, they are merely a small portion of complex influences on praxis<sup>51</sup>, which is sexual risk taking. For example, controversial claims have also been made that young people's sexual activities are developmentally appropriate, and parts of complex processes of trial and error crucial for identity formation and achievement (Marcia, 1966; Erikson, 1968; 1980).

Despite the obvious cultural, socio-economic differences and the paucity of research on the development appropriateness of premarital sex, I expect to find similar trends in Nigeria. Although bio-cognitive influences on young people's sexual risk taking seem intuitive and appealing, they are nonetheless too linear in their accounts of influences on young people's sexual risks taking. Other variables at play include emotion, love or romance.

### **2.3.2 The influence of emotion**

Emotion, romance, love and affection are influences on young people's sexual risk taking that are often interchangeably employed in sexuality literature. Emotion is

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<sup>51</sup> By praxis, I mean an established custom or habitual social practice, such as young people's sexual risk taking.

defined as the “intense attraction that involves the idealization of the other, within an erotic context, with the expectation of enduring for sometime in the future” (Jankowiak and Fischer, 1992, p.150). Nevertheless, emotion theory is the least applied model to study young people's sexual risk taking. This is to the extent that discourse on sexual behaviour omits emotion and explain behaviour in social and rational frameworks (Alaka, 2006). According to Alaka, rationality and social influences are insufficient to understand sex, birth, life, marriage, death; consequently, Alaka advocates the inclusion of emotion (Alaka, 2006). Research activity on emotion and its influence on young people's sexual risk taking is beginning to grow (Crouter and Booth, 2006; Florsheim, 2003a&b; Giordano, 2003).

For example, studies report that women express trust in their partners by a refusal to use, or cessation of condom use (Holland et al., 1990, 1992; Jadack, et al., 1997; Lock, Ferguson and Wise, 1998; Ickovics, Thayaparan and Ethier, 2001; Soler et al., 2000). In the same vein, premarital sexual relationships and adultery are linked to emotional variables, such as love, because practitioners engage in these risk-prone sexualities regardless of an awareness that premarital and extramarital sex attract negate social sanctions (Jankowiak, Nell and Buckmaster, 2002). Social agent's awareness of prevalent sexual norms and negative sanctions that deviancy attract, principally explains the secrecy surrounding adultery and premarital sex.

Even though researching emotions such as love, affection and trust will be challenging, their influence on young people's sexual risk taking are nevertheless, cross-cultural and gendered. In this regard, claims are made that emotional influence on sexuality “is possibly a developed form of a mammalian drive to pursue preferred mates” (Aron, et al., 2005; see also Jankowiak and Fischer, 1992, for conclusions on cross-cultural romantic love surveys). From this perspective, young people's development of emotional traits and their impacts on sexual risk taking have biological, social and political economic foundations (Aron, et al., 2005; Arnow, et al., 2002; Redoute, et al., 2000).

Young people's interest in emotive and romantic relationships develops around puberty (Harris et al., 1997; Miller and Benson, 1999). Practically, young people elicit, demonstrate and reciprocate love and affection with material rewards and



sexual risk taking, which are inevitable components of securing and maintaining sexual relationships (Berg and McQuinn, 1986). Emotional influences vary with individuals, age, gender and contexts. For example, research indicate that middle school adolescent's date for superficial reasons as infatuation, crushes, and feelings of instantaneous love, moderated in subsequent years by adolescents placement of higher values on commitment and intimacy (Connolly and Goldberg, 1999). Related research report similar themes among adolescents and young adult's sexual narratives, which became more complex as they acquire more life and sexual relationship experiences (Waldinger, et al., 2002).

College students on the other hand, place more emphasis on reciprocal affections from their romantic partner (Galotti, Kozberg and Appleman, 1990; Roscoe, Diana and Brooks, 1987). In the same vein, research on romantic love and emotional influences on adolescents relationships suggest that male description of romance hinge on the physical attractiveness of females, while female descriptions, hinged on self-disclosures, support, physical attraction and commitment of males (Feiring, 1999a, 1999b, 1996). According to Giddens, self-disclosure:

“presumes some degree of self-interrogation. How do I feel about the other? How does the other feel about me? Are our feelings “profound” enough to support long-term involvement”?  
“...romantic love is sexual love...sexual satisfaction and happiness, especially in the fantasy form of romance, are supposedly guaranteed by the very erotic force which romantic love provokes”  
(Giddens, 1992, p.44 and 62).

It seems reasonable therefore, to conclude that emotion, such as love and affection, influences young people sexualities (see Collins and Sroufe, 1999; Sprecher, Barbee, and Schwartz, 1995). This partly explains young people's initiation of sexual activities in the context of romantic relationships, according to a multiethnic study of four hundred and fifty two 18- 25 year olds (Feldman, Turner and Araujo, 1999). Similarly, a national survey of adolescents in the USA indicates that about two-thirds “strongly agree” that sex ought to take place in romantic relationships<sup>52</sup> (Albert, 2004). Young people are intensely fond of their romantic partners, with whom they

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<sup>52</sup> In a contradictory twist, young people in the USA survey normatively disapprove of sexual activities while in high school with up to 63 and 76 disapproval rates for boys, and girls (Albert, 2004).

are going steady (Abma, et al., 2004). Among young undergraduates, emotional attachments are said to develop four months into relationships which:

“provide an opportunity for individuals to explore their sexuality in the context of their feelings of love for and perception of being loved by their partner”... The first few months during which young adults date and are in love also are a period of self-discovery that may lead to greater feelings of ability and self-worth” (Kaestle and Halpern, 2007, p.134).

In addition, emotional relationships are said to be exhilarating for young people. Studies link romantic love with euphoria, exclusive attention, cherishment, freedom, (in)dependence and specific brain functions that set-off sexually related motivations and rewards (Sprecher and Regan, 1998; Bartels and Zeki, 2000; Aron, et al., 2005). Young females, particularly take sexual risks to prove their love to male partners (Holland et al., 1998), strengthen or bolster perceived unrequited love (Kaestle and Halpern, 2007) and to control the pace and ultimate purpose of relationships. The tendencies of young females to employ sex to affirm/maintain love and affection has been called a perennial altruistic characteristics of feminine sexuality, which is product of heterosexual cultural conditioning, which emphasises feminine collusion in, and conformity in maintaining gendered and dominant male conventions (Holland et al., 1998).

From the foregoing, emotion as an influence of young people's sexual risk taking challenges the dominant social and rational research paradigms which draw upon narratives of female victim hood, poverty, cultural norms, and disempowerment as determinants of sexual risk taking. Emotion introduces the saliency of multiple variables as biology, social norms, peer relations, personal and collective ethos. Emotion is an example of micro, meso or intermediate variables that influence praxis, such as sexual risk taking. However, emotion has positive and negative components (Alaka, 2006). According to Alaka, positive emotion are found in “conjugal love, whether within marriage or not, and in both actual and potential sexual and/or reproductive relationships. Several aspects of conjugal love have a potential impact on reproductive behaviour and, by extension as well as independently, on reproductive health. The three considered here are social expectations about love, individual expectations, and actual experience” (Alaka, 2006, p.109).

Alaka argues that the social expectations of love are dictated by social rules and sanctions for breaking them. That is, the social expectations of love are normatively regulated by majority moral consensus. For example, over time as a sub-group, young people's sub-culture evolve and maintain heterosexual dating rules, norms, scripts and sanctions in Nigeria. These guide to sexual behaviour prescribes who, how, when and the process of dating and sex. The social expectations of love also foster normative marital sexual inequality (Alaka, 2006). In this regard, a study of heterosexual men and women recruited at discos and bars in Melbourne, Australia, report an emerging trend that prescribes for all young people the 'relinquishment of control for the sake of love' (Rosenthal, Gifford, and Moore, 1998). Similarly, feminine perspectives normatively reject female insistence on condom use by male partners because such negotiations does not portray trust/love, while male decisions to use condoms for contraception reaffirms male virility (Sione'an, et al., 2002; see also Kirkman, Rosenthal and Smith 1998; Lear, 1995).

The normative influence of emotions on sexual risk taking, such as female non-insistence on condom use, is confirmed for African American women. African American women opposition to condom use, we are told, arise from their need to nurture romance, rather than their economic dependence on the men (Sobo, 1995; see also Hoskins, 2000 for similar observations). Young people's emotional turmoil during adolescent years is also linked with increased emotionally charged risk prone sexual behaviour (Leith and Baumeister, 1996).

The utility of emotional constructs in uncovering influences on young people's sexual risk taking is that emotional influences are intuitively appealing, and if the mass media is to be believed, commonplace. Adding emotional constructs to sexuality studies induces my engagement with personal experience and the cognitive variables that influence sexual risks such as trust and affection, which young people are able to recall and discuss. Emotional constructs also draw attention to the role of curiosity, guilt and shame on sexual risk taking. Indeed, the observation is made that emotional variables on young people's sexual risk taking are "in many ways ...the 'last frontier' in the study of adolescent relationships" (Giordano, 2003, p.258).

### **2.3.3 The influence of norms (reinforced by political-economic systems)**

Cultural norms perspectives of young people's sexual risk taking attempt to explain their risk prone sexualities as by-products of cultural perception, acceptance and response to anticipated rights and obligations, which exist in varying degrees in all societies (Giddens, 1979; see Douglas and Wildavsky, 1982 also). For example young female's sexual risk taking is linkable to dominant social and cultural prescriptions, which stipulates when, where, how and with whom to have sexual relations (Weiss and Gupta, 1998; Gupta, 2000) and social sanctions for non-compliance. In other words, "an actor may 'calculate the risks involved in the enactment of a given form of social conduct, in respect of the likelihood of the sanctions'<sup>53</sup> involved being actually applied, and may be prepared to submit to them as a price to be paid for achieving a particular end" (Giddens, 1979, p.87).

From a normative influence perspective, young people's sexual risk taking can be explained by referencing their cultural socialisation and internalisation of dominant feminine/masculine ethos. For example, the cultural prescriptions for feminine subservience to men or male dominance of females in Nigeria can partly explain exploitative sexual relations, which privilege males. However, gendered inequalities and constraints are varied. In her plenary address to the XIIIth International AIDS Conference, in Durban, South Africa, Gupta (2000) elaborates the cultural origins and political economic reinforcement of female sexual vulnerabilities in patriarchal societies.

In the first instance, Gupta observes that a culture of silence pervades around sex that prescribes that women be and remain ignorant about sex and passive in accepting it, which negates women seeking risk reducing information, products and negotiation skills for safe sex (Gupta, 2000). She also identifies as influential, the pervasive prescriptions for virginity for unattached females in the developing world and elsewhere that diminishes women's willingness to seek sexual reproductive health information and commodities because it implies promiscuity (Gupta, 2000). She implicates virginity in women vulnerability to sexual risk taking based on the

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<sup>53</sup> For Giddens, "sanctions or 'sanctioning' is a chronic feature of all social encounters" (Giddens, *ibid*). Sanctions apply, in subtle and pervasive ways, in the cultural production of femininity and masculinity; with inherently significant obligations on social agents to (un)consciously act in prescribed manners.

unfounded belief in some societies that sexual intercourse with a virgin cures STI and HIV/AIDS (Gupta, 2000).

The belief that sexual intercourse with a virgin can cure HIV/AIDS, is also linkable to cultural and gendered beliefs that associates virgins and nubile with purity, eroticism, passivity and invigorating health. The cultural prescriptions and preference for young females to be virgins also drive the substitution of virginal with anal sex by women to preserve their virginity and conform to cultural norms, elevating women's vulnerabilities to STIs and HIV/AIDS (Weiss, Whelan, and Gupta, 2000; Weiss and Gupta, 1998). The cultural prescriptions for virginity is a driver of abstinence<sup>54</sup> pledges, consequent secrecy surrounding young people's sexual activity, prevent young people from seeking sexual health services, and stigmatize those who do (Weiss, Whelan, and Gupta, 2000; Weiss, and Gupta, 1998).

In addition, the prevalent cultural ideals for motherhood deny women the options to negotiating non-penetrative sex, contraceptives use and stigmatize those who do (Heise and Elias, 1995; UNAIDS 1999c). Furthermore, Gupta suggest that the economic dominance of women by men influence their vulnerability to sexual risk taking and sexually transmitted diseases because women resort to risky sex related exchanges to survive (Gupta, 2000). Women's social and economic dependence on their sexual partners minimises their considerations of the partner's sexual risk-prone biographies (Mane, Gupta, and Weiss 1994; Weiss and Gupta, 1998). In the final analysis, Gupta identifies linkages between culture, intimate partner violence (IPV), male sexual coercion and male socio-economic powers as drivers of gendered sexual risk taking (Gupta, 2000; see Heise, Ellsberg and Gottemoeller, 1999 also for similar findings).

In utilitarian terms, the gendered socialisation of young people in Nigeria proceeds via different paths. Women are socialised to be submissive, define their self worth

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<sup>54</sup> A review of the effectiveness of abstinence programmes in the developing and developed world indicates that, "when compared with various control groups, there was little evidence that risky sexual behaviour, incidence of sexually transmitted infections, or pregnancy were reduced in adolescents in abstinence only programmes. Abstinence only programmes did not increase primary abstinence (prevention) or secondary abstinence - decreased incidence and frequency of recent sex" (Hawes, Sow, Kiviat, 2007 see also O'Reilly, Medley, Dennison, and Sweat, 2006, for similar conclusions on abstinence in developing countries).

vis-à-vis relationships with and marriage to men and procreation. Other behavioural prescriptions and expectations for socialized females include dutifulness, submissiveness, decorum, fearfulness, humility, faithfulness, patient, kind, reticence and bashfulness (SSHRN,<sup>55</sup> 1999; see Izugbara, 2004; Ejikeme, 2001 also for similar observations). It is speculated that these behavioural traits contribute to the seeming unquestioning attitude that young girls exhibit towards their male sexual partners, and by extension, sexual risk practices. Findings from a study in Uganda emphasize this point. The author reports that the binary ideology of wifedom and motherhood splits women into *good women* expected to be monogamous and submissive and *torse women* who insist on condom use and are therefore, promiscuous (Obbo, 1999). In the same regard, speculation is made that commercial sex workers and young girls fail to negotiate condom use with their sexual partners because it implies promiscuity, while unquestioning acceptance of unprotected sexual intercourse implies devotion, trust and monogamy (Obbo, 1999; see Morokoff et al., 1997 also for similar findings).

Studies in Nigeria affirm that conventional gendered norms and discourse influence sexuality (Izugbara, 2004; Izugbara and Ukwai, 2003; Izugbara and McGill 2003). Izugbara's deconstruction of sexual discourse in Nigeria uncovers patriarchy and hegemony, which exploits women sexually and are traceable to the systemic operations of culture, religion and politics. Masculine cultural patriarchy, according to Izugbara and colleagues, are implicated in the social (re)production of normative standards for masculinity and femininity through the socialisation process that instil divergent personality traits, values and attitudes on young males and females (Izugbara, 2004). Unlike young females, young Nigerian males are socialised to be domineering, breadwinners and aggressive (see SSHRN, 1999; Asanga, 1998 also) with more risk prone worldviews, violence and aggression (Abia, 2002; Gbarale, 1999).

Deviation from these normative sexual roles exposes young people to social sanctions such as ridicules and peer stigma. Cultural socialisation and gendered social relations also encourage the scripted and mutual expectations by sexual partners that women ought to be sexually available to men (Muehlenhard and Falcon, 1990; Price and

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<sup>55</sup> SSHRN - Social Science and Health Research Network, Nigeria.

Byers, 1999; Holland, et al., 1990). It is my contention, therefore, that patriarchy everywhere challenges the foundations of safe sexual practices vision that “every sex act be free of coercion and infection; every pregnancy intended; every birth healthy” (National Research Council, 1997). In corroboration, Izugbara in a study titled ‘Patriarchal Ideology and Discourses of Sexuality in Nigeria observe that:

“...that prevailing codes of sexuality and sexual conduct in contemporary Nigeria are socially produced and fed by oppressive patriarchal subjectivities and ideologies that try to instil a sense of what is normal sexually-speaking, for us all”<sup>56</sup>. (Izugbara, 2004, p.2).

Another driver of sexual risk taking is intimate partner violence (IPV) including sexual violence<sup>57</sup>. IPV evolves from unequal gender relations and is reinforced by contextual political economies. IPV include physical, psychological violence and the sexual kinds that have long-term negative impact on female health<sup>58</sup> (Romito, Molzan, and De Marchi, 2005; Pico-Alfonso, et al., 2004; Campbell et al., 2002; Coker, et al., 2000). Indeed, Wilton suggests, “unequal relations of power between women and men are not simply of academic interest. In the context of HIV/AIDS they are literally life or death issues...” (Wilton, 1994, p.4). IPV and sexual violence are also rooted in social conventions on heterosexuality, masculinity, femininity and recently, homosexuality, which prescribe for one partner, a woman’s subservience role relationships (Heise, Ellsberg and Gottemoeller, 1999). IPV is common today.

IPV exert significant influences on young people’s sexual risk taking. It is implicated in the sexual risk taking via male physical, psychological and material exploitation of females. In developing countries, studies indicate that as much as 1/5-1/2 of female respondents report sexual coercion by their intimate male partners (see Ellsberg et al., 2000; Coker and Richter, 1998; Watts et al., 1998; see Morokoff, et al., 1997 also for

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<sup>56</sup> Izugbara further contends “...I suggest that these oppressive, male-biased discursive subjectivities have three familiar traits: They are, (1) homophobic (i.e. support the hatred and fear of men who step out of or challenge traditional male roles), (2) penis-centred (i.e. glorify and idolize traditional imageries of masculinity and male sexual prowess and encourage the objectification of women and their body), and (3) male-privileging (encourage the ideology of double standard in which males feel morally and physically edified by multiple sexual encounters while women are held as morally and physically tarnished by the same)” (Izugbara, 2004, p.2).

<sup>57</sup> Sexual violence covers “the range of psychologically and physically coercive acts used against adult and adolescent women by current or former male intimate partners” (WHO, 1997).

<sup>58</sup> Although either heterosexual partner can be a victim of IPV, patriarchy and gender socialisation in Nigeria seem to predispose more women to IPV than men.

similar findings). Similarly, authors of an application of social policy and gender power relations construct to the study of women's significant predisposition to sexual infections, report that unequal gender relations benefit men and disadvantage women by predisposing them to masculine sexual exploitation and related risks (Zierler and Krieger, 1997). These risks include STIs.

In addition, feminist theorist's application of cultural and political economic approaches to sexual risk taking corroborates normatively gendered influences on young women's sexual risk taking. Women's lack of access to critical resources as information, remunerative economic and domestic productive skills, technology, and social support are said to predispose them to sexual risk taking and increased vulnerability to STIs and HIV/AIDS (Weiss and Gupta, 1998). Women social, political and economic disempowerments are themselves products of cultural norms that cast women as subservient to men. In this regard, sexual risk taking by African American women is linked to poverty, lack of economic opportunities and intimate partner violence (White, 2002). These normatively gendered cultural and political-economic asymmetries of control of resources produces feminine and masculine templates, which are facilitative of this study. For example, Altman's (1999), observe that:

“it is clear that globalization impacts on sexuality in all three ways. Economic changes mean that sexuality is increasingly commodified, whether through advertising or prostitution. . . . Cultural changes mean that certain ideas about behaviour and identity are widely dispersed, so that new ways of understanding oneself became available that often conflict bitterly with traditional mores ... the political realm will determine what forms are available for sexual expression ...”(Altman, 1999, p.563).

The gendered socialisation of women, however, does not function in linear terms as presented above. There are persuasive arguments for feminine collusion to propagate and nurture gendered socio-economic orders. Commenting on this, Holland, et al., in their seminal work observe that, “our initial sense of masculinity and femininity ... shifted to an image of the young women colluding with their sexual partners in this production of multilayered male power... in producing themselves as feminine, young women can play an active role in constituting and reproducing male dominance. In accepting the primacy of men's needs, they help to make first intercourse an induction into masculinity” (Holland, et al., 1998, p.157). In addition and more revealing:



"in young people's stories of losing virginity, a man gains manhood through a woman's loss of virginity...a woman has no direct access to the masculine agency which is effected by his entry into her body, but she does have the ability to undermine it through ridicule or refusal"(Holland, et al., 1998, p.156).

Anthony Giddens makes similar arguments that social actors are not as powerless to contest their positions, as popular conventions would have us believe. Instead, social actors are "often very adept at converting whatever resources they possess into some degree of control over the conditions of reproduction of the system" (Giddens, 1982, p.198-199; see Willis 1977 for similar assertion). Furthermore, gender and power theories of sexual behaviour inadvertently objectifies women as unthinking automatons that do not act, but merely respond to masculine sexual stimuli. This is not altogether accurate.

Studies attribute the seeming female passive acceptance of males' risk-prone sexual advances to evolutionary and adaptive behaviour, (un)consciously deployed by women to select and nurture male partners who have the most socio-economic potentials to meet their needs than others (Buss, 1989 and 1988; Hill, Nocks, and Gardner, 1987; Buss and Dedden, 1990). In essence, women possess and leverage varying degrees of agency in behaviour that culminate in sexual risk taking. Most importantly, I argue that women are knowledgeable social agents. Consequently, they are partly responsible for sexual risk taking, because like men, they "could, at any phase in a given sequence of *sexual* conduct, have acted differently" (Giddens, 1994, p.9, word in italics is mine), through sexual abstinence or consistent use of contraceptives.

#### **2.4 Sexual socialisation perspective of young people's sexual risk taking**

Sexual socialisation perspective of young people's sexual risk taking illuminates the social processes through which young people acquire/maintain sexual worldviews and practices relating to premarital penetrative sex, of the oral, anal and vaginal kinds. That is, sexual socialisation, hereafter-called sexualisation perspective, links sexual risk behaviour to influences from powerful institutions of social life, conventions the institutions generate/maintain, which define (un)acceptable standards of heterosexuality and homosexuality. For example, sexual risks taking from sexualisation perspective is influenced by the "pornographication" of popular culture

and the objectification of young people as sexual objects and consumers (Brian McNair, 1996; in Attwood, 2005). The pathways for the acquisition of sexuality is via social learning, modelling and positive reinforcement of behaviour.

On one hand, young people adopt sexual risk behaviour because it is socially/materially rewarding, and because sexual risk taking is consistent with the dominant social expectations of their environment. On the other hand, non-conformity with the normative sexual behaviours and expectations expose young people to peer sanctions such as ridicule, exclusion, vilification and aggression. Sexualisation perspectives of young people sexual risk taking therefore encourages researchers to approach young people's sexual risk taking as learned, and not merely an innate behaviour.

Sexualisation perspective of young people's sexual risk taking is exemplified, or inspired by social learning theory (Bussey and Bandura, 1999), cognitive development theory (Warin, 2000) and gender schema theory (Bem, 1985). For example, the sexualisation of young people and their consequent sexual risk taking is demonstrated by the objectification theory (Fredrickson, and Roberts, 1997; McKinley, and Hyde, 1996). Sexual objectification describes the social accentuation of women's sexual characteristics, especially their physical anatomy and beauty, while concurrently minimising their substantive personalities, emotions and feelings. Objectification theory also explains the pathways, through which young people imbibe, internalize and duplicate sexualised culture from their environment in a manner that de-links the human intelligence and emotions from the sexualised body.

The pull/push character of social norms, modelling and behaviour reinforcements evidences the primacy of socialisation agents, in shaping the psychological, emotional and sexual behaviour of young people (Chapin, 2000; Luster and Small, 1994; Resnick, et al., 1997). In this regard, studies report that young people attribute their sexual behaviour to socialisation agents and sexualisation processes (Kaiser Family Foundation, 1998; Sutton, Brown, Wilson, and Klein, 2002). Research validates the sexualised contexts of young people's lives today (Roberts and Tanner, 2000).

The sexualisation process, although a powerful perspective of young people's sexual risk taking, is however, not linear. Sexualisation perspectives minimise the role of young people's positive pre-dispositions and varying agencies in the production and maintenance of a sexual risk taking cultures. It assumes and proposes only external variables as influential on young people's sexual taking. Sexualisation fails to consider that young people collude with social institutions for sexualisation, indulge in self-objectification by accepting and implementing peer and third person images perceived to be desirable, trendy and normative.

For young females, sexual objectification process promotes their adornment, presentation and body control manners that enhance their sexual desirability to third parties, especially males in Nigeria. Socialisation agents have varying degrees of blame for young people's sexual risk taking because of what they do, sanction or fail to do. For example, religious institutions and parents are influential in young people sexual risk taking by their insistence on abstinence only and/or non-use of contraceptives, condoms and pills. As a result, attention will be paid to the role of parents, the mass media-industrial-complex, peers and gender asymmetries in propagating sexual risks.

#### **2.4.1 Key sexualisation influences– the influence of social learning**

Social learning theory proposes that the everyday living experiences produce role models and modelling opportunities for young people to learn from, and acquire sexual risk behaviour. In other words, young people's sexual risk taking, according to social learning advocates, occur because there exist in every society adults, relatives and peers who take sexual risks (models), whose conducts (modelling) are learned by young people (social learning). In its current form, social learning construct is attributable to a number of authors (Bandura, et al., 1977, Peck et al., 1981; McKegarney and Barnard, 1992; Perry and Sieving, 1993; Milburn, 1995; Wilton et al., 1995; Brown, 1996). Young people's social learning of modelled sexual risk behaviour, however, does not proceed on a direct path but is mediated by other variables. The first is the characteristics of potential role models, young people's personal traits and the perceived outcomes of the given behaviour. Young people are thought to be attracted to modelled risk behaviours because they perceive benefits and affirmative social support for those practices (Bandura, 1977).

The earliest application of social learning theory was to investigate young infant's imitation of adult aggression (Bandura, et al., 1963). Subsequent refinements in the 1970s by Bandura made social learning theory more amenable towards the investigation of adolescent's adoption of adult sexual behaviour. Thus, the emphasis of social learning theory is on young people's social learning and adoption of behaviour from adult models who young people consider credible and the concomitant positive reinforcement of adopted behaviours (Bandura, 1977). The application of social learning to sexual risk studies is challenged on a number of fronts. There is the assumption that role modelled sexual risk behaviours ought to be observable by young people before learning occurs. Empirically, most sexual activities are dyadic in nature, outside the purview of peers and relatives. Consequently, it is difficult to see how dyadic sexual risk behaviours are modelled for young people.

It is possible however, that social learning and adoption of sexual risk behaviour do not require role modelling. Sexual risk taking, for example, is innate (biological), but reinforced by young people's perceptions, interpretation and internalisation of cultural cues (sexualisation). Social learning perspective is also confronted with the challenge of defining peer groups, their evolution, maintenance, leadership cadre and statuses. Regardless of the outlined challenges, social learning perspectives have been employed to correct risk behaviours among young people. Successful examples include initiatives that sought and engaged local opinion leaders to minimise risk practices (Wiist and Snider, 1991; Kelly, et al., 1991; Grossberg, et al., 1993). As with other linear perspectives, social learning conceptualisations inadequately accounts for young people's risk-prone sexualities. Other variables, such as sexual scripts, are similarly implicated.

#### **2.4.2 The influence of sexual scripts**

Sexual scripts influence young people's "learning the meaning of internal states, organizing the sequences of specifically sexual acts, decoding novel situations, setting limits on sexual responses and linking meanings from nonsexual aspects of life to specifically sexual experience" (Gagnon and Simon, 1973, p.19). That is sexual behaviour and by extension, young people's sexual risk taking are learned behavioural

exchanges with a predictable order or sequence. The pervasiveness of sexual scripts influenced the inference that scripts are pivotal to the social evolution of sexual behaviour, sexual socialisation of young people, their predispositions and participation in premarital sex, and the dynamics of sexual behaviour discourse (Simon and Gagnon, 1987; Longmore, 1998).

Research indicates three interrelated script levels (Simon and Gagnon, 1986). The first is the cultural scenario script, especially sexual conduct guides. Cultural scenario scripts governs the why, where, how, with whom, where and when questions of sexual conduct. The second script level is interpersonal scripts, which approximates young people's interpretation of their complex cultural scenario scripts, their prevailing context and individuated/collective desires. The interpretations of interpersonal scripts are subjective, and dependent on the social agent's unique socialisation, perhaps sexualisation, life experiences and motives. The third set of scripts is the intrapsychic scripts. These refer to social agent's adoption, adaptation and performance of cultural scenario and interpersonal scripts in a manner that the prevailing sexual order are concurrently reaffirmed, challenged and authenticated.

Sexual scripts in Nigerian influence courtship, dating, sexual expectations and practices of heterosexual partners. For example, gifting or cash presents by males to females are scripted behaviour that declares young males sexual interest in a female. Females, who accept male cash/gifts, reciprocate by nurturing males and granting sexual access. There is also first-date scripts held by heterosexual couples with the expectation of sex after night-outs or romantic dinners. Sexual scripts are increasingly global in manifestation. For example:

“first-date scripts consistently depict men as taking an active role and women as taking a passive one. The man is expected to initiate the date, plan the date activities, drive, pay for the date, and initiate sexual intimacy, whereas women are expected to wait for the man to initiate and decide to “accept/reject date's moves” (Morr and Mongeau, 2004, p.6).<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> See also Rose and Frieze, 1993; Laner and Ventrone, 2000; Metts and Spitzberg, 1996; O'Sullivan & Byers, 1992 for similar arguments).

Sexual scripts evolve, influence, shape and are themselves influenced and shaped by young people's sexual behaviours. In addition, and similar to social learning influence claims, young people learn and adopt sexually scripted behaviour from pre-existing pools and role models in society such as peers and mass media celebrities. I conceive sexual scripts, nevertheless, as influential and not deterministic of young people's sexual risk taking. This is because young people selectively adopt appealing/rewarding scripts based on their sexual socialisation, internal dispositions, needs and contexts. Sexual scripts emphasises the often-understated role of young people's agency on sexual risk taking.

Sexual scripts, moreover, disclaim naturalists' linear claims about the procreation basis of sex. In place of naturalist claims, sexual script theorists argue for the normalization of multiple and varied expression of sexuality, the treatment of the erotic as part of social life. Sexual scripts also counter the excessive focus on sexual drives/conduct with queries about the salient conventional meanings and values of sexuality. From a sexual script perspective, the importance of social learning and cultural transmission of sexuality, its subjective and temporal meanings, varied manifestations and linkages with sexualisation of young people are emphasized. Furthermore, research indicates that sexual scripts influence casual sex by young people. In this regard, the sexual behaviour of young males has been characterized as "homosocial" (Carns, 1976; see Miller and Simon, 1974; Gagnon and Simon, 1973; Kaats and Davis, 1970). Young male's homosocial sexuality implies their sexual activities serve more than sensation seeking functions. Premarital sex for young males is normatively ego enhancing. In this regard, the observation is made that:

"the traditional double standard provided males with a prescription for premarital coitus, which can be referred to as a casual-sex script. This script assigned to men the role of initiating and pursuing sexual activity until stopped by the partner. Women, on the other hand, at least "nice" women, did not have an openly prescribed script for premarital coitus" (Reed and Weinberg, 1984, p.131).

Empirical script studies have been carried out with white young people (for example, Alksnis, Desmarais and Wood, 1996; Rose and Frieze, 1993; Ross and Davis, 1996), on same sex relations sub-population (for example, Rose, 2000; Klinkenberg and Rose, 1994), and African American women (for example, Stephens and Phillips,

2005; Sterk-Elifson, 1994). There are no studies on the subject in Nigeria even though my personal experience, observation and conversation with young people and other reproductive health stakeholders significantly indicate scripted sexual behaviour among young people. Sexual scripts research elsewhere is adaptable to the Nigerian context. For example, sexual scripts are important paradigms for organizing ideas of origins, constituents, expressions and nurture of normative sexual experiences (Gagnon, 1990; Simon and Gagnon, 1987). Other authors seem to agree in the observation that:

“...to answer the question ‘what should I do’? A person can look to see what is done by ‘people like me’. Moreover, those who are similarly situated can be expected to have similar interest in a problem of uncertainty about appropriate scripts. It is easier to take advantage of this mutual interest with persons who are physically and socially close. One can question them directly about what they think and do and discuss matters with them. Those who are close can also be more easily observed to see what the consequences of various courses of action are” (Reed and Weinberg, 1984, p.130).

Moreover, researchers report differences in male and female script governed dating behaviour (see Bettor, Hendrick and Hendrick, 1995; Greer and Buss, 1994; Regan and Berscheid, 1995). For example, one study of male college student’s report four heterosexual premarital sex promoting scripts directed at females. The first is males’ declaration of love for girls. The second is males’ implying or declaring they seek commitment or exclusive long-term relationship with girls. The third is males’ isolation of females in a private or secluded spot, and the fourth, is males’ expression of concern over females welfare, or declaring they care for them (Greer and Buss, 1994). An earlier study indicated that women engage in sexual acts with males who declare love and commitment to them (Dermer and Pyszczynski, 1978).

Female students equally identified four sex-promoting scripts directed at males. Firstly, asking males if they wish to have sex is said to be potent. Secondly, a female’s direction of a male's hands to their genitals is also effective. Thirdly, a female can directly initiate coitus, and fourthly, a female open declaration that they wish to have sex to males is also effective (Greer and Buss, 1994). These studies confirm anecdotal and stereotyped evidence that men are always willing to have sex as long as it is available. They also indicate significant feminine agency. That is, women are not as helpless and powerless to initiate or refuse sexual risk taking. Irrespective of its appeal, sexual scripts are insufficient to uncover influences on

young people's sexual risk taking in Nigeria because other variables as the mass media are influential.

### **2.4.3 The influence of the mass media**

The mass media-industrial-marketing-complex<sup>60</sup> hereafter referred to simply as the mass media is powerful in the evolution, propagation and maintenance of post-modernist consumerist<sup>61</sup> and sexual culture<sup>62</sup>, which defines sexuality, objectify young people and create identity dissatisfaction that are assuaged by cyclical consumption of produced branded goods and services, some of which influence sexual risk taking, for example, drugs and alcohol. The objectified and sexualised images of young people are present in every media outlet today. These range from regular television programming, advertising, the fashion industry, music videos, and the print media in USA studies (Grauerholz and King, 1997; Ward, 1995; Lin, 1997; Gow, 1996; Vincent, 1989; Krassas, Blauwkamp and Wesselink, 2001, 2003; Plous and Neptune, 1997). The processes of young people sexualisation by the mass media are, however, complex and multifaceted.

Young people are sexualised through social learning (Bandura, 1986), mass media sexual disinhibitionist or desensitisation (Comstock, 1989; National Institutes of Mental Health, 1982), mass media priming (Jo and Berkowitz, 1994); super peer perspective (trend-setters) (Strasburger, 2002; Strasburger and Wilson, 2002) and through mass media induced arousals (Zillman, 1982), to mention a few. For example, television watching is associated with young people's development of consumerist dispositions in a lifestyle value study that indicates 72% of high school graduates watch television everyday (O'Guinn and Shrum, 1997; see Roberts, 2000 for similar comments). Such findings influence the conclusion that television plays a significant role in young people socialisation and habit formation (see also Prokhorov, et al.,

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<sup>60</sup> The mass media-industrial-marketing-complex approximates not only conventional institutions that make-up the mass media such as television, radio, books, newspapers, music, magazines and the internet. The complex accommodates the industrial and service production entities, especially their liaison marketing consulting intermediaries for production and sponsorship of programmes, advertisements, sponsorships and public relations initiatives that leverage young people's sub-culture to generate repetitive demand for consumer goods and services.

<sup>61</sup> Consumer socialisation is conceived as the series of actions that endow social agents with knowledge, attitude and practices necessary for thriving in a neoliberal marketplace (Moschis and Churchill, 1978; Ward, 1974).

<sup>62</sup> By consumer culture, the thesis refers to the prevailing consumption modes orchestrated by the joint activities of corporate organizations (not just the mass media) generate and sustain demand for goods and services through various marketing initiatives whose underlining purpose is commercial profits and market base expansion.



1993). Related studies on the relationships between antismoking advertisements and smoking in movie scenes report that in-movie smoking is influential on young people's acquisition of smoking habits because it glorifies smoking for young people (see Pechmann and Ratneshwar, 1994; Pechmann and Shih 1999; Peracchio and Luna 1998; Pollay, et al., 1996).

In addition, and more contentious, is the mass media's propensities to target and exploit young people's immature decision making process (Pollay, et al., 1996) via marketing and promotions (Krugman and King 2000) to sell tobacco and alcoholic beverages (Garretson and Burton 1998) for profit and market base expansion. The apparent gullibility of young people to persuasive communications is documented by a series of studies. One study indicate a greater advertising recall rates for young people under 18 years of age than other consumers age groups (Dubow, 1995).

When significant higher mass media pornographic content rates (Brian McNair, 1996; in Attwood, 2005) are combined with young people's significant recall rates, sexualised consumers are produced and nurtured. In this regard, the mass media is linked with influencing young people's sexist ideas and sexual violence belief systems. For example, young people exposed to sexualised media objectify women, have higher heterosexual tolerance for sexual harassment, rape myths, gendered stereotypes, sexual violence, and conflict-prone sexual worldviews about relationships than others not exposed to sexualised media contents (Kalof, 1999; Lanis and Covell, 1995; MacKay and Covell, 1997; Milburn, Mather and Conrad, 2000; Ward, 2002; Ward et al., 2005).

Another study evaluates marketing promotion and advertisement in the mass media and report a high prevalence of varying forms of sexual appeals as persuasive platforms to induce, provoke effect and render memorable products and services offered on sale (Belch, Belch, and Villarreal, 1987). Furthermore, there are suggestions that modern mass consumption is driven by promised fulfilment of erotic appetites and fantasies (D'Emilio and Freedman, 1989). In corroboration, a study in the USA report that 12% of five hundred and five (505) prime-time advertisements sampled on key networks depicted models in various states of nudity, while 8% of the advertisements depicted female sexual demeanours (Lin, 1998). In relation to women

in the USA, the print media are said to prescribe dress and behaviour modes that render women sexually attractive to men (Duffy and Gotcher, 1996; McMahon, 1990; Durham, 1998).

Generally, women in modern advertisements are depicted more as sexual objects in a manner that the female body becomes “a display item to be shown in the best poses, lighting, and in the most flattering lingerie” (Boynton, 2003, p.10 in Attwood, 2005). This fact influences the claim that overt sexual appeals and increasing forms of nudity are on the increase in advertisements (LaTour, 1990; Severn, Belch, and Belch 1990; Lawrence and Reid, 1988). The observation is also made that the powerful process of brands, fashion and passion have wrested sex from its traditional procreation base transferring it into the spheres of leisure and style (Attwood, 2005) According to Attwood, style is a:

“process of domesticating sex by making it familiar and feminine... It is striking that in this repackaging of sex across the range of brands, there is a very clear perception that sex must be made over as nice, bright, and accessible. This is achieved by clearly signifying sexual representations, products and practices as stylish, classy and fashionable” (Attwood (2005, p.399).

Other members of the mass media are similarly implicated in the sexualisation of young people. The print media, such as young people magazines (YM), has been identified as influential on the sexualisation of women. This informs the conclusion that “the world of YM is a place where young women ... must consume and beautify themselves to achieve an almost impossible physical beauty ideal. In addition, it is a place where sexuality is both a means and an objective, where the pursuit of males is almost the sole focus of life. In fact, the objective of attracting males is the only objective presented - it is an unquestioned “good.” (Duffy and Gotcher, 1996, p.43).

Significantly, the sexualisation of young people proceed through the mass media’s assumption of the popular cultural authority status, and consequent deployment of repetitive images and messages (redundancy), which promotes consumerist agendas, sexualise young people, create identity, body, and value dissatisfactions. Reiterating an earlier point, perennially changing branded goods and services are offered to assuage the mass media orchestrated disaffections. The utility of these branded goods

and services vis-à-vis assuaging young people's cultural, identity, body and sexual dissatisfaction are short-lived, setting off anew, the mass media influence cycle.

The mass media cultivation theory is another perspective of young people's sexualisation (Gerbner, et al., 1994). Mass media cultivation theory draws attention to young people's repeated exposures to sexualised content, which habituate and orientate them towards the adoption of beliefs and practices similar to those viewed, heard and modelled on the mass media. For example, the lack of male condom use in Nigeria can be linked to their viewership of pornography, which habituates them towards non-use of condoms similar to those seen in pornographic movies, on one hand, and because sex without condoms is satisfying and normative, on the other.

Furthermore, the mass media also influence young people's sexual risk taking through their agenda setting capacities (Kosicki, 1993). Agenda setting proceed through the mass media redundant focus on issues and perspectives as leisure, recreation and fashion - leveraging sex. These forms of mass media treatment of social issues sell preconceived worldviews of media gatekeepers, which are paradoxically influenced by extant social behaviours. Sexual themes broadcast are entrenched because young people are unable to differentiate between reality and the persuasive messages on the media, which are cast as normative. In addition, feminist and social construction theories point to the sexist, gender and power differentials inherent in cultural ideas delivery systems that are the mass media (Jordan, Kaplan, Miller, Stiver, and Surrey, 1991; Hare-Mustin and Marecek, 1988), and their potentials to promote and maintain sexual risks.

The relationship between young people's exposure to the mass media sexual content and actual sexual behaviour has been demonstrated by (Rudman and Borgida, 1995; McKenzie-Mohr and Zanna, 1990). For example, Rudman and Borgida report male behaviour towards females was more sexualised post-experimental exposure to mass media sexual content. For example, a sample of male undergraduates asked females posing as work applicants' questions that are more sexist after their exposure to sixteen objectified and sexist commercials. The male undergraduates also recalled female's physical attributes, judged them professionally incompetent but more suitable for employment than the control groups (see Rudman and Borgida, 1995, for

detail). In a similar study, female experimenters evaluated stereotyped male behaviour post exposure to fifteen minutes pornography. The female evaluators reported sexually charged male behaviour, that males sought closer physical contacts and recalled the female's physical appearance data more than control the group (McKenzie-Mohr and Zanna, 1990).

Although under-researched in Nigeria, the print media is expected to be implicated in the objectification of women and sexual socialisation of young people. For example, based on a focus group study of the sexualisation of young people in Nigeria, the authors report that in urban Zaria, Nigeria, secondary schools pupil's claim that popular erotic magazines and columns are the major sources of their sexuality education. These include "Ikebe Super, Lolly, or Fantasy, as well as from "love novels." Ikebe Super is a risqué, adult comic book that features one column in each issue on sex education" (Barker and Rich, 1992, p.202).

There is also the growing influence of the internet, a mass media outlet, in Nigeria. Internet Cafes or Cybercafés, as they are called in Nigeria, serve young people's communication needs. They are also social centres where young people surf the world-wide-web, meet and interact. The role of the internet on young people's sexual risk taking is significant, although currently un-researched in Nigeria, elsewhere, studies about the influence of the internet on young people indicate differential and multipurpose usage profiles (Roberts et al., 2005; Lenhart, Rainie, and Lewis, 2001). More girls than boys use the internet in early to middle school years (Lenhart, Madden, and Hitlin, 2005). Internet sites such as Face book, My Space, internet blogs and other peer-to-peer sites are popular among young people in Nigeria. Young people leverage these internet sites to make and receive sexual presentations of the self and peers, pictorially, textually, verbally and in real time. The popularity of these sites to young people and their sexualities generates public concerns over the sexual exploitation of young people by paedophiles, among others (Kornblum, 2005).

A study evaluated the sexualisation of girls on official web sites of celebrities that recruit teenagers. The author found that unlike males, female celebrity images were more sexualised, for example female musicians (Lambiase, 2003). In addition, pornographic images and videos are streamed and viewed by young people surfing the

internet (Griffiths, 2000). Pornography is so pervasive that the Kaiser Family Foundation argues that 70% of young people stumble upon internet porn and 23% of young people claim it happens frequently (Kaiser Family Foundation, 2001). Also corroborating the pornographic content and access that the internet provides, one study calculates that 12% of all web sites and 25% of search engine requests are pornographic in content (English, 2005). Another study reports “there are 420 million individual pornographic web pages today, up from 14 million in 1998” (The Third Way Report, 2005, p.2). Similar trends are projected for Nigeria - about the influence of the internet and young people’s sexualisation to the extent that:

“online pornography is increasingly accessible to children outside the home, as well as through wireless devices that leave parents with virtually no ability to monitor, filter or track. This accessibility is complicating the efforts of parents to supervise their children’s online activities. Teenagers now have access to sexually explicit images and messages via wireless laptops, BlackBerries, two-way pagers, camera phones, instant messaging and chat rooms” (The Third Way Report 2005, p.2).

In contrast to the above, studies also demonstrate qualified mass media sexual socialisation influences on young people, proposing relativity of mass media influence which differs with young people's maturity (Chandler and Heinzerling, 1999; John, 1999). Regardless of mass media influence qualifications, more studies seem to indicate significant influence on young people’s sexual socialisation. (see, Fox et al. 1998; Gould 1994; Krugman, et al. 1994; Turco, 1997; Wong, 1996). The popularity of mass media influence perspectives in the last two decades could be due to the emergence of global cultural media leveraging popular culture, including sexualities, to create demand for, and sell information, goods and services to young people (Roberts, Foehr and Rideout, 2004).

The consequences of global media cultural dominance over the local are seeming cultural harmonization (Simpura, 1997) of behaviour, brands, consumption, style, tastes, trends and sexualities. This process furthers young people’s sexual risk taking because novel and foreign sexual mores and practices are more assessable today in comparison with the traditional past. Regardless of the intuitiveness and empirical validity of mass media influence perspectives, it remains an inadequate paradigm in accounts of influences on young people’s sexual risk taking. Other variables as young people’s peers and interpersonal relationships with peers are relevant.

#### 2.4.4 The influence of peers

A peer group is "...the halfway house between the family and the adult world, and is one of the most powerful and potent forces effecting change in the adolescent" (Gay, 1992, p.207). Studies corroborate the pervasive and powerful role peers play in young people's socialisation, beliefs formation and behaviour (Hawkins and Coney 1974; Moschis and Churchill, 1978; DiIorio, et al., 1999). Peers are said to be more powerful than parents<sup>63</sup> and schools as sources for young people's sexual information (Frankenberger and Sukhdial, 1994), via advice, modelling, approval and peer meaningful sanctions for non-compliance with prescribed sexual behaviour. Adolescent girls are also said to exert revenge on peers they dislike or perceive as competition by sexualising and tagging them as sluts (Brown, 2003). This practice is common with Nigerian girls who often call each other the local equivalent of sluts - *ashawo*. Another study indicates that young girls monitor and regulate each other's behaviours in conformity with the dominant *thin* sexy ideal (Nichter, 2000; Eder, 1995).

The significant influence of peers over parents and schools is attributable to parents and schools ignorance and/or discomfort in discussing sexuality with young people. Peer influences on young people's sexualisation seem definitive and commences early. A mixed playgroup study report that boys perceive girls in sexual terms early in life, irrespective of girls' behaviour (Thorne, 1993). Furthermore, girls seem to derive their power and popularity from their physical good looks, capacities for social interaction with boys (Adler, Kless and Adler, 1992) and sexy behaviour directed at males (Levy, 2005; Paul, 2005; Pollet and Hurwitz, 2004). Girls exploit their good looks and physiology to attain power via association with popular males. A study of white urban girls in Chicago, USA, corroborates the idea that girl's popularity depends upon their physical and social presentation as sexy and attractive in a manner that attracts "the male gaze" is valid (Merten, 2004, p.364).

There are also strong indications that young males engage in sexual harassment of females at play, school and work. A study titled "Hostile Hallways" report that sexual harassment of girls by boys is common, 63% of girls indicate they have been sexually

harassed “often” (American Association of University Women, 2001) Heterosexual sexual harassment takes the form of unappreciated sexual jokes, innuendos, opinions, touching and brushing against different parts of the female anatomy by males (Lindberg, Grabe and Hyde, 2006). Furthermore, peer sexualisation, is attributable to the pervasive global consumerist trends. Research indicates that young people at school depends on peers and not parents for product and consumerist trend information (Tootelian and Gaedeke, 1992). Higher materialist tendencies are also reported for young people in regular communication with their peers (Churchill and Moschis, 1979; Moschis and Churchill, 1978). A major influence on young people’s sexual risk taking is their quests for material possessions, which accounts for risk-prone transactional and cross-generational sex.

In relation to sexual behaviour, young people’s perception of their peer’s sexual activities influences similar activities, for example, multiple partnered sexual encounters (Catania, et al., 1989). In the same regard, young people’s earlier sexual debut and sustained sexual activity is traceable to increasing peer counsel and relevance over parents, erosion of traditional sexual control mechanisms and increased social opportunities for sexual risk taking (Jessor, et al., 1983). The consequences of this conflict prone scenario are that young people behave in manners more consistent with peer-approved behaviour (Ellen, Bone, and Stuart, 1998), which currently prescribes sexual activity.

Related studies of young people’s drug abuse (for example, Graham, Marks, and Hansen 1991) and smoking (Sussman, 1989; Sussman, et al., 1993) indicate that peer influence is dispensed by modelling, young people’s sustained observation and imitation of their peer behaviour. These related studies on peer influences preoccupies themselves with impacts and outcomes of young people’s seeming (in)accurate interpretations of social pressure to conform to perceived peer standards. In this regard, studies in the USA indicate that young people overestimate the prevalence of peer sexual risk taking (Gibbons, Helweg-Larsen and Gerrard, 1995). It is possible

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<sup>63</sup> One study reports a higher level of young people’s scepticism with parent and school led sexual education (Mangleburg and Bristol, 1998). Young people evidently prefer peer advice for consumption, general conduct and style (Moschis and Moore, 1979).

that similar peer social pressures on sexual risk behaviour obtain in Nigeria despite the obvious socio-economic and cultural differences from the USA.

Social pressure have been variously called “normative social influence” (Sussman, et al., 1993); “passive social pressure” (Graham, Marks and Hansen, 1991), “peer social modelling” (Moore, et al., 2002), “active social pressure” (Graham, Marks, and Hansen, 1991), and “informational social influence” (Sussman, et al., 1993). Regardless of nomenclature, peer pressure on young people approximates covert and overt suggestions, advice, information sharing, approval, modelling and sanctions exerted on each other. For example, I attest to the fact that male peers prescribe and monitor each other's conformity to wear trendy clothes, have sexual relations, act suave and use modern electronic gadgets in Nigeria. For girls in Nigeria, peer expectations requires them to be lean and curvaceous, dress in anatomy revealing clothes, fortnightly change hairstyles and so forth. The lean ideal has been associated with the “culture of dieting” for girls (Levine, Smolak and Hayden, 1994; Nichter, 2000).

Empirical studies in Nigeria validate the peer sexualisation perspective. They include the evaluation of peer perception of the sexual behaviour and health decision of female undergraduate students in Anambra State, Nigeria. The authors conclude that the “perception of sexual behaviour of peers and the nature of the pressure that peers exert support pre-marital sex” (Okonkwo, Fatusi and Ilika, 2005, p.107). There is also the investigation of sexuality and reproductive health practices in four Tertiary Educational Institutions (TEIs) in Nigeria that attributed adolescents’ sexual activities to influences as peer pressure and economic gains (Alubo, 1997). Although peer influences on young people’s sexual practices are significant, peer influences remain insufficient in its account of sexual risk taking. This is because peers exert sexual influences on young people who are already predisposed it. As a result, multiple perspectives that explain influences on young people’s sexual risk taking must be admitted. These should include parental (un)conscious sexualisation of young people.

#### **2.4.5 The influence of parental sexualisation**

Parental socialisation is filial nurture of young people that prepare and adapt them to their socio-cultural environments (Baumrind, 1980). The nature of parental influence



on young people can be direct, (via training and instructions) and indirect through conscious and/or unconscious behaviour modelling (Ward, Wackman and Wartella 1977). Both forms of parental influence can be gendered and sexual in content. In relation to sexual risk taking, filial influences proceed through gender schemas. Gender schemas are those sets of codified experiences, behaviours and expressions that facilitate a social agent's perception, interpretation and action, in manner that (re)affirm the existing gender frameworks in a society. Filial gender schemas influence sexual self-concepts, attitudes and behaviour of young people (Tenenbaum and Leaper, 2002).

Fathers attitude are thought to influence young people's gender typing or conformity with the existing gender types (McHale, Crouter and Tucker, 1999). For example, a Nigerian father's gender schema about sexual relationships and sex condones premarital heterosexual sex for his son(s). Indeed, young people who engage in problem behaviour, such as sexual risk taking, are reported to perceive positive parental approval that those who do not (Jessor and Jessor, 1977). Within the same household, an opposite gender schema, of abstinence and fidelity will be conveyed to daughters. These gender schemas have sexual risk consequences for all young people. The males interpret parental schema as positive encouragement to take sexual risks, while the females perceive them as a stipulation for subservience to males.

Other studies link pervasive social ethos of thinness, which has passive or active support of the mass media, peers, and parents to the sexualisation of girls (Levine, Smolak and Hayden, 1994; Nichter, 2000, see also APA, 2007). For example, in a study of mostly white participants, the relationships between mothers and daughters influences young girl's physical appearance (dis)satisfaction (Ogle and Damhorst, 2004). In addition, mother's criticisms of daughter's weight (body fat index), and mother's effort to control their own weight, were related to daughter's eating disorders (Hill, Weaver and Blundell, 1990; Levine et al., 1994).

The pervasiveness of thinness ideals informs the conclusion that, "girls seemed to be surrounded by excessive concerns over physical appearance and talk of feeling fat" (Nichter, 2000, p.120). In addition, physical body appearance cues are transmittable also from fathers to young people through suggestions, criticisms "appraising looks,

kidding quips, putdowns, and snide comments as “when did you start getting boobs?” (Nichter, 2000, p.140). The seeming parental preoccupation with young people’s physical appearance, especially females, has been associated with self-objectification, eternal quest for third party validation, approval and/or ingrained need to sexually please others (Lamb, 2002, 2006; Tolman, 2002).

Furthermore, parents who smoke are likely to nurture similar offspring. For example, a study in America indicate that half the adolescents who smoke have parents with similar smoking habits, even though over half of these parents would prefer their wards not smoke (Washington, DOC 2001). Another study<sup>64</sup> established significant relationship between unsatisfactory family relationships and increased sexual risk taking by young people (Vance, 1985). In the United Kingdom, one study links low or high quality mother-child relationships with intergenerational sexual risk taking (Taris, 2000). According to the study, low quality mother-child relations are associated with young people’s sexual risk taking while high-quality relations are not (Taris, 2000). Relating these examples to Nigerian, the question can be asked, do young people from polygynous families have multiple and concurrent sexual partners?

Parents also inadvertently sexualise their wards by actively promoting their participation in sexually precocious social activities such as dating, beauty contests, and party attendance, among others. In addition to the aforementioned ideational and practical filial sexualised supports, parents in advanced economies support young people’s engagement in physical appearance enhancing activities such as cosmetic surgery to enhance their looks. The American Society of Plastic Surgeons report that over 77,000 recipients of cosmetic surgery in 2005 were young people 18 years old and younger who had parental consent before surgery (American Society of Plastic Surgeons, 2006). Often, parents who support physical appearance enhancement fail to consider its inevitable sexual implications. Their wards attract attention that is more sexual and have many opportunities to act upon them.

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<sup>64</sup> These are claims that the relationships between parental influences and young people’s adoption of sexual risks behaviours or utilization of sexual health products have not been unequivocally tested (see Chandler and Heinzerling, 1999; John 1999).

Other studies link lack of organic parent-adolescent relationships with early sexual debut and sustained sexual activity. Parent's inability to monitor young people is probably due to their increasing separation in time and space because of education and work demands (modern political economy). It is also due to inter-generational differences, personal and cultural sensitivities surrounding sexuality, particularly worries that such discussions will encourage young people to experiment (Pick and Palos, 1995; Walters and Walters, 1983; Fitzgerald and Fitzgerald, 1987; Fine and Diamond, 1992; see Bellis, et al., 2000; Eiser and Ford, 1995 also for similar arguments). The consequences of inadequate parental supervision of young people are numerous. They include increases in emergency contraception demands, sexual health clinic attendance and abortion request by young people (Parnell and Rodgers<sup>65</sup>, 1998; Wellings<sup>66</sup> et al., 1999 and 2001).

There are also studies that assign significance to family characteristics, parental attributes and young people's sexual risk taking. For example, a study carried out in Plateau State, Nigeria, associates young people from polygynous marriage arrangements with increased sexual risk taking (Slap et al., 2003). In other words, more young people from polygynous families (42% of the 4,218 sample), compared with their counterparts from monogamous families (28% of the sample) with ages ranging from 12-21 years took more sexual risks (Slap et al., 2003). Furthermore, a link is established between family instability and young people's sexual risk taking. A three stage random sampling study conducted in Bida Local Government Area of Niger State, Nigeria, associates family instability with increased sexual risk taking by young people (Odimegwu, Solanke and Adedokun, 2002). In Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of Congo, higher rates of premarital sexual activities were reported for females whose parents were significantly educated (Djamba, 1995).

In contrast, some studies document minimal relationships between parental attitudes/socialisation and young people's sexual risk taking (Luster and Small, 1994; Resnick, et al., 1997; Romer, et al., 1999; DiIorio, Kelley and Hockenberry-Eaton, 1999; Hutchinson, et al., 2003; Vandell, 2000). Indicative studies about positive filial

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<sup>65</sup> Study of celebrative seasonal induced abortion in North Carolina, USA.

<sup>66</sup> Study of celebrative seasonal induced abortion in the European study.

influences on young people's drinking and smoking habits confirm that young people who discuss the demerits of drugs with their parents, compared to others, are less prone to substances abuse (Holtzman and Rubinson, 1995; Brannen, et al., 1994; Grotevand and Cooper, 1998). Young people who have constant discussion with their parents about HIV/AIDS, are reportedly less likely than others to engage in sexual risk taking (Holtzman and Rubinson, 1995).

Corroborating the foregoing, deductions are made that parenting style and relations matter, for example parents relative attitudes on the assertiveness, negotiation, protectiveness, clarity and restrictiveness continuum (Brannen, et al., 1994; Grotevand and Cooper, 1998). Young people from homes where parents employ negotiation, dialogue, and are precise about sexual reproductive health issues and practices were adoptive of risk free sexual practices unlike their counterparts who thrive within authoritarian and control-prone homes. Another study finds that young people in middle/high school favour consulting their parents before buying high-risk goods as personal information technologies (Moschis and Moore, 1979). Additional research on the effectiveness of sex education programmes report that initiatives conceived to increase filial-adolescent communications about sexual abstinence does delay sexual debut (Blake et al 2001).

In contrast, studies report minimal parental influences on young people and indicate significant influences of peers on young people's development of sexual identity and behaviour (Harris, 1995, 1998, 2000). Apparently, results are mixed about the role of parents in young people's socialisation or sexualisation. Nonetheless, parental sexual socialisation although incisive, is insufficient to account for sexual risk taking. Young people's contexts, especially their political economy, are influential as well.

#### **2.4.6 The influence of gender on sexual risk taking**

Connell advocates a relational conception of gender. According to him, gender is most productively conceived "as a structure of social relations, particularly power relations" and as "a way in which social practice is organized, whether in personal life, interpersonal interaction, or on the larger scale" (Connell 2000 p.8 & 24). Similarly, Butler suggests "the gendered body is performative ... has no ontological

status apart from the various acts, which constitute its reality"<sup>67</sup> (Butler, 1999[1990], p.136). Despite Connell and Butler's injunction, gender is dominantly conceptualized as a "set of polarized binary oppositions" (Weedon, 1999, p.184) which privilege males and disadvantage females in mainstream sexuality scholarship (see Gupta, 2000; Izugbara, 2004; Orubuloye, Caldwell and Caldwell, 1997a; Obbo, 1995; SSRHRN, 1999). In essence, gender, especially its masculine variant is commonly conceived in sexuality studies as hegemonic:

"understood as the pattern of practice (i.e., things done, not just a set of role expectations or an identity) that allowed men's dominance over women to continue" (Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005, p.832).

Based on hegemonic perspectives, gender properties such as masculinity and femininity, are operationalized, in dominant sexuality literature, as properties of biologically defined individuals (males or females). In reality, gender properties ought to be seen as properties of societal structures (rules and resources), which come alive (instantiated) when social agents contemplate, act and rationalize their actions. The influence of hegemonic understanding of masculinity is traceable to western colonial portrait of African men as hypersexual (Elliston, 2005), "exotic, mysterious, [and] uncivilized" (Jolly 2003, p.5). Oyewumi theorizes that colonization and the dominant ethnocentric discourse it produces and nurture<sup>68</sup> about the colonized, imposes on African societies alien "body-reasoning and the bio-logic" which emanates "from biological determinism" (Oyewumi 1997, p.x).

In relation to sexuality, most western and indigenous<sup>69</sup> scholars portray African males as highly sexed individuals who indulge in risk-prone sexualities. This portrait of highly sexed African males historically structure African sexuality studies regardless of increasing empirical arguments for mutable sexualities and diverse masculinities (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005, p.832; see Brod, 1994 also). Based on the

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<sup>67</sup> In essence, that "[t]here is only a taking up of the tools where they lie, where the very 'taking up' is enabled [and constrained] by the tool lying there" (Butler, 1999[1990], p.145; word in italics mine).

<sup>68</sup> Longino calls the dominant western marginalization of alternative experiences and ways of knowing "heuristic biases" (1993, p.102), which mostly emanates from systemic failures to be conceptually and methodologically sensitive to variable contexts, conducts and experience as foundations for knowledge, praxis and rationality. Nevertheless, I suspect Oyewumi's overgeneralization about gender trajectories in Africa will not hold true for the whole continent. the argument is that context and specificities matter.

<sup>69</sup> Such portrayals are usually foolproof approaches to securing external funds for research.

preceding foundations, masculinity is essentialized over its multiple variants, such as complicit<sup>70</sup> masculinity. It is also enshrined in the Nigerian private and public space. The enshrinement of masculinity, and femininity, into public space subsequently influences their assumption of “stylized and impoverished” attributes (Connell, 1987, p.183), which creates winners and losers. According to Connell:

“the winning of hegemony often involves the creation of models of masculinity which are quite specifically fantasy figures, such as film characters played by Humphrey Bogart, John Wayne, and Sylvester Stallone” (Connell, 1987, p.184).

In a departure from dominant sexuality studies essentialized masculinity, I conceptualize masculinity, and indeed femininity, "as an aspirational goal rather than as a lived reality for ordinary [wo]men" whose primary characteristics is its "impossibility or ‘fantastic’ nature" (Wetherell & Edley, 1999, p.337; word in italics mine). Although real people are more complex than the pervasive masculine and feminine stereotypes, they nevertheless, “collaborate in sustaining these (*gendered*) images” (Connell, 1987, p.185; word in italics mine). This realization leads one to wonder whether females in Africa are helpless participants in sexual risk taking or rendered invisible by researchers and their prejudiced conceptualizations and methodologies.

By applying a more realistic methodology, Uchendu, based on her study in Nigeria, report that young Nigerians know that maleness *or femaleness* does not proof masculinity *or femininity* (Uchendu, 2007, p.282; words in italics are mine). Instead, masculinity (*and femininity*) is defined by young people in her study as mental and performative attitudes, states and individual expressions, which “occur within a time frame: having a beginning and an end, the latter possibly at death. Within this time frame, individual masculinities can vary in their manifestations” (Uchendu, 2007, p.283). This finding is a critical departure from dominant sexuality studies, which stereotypes men as hedonistic and uncaring. In a seeming reinforcement of this departure from mainstream sexuality studies, UNFPA cautions:

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<sup>70</sup> Complicit masculinity denotes the non-(re)enactment of hegemonic masculinity by male beneficiaries of patriarchy (Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005). In addition, Connell (1993) proposes three other kinds of masculinity. They are hegemonic masculinity; submissive masculinity; and oppositional/protest masculinity.

“men are more concerned about their partners/spouses and children than the stereotypes would suggest. However, stereotypes are hard to change. The assumption of many health care providers that men are uninterested in taking responsibility for family planning has become a self-fulfilling prophecy. Most reproductive health / family planning service delivery systems are almost entirely oriented to women and provide little or no information about male contraceptive methods. Health workers are sometimes poorly trained in counselling men about safer sexual practices and male methods, and may communicate negative rumours about them (UNFPA, 1995, p.1-2).

A prime example of dominant sexuality research leveraging essentialist gender approach, such as hegemonic masculinity, to study sexuality is Caldwell and colleagues studies (1992;1989). Caldwell and his colleagues unequivocally conclude that a distinct African sexual systems exist, which is characterized<sup>71</sup> by predatory and promiscuous males on one hand, and sexually repressed females, on the other. This characterization of African sexuality disingenuously presents "astonishingly limited and bleak understandings of the characteristics of the human beings involved" in relational sexual practice (Sen, 2006, p.103, discussing ascribed identities). Sen also criticizes “the appalling affects of the miniaturisation of people” (2006, p.xvi), which is an inevitable product of prejudicial classification and categorisation of social agents into "singular affiliation" (Sen, 2006, p.23).

The quest for singular affiliations, which enhances programme and intervention uniformity by sexuality studies, can also misrepresent, exaggerate and minimize the complexities, recursive dynamism and unequivocal relational tensions underlining negotiated heterosexuality. More critically, to adapt Edward Said's incisive observation in *Orientalism* (1979), Caldwell and colleagues have produced emotive *knowledge-sets about African sexuality*, which are now nearly impossible to refute, even with empirical evidence. In essence, Caldwell and colleagues (1992; 1989) deductions have taken on the vestiges of closed systems, because of their perennial use in infinite cycles as *self referring* or self evident African sexual accounts (Caton,1999), which contributes towards sustaining global hegemonic power relations.

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<sup>71</sup> This characterization of African sexuality is representative of western, and recently, externally funded indigenous sexuality research positions, which imposes western cultural prejudice on third world [wo]men (Mohanty, 1991).

The net-effect of miniaturization and reification of agents based on gender, is the stereotypical construction of sub-populations<sup>72</sup> as sexually risk-prone, irrespective of the similarities and/or differences of their with the non-classified groups (Weiten, 1989, p.462-463). The preceding effect is related to another, which is criticized by Collier (1998). This is the tendency for hegemonic masculine informed approaches to depict men as independent, adventurous, unemotional, non-nurturing and aggressive. The same traits are associated with sexual risk taking. Similarly, Holter, (1997; 2003) gives a more incisive critique on dominant gender studies essentialist orientation<sup>73</sup> by calling attention to the common construction of male power based primarily on female subjective rendition of heterosexual experience, which usually neglect other structural influences on feminine subordination - including feminine knowledgeable, purposive and active collusion in maintaining patriarchy for individuated or collective benefits.

Consequently, in a deviation from classic constructions of hegemonic masculinity and helpless femininity, I conceive gender as performative<sup>74</sup> properties of societal structures. Within this perspective, masculinity and femininity are performative attributes, which are interrelated and interdependent. Their meanings and trajectories are daily (re)affirmed, accessed, challenged, reconfigured and maintained by young people with practical knowledge, active agency, discursive rationalizations and (un)conscious activities. These state of beings are in turn structured by young people's "knowledge of interpretive schemes, power capacities, and normative expectations and principles of the agents within context" (Stones, 2005, p.91).

Therefore, I expect that influences on young people's sexualities will be gendered, yet present discursive and purposive action similarities and differences. Nevertheless, I do not envisage that the anticipated similarities and differences can be attributable to gender asymmetries alone. In essence, I subscribe to neither the valorisation of gender

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<sup>72</sup> This is the major reason I did not link my respondents' ethnic/tribal identities with their sexual risk narratives.

<sup>73</sup> In addition, there is the predilection of sexuality researchers and commentators to presume and attempt demonstrating "separate spheres" for male and female social praxis (Brod, 1994).

<sup>74</sup> According to Butler, performativity implies that gender is instantiated, nurtured and maintained by its performance via our routine daily acts, idiosyncrasies, habits, mannerisms, reactions to issues/events etc that typifies masculine and feminine gender categories (Butler, 1999; 1997a&b). For example, when a heavy object need lifting, how often do women look to men to do the lifting and men oblige?



differences (McDowell 1993), nor the minimization of masculine privilege because unprotected premarital sex is unequivocally "events of which an individual is the perpetrator, in the sense that the individual could, at any phase in a given sequence of conduct, have acted differently" (Giddens, 1984, p.9). No young person who engages in unprotected premarital sex (sexual risk taking) is helpless to act differently. For example, they could consistently use condoms/contraceptives; they could practice sexual abstinence and/or refraining from having boy/girlfriends among other risk reduction activities. As a result, I will focus my data collection and analysis on the:

1. sexual relational consideration of respondents as gendered, yet purposive and active agents by illuminating how they acquire and assert their so-called masculinity (dominance?) and/or femininity (helpless collusion?).
2. manifest gendered tensions, construction of meanings and rationalizations of sexual risk taking that young people's sexual risk narratives will embody.

## **2.5 Political economy perspective of young people's sexual risk taking**

From political economy<sup>75</sup> perspective, young people's sexual risk taking is influenced by structural variables. These variables are also perceived to drive risk taking, are present in varying degrees in all social settings and interlocked with sexuality and gender hierarchies (Farmer, 1992). According to Roseberry, political economy is both the "attempt to understand the emergence of particular peoples at the conjunction of local and global histories, to place local populations in the larger currents of world history," ... "the attempt to constantly place culture in time, to see a constant interplay between experience and meaning in a context in which both experience and meaning are shaped by inequality and domination" (Roseberry, 1989, p.49).

Drawing on political economy perspectives are studies that link networks with HIV/AIDS vulnerabilities (Hunt, 1989; Obbo, 1993a&b). Network studies are concerned with accounting for HIV infection via route<sup>76</sup> mapping and the exploration of relational power dynamics in societies, families, between genders, which reveal sexual risk routes (Obbo, 1995, 1997). For example, peer social visits. Parallel to this, is the adaptation of the Gramscian logic to the conceptualisation of young people's

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<sup>75</sup> Political economy conceptualisation of sexual risks has similarities and dissimilarities with socialisation conceptualisations. Both perspectives emphasise external influences, social learning and gender inequalities as influential on young people's behaviour. Unlike socialisation conceptualisation however, political economy accounts for the processes that endow external influences such as social institutions with their most influential characteristics of inequality and domination.

<sup>76</sup> In addition, networks are ascribed protective and preventive capacities for STIs and HIV (Obbo, 1995; 1997).

behaviour, the social constructions of risks and risk groups. From this perspective, sexual risk taking is a manifestations and components of larger hegemonic orders that promote, maintain and reconstruct privileged group's positions, while concurrently obscuring and limiting discourse on the dynamics and benefits of dominating the social order (Glick-Schiller, 1992).

Political economy perspective applied to young people's sexual risk taking in Nigerian, for example, can illuminate vulnerabilities of young people that are influenced by structural processes such as the persistent incursion of consumerism and globalization into erstwhile traditional lives. That is, modernity induced lives "in circumstances in which disembedded<sup>77</sup> institutions, linking local practices with globalized social relations, organise major aspects of day-to-day life" (Giddens, 1990, p.79). Consumerism and globalization can be assigned blame for young people's sexual risk taking because of their propensities to erode the moral and material base of indigenous life, fostering in their place, pervasive identity confusion, material dissatisfaction and rural-urban migration in pursuit of better life, which are usually illusory. On arrival at these cities, young people are cut-off from their traditional family or community support and guidance. They become preys and economic hostages of more economical powerful and sexually aware predators. In addition, young people often take up menial jobs as motor-park touts, construction labourers, petty-ware hawking and/or commercial sex work to survive.

From the foregoing, it is apparent that political economic perspective is a structurally deterministic construct in the explanation of influences on young people's sexual risk taking despite Roseberry's caution that:

"the statement that anthropological subjects should be situated at the intersections of local and global histories is a statement of a problem rather than a conclusion. The problem imposes upon scholars who attempt to understand particular conjunctions a constant theoretical and methodological tension to which oppositions like global/local, determination/freedom, structure/agency give inadequate expression. They must avoid making capitalism too determinative, and they must avoid romanticizing the cultural freedom of anthropological subjects. The tension defines anthropological political economy, its preoccupations, projects, and promise" (Roseberry, 1988, p.173-174).

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<sup>77</sup> "Disembedding: the lifting out of social relationships from local contexts and their recombination across indefinite time/space distances" (Giddens, 1991, p.242).

Indeed, Ortner observes that political economy is "too economic, too strictly materialist," and minimizes "real people doing real things" (Ortner, 1984, p.142-144). Typical conclusions drawn by political economic studies of sexual risk, drug addiction, alcohol and HIV/AIDS are calls for "more comprehensive, systemic public health efforts that address the root causes of the crisis, causes that lie in the oppressive structuring of class, ethnic, sexual orientation, and gender relations in U.S. society" (Singer, 1994, p.937; see also Waterston, 1993, for similar conclusions). Alternatively, calls for "broad social change ... essential if the goal is to address significantly the problems posed by drug consumption among the poor and working class in the United States..." (Waterston, 1993, p.24 and 247).

Although political economic perspective of sexual risks is persuasive, its application over-emphasises structural constructs to explain cause, influence, action and outcome. As a result, political economy is implicated in institution and class blaming under the illusory assumption that solutions to all social problems are within these powerful institutions. This assumption is partly incorrect. The powerful structural institutions have little stake in changing<sup>78</sup> the status quo. Contrary to its original goal of minimizing one-sided victim blaming, which reputedly underlines Western scholarships, political economy of sexuality and sex in sub-Saharan Africa, nonetheless, persist in institution blaming. Thus political economy perspectives commit "the epistemological errors of Western civilization" which lie "in the tendency to select the wrong units for analysis, to locate systems that have the same fundamental characteristics of mind in separate fields, and to cut them off from the larger, holistic system in which they exist" (Bateson, 1972, p.483-484).

The fallacies described by Bateson thrive in both Western and third world scholarship. These fallacies, for example, the selection of wrong analytical units and divorce of micro sociological systems from their larger macro associates, undermined the application of political economy perspective to sex and sexuality studies in Africa. For example, political economist blame the dislocation and fragmentation of young people's developmental trajectories towards adulthood by prolonged formal education, delayed labour market entry, and delayed home leaving for risk behaviours

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<sup>78</sup> Change, whenever it occurs, originate from human agency, is revolutionary and antithetical to the stakes of the owners and/or managers of the powerful social institutions.

(Jones and Wallace, 1990; Jones, 1995; Cohen and Ainley, 2000; EGRIS, 2001). The day-to-day functioning of modern society, from a political economic perspective, elevates young people's opportunities for sexual risk taking. As a result of preoccupation with structural determinism, political economists gloss over the need to explain the relationships between structure (determinism), intermediate variables (dispositions and practices), action (agency) and outcomes (intended and unintended).

Political economic orientated studies in Nigeria include those that report young females take on older male partners for material benefits while concurrently keeping their younger peer sexual partners (Amazigo, et al., 1997). There is also research that indicates high prevalence of transactional sex among more than a quarter of Nigerian young people 15-24yrs (NPC, 1999; Yahaya, 2001; see Ankomah, 1999 for similar conclusions on Ghana). In addition, increased negative health outcomes associated with unsafe abortion and young people's sexual risk taking have also been linked to low socio-economic status (Olukoya, et al., 2001). Elsewhere, feminist scholars have drawn almost exclusively on political economic constructs to explain feminine vulnerability to HIV/AIDS and STIs. Indicative studies blame women exclusion, lack of access and control of socio-economic resources<sup>79</sup> for their vulnerability to HIV/AIDS and STIs (Weiss and Gupta, 1998; see also Gupta, 2000; Zierler and Krieger, 1997 for similar observations). Other studies assign primacy to economic disempowerment of women, media and cultural violence as determining as key drivers of sexual risk taking by young black females in the USA (White, 1999; Gupta, 2000).

Additional studies that are political economic in orientation include those that detail a cyclical and seasonal nature of young people's sexual risk taking. A significant proportion of seasonal holidays are products of the dominant global and local political economic orders. A few that has religious origins, such as Christmas and Valentine, have been systematically internalised into the dominant political economic consumerist order. Both the Christmas and Valentine celebrations have become seasons for excessive consumption and recreational sexual activities, which are often risk-prone, in most parts of the world, including Nigeria.

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<sup>79</sup> These include, but are not restricted to income, employment, information, technology etc based on their historic and cultural location at those junctions of local and global historical trajectories.

In the United Kingdom, the cyclical and seasonality of sexual risk taking peaks around summer holidays and Christmas (Bellis, Hale and Bennett, 2000; Eiser and Ford, 1995). The same seasonal periods are marked by excessive alcohol consumption and subsequent unprotected sex (Wellings, Macdowell, and Catchpole, 1999). The consequences of globalized seasonal risk taking are increases in emergency contraception demand, sexual health clinic attendance and abortion request by young people (Parnell and Rodgers, 1998; Wellings, Macdowell and Catchpole, 1999). This perspective, seasonality and sexual risk taking, although un-researched in Nigeria, hold true nevertheless, for student vacations, Valentine, Christmas and New Year.

### **2.5.1 Key influences under the political economy - plastic sexuality**

Plastic sexuality approximates the freeing of female sexualities from the constraints of the male domination, repetitive pregnancies and reproduction (Giddens, 1992; see Foucault, 1978 & 1990 also). Directly flowing from this freedom, human sexuality is now "the medium of a wide-ranging emotional reorganization of social life" (Giddens, 1992, p.182). For example, the erstwhile unequivocal linkages between marriage and parenthood has been severed (Giddens, 2000, p.69-84). Sexuality is now elevated to a "lifestyle issue" and is "doubly constituted as a medium of self-realization and as a prime means, as well as an expression, of intimacy" (Giddens 1992, p.199 and 1991, p.164). Plastic sexuality also means the "privatising of passion: the contracting of passion to the sexual sphere and the separation of that sphere from the public gaze" (Giddens, 1991, p.244).

The liberation of feminine sexuality from the 'rule of the phallus,' repetitive pregnancies, childbirth and maternal death is a derivative of various human emancipator and reflexive<sup>80</sup> projects. Among these are the increased availability of sophisticated sexual contraceptives and reproductive health technologies (Giddens, 1992, p.2). Others are modernity, urbanisation and emancipatory politics,<sup>81</sup> which foster social change, egalitarianism – especially the notion of sexual rights, as a constituent of human rights. Plastic sexuality is also influenced by the deep-rooted

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<sup>80</sup> Reflexivity is a property of humans and institutions of modernity. It implies a pervasive, intermittent and/or continuous self-monitoring, which may elicit such questions as "how can I use this moment to change" (Giddens, 1991, p.76).

<sup>81</sup> "Emancipatory politics: the politics of freedom from exploitation, inequality or expression" (Giddens, 1991, p.242).

uncertainties caused by risk culture<sup>82</sup>, the dominance of experts and abstract systems on private life, globalization, alienation and enhanced risk perception, i.e. risk society (Giddens, 1990; 1991).

The emancipation of feminine sexuality, according to Giddens, restructured sexual relations – moving it to the arena of “pure relationships” (Giddens, 1992). According to Giddens, pure relationship is mostly utilitarian or “entered into for its own sake” and maintained as long as partners derive “enough satisfaction for each individual to stay within it.” (Giddens, 1992, p.58). In pure relationships, “external criteria have become dissolved: the relationship exists solely for whatever rewards that relationship can deliver. In the context of the pure relationships, trust can be mobilised only by a process of mutual disclosure” (Giddens 1991, p.6). External criteria include relationship considerations such as the extended family approval and/or support.

There are inherent ideals of balanced power between partners in pure relationships, which I presume characterises young Nigerian university students’ sexual relationships. That is, partners presumably enter pure relationships willingly, organize and maintain it for themselves in seeming gender equality (Giddens, 1991, p.88-89). In addition, pure relationships thrive upon assumed women’s autonomy, which theoretically means they are devoid of the double standards synonymous with romantic relationships or ‘confluent love’ (Giddens, 1992). Confluent love embodies the “ethics of personal life which makes possible a conjunction of happiness, love and respect for others” (Giddens, 1992, p.181). Confluent love is said to be displacing traditional heterosexual marriages, even though traditional heterosexual marriages retain their superficial social status and privileged position in society (Giddens, 1992). Plastic sexuality promotes confluent love.

Giddens contrasts confluent love with romantic love. On one hand, romantic love thrives on ‘projective identification,’ or the revealing of oneself to the other, which creates feelings of wholeness and belonging between partners (Giddens, 1984).

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<sup>82</sup> “Risk culture: a fundamental cultural aspect of modernity, in which awareness of risk forms a medium of colonising the future” (Giddens, 1991, p.244). In this regard, I advance the opinion that risk taking is young people’s “reactions against mundane, secular rationality and against the (especially modern) forms of social setting in which they are inextricably implicated.” (O’Malley and Mugford, 1994, p.190; see Giddens, 1990 also).

Dominant unequal gender hierarchies and normative differences underpin romantic love. While romantic love balances the gendered inequalities and harmonizes modern heterosexual relationships, confluent love minimises biological, socio-economic and gender structured hierarchies – transposing traditional sexualities into modern life-style challenges.

The rudiments of confluent love include an unwritten prohibition of intimate partner physical/emotional violence, mutual respect, balanced and constantly (re)negotiated partner's rights, responsibilities and privileges, open communication, free relationship entry/exit opportunities, reflexivity and accountability (Giddens, *ibid*). Partners in confluent love are ideally co-dependent, share authority on balanced gender contours, are governed by little ethical absolutes, and are regulated by mutual self-control (Giddens, *ibid*). I am convinced that key traits of romantic, confluent love and plastic sexuality thrive in varying degrees among young Nigerian university student's relationships.

Plastic sexuality facilitates young people's sexual risk taking in manners that may be speculated upon. In the first instance, plastic sexuality serve to socialize and predispose young people to develop and hold positive views of premarital sex, which increases the likelihood of earlier sexual debuts (McRobbie, 1996), because sex is no longer tied to the risk of repeated pregnancies, which can be managed by contraceptives and abortion. Plastic sexuality promotes the entrenchment of the belief that premarital sex is private acts and rights, requiring only personal/mutual partner consent. Plastic sexuality promotes the eternal quest for true love or future marriage partners, through repeated experimentations in sexual relationships (serial monogamy). Plastic sexuality also promotes in young people, attitudes that reject the prevailing gendered sexual double standards (Weeks 1995), exposure to novel sexual practices and sexual risk taking.

Plastic sexuality, confluent love, and indeed pure relationships, validate the argument of pervasive young people's ideational reconstitution towards secularism, individualism, self-actualization (Lesthaeghe and Surkyn, 1988), and perhaps,

hedonism. These emergent identity<sup>83</sup> types enthrone selfish worldviews, breakdown traditional sexual control orders and encourage sexual experimentation. Secularism, individualism and the quest for self-actualization also promotes young people's increasing cohabitation with each other instead of traditional marriage unions. Cohabiting partners take sexual risks and are equated with "empty social categories" because cohabiting partners constantly negotiate, define, and justify their relationships (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 1995).

In addition, research validates confluent love and plastic sexuality as modern lifestyle issues. A study finds data for the claim that couples today "collaboratively generate a sense of caring, intimate, equal relationships" and that "most individuals now approach couple relationships with expectations which include mutual emotional support and treating each other like equals" (Jamieson, 1999, p.491). Nevertheless, Jamieson criticizes Giddens inattention to gender inequalities within confluent relationships evidenced in childcare arrangements, earning powers, money management, and other domestic chores that disadvantage women and privilege men. Although plastic sexuality is a persuasive influence on young people's sexual risk taking, its accounts are insufficient. Sexual risk taking may be forms of social exchanges.

### **2.5.2 The influence of social exchange**

Exchange based sexual relations conforms to patronage of prostitutes and non-marital sexual relationships outside prostitution by everyday people whose gifts/cash are not necessarily predetermined, but expected (Hunter, 2002; Wojcicki, 2002). From this perspective, young people, and indeed adults, are involved in sexual exchanges. Actors in sexual exchange relationships are influenced by various subjective desires and values (Luke, 2003; Kaufman and Stavrou, 2002). For illustration, a woman who sleeps with a man after a *good night out*, the one who sleeps with her teacher for good grades, or with a *Sugar Daddy/Mummy* for school fees, are all engaged in sexual exchanges. It matters little whether what is exchanged is a cinema ticket, dinner, outright cash, purchase of a flat, car, payment of school fees, and/or award of good grades. The giving normatively conveys the giver's sexual interest in the receiver,

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<sup>83</sup> "Self-identity: the self as reflexively understood by the individual in terms of his or her biography" (Giddens, 1991, p.244).



who is not obliged to accept. The acceptance of the gifts/cash normatively conveys to the giver, the recipient's interests and willingness to engage in sexual relations. The sexual exchange scenario depicted herewith is scripted and is true for most cultures.

The sexual relationship that ensues may disproportionately satisfy the gift/cash giver's sexual interests. Conversely, it may satisfy the recipient's material needs more. Regardless, the gift/cash giver may not be the dominant party in the ensuing relationship as normatively supposed. Emerging studies seem to confirm this claim. In a sub-Saharan study titled 'Milking the Cow', Hawkins, Mussa, and Abuxahama, (2005) surmise that:

“... all narratives are explicit that the primary motive for transactional sex is economic, and young women have no emotional attachment or expectations beyond exchange of sex for money and other economic benefits... These young women do not conceive of themselves as passive or coerced victims of relationships with older men., they are active agents involved in a continuing process of defining their social and sexual identity and making choices about the risks they engage in” (Hawkins, Mussa, and Abuxahama, 2005, p.iv).

Rationalizations for involvement in sexual exchanges vary and are gendered. For example, women involved in exchange based sexual relations can argue they were driven into it by poverty and/or alienation (Gould, 2001; Dunlap, Golub, and Johnson, 2003; Rabinovitch and Strega, 2004), and expect financial support from male patrons. Men involved can similarly argue they normatively seek companionship and are expected to financially support women who grant it. Other influential variables cited include the lack of, or search for love/affection, marriage partners, alternative economic options and control over personal lives (Jejeebhoy and Bott, 2003, Wojcicki and Malala, 2001, Outwater, et al., 2000; Leclerc-Madlala, 2003, Wojcicki, 2002, Luke 2003, Fugelsang, 1997, Meekers and Calves, 1997a).

In Nigeria, money, material assistance and gifts exchanges<sup>84</sup> by unmarried sexual partners are normative and influence sexual risk taking (see Silberschmidt and Vibeke, 2001; Varga 2001, Outwater, et al. 2000, White 1990; Luke and Kurz, 2002 for discussions). Exchange related sexual risk taking are prevalent in Nigeria because

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<sup>84</sup> Exchange in non-marital sexual relations may include material and non-material goods. For example, gifts and cash will constitute material exchange for sex, while love, commitment, time investments, sex and affection will constitute non-material investments in transactional relationships.

they are less stigmatized than commercial sex work (Leclerc-Madlala, 2003; Wojcicki, 2002; Kaufman and Stavrou, 2002; Rasch, et al., 2000; Nyanzi, et al., 2000; Silberschmidt and Rasch, 2001; Gage 1998; Webb 1997; Komba-Malekela and Liljestrom, 1994; Gorgen, et al., 1993). The high prevalence of STIs in sub-Saharan Africa however, eroded the seeming social acceptance of sexual exchanges, focusing attention instead on the relationships between transactional sex, sexual risk taking and STIs (Dunkle, et al., 2004; Leclerc-Madlala, 2003; Wojcicki, 2002; Bohmer and Kirumira, 1997; Meekers and Calves, 1997b; Nzyuko, et al., 1997; Webb, 1997; Komba-Malekela and Liljestrom, 1994).

I reiterate the argument that social actors are knowledgeable and perceptive enough for discriminatory and elective social action, which sexual exchanges and risk taking represents. This is because engagement in sexual exchanges in Nigeria challenges the normative chastity ideal, expected of young people, even though premarital sex by consenting minors and adults is not illegal. Thus, sexual exchanges illustrate and validate the role of young people's agency in sexual risk taking. For example, a study on the social organization of risk by women who work out of London flats report that the women were influenced into sexual risk taking by pressures from their gate-keeping maids and exorbitant rents (Whittaker and Hart, 1996), on one hand.

On the other hand, other authors conclude the London sex-workers exhibit wilful rationality (Scrambler and Scrambler, 1997). Regardless of the foregoing, poverty constructs as dominantly applied to sexuality studies largely construct women as social dupes, absolve them of complicity in sexual exchanges and attendant unwanted outcomes. Women are conceived as vulnerable because of their political-economic and normative disempowerment by the functioning of structural institutions, which limits women's capacities (agency) to avoid unsolicited sexual attentions and risk taking (Jackman, 2002).

Unlike linear perspectives, such as sexual exchanges, an argument is made for adoption of mixed-models to understand sexual relations and risk taking, which considers the varied agencies of women. This is because women exercise significant power in the final choice, acceptance and rejection of sexual propositions, except in instances of rape. Female control or power over sexual relationships however, may

reduce post coital congress. To regain initial control or its vestiges, women often condone or engage in further sexual risk taking. These claims do not challenge the assumption that sexual exchanges are risk-prone. Neither does it minimize the influences of gendered and patriarchal society as Nigeria. It essentially challenges the notion of women incapacities to resist male sexual demands because they are vulnerable and powerless.

Sexual exchanges thus, illuminate the strategic/tactical reasoning and action behind women involvement, acceptance and nurture of risk-prone sexual relations with single and/or multiple partners. For example, women in exchange-based sexual relations are quite aware of other economic options that may mitigate their economic vulnerabilities, such as blue-collar jobs, itinerant ware hawking, domestic service and so forth. Most do not take these options because menial or *9am-5pm jobs* are considered tedious, financially unrewarding and more degrading than sexual exchanges. In addition, sexual exchanges, not formal prostitution, is normative, complex and scripted social sexual behaviour endemic in most cultures. Illustratively, studies confirm that gift giving and acceptance are testaments to the mutual interests between the giver and receiver, and influence sexual risk behaviour (Fuglesang, 1997; Komba-Malekela and Liljestrom, 1994).

Based on the foregoing, it is reasonable to speculate that partners in exchange-based sexual relations proceed in a scripted manner to seek, accept, nurture and exploit their relationships for individuated and/or collective ends. Based on this categorisation, males will choose females based on their perceived beauty, sexual availability and potentials to enhance his social standing (ego). Females will acquiesce to males' sexual propositions based on a subjective evaluation (sometimes incorrect) of his socio-economic standing, which women often leverage for their own ends. Women in these relationships are unquestionably aware of what the men want in return for their gifts, cash and/or social support. Most of the time, women in sexual exchange based relations are willing to reciprocate male material and social support by granting sexual access. Does this make them vulnerable, calculating, or both?

In Southern Africa, a relationship between the sum of money exchanged and sexual risk taken by females is established. Men pay larger sums of money to prostitutes for

“dry sex” (without condoms) and terminate relationships when women insist on condom use (Leclerc-Madlala, 2003; Varga, 2001; Wojcicki and Malala, 2001; Campbell, 2000). In addition, another Southern Africa study finds a graduated relationship between higher valued gift/cash transfers and sexual risk taken by young people. Kissing is considered an adequate return for exchanges and transfers such as alcoholic beverages, while oral, penetrative sex and other forms of sexual risk taking are reserved for more high-end exchanges, such as large sums of cash, cars, jewelleryes (Kaufman and Stavrou, 2002). Similar trends were indicated for unmarried sexual partners in south-western urban Nigeria. One study suggest the prevalence of material transfers, which is progressively of higher value<sup>85</sup>, the longer the non-marital sexual relations lasts (Orubuloye, et al., 1992; 1997a&b; see also Varga, 2001; Campbell 2000, for similar findings in Southern Africa). In neighbouring Cameroon, another study reports “an explicit exchange of money for sexual favours” (Meekers and Calves, 1997a, p.364-366).

Sexual exchanges however, have potentials for promoting intimate partner violence, including sexual risks taking. This is most likely due to the gendered interpretations of the meanings and value of the cash/gifts given, and the anticipated returns expected of the receiver (Nnko and Pool, 1997; Bohmer and Kirumira, 1997). In this regard, social exchanges are associated with sexual harassment, rape and assault based on actors misperception of the meanings of cash/gifts and returns anticipated (Abbey, McAuslan, and Ross, 1998; Sigal, et al., 1988; Johnson, Stockdale and Saal, 1991). Nonetheless, even though sexual exchange is an incisive perspective, it is inadequate to explain the totality of influences on young people’s sexual risk taking. Young people predispositions to problem behaviour are also influential on their sexual risk taking.

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<sup>85</sup> In addition, emotive and non-material based relations have been identified among some commercial sex workers and favoured clients (Orubuloye et al., 1992; see also Varga, 2001; Campbell 2000, for similar findings in Southern Africa).

## 2.6 Problem behaviour perspective of young people's sexual risks

Problem behaviour<sup>86</sup> perspectives "homogenize and pathologise understanding of young people and their needs, it encourages the conception of young people as possessing a series of *deficits* (in knowledge, attitudes and skills), which adults are equipped to address with sexual health interventions they conceive and execute (Aggleton and Warwick, 1997). Problem behaviour is the most dominant and usually under-specified conception of young people's sexual risk taking in all societies today. Influenced by the problem behaviour perspective, society, academics and interventionists conceive young people's sexual risk taking with unease and alarm. In its most restrictive form, young people's sexual activities are depicted as selfish, hedonistic, reckless, foolhardy, irresponsible, deviant, irrational and ignorant (Lear, 1995, 1997; Varga and Makubalo, 1996; Moore and Rosenthal, 1993). Gagnon and Simon commented upon problem behaviour oriented societal conception of sexuality in the observation that:

"rarely do we turn from a consideration of the organs themselves to the sources of the meanings that are attached to them, the ways in which physical activities of sex are learned, and the ways in which these activities are integrated into large social scripts and social arrangement where meaning and sexual behaviour come together to create sexual conduct" (Gagnon and Simon, 1974, p.5).

The problem-behaviour perspective of young people sexual risk taking thrives upon the assumption that sexual activities are types of abnormal behaviour that are attributable to individual, environmental and behavioural deficiencies synonymous with only young people (Southgate and Hopwood, 1999). Problem behaviour perspective of young people's sexual risk taking also seek to establish a hierarchy of influences, presume that young people sexual risk taking is emergent and not historic, and would impose social controls such as sexual abstinence as the only viable option to manage young people sexualities.

According to Jessor and Jessor, the "problem behaviour syndrome" characterizes young people more than adults (Jessor and Jessor, 1977). This is a curious assumption because sexual risk taking is not synonymous with young people only (see Hovarth

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<sup>86</sup> Although problem behaviour perspective classically addressed developmental challenges of young adults, (Donovan and Jessor, 1985; Jessor, 1987; Jessor, 1992 and 1993), the theory was refined to assume sociological significance, and leveraged to illuminate the social contexts of young people's existence, with emphasis of families, schools and neighbourhood (Jessor, Donovan, and Costa, 1991).

and Zuckerman, 1993; Gott, 2001 for detailed discussions). Risk taking, generally, is prevalent across all population<sup>87</sup> subgroups in society. For example, it is accepted and nurtured in diverse fields as investment banking, gambling, education, professional sports, health and recreation (Johnson et al., 2004). Risk taking is also depicted as a "domain-specific" - with each domain separate from others (Johnson et al., 2004, p.161). Regardless of the prevalence of risk taking across all sub-populations, adult society specifically associate sexual risks with young people, conceive sex a problem behaviour, a cause for alarm based on socio-legal norms that privilege adults and social institutions they control.

Due to this problematic conception and construction young people, their status in society is a paradox. On one hand, young people are idealized (Dwyer and Wyn, 2001, p.59) and constructed as cherished resources (Kelly, 2000a, 2000b, and 2003). On the other, they are constructed as troublesome instead of troubled, as offending and offensive, and as at risk to themselves, others, dominant values and the social order (Whyte, 2004; Smith, 2003; Smith, 2003; Goldson, 2000; 2002). Studies within the problem behaviour perspective conceive young people's sexual risk taking as volitional behaviour associated with the teen years that produces only undesirable social and health outcomes (Irwin and Millstein, 1986; Jessor and Jessor 1977; Donovan, Jessor and Costa, 1991; Jessor, 1992). Similar studies with biomedical roots, equate young people's sexual risk taking with direct and indirect negative health and social consequences (Irwin, 1993; Tonkin, 1987).

Additional application of the problem behaviour perspective is to study young people's associated health behaviours (Donovan, Jessor and Costa, 1991), and early sexual debut as a product of young people's rejection of social norms (Jessor, Costa, Jessor, and Donovan, 1983; Jessor, 1984; Costa, Jessor, Donovan and Fortenberry, 1995). Other advocates of the problem behaviour perspective advance the claim that young people engaged in risk-prone behaviour are deviants, and that a given problem

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<sup>87</sup> Incidentally, some adults are participants in young people sexual risk taking across the world. For example, the National AIDS Behavioural Study (NABS) find that in the USA, up to 5.5% and 7.5% of an adult sample of 3219, 50 years and above had a minimum of one HIV sexual risk factor (see Stall & Catania, 1994; Leigh, Temple and Trocki, 1993 for details). In addition, similar trends were reported for the UK among GUM clinic attendees. 16,000 attendees of genitourinary medicine (GUM) clinics in the UK over 50 years of age have STI concerns (Gott, et al., 1998). There are no reasons to think that similar trends will not obtain in Nigeria despite the lack of research into this.

behaviour is symptomatic of others that are co-present (Gottfredson and Hirschi, 1990).

The argument is made, nevertheless, that problem behaviour perspective of young people's sexual risk taking is restrictive and too narrow for effective sexual health research and programmes (Aldridge, Parker, and Measham, 1998; Scriven and Stevenson, 1998). Illustrative studies report that young people dislike interventions that centre on pre-defined risk behaviours, such as alcohol or premarital sex (Aggleton, et al., 1998). The singular focus of problem behaviour perspectives ignores and minimises the tendency of these behaviours to occur separately, sometimes together, with the same, different or similar young people, in the same and different contexts (Wight, Abraham, and Scott, 1998).

In addition, problem behaviour perspective fails to consider the importance young people attach to the risk taking or the so-called problem behaviour, consequently narrowing its potentials for research and intervention success (Crossley, 2001). Other commentators observe that young people are frustrated and alienated by safe sex and abstinence only messages, largely influenced by the problem behaviour perspective (Rofes, 2002). The communication redundancy of safer-sexualities and abstinence-until-marriage messages creates perception dissonance called message fatigue (Crossley, 2002 and 2001). Message fatigue is blamed for young people's distrust of expert systems<sup>88</sup>, such as researchers and intervention managers, their findings and interventions (Crossley, 2002 and 2001). Furthermore, researchers' portrayal of sexually active young people as self-destructive hedonists seem to paradoxically recommend the condemned risk behaviour to other young people (Crossley, 2002). The paradoxical role of expert systems inadvertent promotion of sexual risk taking is captured by, Costa's on-line review of problem behaviour:

"sexual intercourse, normatively acceptable for adults, is likely to elicit social controls for a young adolescent...Consensual awareness among young people of the age-graded norms for such behaviours carries with it, at the same time, the shared knowledge that occupancy of a more mature status is actually characterized by engaging in such behaviour. Thus, engaging in certain behaviours for the first time can mark a transition in status from "less mature"

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<sup>88</sup> "Expert systems: systems of expert knowledge, of any type, depending on rules of procedure transferable from individual to individual" usually associated with one or multiple nurturing structural institutions (Giddens, 1991, p.243).

to "more mature," from "younger" to "older," or from "adolescent" to "young people " or "adult." (Costa, 2006, online).

In essence, problem behaviour paradigm problematizes young people - associating them exclusively with risk behaviours that have pathological outcomes. Problem behaviour also falls short of considering young people's positive predispositions to sexual risk taking, agency and inherent individuated/collective values. In essence, problem behaviour perspectives of young people sexual risk taking is criticised for focusing too much on risk groups, such as young people, risk practices, such as unprotected sex, while minimising the meanings/functions of premarital sex to young people, and the culpable structural influences (Dowsett and Aggleton, 1999; Gausset 2001; Crossley, 2002 and 2001). The utility and effectiveness of problem behaviour perspective of young people's sexualities is also challenged by the predilection of successive generations of young people in Nigeria and elsewhere to replicate, with startling innovations, the sexual risk practices of the past generation. For example, young people can engage in both vaginal and anal sex. Virginal sex is historic, anal sex, is relatively new to most young people, who are predominantly in heterosexual relationships in Nigeria.

#### **2.6.1 Key influences under the problem behaviour - alcohol**

Alcohol<sup>89</sup> or drug consumption is another useful paradigm that accounts for young people's sexual risk taking, based on cognitive altered states or intoxication. As used here, alcohol or intoxication influence concept covers all explanatory frameworks that assign significant influence to alcohol ingestion for young people's sexual risk taking because of their altered cognitive states. That is, there is a direct link between young people's consumption of alcohol, early sexual debut, sustained sexual risk taking (O'Donnell, O'Donnell and Stueve, 2001) and their infection with STIs (Cooper, 1992; Halpern-Felsher, Millstein and Ellen, 1996). Two models of alcohol influence construct are identifiable. The first is the acute causal effects of alcohol model and the second is the expectancy model of alcohol influence.

The acute causal effects of alcohol model assign influence to the dis-inhibiting properties of alcohol as the reason for young people's sexual risk taking. The -

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<sup>89</sup> Although alcohol and drug influence on young people's sexual risk taking have not been subjects of academic or programme research in Nigeria, I speculate that alcohol use by young people is reasonably more widespread than drug use, based on personal experience and anecdotal evidence. Consequently, I will focus on alcohol influence alone.



mechanism of alcohol dis-inhibition is explained with the alcohol myopia concept (Steele and Josephs, 1990). According to the authors, the acute causal effects of alcohol emanates from the inherent pharmacologic contents and effect of alcohol, which reduces the scope and accuracy of rational information processing and management. The push and pull influence of alcohol on sexual impulses are said to have equal strength and force (Steele and Josephs, 1990).

After alcohol ingestion, for example, the mind continues to evaluate the immediate cues of behaviour, such as sexual arousal, while concurrently submerging the more complex inhibitive signals, such as fear of STIs or unwanted pregnancy, which, under more sober states, reduces agents' likelihood to take sexual risks. The acute causal effects of alcohol model indicate that risk taking occurs after alcohol ingestion because normal behaviour as sexual arousal continues to function, while inhibitory cues as fear of STIs are weakened. It is under this circumstance that young people take sexual risks.

Two principal challenges to the alcohol inhibition construct come to mind. The first is an implicit assumption that young people only take sexual risks because they are drunk. Based on my experience and preliminary findings, this assumption is incorrect. Not all young people who take sexual risks ingest alcohol or are intoxicated. The second is that if the equal push and pull effect of alcohol inhibition is true, young people's agency is a more valid explanation for sexual risk taking post alcohol ingestion. This is because the push-pull effect could have influenced their adoption of abstinence and/or safer sexual behaviour, instead of sexual risk taking.

The expectance model of alcohol influence, on the other hand, postulate that young people's sexual behaviour after intoxication is influenced by their prior beliefs about the effects of alcohol on behaviour (Steele and Josephs, 1990). For example, anecdotal evidence and folklore suggest alcohol ingestion before sexual intercourse is dis-inhibitory, increases libido and sexual performance. From this perspective, the expectance model of alcohol influence is synonymous with the self-fulfilling prophecy (Lang, 1985). Through this process, young people who hold prior belief that alcohol dis-inhibits sexual encounters, enhances sexual performance and competencies will ingest alcohol before engaging in sexual risk taking more than

those who do not hold such beliefs. The expectance model of alcohol seems more persuasive and valid for Nigerian young people, although a few may ingest alcohol out of curiosity and as a component of social life and growing-up. The expectance model of alcohol influence is also very compatible with my advocacy for the inclusion of agency, a co-influence with structure, in accounting for young Nigerian university students' risk-prone sexuality.

From the foregoing, it is obvious that the acute causal effect and expectancy models of alcohol postulate influence on young people's sexual risk taking. Both, nevertheless, differ in terms of effect dynamics. While the causal effects of alcohol construct is about the character and relative strength of rival (dis)inhibitory cues, the expectancy model of alcohol point to young people's prior beliefs (dispositions) about the impact of alcohol on sexual behaviour (practise). The alcohol expectancy model has been validated by studies, which affirm young people's prior-beliefs about alcohol and drugs effects on sexual prowess, and led to the conclusion that alcohol effects beliefs are normative, anchored by their social relations, fables, local folklore, and experience (Ingham, Woodcock, and Steiner, 1993; Shiner, and Newburn, 1997).

Empirical evidence for alcohol expectancy construct in Nigeria are deducible from the ubiquitous utility and social significance of alcohol in relation to rituals, events, celebrations, relaxation and leisure. From literature elsewhere, alcohol consumption is also integral to social relations formation, maintenance and enhancement (Hunt and Barker, 2001; see Beccaria and Sande, 2003; Gamella, 1995 for similar conclusions about Italy and Spain respectively). In essence, alcohol consumption as a social activity enhancer is normative.<sup>90</sup> For young people, alcohol consumption, for example binge drinking, have been associated with sexual risk taking. Binge drinking plays a role in sexual risk taking by "...functional impairment ...and is particularly important given its link to a number of health and social problems" (Kuntsche, Rehm, and Gmel, 2004 in Anderson, and Baumberg, 2006). Alcohol consumption and intoxication is also gendered. Young males are more prone to heavy drinking than

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<sup>90</sup> In addition, alcohol consumption is socially symbolic, with significance attached to alcohol varieties, place of consumption, consumption partners, volume and manner of consumption (Room, 2001; Gusfield, 1987; Thornton 1987; Moore 2001).

young females (Wilsnack, Vogeltanz and Wilsnack, 2000). Could this variable account for significantly higher male sexual adventurism in Nigeria?

Corroborative studies from Europe, although demographically dissimilar to Nigeria, indicate that males drink about two to three times more alcohol than women (Leifman, 2002; Mäkelä et al., 2005). Other studies, however, indicate that young males often exaggerate their drinking levels in studies (Bloomfield et al., 1999; Ramstedt and Hope, 2003) to conform to normative expectations. Similar studies report egalitarian and convergent drinking patterns between males and females in Europe (see Rickards, et al., 2004), which is indicative of a more balanced gender profile in alcohol-induced risk taking. Although the Nigerian society disapproves female alcohol consumption, similar drinking trends as detailed above may thrive privately. The implication of alcohol consumption on intimate partner sexual exploitation and violence in a patriarchal society, such as Nigeria, is obvious. Nevertheless, intoxication perspectives neglect the role of calculated intents and agency in alcohol ingestion and subsequent risk taking. They are therefore inadequate in their accounts of young people's sexual risk taking. Other variables as sensation seeking are also relevant.

### **2.6.2 The influence of sensation seeking**

Sensation seeking<sup>91</sup> is “a trait defined by the seeking of varied, novel, complex, and intense sensations and experiences, and the willingness to take physical, social, legal, and financial risks for the sake of such experience” (Zuckerman, 1994, p.27; 1979). Sensation-seeking personas are split into four groups. There are the adventure and thrill seekers, experience seekers, disinhibitionist, and those susceptible to boredom (Zuckerman et al., 1978). Causal variables for sensation seeking are thought to derive from genetic, biological, psychological, physiological, and social variables (Zuckerman, 1983, 1984, 1990, 1994, 1996; Zuckerman, Buchsbaum, and Murphy, 1980).

Sensation seeking exerts influence on young people to seek arousal, sensory and bodily stimulations from risk taking behaviours (Arnett, 1991; Irwin and Millstein,

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<sup>91</sup> Various terms have been used to describe 'sensation seeking. Among them are Farley's (1986) Big T (thrill-seeking) personalities; Zuckerman (1979) sensation seekers, and Klausner (1968) stress-seekers.

1986; Zuckerman, 1985, 1994; Zuckerman and Neeb, 1980). Sensation seeking as a state of mind is however, associated with young people undergoing rapid biological, psychological changes who depend on social institutions, norms and practices for socialisation. Extroverted young people, with earlier sexual debuts and multiple sexual partners, are more prone to adopt risk-prone sexual practices (Eysenck, 1978). It is incontrovertible that young people seek sensations from risk prone behaviours as sexual risk taking (Zuckerman, 1990).

Studies corroborating the preceding claim are varied, but consistent. For example, research on college students indicate an embeddedness in college risk cultures, which are notorious for excitement, sensory stimulation and passion (Horvath and Zuckerman, 1993). In other words, students are embedded in college risk cultures, which promote binge drinking, sexual risk taking, drug use, and criminal behaviour, which stimulates the senses. Researchers and programme managers however, ignore, minimise and problematize sensation seeking from sexual risk taking. In addition, initiatives evolved to manage young people's sexual risk taking fail to provide alternatives to sensations derived from sexual risk taking. The failure of society to balance the functions of sexual pleasure against potentials for young people's compromised health most likely explains the relative ineffectiveness of sexual reproductive health research and interventions in Nigeria.

Elsewhere, in a Swedish and German study of gay men, report indicates the inherent and often irreconcilable conflicts that interventions asking participants to give-up sexual pleasure for abstinence arouse (Nilsson-Schönnesson and Clement, 1995). Irrespective of the preceding, young people and their sexual practices are problematized by academics and interventionists. They are cast as ignorant deviants, in need of accurate information and positive behaviour models (Eysenck, 1978; Kalichman, et al., 1994; Bogaert and Fisher, 1995).

Irrespective of the foregoing, sensation seekers are keenly aware of, and often accept, the inherent risks associated with their peculiar adrenaline inundating activities (Zuckerman, 1994; see also Lyng, 1990; 1993; 2005). That is, sensation seekers have a keen awareness of the inherent negative outcomes of activities such sexual risk taking, for example, pregnancy and STIs. They mitigate the known risks with

initiatives, such as condom and contraceptive use, and proceed to take the risk, all the same. Studies that apply sensation-seeking perspective to young people's sexual risk taking do not acknowledge Zuckerman's caveat that sensation seekers do not necessarily seek bodily and/or mental harm (Zuckerman, 1994). As a result, sensation seeking as a personality trait is uncritically ascribed to young people alone. Sensation seeking perspectives evoke questions about the validity of research conclusions, which are drawn from linear and flawed epistemologies (see Arnfred, 2004; Booth 2004; Schlep, 1991; Seidel 1993; Silberschmidt, 2001; Spronk, 2005; Stillwaggon, 2003).

The fact that sensation-seeking activities serve functional purposes is usually minimised in literature and interventions. For example, college students benefit materially from sexual risk taking (Parsons, Siegel, and Cousins, 1997). Related studies on sensation seeking with prison inmates indicate that prisoners crave the 'high' of committing crimes - "feeling intensely alive and able to do anything" (Gove, 1994, p.374-388), and uplifted above their law-abiding peers. Other studies of high-risk sports corroborate the personal and social significance of intensely risky activities and experiences to young people (Lyng, 1990). Sexual risk taking, comparatively produce the out of body experiences and sensations that confer on young people intense emotional feelings of love, independence, belonging, peer approval and excitement.

There are also age and gender differentials in sexual risk-taking. Research on sensation seeking as a reason for risk taking confirms the influence of gender and age on sensation seekers demographics. More men than women are prone to risk taking or sensation seeking (Zuckerman, 1983, a&b). Other studies link sensation seeking behaviours with travel/tourism, (Fontaine, 1994), adventurous sports by young white males (Lyng, 1990 and 1993), parachuting (Hymbaugh and Garrett, 1974), auto racing (Straub 1982) among other high-risk activities. Regardless, sensation-seeking perspective is inadequate in its account of influences on young people's sexual risk taking. Other influences, such as young people's differential association with their sexually active peers, are similarly influential.

### **2.6.3 The influence of differential association**

Differential association<sup>92</sup> influence is another useful framework that illuminates influences on young people's sexual risk taking. In its classic form, differential association is applied to investigating crime as a learned behaviour, and not a biological or psychological disorder (Sutherland and Cressy, 1960). The proponents of differential association advance the thesis that crime is socially learned<sup>93</sup> through selective association with criminals who teach criminal behaviour (Sutherland and Cressy, 1960). Adapted and applied to young people's sexual risk taking, the argument is made that young people learn sexual risk taking, and indeed other undesirable habits such as binge drinking, stealing etc from their selective association with peer practitioners of these vices who willing teach the skills.

The explanations of behavioural risk knowledge and skills acquisition by differential association theorists are concise. It is observed that the simple acts of young people's relationship with risk takers, for example sexually active peers, offer the sexual neophytes varied opportunities to learn, internalize and take sexual risks. In essence, differential association theory advances the following four theses. The first is that peers are credible, powerful and convincing sources and models of information and behaviour. The second is that peers leverage pre-existing information acquisition and sharing networks. The third is that education and advice from peers are more credible to young people than similar information and advice from parents and schools. The fourth is that the negative differential association process and outcomes are reversible by leveraging peers to re-educate young people, especially the vulnerable hard to reach young people.

The application of differential association framework has been wide and varied. It was employed to investigate substance and alcohol use in the United States where the author documented significant correlation between participants drug/alcohol use with their friends, which implied that mere association with substance users directly

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<sup>92</sup> Differential association is assigned purposefully to problem behaviour influences by the thesis because there seem an implicit assumptions by proponents that young people deliberately choose, associate with, and learn from delinquent peers. The choice, association and learning of vice are forms of problem behaviour.

<sup>93</sup> Differential association construct can conversely serve positive behaviour reinforcement purposes. Public health practitioners argue that young people can learn effective sexual health habits through the differential association process also (Morgan and Eiser, 1990).

influence the adoption of similar risk behaviour (Dull, 1983). Parallel application of differential association influence in a study of HIV prevention interventions that included (un)known and (un)associating peers validate the assumption that peer utilise pre-existing communication networks and information sources (Shepherd et al., 1997).

As a programme tool, differential association is limited in scope to established friendships and other social association networks, unless innovated upon. Unlike the preceding application, differential association was extended to exploit existing organic social networks and not pre-existing peer networks. Indicative studies include the employment of well-liked men (who are not necessarily gay) in gay bars to initiate conversations with heterosexuals and gay men (Kelly et al. 1991), and the application of a similar coverage strategy in a college setting in the USA (Grossberg, et al., 1993).

A major drawback of differential association theory is that dyadic sexual relations, especially the riskier kinds, are rarely modelled for close peers to observe. Thus, it is difficult to demonstrate the differential association teaching-learning-habit-acquisition process for sensitive sexual behaviour, such as sexual risk taking. In this regard, the observation is made that association does not equal cause, and that it can be the case that individuals' have associational preferences with similarly behaved peers (Coggins and McKellar, 1994). In essence, birds of the same feather tend to flock together.

#### **2.6.4 The influence of ignorance**

In its classic form, the ignorance construct advance the argument that sheer unawareness of the dangers of sexual risk taking account for young people's sexual risk taking. It is not clear from the ignorance perspective that young people's sexual health ignorance is internal, external or both in origin. Nevertheless, ignorance in modernity is problem behaviour. It encompasses lack of knowledge about contraceptives as condoms and pills, lack of knowledge to negotiate safe sex with sexual partners and the lack of knowledge of STI transmission routes. The ignorance perspective still thrives today in various programme and research initiatives. In fact, a 2005 UNAIDS report affirms the supposition that ignorance influences young people's sexual risk taking. According to the report:

“in much of sub-Saharan Africa, knowledge about HIV transmission routes is still low. Generally, women are less well-informed about HIV than are men; this is also true of rural areas compared with those living in cities and towns ... In 24 sub-Saharan countries (including Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, Kenya, Nigeria, Senegal and Uganda), two thirds or more of young women (aged 15–24 years) lacked comprehensive knowledge of HIV transmission” (UNAIDS/WHO, 2005, p.18).

Attesting the link between ignorance and sexual risks, a study in Russia indicate that two-thirds of the sample polled related kissing with HIV and AIDS acquisition and three-quarters link HIV transmitted with mosquito bites (Specter, 2004). The observation is also made that sexual risk taking by young people thrive “under conditions that are quite specific” as “low level of contraceptive awareness...” (Gurko, 2004, p.59). Other studies recommend contraceptive promotions to enhance personal or mutual protection of young people during sexual encounters (Tschann and Adler, 1997).

Symptomatic of the ignorance assumption are studies recommending the empowerment of women, the reduction of the negative influence of cultural/gender-driven disadvantages, increasing women’s access to knowledge/capacities to negotiate safe sex and/or delay sexual intercourse with new and/or existing partners, often assume social actors are ignorant (see Shoop and Davidson, 1994; Cobb, 1997; Coleman and Ingham, 1999). Majority of sexuality research in Nigeria are influenced by the assumption that young people are sexually ignorant. Specific studies in Nigeria include, a cross sectional study of adolescents knowledge of HIV/AIDS and their sexual practices in Benin City, Nigeria, which indicate, “the knowledge of the study population was poor and correlates with their reckless sexual practices” (Wagbatsoma and Okojie, 2006, p.76).

Others include those that assess journalist’s knowledge of AIDS and attitude to persons living with AIDS (PLWA) in Ibadan, Nigeria, and similarly conclude that “journalists in Ibadan do not have adequate knowledge of AIDS, and many of them show negative attitude towards PLWAs, thus undermining their potential ability to educate the public about AIDS (Isibor and Ajuwon, 2006, p.101; see also Ihekweazu and Starke, 2005). The most recent studies in Nigeria that are influenced by the ignorance assumption assign blame for young people’s sexual risk taking on



ignorance of protective behaviour (see MacPhail and Campbell, 2001; Kapiga and Lugalla, 2002; Onoh, et al., 2004; Nigerian Demographic and Health Surveys 2003; Arowojolu, et al., 2002; Otoide, et al., 2001).

The dominant assumption that young people in sub-Saharan Africa take sexual risks because they are ignorant of the causes and course of STIs is not uniformly accurate. There is concurrent evidence that almost 90% of Nigerians are aware of the causes, course and consequences of STIs (Caldwell et al., 1992; Arowojolu, et al., 2002). For example, a study of Northern Nigerian males knowledge, attitudes and family planning practices<sup>94</sup> report a "high knowledge of contraceptives, a generally negative attitude towards limiting family size for economic reasons, and consequently low rates of contraceptive use" (Duze and Mohammed, 2006, p.53; see Moronkola, Ojediran, and Amosu, 2006, for their study of contraceptive knowledge and use).

Similarly, Izugbara's study of sex workers in Aba, Nigeria, conclude they pursue multiple "strategies in managing these risks, including setting boundaries for themselves, being choosy and selective about clients, using traditional medicine and charms, alcohol and drug use, and participation in religious activities. Results challenge mainstream medico-epidemiological notions that sex workers are unaware of the risks they are exposed to, and/or do nothing to address them" (Izugbara, 2005b, p.141). Indeed, the author of a recent study in Nigeria confirms the paradox that the ignorance thesis poses to research and programmes. According to Smith:

"the basic argument, born from ethnographic data, is that although most young Nigerian migrants know that HIV can be transmitted sexually and also know that condoms are a means of preventing transmission ... and ... most young people do not desire premarital pregnancy ..." (Smith 2004c, p.224).

It seems reasonable therefore, to infer that findings about the influences of ignorance on young people's sexual risk taking in Nigeria are mixed. Regardless, ignorance is inadequate in its accounts of young people's sexual risk taking. This is because HIV/AIDS communication in Nigeria has been ongoing for more than two decades. Young people inability/neglect to adopt the safer sexual behaviour may not be due to

ignorance, but related to co-influences, such as sensation seeking, emotions, peer pressure, agency and so on. Nevertheless, a critical component of my research is to test the levels of young people's awareness of HIV/AIDS, its transmission routes, mitigating factors and consequences.

### **2.6.5 The influence of agency**

The least popular among perspectives of young people's sexual risk taking is the agency perspective. The pervasive disputes over agency and social action in the social sciences probably influenced the counter-intuitive character of agency arguments. For example, the question can be asked - how can a young and rational person adopt behaviours that will compromise his/her health? To posit human agency, consequently, presumes "a freedom to make healthy choices ..." which "is out of line with what many lay people experience as real possibilities in their everyday lives" (Williams, 2003, p.147).

There are valid grounds, nevertheless, to admit agency as an influence on young people's sexual risk taking. To illuminate this claim, I employ Yates dual categorization of risks (Yates, 1992 a&b). The first category of risk Yates calls deliberated risk. This covers behaviour emanating from a discriminating social agent's decision-making process. The second category, he calls non-deliberative risks and covers behaviours emanating from a social agent's failure, ignorance and/or neglect to consider the full ramification of given behaviours and their potential outcomes (Yates, 1992 a&b).

Applied to sexual risk taking, deliberative and non-deliberative risk models underscore the influence of agency, concurrent with structure, on sexual risk taking, which can be planned or unplanned. For example, Nigerian young males deliberate upon the cultivation of particular girl(s) as a "girlfriend," for having "fun" (sexual intercourse), for sensation and/or to enhance his social reputation and self-esteem among peers. In the process, the young male also considers, minimises and attempts to mitigate the inherent risk associated with the sexual encounter. He will make a

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<sup>94</sup> Knowledge of, and use of contraceptives are principally linked with promiscuity and STIs prevention in most parts of Nigeria – where there is a significant preference for large families (as a gift from God) and perennial cross-gender negative attitude towards contraceptive use and abortion.

choice of girl, socially similar to himself, thus clean. In addition, the young male may use condoms for the first series of sexual encounters until trust is established. At other times, the same male may exploit casual sexual opportunities as soon as they present themselves to him, without the risk mitigation strategies.

The young female, on the other hand, also deliberates upon the male's proposals to become a 'girlfriend.' Variables young Nigerian females consider are similar and different from what males consider. They include good looks, family background, wealth, sociability, humour and level of education, all of which has bearings on female's strategic interests and intent in a suitable marriage at some future date. Females are keenly aware that the males want sex from the girls they date, almost immediately. They may share this need for sex, or grant the male sexual access in furtherance of their strategic goals. At other times, a *chance* visit of males they are romantically interested in may result in unprotected sex, due to mutual desire, male pressure or the female's desire to please. From these examples, it is difficult to minimise young people's agency. Sexual risk taking requires significant degrees of heterosexual partners' collusion – except in instances of rape. The scope of young people's agency is however, variable - mediated by cultural norms, personality, gender and political economy.

Young people's varied agencies are inherent in their choice of partner, wooing (toasting) and affirmation, contraceptive use or avoidance, periodic abstinence or withdrawal among other sexual relations cultivation, disease and pregnancy control behaviours. Essentially, the failure of the disease/pregnancy mitigation initiatives does not equate ignorance or wilfulness. It may simple be young people's failure to envisage varied outcome of sexual risk taking. One study corroborates the notion that young people perceive more positive benefits from sexual risk taking – despite their knowledge that it can pose health challenges, and the dominant portrayal of premarital sex as dangerous, threatening and hazardous (Alaszewski and Manthorpe, 2000).

Young people's sexual risk taking agencies, thus, emanates from knowledge driven action related to sexual risk taking which is based on an informal calculation of the risk/benefits of sexual risk taking. This calculation is not always accurate because it is governed by their sexualisation, positive predispositions and variable agencies related



to unprotected premarital sex (Fishbein and Middlestadt, 1989; see Rotheram-Borus and Koopman, 1991 also). In essence, the discursive nature of risk perception, is embedded and derived from actors private worldviews (Wetherell and Porter, 1988), and multiple influences, which thrive within social systems linking individuals with the micro and macro environment (Macintyre and Ellaway, 2000).

From a knowledge driven action perspective, deciphering young people's predispositions is the best predictor of whether or not they will engage in sexual risk taking. By implication, isolating relevant strands of young people's sexual knowledge sources and action cues will promote risk reduction with sexual reproductive health and behaviour modification programmes. For example, if it is confirmed that young people are favourably disposed to sexual risk taking, programme managers can attempt to dissuade them from sex before sexual debut and/or provide contraceptives for safer sexual conduct.

Another agency perspective of young people's sexual risk taking is edgework. "Edgework" is defined as exhilarating practical counterpoint that is a reaction to a "social system associated with class conflict, alienation, and the consumption imperative" (Lyng, 1990, p.869). Individuals who recognize the likely life threatening consequences of their participation, but do so to derive the momentary and exhilarating experience (Lyng, 1990), were the original subjects of Lyng's application of edgework to the seminal study of voluntary participation in high-risk sports. For Stephen Lyng, edgework approximates social actor's exploration of the boundaries between order and disorder, life and death, consciousness and unconsciousness, pleasure and pain, to wrest control and freedom from the macro level constraints in the sensation, material, physical, and emotional senses (Lyng, 1990, p.855-857).

As an influence on young people's sexual risk taking, edgework admits multiple levelled influences on "edge workers" or risk-takers. These influences derive from interrelated macro and micro factors. The macro drivers of risk-taking include institutional constraints that render everyday life mechanical, bureaucratic, rigid, impersonal, alienating and outside the control of social actors. Macro level influences and the loss of control they engender in actors produce the micro-level reactions called edgework (Lyng, 1990, p.877). Risk taking from edgework perspective, are

social agents reaction to objectified existence to find meaning, acceptance, identity and wrest control (albeit illusory) from macro structures.

There is robust cross-disciplinary evidence that render edgework persuasive because it accommodates the micro, macro and cognitive drivers of praxis. For example, edgework accommodates the influences of variables as diverse as young people's political economies, culture, relationship networks/contexts, powerlessness, peers, cognition and elective action to mention a few. According to Lyng, edgework or risk taking offers social actors opportunities for "creative skilful, self-determining action" (Lyng, 1990, p.877) unlike the macro-level constraints that restrict actor's creative action via the functioning of its class divisions, control systems, labour alienations, sexism, racism, gender and governmentality.

The outcome of institutional constraints on young people are loss of control, alienation, and a state of meaninglessness (anomie), which separate young people from the various means to actualize robust individual ends. Adult managed structural institutions objectify, exploit and over-burdened young people while concurrently denying them access to resources, choices and freedom to realize their expectations. As a result, young people resort to various kinds of "edgework," such as sexual risk taking, to make their life more meaningful and rewarding. According to Lyng:

"while a person may never know for sure if s/he is successfully dealing with the institutional threats of modern life . . . illicit edgework allows one to measure success in an unambiguous way. Every successful stickup, con game, shoplift, etc., is taken as proof that one possesses the basic survival instinct" (Lyng, 1993, p.127).

Not all edge workers, as Lyng will have us believe explore "the boundaries between order and disorder, life and death, consciousness and unconsciousness, pleasure and pain" (Lyng, 1990, p.855-857), in sexual risk taking. Regardless, research on the influence of edgework on sexual risk taking in an era of HIV/AIDS reveals interesting functioning of young people's agency. These studies demonstrate that beliefs about the advantageous outcomes (positive outcome expectancies) of a given risk-prone activity are a reliable predictor of behaviour (Goldman, Brown, and Christiansen, 1987; Fromme, Stroot and Kaplan, 1993). I speculate that young Nigeria university students expect positive benefits, e.g. sexual pleasure and material rewards, from

sexual risk taking. For example, young people perceive sex without condoms as more spontaneous, sensation-prone and pleasurable than sex with condoms.

Corroborating the positive outcome expectancies of sexual risk taking, sexual decision-making research with drug users/CSW in the USA indicate that perceived benefits of heightened sexual pleasure for partners often outweighs risk considerations (Plant, et al., 1989). Additional studies within this perspective report a predilection for “dry sex” in diverse sub-Saharan African communities (Civic and Wilson, 1996; Pool, Whitworth and Green, 2000). Others studies include a Ugandan investigations of condom use among CSW who report a reluctance to use condom with special male friends, attribute this behaviour to perceived loss of intrinsic intimacy associated with semen deposit inside CSW (Obbo,1993 a and b).

Although agency perspectives are important constructs, it is argued that agency perspectives cannot exhaustively account for young people’s sexual risk taking. Not all sexual acts are pre-contemplated in the manner that agency advocates suggest. Neither is sexual risk taking always driven by pleasure or sensation seeking. Other variables as emotions<sup>95</sup>, loneliness and/or intoxication drive young people's contextual decisions to take sexual risk. In addition, there may be contradictions in the functioning of behavioural attitudes and agency. For example, a USA anti-smoking study indicates that 71% of young people in high school publicly advocated antismoking behaviour while concurrently experimenting with smoking (Washington DOC, 2001; see also Stanton and McGee 1996 for similar sentiment). The implication of the above is that young people who express a particular normative<sup>96</sup> behaviour publicly, for example, sexual abstinence, may fail to abstain when confronted with opportunities for sexual risk taking, and vice versa. Sharland, however, underlines the inadequacy linear perspectives, such as agency. According to Sharland, an:

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<sup>95</sup> Phenomenological deconstruction of rational choice explanations of crime and delinquency find that variables such as physical/emotional attraction and rewards of behaviour, such as sexual risk-taking, are more influential than age, gender, race, social and economics, which were not sufficient nor robust enough explanations for behaviour and experience (see Katz, 1988).

<sup>96</sup> The tendency for young people to act normatively in public is linked to the omnipresence of safe-sex messages (Bush and Boller, 1991; Fine and Dimond, 1992; Hernandez 1996; McManigal, 1999; Raymond, Tanner, and Eppright, 1998; Rose 1999a&b).

“...overview of risk taking patterns and their associations is sufficient to persuade us that none of the models of self-inventing free agent, nor sociostructurally determined enactor, nor (un)regulated self-regulator, is alone sufficient to explain young people’s risk taking, nor what we make of it” (Sharland, 2006, p.257).

## **2.7 Conclusion**

Thus far, my conceptualisation of young people's sexual risk taking, in *chapter one*, demonstrates that it is influenced by, but not determined by the powerful structural and agential forces in the Nigeria society, which defines conventions of heterosexual practice. A review of literature to test this conceptualisation in this *chapter* covered diverse theories, such as political economy, mass media, emotions, plastic sexuality, problem behaviour, peer influence perspectives, and so on. My literature review also indicates that these dominant research perspectives are too narrow and inadequate for the task of deconstructing the variable and complex influences on young people’s risk-prone sexualities. This is because individually, they present only a partial account of influences on young people’s risk-prone sexualities. This shortcoming led to my choice of a more holistic perspective, structuration theory, which sensitizes research to the complex interdependencies and interplay of young people’s context and conduct.

My choice of structuration theory followed a complex process of conceptual deconstructions, criticisms, and comparison that resulted in the elimination of multiple and plausible theories such as political economy, problem behaviour, edgework, and sensation seeking theories. My rejection of particular theories and constructs does not mean they are invalid. They are rejected because of their linearity and dialectical confinements, which either overemphasizes structural determinism or agency or minimizes either.

Instead, I conceptualize structure after Giddens (1976; 1981; 1984). According to Giddens, structure are "rules and resources, recursively implicated in the reproduction of social systems. Structure exists only as memory traces, the organic basis of human knowledgeability, and as instantiated in action (1984, p.377). Structure is thus, "both the medium and the outcome of the practices which constitute social systems" (Giddens, 1981, p.27). From this perspective, "structures must not be conceptualized

as simply placing constraints on human agency, but as enabling" (Giddens 1976, p.161). Structuration theory is discussed further in chapter 3.



## Chapter 3

### Theoretical framework – Structuration theory

#### 3.1 Introduction

Structuration is the constitution “of social relations across time and space, in virtue of the duality of structure” (Giddens, 1984, p.376). Structures are “those practices which have the greatest time space extension” and “can be referred to as institutions” (Giddens, 1984, p.17). More concisely, structures are “institutions, conceived of as regularised practices which are ‘deeply layered’ in time and space, both pre-exist and post-date the lives of the individuals who reproduce them, and thus may be resistant to manipulation or change by any particular agent” (Thompson. 1989, p.72-73). According to Giddens, structure “forms ‘personality’ and ‘society’ simultaneously – but in neither case exhaustively: because of the significance of unintended consequences of action, and because of unacknowledged conditions of action” (Giddens, 1979, p.70).

However, structure is not inviolate to creative human practices. For example, the reluctant social acceptance of homosexuality today is gradually reconstituting its original constraining structures. This claim is evidenced by the increasing symbolic *coming-out* of homosexuals in late modernity, compared with their former private, perhaps secret, practise of their sexualities. Based on this emerging trend, one can predict a wider social acceptance and open practise of homosexuality in Nigeria in due course. Thus, our very agencies as humans can, and does, reconstitute the content and trajectories of structural constraints and enablement – rendering them vulnerable to episodic change.

"In this sense practice cannot escape structure, cannot float free of its circumstances... It is always obliged to reckon with the constraints that are the precipitate of history" (Connell, 1987, p.95).

Young people who reject the dominant abstinence-until-marriage prescriptions, for example, often do no (re)invent new sexualities. They are constrained into creative sexual practises based on available alternatives in the Nigerian society. These are composed of (1) unprotected premarital sex; (2) unprotected premarital sex with periodic and inconsistent contraceptive/condom use; and (3), a hybridization of option

one and two. Thus, there are complex and mutually (re)constitutive interrelationships between structure and agency, which present social actors with concurrent opportunities and constraints for action. Social research often ignores or minimises these complex interrelationships. In a departure from this trend, Anthony Giddens conceptualises agency and structure as transformative and relational. Structures are "sets of mutually sustaining schemas"<sup>97</sup> and resources that empower or constrain social action and tend to be reproduced by that social action" (Sewell, 1992, p.19). Critics of structuration theory, for example, Archer, (1995) and Hollis and Smith, (1990), observe that Giddens conflation of structure and agency render the concepts more complex, and fails to distinguish dialectical boundaries between them.

I am convinced that criticisms of conceptual conflation,<sup>98</sup> levied on structuration theory are implausibly stretched. In instantiating action, social actors rarely think, or act, in terms of distinct influences of structure or agency. Why should academic research impose this distinction? Instead, social action, such as young people's sexual risk taking emanate from goal oriented sexual risk behaviour, which are constrained and/or enabled by structure. Structuration theory, therefore, offers a sensitizing blueprint for illuminating the "conditions governing the continuity or transformation of structures, and therefore the reproduction of systems" or patterned relationships such as young people's sexual risk taking, via the recursive co-influence of structure and agency (Giddens, 1979, p.66; Giddens, 1984).

Structure has dual properties in structuration terms, which facilitates the study of young people's sexual risk taking. The properties are comparable to a coin with two sides. On one side of structure are situated social actors who engage in sexual risk taking based on their dispositions, agencies<sup>99</sup>, individuated needs, opportunities and

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<sup>97</sup> I define schemas are flexible rules, norms, conventions or procedures that govern social agent's performance of action.

<sup>98</sup> Conflation "concerns the problem of reducing structure to action (or vice versa) and the [consequent] difficulty of documenting an institution apart from action" (Barley and Tolbert 1997). See also Archer's criticism of structuration theory as non-propositional (Archer, 1982, p.459) and conflationary (Archer, 1995; 1988; 1982). My readings of Archer's morphogenetic approach indicate that the principal difference with Giddens' structuration theory is in terms duality versus dualism, of structure and agency. In essence, unlike Giddens, Archer insists on analytical stratification of structure and agency even though both are inseparable in reality.

<sup>99</sup> To reiterate an earlier definition, "agency concerns events of which an individual is the perpetrator, in the sense that the individual could, at any phase in a given sequence of conduct, have acted differently" (Giddens, 1994, p.9).

constraints for action, such as sexual risk taking. On the other side are "rules and resources organised as properties of social systems" (Giddens, 1979, p.66), which concurrently present opportunities and constraints for sexual risks to social agents and facilitates the (re)production of sexual risk interactions. Systems, in turn, are "reproduced relations between actors or collectivities, organised as regular social practices" such as young people's sexual risk taking (Giddens, 1979, p.66; see Cohen, 2000, p.94 also). Normative dyadic or multiple-partnered sexual relations exemplify a social system. Structure and agency, from this perspective, are components of the actions they influence and (re)produce.

Cohen agrees with Giddens characterisation of structure. He observe that "the structurationist ontology is addressed exclusively to the constitutive potentials of social life: the generic human capacities and fundamental conditions through which the course and outcomes of social processes and events are generated and shaped in the manifold ways in which this can occur (Cohen 1989, p.17). With structuration theory, Giddens attempts to overcome the perennial agency/structure debates that preoccupy social scientists<sup>100</sup> (Giddens, 1981a&b). These debates surround the ontological status of structure or agency, determinism or voluntarism and the macro or micro in relation to explaining the social action and order. Archer, one of Giddens' most ardent critics, agrees<sup>101</sup> with Giddens characterisation of dominant approaches to the study of social (dis)order. She suggests linear application of agency or structure:

"evade the encounter with the vexatious ambivalence of social reality" which can recast "as the 'science of society' versus the 'study of wo/man': if the former denies the significance of society's human constitution, the latter nullifies the importance of what is, has been, and will be constituted as society in the process of human interaction" (Archer, 1995, p.2).

Studies adopting the convenient linear approaches include Williams study in Wales, United Kingdom, which reports significant influence of the social structure on

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<sup>100</sup> Archer refers to the debate as "the vexatious task of understanding the linkage between 'structure and agency' which "will always retain this centrality because it derives from what society intrinsically is" (Archer, 1995, p.1).

<sup>101</sup> Archer and Giddens, however, part ways in their suggested treatment of co-influential structure and agency. While Giddens suggests they be treated as analytical duality, Archer insists they be treated as analytical dualism (see Giddens, 1984 and Archer, 1995).

negative health status and lifestyle of coal miners (Williams<sup>102</sup>, 2003, p.146-147). Williams study exemplifies top-bottom studies that privilege structure. Studies that privilege agency, on the other hand, attribute causative powers to individuals in a manner that is similarly linear or *upwards conflating* (Archer, 1995, p.4). For example, there are studies and interventions which propose that health behaviour are outcome of individual choice alone (mostly unspecified as agency). These studies and interventions usually recommend individual behaviour change initiated through information, education and communication (IEC). Studies that leverage theories as the Health Belief Model, the AIDS Risk Reduction Model and so on, privilege agency to the detriment of structure (Lomas, 1998; Sweat and Denison 1995).

In their compartmentalisations, these studies emphasise structure or agency, neglect their inevitable interrelationships and (re)constitutive powers. It is in a departure from these linear research predilections that Giddens advances the idea of analytically conceiving social structure and agency as a duality, not necessarily in dialectic opposition, in both extant social practise and academic analysis. In other words, the social structure is both the medium and the outcome of the practices” it influences (Giddens 1981a, p.27). Bhaskar similarly rejects methodological distinctiveness of linear perspectives in the observation that social structures “...do not exist independently of the agents” awareness of their potentials and calls for methodological interrelationships (Bhaskar, 1989, p.48 and 70-78). Emphasising this point, Giddens notes:

“the constitution of agents and structures are not two independently given sets of phenomena, a dualism, but represent a duality ... the structural properties of social systems are both the medium and outcome of the practices they recursively organise”. (Giddens, 1984, p.25).

Thus, structuration theory invites "epistemological openness" in the idea of structural duality (Layder, 1998, p.41; see Denscombe, 2001; Hollis and Smith, 1998, p.117

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<sup>102</sup> One study of Welsh coal miners who are "unsung in any chronicle of existence" link their high mortality and poor health statuses to their exploitative employment and poor nutrition (cited in Williams, 2003, p.145). According to Williams, the condition of the Welsh coal miners "provides a salutary reminder of the way in which the balance between agency, context, and structure is itself highly determined by structural forces." (Williams, 2003, p.146).

Williams similarly concludes about a northwest England study that "the respondents understood the behavioural risk factors that made ill-health more likely and for which they were in a limited sense, responsible, but they were also aware that the risks they faced were part of social conditions that they could do little to change" in a study of working-class neighbourhood in northwest England (Williams, 2003, p.147).

also for similar sentiment). Thus, structure or social systems do not function without agency (knowledge, intention and action). Neither does agency thrive without structural constraints and opportunities. In reality, structural properties constantly combine with agency in the (re)production of action. Agency, simultaneously, influences and transforms the social structure, which manifest in social agents as their conception/awareness of structural opportunities and constraints. This characterisation of structuration does not preclude the possibility that agents may be unaware of the total ramification of their actions, in part or as completely, in time and space. In structuration terms therefore:

“the basic domain of study of the social sciences... is ... social practices ordered across space and time. Human social activities, like some self-reproducing items in nature, are recursive. That is to say, they are not brought into being by social actors but continually recreated by them via the very means whereby they express themselves as actors. In and through their activities agents reproduce the conditions that make these activities possible.” (Giddens, 1984, p.2).

The duality of structure in Nigeria can be demonstrated with the cross-generational discursive and institutional linkages between contemporary young people’s sexual risk taking practices and their past manifestations documented in literature, traditional theatre and anecdotal folklore. This attests the historical roots of modern sexual risks with the past sexual risk cultures, even though modern young people innovate upon sexual risks. Extant or (re)produced sexual risk practices, despite global and local input, are to be viewed as products “tied to particular cultures, to particular histories and to individual life experiences” (Sibley 1995, p.75; Thrift 1985; Dyck, 1990; Dear and Moos, 1994). The historical linkages between past and modern sexual risk behaviour are hinted at by Caldwell, Caldwell and Orubuloye, (1992) study of the family and sexual networking, drew the controversial conclusions<sup>103</sup> that African families normatively accommodated the sexual excesses of members (see Orubuloye, 1997a&b also). In essence, if Caldwell and colleagues are correct, I expect to find

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<sup>103</sup> According to Caldwell and colleagues, “much of the excess sexuality of single males, and some of that of married males, was accommodated within the larger family through access, provided that it was discreet and not flaunted, to the wives of relatives: wives of older brothers, fathers (except for their own mothers), uncles, and sometimes brothers-in-law and cousins. There were others, such as cross cousins. There was a real sense in which women were married to families, and proscriptions against adultery either did not apply or did so only at a much reduced level” (Caldwell, Caldwell and Orubuloye, 1992, p.406; see Orubuloye, Caldwell, and Caldwell, 1997; Caldwell, Orubuloye and Caldwell, 1991 also for similar sentiments).

social continuities of cultural and family support for members' promiscuity in Nigeria.

Contrary to linear approaches and disingenuous generalisations, such as Caldwell, Caldwell and Orubuloye (1992), I conceived young people's sexual risk taking as products of extant structural sexualisation and young people's agencies, which are deducible from young people's sexual risk taking narratives, body polity discourse, local history and folklore. From these institutionalised sexual risk behaviour pools and linkages, young people with varying knowledge and agencies, learn and perform sexual risks. The course and consequences of young people's manifest and symbolic agencies, in turn, validate, influence, and (re)constitutes the social structure, which influences further and similar action. Agency and structure are therefore, non-linear. They are mutually dependent, referential and reconstitutive variables, this emphasises Giddens' structural duality<sup>104</sup> tenet – influential on the manifest self-repeating or recursive nature of social life and practices (Giddens 1976, p.161).

To illustrate the structural duality tenet with young females sexual risk taking, structuration theory points the investigation towards young people's social contexts, sexualisation, positive predispositions to sexual risks, variable agencies and benefits derived from sexual risk taking instead of the dominant structural exploitation<sup>105</sup> thesis. The analysis of young people's social context, conduct and outcome of their purposive action, for example, will reveal structural enablement and constraints on the so-called young people's sexual exploitation. Structuration theory also point the investigation towards the deconstruction of young people's awareness and/or ignorance of the structural opportunities and constraints, the purpose and benefits of sexual risk taking, and its negative consequences on young people and society.

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<sup>104</sup> Roy Bhaskar shares Giddens proposition to a point. According to Bhaskar, "society is both the ever-present condition and the continually reproduced outcome of human agency. And praxis is both work, that is, conscious production, and (normally unconscious) reproduction of the conditions of production, that is society. One could refer to the former as the duality of structure, and the latter as the duality of praxis" (Bhaskar, 1989, p.78).

<sup>105</sup> See O'Connell Davidson, 1998; 2001 a&b; Moorhead, 1989; Lee-Wright (1980), for conclusions on exploitation basis of sexual risks.

Young people's awareness and/or ignorance of their context, sexual conducts, benefits and consequences of sexual risk taking, intended or unintended<sup>106</sup>, can subsequently be contrasted with various counter-discourses of sexual risk taking, in literature and lay beliefs, to establish fits or misfits. Furthermore, structuration theory persuades the investigator to examine how young people's sexual risk taking context, conduct, benefit and consequences recursively influence and (re)produce the so-called sexual exploitation of young people on one hand, and how young people's sexual conducts predispose them to sexual exploitation, on the other. Employing the outlined data collection and analytical procedures negates linear paradigms and inferences about young people and their so-called sexual exploitation.

The advantages of structuration theory is that it can enrich young people's sexual risk taking research in Nigeria by harmonizing two previously incompatible conceptualisation of social action. These are the concepts of structure and agency. Individually, agency or structural approaches offer different perspectives of praxis and social order. The former, agential informed research, offers insider interpretive accounts of social life. Agency approaches are preoccupied with actors, their needs, reasoning and understanding of their contexts, actions and consequences. Structural approaches, on the other hand, place emphasis on the dominance and deterministic power of structural constraints on manifest agency and social order (Hollis and Smith, 1990; Smith 1994, p.17-19).

Unlike linear paradigms, structuration informed investigations are concerned with the interdependences inherent in manifest structure and agency, their co-production of social action and mutually reconstitutive properties. Structuration sensitive approaches preclude elaborate institutional analysis. Institutional analysis, according to Giddens, is "social analysis which places in suspension the skills and awareness of actors, treating institutions as chronically reproduced rules and resources" (Giddens, 1984, p.375). Instead, investigative lens is directed at the examination of influential components of the social institutions, how they acquire and manifest their constraining/enabling rules and resources, and how they simultaneously become

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<sup>106</sup> See chapter eleven of Amartya Sen's "Development as Freedom," for an insightful discourse on the importance and interrelationships between intended and unintended consequences of social praxis (1999, p.254-261).

vehicles and outcomes of action, such as young people's sexual risk practices (Jary and Jary, 1997). For example, such investigation will illuminate extant structural patterned influences and constraints that predispose young Nigerian university students' to sexual risk taking and not sexual abstinence, both are sexual conduct options in Nigeria.

The foregoing suggests the significant influential role of collective institutional properties, operating in concert, on young people's sexual risk taking. For example, the gender expectations of maleness/femaleness combined with variables such as peer pressure, young people's relationships and felt needs (such as affection, marriage and poverty) can influence sexual risk taking. Differential combination of influential variables such as alcohol, alienation and sensation seeking, conversely, can influence the same young person and/or others at different states, context and seasons to take sexual risks. From these structural influence pools, successive generation of young people draw their sexual risk knowledge and behaviour, in a manner that validates, challenges, yet reinforces the existing structures of domination and socio-economic imbalances.

Three forms of empirically and analytically interrelated structural institutions thrive in society. These are the structures of signification, domination and legitimation (Giddens, 1979; 1984). Sexual risk taking structures of signification in Nigeria covers those shared symbols, language and codes that young people leverage for sexual communication, understanding and practice. In other words, structures of signification are those "shared symbolic orders and modes of discourse which enable as well as constrain everyday interaction and situate actors in time and space" (Jabri, 1996, p.54-86) in a sexual sense such as sexual scripts.

The structures of domination, on the other hand, illuminate the interaction between social agents and the social structure in manner that demonstrate through action, the uneven asymmetries of power. For example, gendered norms and their relationships with political economy. Furthermore, the structures of legitimation are value laden. They are products of a biased application of normative rules and sanctions to praxis. From Nigerian perspectives, value-laden structures of legitimation are best understood with the double standards that guide sexual rules differentially for young males and



females. Young people, no matter how powerless, exploit the structural constraints and opportunities via their agencies for sexual risk taking. As Jabri's observes:

“where strategies of control draw upon structure of domination in seeking compliance and conformity, they also generate in their wake counter-strategies and counter-discourses which challenge the given established order” (Jabri, 1996, p.84).

In other words, structural influences on young people's sexual risk taking, defined as patterned institutional rules, resources and agency, can be temporal or durable, generalizable or contextual, variable or specific, enduring or mutative. Structuration theory conception of structure is of course non-conventional. Structure is composed of unevenly distributed and influential procedural rules and conventional rules, material and authoritative resources, which are leveraged by young Nigerian university students for sexual risk taking. The components of the social structure are discussed below.

### **3.2 Structures as rules, their relationship with agency and young people's sexual risk taking**

Giddens presents structure as principles, which are “the most deeply embedded structural properties implicated in the reproduction of societal totalities” (Giddens, 1984, p.17). In essence, society is composed of a succession of patterned and interrelated institutions, which are capable of recursive self-reproduction, which provide social agents with spatial and temporary knowledge of rules and resources imperative for meaningful social action that ensure the continuance of social life (Giddens, 1984). Thus, social institutions manifest to social agents, in a social system, as rules and resources.

To be effective, rules need not be codified, and include norms, dominant morality and conventions. Young people in Nigeria are aware of generalizable sexual relations rules, the dominant abstinence-until-marriage morality, and social condemnation of unwanted pregnancies and STIs with associated sanctions. Rules are broken into constitutive rules (codes of signification) and regulative rules (normative rules) (Giddens, 1984). On one hand, constitutive rules or codes of signification facilitate young people's perception and internalisation of dominant sexual symbols, behaviour, meaning and value. On the other hand, regulative or normative rules prescribes

guidelines, possibilities, prohibitions and sanctions for normative and deviant sexual conduct (Giddens, 1984, p.18) as mores that regulate premarital sex. In apparent contradiction of the regulatory or constraining sexuality rules, young people selectively exploit sub-cultural constitutive (enabling) sexual rules, depending on the extent of their sexualisation, felt-needs, context and variable agency, for sexual risk taking. A good example of constitutive sexual norms (rule), linkable to popular culture and peer influence, and propagated by the mass media and folklore, requires young Nigerian males to be sexually adventurous.

The extent that young people systemically ignore traditional normative sanctions against premarital sex in Nigeria is also symptom of the relative weakness in the application of corresponding social sanctions. For example, until the recent past when illegal abortion became more available in Nigeria, young people who have premarital sex, which leads to unwanted pregnancies, were forced into marriage. This is no longer the case. In addition, structure is internal to social agent's behaviour than conventional social science conception of structure. "As social actors, all human beings are highly 'learned' in respect of knowledge which they possess, and apply, in the production and reproduction of day-to-day social encounters; the vast bulk of such knowledge is practical rather than theoretical in character" (Giddens, 1984, p.22).

Within Giddens structuration framework, rules are procedures and techniques that are generalizable (1979; 1984). Young people's comprehension of constitutive and regulative rules of dating and sexual relations, for example, enable them to engage daily, in the (re)enactment of sexual risk taking behaviour. It is possible to discern threefold relationship between structural rules and young people's sexual risk taking in Nigeria, adapting Jabri's application of structuration to conflict studies (Jabri, 1996, p.54-86). Firstly, specific rules, as those that prohibit young people's sexual activity, although relatively weak today, are ubiquitous and contentious enough to generate tensions between young people and prohibitive norms and sanctions.

Secondly, other rules of social life, unintentionally or for historical continuity, promote young people's inclination to sexual risk taking as an acceptable conduct, yet condemned behaviour. For example, sex as celebration, recreation and fun is

embedded in most cultures. Thirdly, young people's dating and sexual risk taking does create their own rule-sets, usually different from those that are dominant and normative. For example, popularity among peers often necessitates replicating, rather than condemning their sexual behaviour. These latter sub-cultural rules undermine the larger Nigerian societal abstinence-until-marriage prescription for young people. In essence, regulative rules, which sanctions young people's sexual risk taking inadvertently, generates tensions between young people and dominant adult society, which encourages young people to undermine them. Young people's sexual risk taking are however, not dependent on their knowledge of sexual relations rules alone. It is concurrently dependent on their relative access to resources that promote sexual relationships as money and/or social capital<sup>107</sup>.

### **3.3 Structure as resources and its relationship with young people's sexual risk taking**

In structuration terms, resources are twofold – authoritative and allocative. Authoritative resources endow human agents, who possess it, with a capacity to control, influence and/or coordinate fellow agents (see Jabri, 1996, p.80-81). Examples of authoritative resources, related to sexual risk taking and influential on peers, include beauty or handsomeness, wealth or access to it, gregariousness or charisma, academic distinction and sporting prowess. Thus, young people who are handsome, beautiful and/or charismatic will attract and influence similarly endowed peers, and others not so endowed. The implication of charisma and/or good looks on falling-in-love, and sexual risk taking are obvious.

Allocative resources, on the other hand, arise “from control of material products or of aspects of the material world,” investing its holder with control over material goods (Jabri, 1996, p.80-81), and by extension, dissimilarly endowed actors. In Nigeria, for example, a young male's access to material wealth, his perceived access to it, or capacity to mobilize allocative resources and social capital, is often commensurate

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<sup>107</sup> Huysman and Wulf, (2004, p.1), define social capital as “network ties of goodwill, mutual support, shared language, shared norms, social trust, and a sense of mutual obligation that people can derive value from. It is understood as the glue that holds together social aggregates such as networks of personal relationships, communities, regions, or even whole nations” (See Putman, 2000 also). Dasgupta (2000, p.398), observes that “social capital is useful insofar as it draws our attention to those particular institutions serving economic life that might otherwise go unnoted.”

with the number of partners, and nature of his sexual practices. Young females, according to folklore, are drawn to wealthy males. Similarly, young female's wealth, or perceived access to wealth, attract males. This is most likely because she employs the wealth to dress well, look good and use various symbol of wealth as a car and expensive electronic gadgets and/or because they hope to marry her and have access to her wealth.

The ambition to marry a wealthy partner is similarly projected by folklore to be sought after by young males in Nigeria, and is influential on sexual risk taking. As a result, young people's access to allocative resources, from parents, relatives (social capital) or personal industry (legal or illegal) facilitate their attraction and maintenance of sexual partners. This affirms structural enablement of sexual risks. Their lack of access to social capital conversely, limits their access, much less capacities to maintain sexual partners, and demonstrates structural constraints.

#### **3.4 Agency, power, action, (un)intended consequences and young people's sexual risk taking**

Human agency<sup>108</sup> is the ability or capacity of social actors to intentionally, reflexively, selectively and temporarily perform one action over another (Bandura, 1971 and 2001; see Giddens, 1981a&b and 1984 also). Social action from the agency perspective arises from different kinds of consciousness that are recognized by the structuration theory. These are discursive consciousness, practical consciousness and the unconscious as various foundations for social action (Giddens, 1984). Discursive consciousness approximates "what actors are able to say, or give verbal expression to, about social conditions, including especially the conditions of their own action; awareness which has a discursive form" (Giddens, 1984, p.374).

Thus, young people who are dissatisfied with their sexual states, and assuage it with one, or a combination of normative actions, such as abstinence, patronage of a CSW, masturbation, or sexual risk taking, can render personal accounts of influences, and make verbal meaning of their actions, with discursive consciousness. Social agents,

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<sup>108</sup> Agency is also defined as "the temporally constructed engagement of actors of different structural environments, the temporal-relational contexts of action which, through the interplay of habit, imagination, and judgment, both reproduces and transforms those structures in interactive response to the problems posed by changing historical situations (Emirbayer and Mische, 1998, p.970).

when asked, are also able to mobilize their discursive consciousness to discuss, rationalize and/or explain their sexualities, in manners that accept or abdicate responsibility, accentuate or diminish the significance or consequences of outcomes. Narratives may also embody vestiges of the preceding discursive renditions.

Practical consciousness, in turn, is “what actors know (believe) about social conditions, including especially the conditions of their own action, but cannot express discursively; no bar of expression, however, protects practical consciousness as is the case with the unconscious” (Giddens, 1984, p.375). Practical consciousness, therefore, represents the inherent capacities of young people to reflexively understand the concurrent structural constraints and enablement, but cannot express discursively, why they are more prone to the influence of one, and not the other. Practical consciousness covers the patterned heterosexual dating and sex initiation rituals that young people internalize, even though they are sometimes unable to elaborate upon their origins and course verbally.

Significantly, structuration conception of the unconscious is innovative. Unlike psychological conceptions of the unconscious, ego is adapted by structuration theory to mean habitual social activities, such as heterosexual dating sexual relationships. Applied to an investigation of sexual risk taking in Nigeria, the unconscious foundations of action are inherent in young people’s practical consciousness. Unconscious activities related to young people’s sexual risk taking has biological and social adaptation roots, which promotes young people’s mastery of the social world. The various consciousness states, discursive consciousness, practical consciousness and the unconscious, recognize that social actors do not always understand or give conscious thought to the full ramifications and outcomes of their sexual activities, due to perennial vested interests, contextual, spatial and temporal challenges.

Young people’s different consciousness states also draw from various global human emancipation projects and the mass media, ideas and practices for sexual risk taking. Typical sexual norms from a global world are those that divorce sex from marriage, and recommends sex for leisure and recreation. It is my experience, and intuitive, that local Nigerian structural institutions, such as the mass media, draw some of their sexualised operational themes from global interactions with via trade, the global

media, immigration and other inter-country interactions. Similarly, it is persuasive that the sale of sexualised branded goods/services, young people's patronage and consumption of these goods, including sexualised entertainment, predispose young people to sexual risk taking. This is one pathway<sup>109</sup> through which current young people sexual risks taking practices serve to validate, reinforce and reconstitute the same structures that initiated them in the first instance.

I am convinced that young are aware of the mutually (re)constitutive roles of their context and conducts, a consciousness I will elicit with interviews. It is also evidential that young people's sexual risk taking consciousness states evolved, is initiated, maintained, perhaps innovated upon, from a pool of past and current structural cues, including agency. This is because social agents "react creatively and interpretatively to processes of commodification which impinge on their lives" (Giddens, 1991, p.7-8), in this instance, their sexualisation. Consequently, I argue that young people's sexualisation and indeed sexual risk taking, paradoxically validate, challenge and reconstitute old and emerging sexual orders. In essence, multiple and variable influences, which are structural and agential in character, concurrently enable and constrain young people's sexual risk taking.

Young people's agencies mediate the push and pull of structural sexual risk taking constraints and opportunities. It is unequivocal that sexual risk taking is an agential activity, which "concerns events of which an individual is the perpetrator, in the sense that the individual could, at any phase in a given sequence of conduct, have acted differently" (Giddens, 1994, p.9). In essence, young people hold varying degrees of power to take or avoid sexual risk taking. This assertion invites a discussion of Giddens observations about power. Power is the ability of an agent "to act otherwise" or the ability of a social agent "to intervene in the world or to refrain from such intervention, with the effect of influencing a specific process or state of affairs" (Giddens, 1984, p.14). Moreover, Giddens conceives power in action relational two-way terms (Giddens, 1981a, p.110). That is:

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<sup>109</sup> Social agents reproduce sexual risk taking in a continuous manner across generations and institutions through this non-hierarchical socialisation, benefits perception, active agency, consequences and social discourse cycle.

"the use of power in interaction ... can be understood in terms of the facilities that participants bring to and mobilise as elements of the production of that interaction, thereby influencing its course... power within social systems can thus be treated *as involving reproduced relations of autonomy and dependence in social interaction*" (Giddens, 1979, p.93, original italics)

This conceptualisation of power promotes the investigation of gendered manifestations of power in sexual risk taking. In essence, an investigation of structures of domination, which according to Giddens, "involve asymmetries of resources employed in sustaining of power relations in and between systems of interaction" (1979, p.93). From a relational perspective, young males deploy privileging political-economic and gendered norms/power for the sexual exploitation, perhaps domination, of young females. Alternatively, the same investigation of structures of domination could reveal that young females exploit their sexualities, a definite form of power, to sexually command/control males, and/or meet felt needs for romantic relationships, social and material support. Therefore, I render power<sup>110</sup> empirically operational by linking it to:

"the notion of action ..., action intrinsically involves the application of 'means' to achieve outcomes, brought about through the direct intervention of an actor in a course of events" (Giddens, 1981a, p.110).

This relational paradigm of power conforms with Giddens injunction that "we have to relate power as a resource drawn upon by agents in the production and reproduction of interaction to the structural characteristics of society. Neither aspect of power is more 'basic' than the other" (Giddens, 1979, p.257). Power<sup>111</sup> "refers to interaction where transformative capacity *is harnessed to actors' attempts to get others to comply with their wants...*the capabilities of actors to secure outcomes where the realisation of these outcomes depends upon the agency of others" (Giddens, 1979, p.93, original italics). Power is dynamic, attracts and commands. Power is leveraged for (un)conscious, purposive and exploitative praxis. In relation to sexual risk taking, power is relational and gendered. Its exercise, trajectories and outcomes often depend on the extent of young people's sexualisation, variable agencies, relative charisma

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<sup>110</sup> Power is also "the capability of the actor to intervene in a series of events so as to alter their course; as such it is the 'can' which mediates between intentions and wants and the actual realization of the outcomes sought after".(Giddens, 1984, p.101).

<sup>111</sup> Rose describes power as the "knowledgeable undertaking everyday routine tasks through time and across space produced and reproduced the structures of society, the economy, the polity, and culture (Rose 1993, p.20).

(authority), perception of, and dispositions to sexual rules, norms and conventions, relative access to material resources, and experience of positive outcomes of sexual risk taking (action). Young people's sexual risk taking, safer sex practices with contraceptives and abstinence are elective forms of social action, with inherent and transposable power characteristics. Unprotected premarital sex, as a form of social praxis, attest to opportunities for the exercise of transformative and dominative power, which "is instantiated in action, as a regular and routine phenomenon" (Giddens, 1979, p.91).

In the context of structural duality, power derives from unequal asymmetries of knowledge, gender, resources, employed in transformative masculine domination of the social world. Thus, patriarchy or male domination of sexual relationships approximates the exercise of power, derived from masculine control of material resources to exploit women, sexually. For example, young Nigerian university male students reputedly leverage power, generated from the larger Nigerian society structural asymmetries, including gender, to get females to comply with their sexual wants. Female sexual acquiescence, in turn, depends primarily on female knowledge, unacknowledged conditions for action, purposive agencies, global and contextually meaningful felt needs.

Female sexual acquiescence is not driven by ignorance and utter powerlessness to avoid sexual risk taking or practice safe sex. Thus, young males' sexual domination of female by leveraging unequal asymmetries of recourse for transformative power, and feminine collusion in male sexual domination are examples of standardised practices and the exercise of variable power in social systems, which reproduces both sexual risk taking structures and the larger gendered "relations of autonomy and dependence in social interaction" (Giddens, 1979, p.93). Accordingly:

"a person or party who wields power *could* 'have acted otherwise', and the person or party over whom power is wielded ... *would* have acted otherwise" (Giddens, 1979, p.91, citing Luke, 1977), original italics).

Thus, transformative or dominative power does not obviate the possibility of autonomous, creative, independent and oppositional action or dissent. According to Giddens, "anyone who participates in a social relationship, forming part of a social



system ... necessarily sustains some control over the character of that relationship or system. Power relations in social systems can be regarded as relations of autonomy or dependence; but no matter how imbalanced they may be in terms of power, actors in subordinate positions are never wholly dependent, and often very adept at converting whatever resources they possess into some degree of control over the conditions of reproduction of the system". (Giddens, 1982, p.198-199).

Illustratively, a given young single and unmarried female, Miss X, engages in sexual risk taking out of peer pressure. If she becomes pregnant, her state will attract negative social commentary and sanctions. Yet Miss X may have elected sexual abstinence or used contraceptives, such as birth control pills, to avoid her state. Alternatively, she can terminate the pregnancy with illegal abortion. If she is unable to avoid or terminate the pregnancy, and it becomes public, Miss X can employ the counter-discourse of male sexual exploitation and domination to account for her state and powerlessness to avert it. Miss X can alternatively, carry the pregnancy to term, at the risk of negative social discourse, stigma or being ostracized from the family or community. This latter class of punishment are modern derivatives of harsher penalties imposed on those caught breaking premarital sexual norms in the traditional past.

This analogy demonstrates one pathway that other young people can learn about Miss X's condition, its cause and consequences. It also demonstrates sexual risk opportunities, constraints, action and consequences of Miss X agency to engage in premarital unprotected sex. It is possible that Miss X's neither pre-contemplated nor desired unprotected sex, pregnancy and/or the attendant social consequences. It is also possible that she did contemplate having sex without contraceptive for increased pleasure or because of pressure from her partner. Giddens conceptualizes this dilemma as unintended consequences of social action because:

“...the durezza of day-to-day life occurs as a flow of intentional action. However, acts have unintended consequences... unintended consequences may systematically feedback to be the unacknowledged conditions of further acts...” (Giddens, 1984, p.8).

Not all young people who engage in sexual risk taking, however, manifest unwanted consequences. Indeed, most young people do not experience undesirable sexual risk outcomes or are adept at managing them before they become public. The emergence and prevalence of HIV/AIDS however, challenge these assertions. The positive benefits of sexual risks are not discussed because premarital sex is normative immoral and prohibited for young people in Nigeria. The positive consequence of sexual risk taking does include pleasure, affection, securing future partners and earning money and so forth. Regardless, unintended consequences does emanate from purposeful young people's sexual activity as in Miss X example. In essence, because Miss X became pregnant (unintended consequences), due to her engagement in unprotected sex (action), for pleasure (intended consequence), due to peer pressure (influence), does not minimize her agency in any way. This is because agency in structuration terms implies power – that is social agent's capacity to act or desist from action, and not necessarily, intentions or (un)anticipated outcomes. According to Giddens, agency is about:

"events of which an individual could, at any phase in a given sequence of conduct, have acted differently" (Giddens, 1984, p.9).

I am convinced that most young people in Nigeria know the cause, course, benefits and consequences of unprotected premarital sex. It seems unequivocal therefore, that Miss X could have acted differently. She could have abstained from sex, irrespective of peer pressure, male domination or the possibility of securing an illegal abortion. Alternatively, Miss X could have utilised different types of contraceptives and condoms to prevent pregnancy or STIs. It is also possible that Miss X engaged in unprotected premarital sex deliberately to get pregnant and force her partner into marriage. Thus, Miss X has knowledge and awareness of some, if not all the structural possibilities and constraints of unprotected premarital sex.

My thesis will therefore, investigate those sexual risks taking acts "which its perpetrator knows, or believes, will have a particular quality or outcome and where such knowledge is utilized by the author of the act to achieve this quality or outcome" (Giddens, 1976, p.76) and their unintended counterparts. This is because the unintended consequences of young people's sexual risk taking disrupts their social and health development and excite body-polity discourse and interventions, which

inadvertently reflect, (re)produce, (re)constitutes and institutionalises young people's sexual risk taking in Nigeria.

### **3.5 Social (re)production of young people's sexual risk taking (structural duality)**

The main argument thus far, is that structural rules and resources have inherent capacities to enable or constrain agency in a manner that promote the maintenance, reproduction and reconstitution of social systems and practices, such as young people's sexual risk taking. From this perspective, social action, such as young people's sexual risk taking, derives from the interdependent functioning of structural opportunities and constraints subjectively accessed with agency (Rose, 1999) – making structure “both the medium and the outcome of the practices which constitute social systems” (Giddens 1981a, p.27).

Consequently, my thesis is about the structural (re)production of sexual risk taking in Nigeria, which I contend commences with recursive structural and self-sexualisation of young people, their positive predispositions to premarital sex, sexual risk taking activities and intended or unintended consequences cycle. The unintended consequences of sexual risk taking generate social discourse, which filters young people's sexual behaviour back into the social systems again. I illustrate this cycle with a linear peer influence model of sexual risk taking analogy.

First, I make the proposal that sexual risk taking norms arise when young people desire and/or perceive greater benefits than harm from given sexual practices. To illustrate this claim, let us assume Miss X exposure to an innovative sexual act labelled “Y” through her participation in a sexually themed research process (structural influence) as mine, a form of discourse. Sex oriented research is implicated in the (re)introduction and reinforcement of new/old sexual ideas, concepts and practices, which escape into the social system during legitimate and illegitimate social or scientific studies. According to Giddens:

“in the area of sexual discourse, more far-reaching in their effects than the openly propagandist texts advising on the search for sexual pleasure are those reporting on, analysing and commenting about sexuality in practice” Giddens(1992, p.29).

Assuming that Miss X finds behaviour “Y” intriguing or desirable, functional or advantageous, and is an early adopter, she proceeds to adopt and/or discuss behaviour “Y” with intimate friends. Among her peers, behaviour “Y” may attain commendable or condemnable consensus or status. If behaviour “Y” is condemned, Miss X’s peer group will generate social norms that will sanction it. If it is accepted, the same peer group will evolve norms that reward its practice. As a result, Miss T, a member of Miss X peer group, will perceive that her peers will hold her in low esteem and/or she will lose peer status, if she does not engage in the peer-approved act “Y”.

When a sufficient number of Miss “X” peers adopt or reject behaviour “Y”, a sexual risk taking norm or sanction arises. Both the behaviour “Y” and the emanating negative consequences, if pervasive, will stimulate varied social discourse about behaviour “Y”. When a sufficient number of adults controlled structural institutions perceive behaviour “Y” as threatening to the social sexual order, they will evolve policies, initiate interventions and laws that sanctions and mitigates behaviour “Y”. The whole process inadvertently publicizes behaviour “Y” to the extent that young people ignorant of it previously. They may become acquainted and intrigued enough to adopt behaviour “Y”. This process is recursive and demonstrates how social life/institutions, young people’s sexual praxis, consequences and related discourse initiate, maintain and sustain sexual risk taking as durable influential social systems. Giddens’ calls the process the recursiveness or self-repeating nature of social life (Giddens 1976, p.161).

Giddens’ notion of plastic sexuality also illustrates the cycle and transformative capacities of structurally influenced sexual risk taking (agential acts) into durable and/or (re)constituted structural forms concretely (Giddens, 1992). The increased availability of all types of contraceptive technologies including legal or illegal abortions (both structural elements), for example, have the unintended effects of liberating the sexual act from the exigencies of procreation and repeated pregnancies. Sexual acts are thus, uprooted from their traditional procreation base by extant contraceptive revolution and affirmative human rights projects. Sexualities are now individual properties and privilege to be dispensed or withheld at will, unlike the historic past when it was embedded in procreation, family and lineages. Young people

in this context take more sexual risks because they can control<sup>112</sup> pregnancy, STI and avoid HIV/AIDS with modern contraceptives and/or abortion.

### 3.6 Challenges of structuration theory

Anthony Giddens structuration theory espouses three basic themes that distinguishes it from other theories in the social sciences (Giddens 1984, p.xvi), and simultaneously lend it to sustained criticisms. The first is the refutation of dominant social science perspectives, which present social agents as ignorant and pushed to act by structure. The second is the elevation of various cognitive faculties of social agents that are embedded in language, social symbols and action. The third is the refutation of natural science empiricist philosophies applied to the social problems, praxis and social order. In essence, structuration theory advances the triple concepts of *instantiation of action*, *duality of structure*, to be elicited with research methodologies that leverage social agents' *discursive structural penetration* of their contexts and conducts, for meaningful deconstruction of social interactions (see Giddens, 1979:1984).

Thus, instead of the Durkheimian preoccupation with social determinism or Marxian structural determinism, structuration draws investigative attention to the combined efforts of structural institutions and young people's agencies, which produces sexual risk taking practice. As a result, like all grand theories, structuration<sup>113</sup> conceptualisations of influence, knowledge, action and outcomes are criticized for its complexity and overlapping of concepts. Archer, (1995), typifies this class of criticism against structuration theory. According to her, Giddens uncritically conflates structure and agency, in a manner that precludes the "examination of their interplay, of the effects of one upon the other and of any statement about their relative contribution to stability and change at any given time" (Archer, 1995, p.14).

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<sup>112</sup> To reiterate an earlier point, sexual risk taking is more that (in)consistent use of condoms and contraceptives. Other symptomatic behaviour include include early age at first sex, or marriage; having multiple/concurrent sexual partners; engagement in cross-generational sex and inconsistent use of contraceptives and condoms (see UNAIDS, 1998a, p.9).

<sup>113</sup> John Parker, contend "that the moment of 'structuration' theory passed some time ago. It still figures prominently in routine social theoretical talk, but its force is only that of a tired conventional wisdom" (Parker, 2000, p.x).

In addition, Archer criticises what she calls Giddens employment of linguistic metaphor to explain “every aspect of ‘structure’ ... held to be activity dependent in the present tense and equally open to transformation, and . . . dependent upon its evocation by agency” (Archer, 1995, p.60). This criticism of structuration theory leverage of language to understand (dis)order seems unnecessary. Hermeneutic interpretive traditions remind us that “language is the universal medium in which understanding occurs” (Gadamer, 1989, p.389). I am convinced that all social experience, and action, is meaningful, understandable, encoded, narrated, filtered, communicated, and reinterpreted through the inevitable medium of language.

In relation to the idea of instantiation of action advanced by structuration theory, Layder observes that “instantiation criterion drains the concept of 'reproduction' of meaning” (Layder, 1985, p.143-144) because Giddens presumes that reproduced relations in social systems only come into being at the moment of their (re)production, when the concept of reproduction implies they already exist. This critique is stretched because according to Giddens:

“the constitution of agents and structures are not two independently given sets of phenomena, a dualism but represent a duality ... Structure is not 'external' to individuals: as memory traces, and as instantiated in social practices, it is in a certain sense more 'internal' than exterior to their activities in a Durkheimian sense. Structure is not to be equated with constraint but is always both constraining and enabling” (Giddens, 1984, p.25).

Another class of critique draws attention to Giddens non-substantive specification of “the concrete social elements which are to count as predominantly structural” because it is not “obvious what 'virtual' existence means, and so we cannot say whether the relation between structure and system is generative and causal, or (by contrast) expressive and logical.” (McLennan, 1984, p.127; see Layder, 1981; Urry, 1982; Thompson, 1984 and 1989; Archer, 1995 for similar opinions). Similarly, Cohen observes that “the analytical components of structuration theory provide no explanatory propositions pertaining to substantive theory or history itself,” and makes for “explanatory adequacy” (Cohen 1986, p.127). Furthermore, structuration theory is said to be ill equipped to advance empirical studies because it fails to delineate “which structures, what agencies, in what sequences” they combine to (re)produce praxis and themselves (McLennan 1984, p.124-125). A similar criticism relates to Thompson’s

insistence that structuration theory evokes more confusion than it dispels, obscuring in the process, some critical issues (Thompson, 1989). Macintosh and Scapens provide a fitting response to these critiques:

“... structuration theory does not provide final answers to the key question in social theory. It does not, for instance, tell us which dimensions of structure are primary and which are secondary, or whether agency has primacy over structure or vice versa. This, however, may be strength of structuration theory in that it does not attempt to privilege particular theoretical positions. Rather, it permits the researcher to explore the issues in specific time-space locations and to develop theories in relation to particular contexts” (Macintosh and Scapens (1990, p.469)

Giddens equally defends his seeming non-clarity about the components of structuration process by outlining potential empirical research issues for structuration sensitive projects. According to Giddens, "a structurationist programme of research for modern social science" will:

“concentrate upon the orderings of institutions across time and space, ...analyse social systems in terms of shifting modes of institutional articulation, ...be continuously sensitive to the reflexive intrusions of knowledge into the conditions of social reproduction, ... and" be oriented to the impact of its own research upon the social practices and forms of social organization it analyses” (Giddens 1989, p.300).

Furthermore, Giddens seem critical of wholesale attempts “to import structuration theory *in toto* into their given area of study”, recommending instead selective application of “concepts, either from the logical framework of structuration theory, or other aspects of my writings ... used in a sparing and critical fashion” (Giddens, 1991, p.213).

The notion of structural duality as empirical methodological research brackets for structuration theory (Giddens, 1979;1984) also drew negative comments from scholars who view the postulation as an obvious reintroduction of the structure-agency debate "through the back door" (Archer, 1995, p.87-88; see also Bagguley, 1984; Layder,1994). In this regard, Parker proposes to replace structuration theory duality of structure with structural and agential dualism, which admits the differences between agency and structure, and addresses Giddens duality tenet, which conflates agency and structure (Parker, 2000). In addition, Urry raises questions about the potentials to investigate structure based on its presentation as rules and resources

“when that structure never produces an unmediated set of effects” that would confirm its existence (Urry, 1982, p.102). Both Parker (2000) and Urry’s (1982) criticism of structuration theory seem a retrospective move towards methodological individualism, “the comfort of established views” which can “easily be a cover for intellectual sloth” (Giddens, 1984, p.xxii), which structuration theory seeks to avert.

Poignantly, structuration theory is criticised for ignoring the roles of intermediate variables as race, age, class and gender the influence of knowledge and action (Gregory 1994, p.111; see Alcoff, 1991 also). These meso-variables hint at differentiated knowledge, access to resources and power bases available to social agents, which can limit consciousness and agency (Thrift, 1985; Wilson and Huff, 1994). In this regard, Rose, comments, “the everyday routines traced by women are never unimportant, because the seemingly banal and trivial events of the everyday are bound into the power structures which limit and confine women.” (Rose, 1993, p.17). Structuration theory’s neglect of meso-variables may have influenced the criticism that it represents the value-laden knowledge, practice and outcome of “white, heterosexual male domination of the western knowledge industry” (Sibley 1995, p.115). This latter criticism is a product of emphasis of empirical structuration research on white heterosexual males. Similarly, Gregory observes that “Giddens’ conception of human subjectivity is not only insufficiently attentive to the process of gendering but also installs at its centre a model of subject-formation drawn from a profoundly masculine version of psychoanalytic theory (Gregory, 1994, p.111).

In “Profiles and critiques in social theory”, Giddens comment directly upon the inequalities in power, resources and knowledge inherent in human relations, but cautions that no social agent is ever powerless (Giddens, 1982; 1984). Elsewhere, he acknowledges the fact that even though he has “simply not accorded questions of gender the attention they undeniably deserve ... gender is constructed and reconstructed in the flow of interaction in day-to-day social life” (Giddens, 1989, p.282-285). The preceding reality makes gender patterns an inevitable constituent of patterned social practices that structuration theory attempts to deconstruct.



In other words, gender “should not be thought of as a property of individual agents... *because the ...criteria for gender identity are embedded in the recurrent practices whereby institutions are structured*” (Giddens, 1989, p.285, words in italics are mine). Moreover, I interpret Giddens’ observation that “there are constraints involved with the operation of power (which concern the resource/sanction aspects of social systems)” (Giddens, 1989, p.258; see also Giddens, 1984, p.179) as sensitivity to the empirical research imperative, which demand the deconstruction of a historically imbalanced/self perpetuating knowledge, resource, power and gender arrangements, and indeed, the existential realities of marginal or vulnerable sub-populations.

Structuration rendition of the notion of power is also criticised as too malleable, leading Layder to call for counter notions of structural power, which is "not simply a negotiable outcome of routine and concrete interactions and relationships" (Layder, 1985, p.146). To criticisms of malleability, Giddens replies, “all sanctions, no matter how oppressive and comprehensive they may be, demand some kind of acquiescence from those subject to them” (Giddens, 1984, p.175). Adapted to sexual risk taking research, this means that no young person is powerless to abstain or engage in sexual risk taking. Feminist’s scholars also attempt to re-sensitize structuration theory in various initiatives that sought to address the lack of attention to intermediate variables (meso) that impinge social action. Feminist researchers sought to enthrone a "different way of knowing" (Dyck, 1990, p.465), which challenges patriarchy and reveals "ways in which social groups and identities interact with political, economic, and social processes" (Staeheli, 1994, p.131).

Accordingly, a guide “to identify and analyze the positionalities of individuals with respect to the structures that shape and define society" (Staeheli, 1994, p.133) were called for that should draw attention to the reality of social agents variable and unequal knowledge construction. For example, “the notion of a sexual division of labour ... a refinement of the concept of reproduction further sensitizes our understanding of the local context in which the women of the study live, and within which their knowledge of their social and geographical worlds are constructed Dyck, 1990, p.460). Particularly important to Dyck is the contingent and mutable nature of knowledge to particular locales, and gendered division of labour, which inevitably impinges on social relationships (Dyck, 1990, p.459).

Other evaluations of structuration theory censure its lack of interest “in the cultural politics of postmodernism” (which includes class, racism, culture, gender, class and emotion (Gregory, 1994, p.123; see also Dear and Moss 1994). To these critics, crediting social agent with reflexive thought processes, which neglects the co-presence of emotions in social action, limits the utility of structuration theory. For example, structuration theory ignores “the emotional, the passionate, the disruptive, and the feelings of relations with others” (Rose 1993, p.28). In the final analysis, structuration theory’s indirect specification of the intermediate variables, such as race, emotions, class and gender is remedied by Stones’ (2005) rendition of the theory for empirical research projects. This is discussed next.

### **3.7 Overcoming challenges - adapting Stones’ empirical research brackets**

For Giddens, the task of social theory is “providing conceptions of the nature of human social activity and of the human agent which can be placed in the service of empirical work” (Giddens, 1984, p.xvii). Based on the various critiques of structuration theory, the task of illuminating “conceptions of the nature of human social activity and of the human agent” (Giddens, *ibid*) with structuration theory seem problematic. The central concern of structuration theory appraisal, is basically the specification of “*who* did what, *when*” and why questions (Parker, 2000, p.84, original emphasis). These are to be related to “*which* structures, *what* agencies, the influence *sequences* (McLennan, 1984, p.125, original emphasis) the nature of (re)produce outcomes and how these combine to promote further praxis and maintain influential structures. Stones, (2005) address these challenges in his:

“revised project of structuration” which “incorporates central elements of Giddens’ original exposition, and continues the spirit of that project, but it also advances and consolidates that spirit: by more carefully delineating the scope of the structuration project; by these developing and reconfiguring some of the older concepts that fall within these parameters; by adding a substantial number of new complementary conceptual categories; and, finally, by thinking more systematically about the relation of each of these elements to questions of methodology, evidence, and the specificity of research orientations” (Stones, 2005, p.1).

Stones’ revised project of structuration addresses the criticisms levelled at structuration theory by reconstructing structuration “ontology”<sup>114</sup>-in-general and

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<sup>114</sup> Nature and relations of being.

pointing it towards the ontic, towards the realm of particular concrete and/or situated entities in the world with particular qualities, relations, shapes, tone, texture, colour and so on” (Stones, 2005, p.76). In essence, Stones renders structuration theory more amenable to empirical research by suggesting three research interests or levels. These are the abstract level, which generally guides empirical research, the meso-level, where concrete and situated actors thrive in complexity and the ontic level that pass through the abstract and meso-levels (Stones, 2005, p.76-77).

Adapted to my quest to isolate the influences on young people’s sexual risk taking in Nigeria, Stones’ structuration empirical research brackets requires that I describe the dominant and oppositional sexual culture, the statuses of their beneficiaries and opponents in Nigeria. In unpacking the local sexual context (“ontic in-situ”), indications of (un)intended consequences of young people’s sexuality are additionally unpacked. The unpacking of local sexual contexts also illuminates young people (social agents), knowledge of structural constraints and opportunities on their sexuality. Locating young people’s socially constructed subordinate statuses and related position-practices, (meso-level variables), requires the “combination of hermeneutics and structural diagnostics” to specify the influences on young people’s sexual risk taking, as a social system, and their inherent interrelationships, whose detail delimits “the scope and scale of” my structuration sensitive study (Stones, 2005, p.81). In essence, structural-hermeneutic diagnosis facilitates the deconstruction of structural duality, related to influences on young people’s risk prone sexualities, with special attention paid to:

“processes which can produce durable structures, regular patterns of interaction and developmental tendencies with relatively high predictability on the one hand, and volatile, unstable, randomized, quick-changing unpredictability on the other” (Parker, 2000, p.107).

The ontic (real) level stratification are exemplified by (un)intended consequences (outcomes) of young people’s sexual risk taking, which impacts upon the abstract (external influences) and meso-level (position-practice) variables. For example, real negative consequences of young people’s sexualities such as unwanted pregnancy and STIs excites social commentary, discourse and interventions, which concurrently impacts local contexts (abstract stratification), young people’s (pre)disposition to

sexual risks (position-practices or meso-level variables), sexual risk taking (agency) and consequences in self-perpetuating cycles. Thus, Stones proposes four analytically related facets of structural duality,<sup>115</sup> for empirical research, while keeping faith with the substance of Giddens structuration theory. These are external structures, internal structures, active agency and, outcomes of action. These differentially combine to influence recursive action (see Stones, 2005, p.84-85).

### **3.7.1 External structures<sup>116</sup> of young people's sexual risk taking**

External structures thrive independently of young people, are influential and provide contexts for sexual risk taking. These structural elements are variable, operate on a larger spatial and time scale and have significant extant and historical impact on sexual behaviour. In a fashion, external structures are the custodians of cultural memory. Examples of external structures are globalisation, modernity/plastic sexuality and socialisation institutions such as the mass media and family. These exemplify Giddens structures of domination, which evolve from, and serve to validate and institutionalise unequal asymmetries of knowledge, resources, social rules and power. Young people draw their sexual risk taking knowledge and practices through their (in)advertent sexualisation by structural institutions. Conversely, young people's sexual risk praxis influences these institutions.

### **3.7.2 Internal structures of young people's sexual risk taking**

Principally, young people's subordinate social statuses influence their internal structures. Young people's internal structures evolve and are sustained by their pursuit of collective and individuated ends, which necessitates the regularly adoption, adaptation and rejection given sexual dispositions and practices (Cohen, 1989). Internal structures contextually and spatially connect young people as sexual risk takers in time and space. That is, current young people's sexual risk repertoires are linkable to the "ghost of networked others that continually informs action" (Thrift,

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<sup>115</sup> These are condensed and more streamlined version of Giddens elaboration of ten "guidelines for the overall orientation of social research" (Giddens, 1984, p.281-354), and his further simplification of the guidelines to three - contextual sensitivity, complexity of human intentionality and the intricacy of social constraint (Giddens 1991, p.311). To these he adds as "most generally relevant to social research", the reproduction of social practices, dialectic of control, and discursive penetration of social agents and double hermeneutic of the research process (Giddens, 1991, p.313).

<sup>116</sup> To reiterate, external structures are "institutions, conceived of as regularised practices which are 'deeply layered' in time and space, both pre-exist and post-date the lives of the individuals who reproduce them, and thus may be resistant to manipulation or change by any particular agent" (Thompson. 1989, p.72-73).

1996, p.54). For example, young people draw from dominant sexual norms in Nigeria, the idea that insistence on condom use signifies distrust and promiscuity of a partner. The outcome of this knowledge/practice is that young people are unwilling to use and/or negotiate condom use for premarital sex, which places them at risks of STIs and unwanted pregnancy.

Stones' suggests that internal structures are of two analytical kinds. He describes the first type as the "conjuncturally specific knowledge of external structures," and the second type as the "general-disposition" to external structures (Stones, 2005, p.85). Young people's conjuncturally specific or positional knowledge of external structures evolve over time. Young people (un)consciously source knowledge in context, from cultural memory traces, perceives it from current adult attitude towards them, and their subordinate status or positions in society. "That is, knowledge of the interpretive schemes, power capacities, and normative expectations and principles of the agents within context" (Stones, 2005, p.91). For example, to speak of young people connotes their positional identities and the patterned construction as immature risks takers.

In addition, young people's social status and associated normative expectations "form a link between structure and agency" (Cohen, 1989, p.210). For example, young people are simultaneously constructed as cherished resource and as at risk to themselves, to other young people, and to dominant social values (see Kelly, 2000a, 2000b, 2003). This at-risk construction of young people, paradoxically, validates the self-fulfilling prophecy, in relation to young people and sexual risk taking. In essence, adult society normative expectations of young people as immature risk takers influence their sexual risk taking. Furthermore, young people leverage their social constructed positions as immature/cherished resources for sexual risk taking, its rationalizations, and to diffuse responsibilities for their actions, transferring responsibilities mostly to external influences. Young people also leverage their social construction as immature/cherished resources to construct personal/collective fables about sexual risk taking and other delinquencies, which minimize the occurrence of unintended consequences from their sexual risk taking.

General dispositions, on the other hand, are (un)consciously drawn upon, but constituted from "...transposable skills and dispositions, including generalized world-

views and cultural schemas, classifications, typifications of things, peoples and networks, principles of action, typified recipes of action, deep binary frameworks of signification, associative chains and connotations of discourse, habits of speech and gesture, and methodologies for adapting this range of particular practices in particular locations in time and space” (Stones, 2005, p.88). General dispositions are similarly, derived from cultural memory traces, sexualisation, personality and experience. They are often “taken-for-granted...unnoticed” and unquestioned (Stones, 2005, p.88). For example, I speculate that most young people in Nigeria are generally favourably predisposed to sexual risk taking.

Combined, young people’s “*conjuncturally specific knowledge of external structures*” and “*general-dispositions*” (Stones, 2005, p.85) to sexual risk taking are expected to influence sexual risk taking in Nigeria. That is, they promote young people's perception of, practical and narrative penetration of their roles, normative expectations, opportunities, constraints, and sanctions of social life drawn from collective cultural “memory traces” (Giddens, 1984, p.17). The manner in which young people leverage conjuncturally specific knowledge of external structures are also influenced by needs, gender, tribe, religion, emotion, knowledge and so forth (intermediate variables).

### **3.7.3 Active agency and young people’s sexual risk taking**

Agency is interrelated with different structural influences, yet it is distinct and not synonymous with unfettered freewill. In addition, agency is not necessarily conflict or resistance prone. De Certeau empirical conceptualisation of agency as strategies and tactics is very relevant to sexual risk taking research (De Certeau, 1984; De Certeau, Jameson and Lovitt, 1980). Adopting De Certeau's conceptualisation of action also illuminates the gendered nature of sexual risk taking. Strategy refers to the capacity of institutions, and indeed individuals, to manipulate structural resources and rules to achieve long-term external goals. For example, a young female's engagement in unprotected sex to secure a potential male for marriage is strategic.

Tactics in contrast, is deliberate action influenced by internal demands. Tactics operate within the limitations imposed by external structures, but is not determined by them. Tactics is instantaneous, flexible, and opportunistic and produces fleeting or

short-term benefits, and sometimes-negative outcomes. For example, it possible to conceive a young male's constant quest and willingness to have sex as tactical action, because it satisfies immediate sexual urges. Based on the foregoing conceptualisation of agency, I argue that young people's sexual risk taking embody strategic and tactical characteristics. That is, "each individual is a locus in which an incoherent (and often contradictory) plurality of... relational determinations interact" (De Certeau, 1984, p.xi). From this perspective, no young person is powerless in relation to taking sexual risks, practising safe sex or abstaining from sexual risks taking. Young people's agency also attests MacLeod's conception that women:

"even as subordinate players, always play an active part that goes beyond the dichotomy of victimization/acceptance, a dichotomy that flattens out a complex and ambiguous agency in which women accept, accommodate, ignore, resist, or protest-sometimes all at the same time" (MacLeod 1992, p.534).

#### **3.7.4 Outcome of young people's sexual risk taking**

The outcome of young people's sexual risk taking covers the intended and unintended consequences of sexual risk taking. These, in turn, include benefits such as pleasure, peer acceptance/popularity, and the earning material rewards. Unwanted outcomes include STIs, HIV, unwanted pregnancies, early marriage and disrupted development. Outcome of young people's sexual risk taking serve to render sexual risk taking more visible, paradoxically normative and legitimate via social discourse and behaviour change interventions. The normative status of sexual risk taking influences further risk taking among other young people. Illuminating the pathways through which the discussed influences recursively operate requires a theory and methodology sensitive to the structural and agential influences on young Nigerian university students' sexual risk taking, which is structuration theory.

#### **3.8 Conclusion**

In this chapter, I discuss structuration theory's postulation of a (re)constitutive interrelationship between agency and structure (Giddens, 1979; 1984). This core proposition support my conceptualization of young people's sexual risk taking, as concurrently influenced by structure and agency, in a manner that does not pre-problematise it, like other linear research approaches, such as sensation seeking. I justify my reconceptualization of young people's risk-prone sexualities by illustrating how it is concurrently influenced by structure, which "forms 'personality' and 'society'

simultaneously – but in neither case exhaustively: because of the significance of unintended consequences of action, and because of unacknowledged conditions of action" (Giddens, 1979, p.70).

The dominant sexual reproductive health approaches, which I reviewed in chapter two, systematically ignore the complex and mutually (re)constitutive interrelationship between structure and agency, especially the notion that they are concurrently constraining and enabling of sexual risk taking. Adapting Giddens' conceptualization of structure and agency as a duality, I argue that young people are influenced into sexual risk taking by their contexts (i.e. structure), but are concurrently involved, through their sexual dispositions and conducts (i.e. agency), in validating, re-creating, maintaining and challenging the same influential structures. I underline that the recursive influences of structure and agency on sexual risk taking proceeds in a manner that is not completely predetermined, rational nor voluntary.

Furthermore, I discuss theoretical and empirical weaknesses associated with structuration theory. One such weakness is related to the claim that structuration theory is non-propositional and conflationary (see Archer, 1995). To mitigate such criticisms, I adapted Stones (2005) re-conceptualization of structuration theory for empirical research. Stones' rendition of structuration theory make it more amenable to empirical research, necessary to illuminate the influences on young people's sexual risk taking. By recasting sexual risk taking as concurrently influenced by structure and agency, and by adapting Stones rendition of *strong structuration* for empirical research (Stones, 2005), I simultaneously highlight the illogicality of treating agency and structure as empirically and analytically exclusive variables on one hand, and conceiving young people's sexual risk taking as influenced either by structure or agency alone, on the other.

I sum-up the chapter with the argument that structuration theory is best suited to unpack the complex influences on young people's risk-prone sexualities. This is because unlike other grand theories, structuration theory specifies that structure and agency are mutually influential, constitutive, transformational and relational (see Giddens, 1979:1984). In essence, I stipulate my intent to leverage structuration theory to increase my grasps of young people's worldview and understanding of how their



contexts and conducts concurrently and repeatedly influence their risk-prone sexualities. Confirming or refuting the preceding claim demands a creative and robust research methodology, which I discussed next, in chapter 4.

## Chapter 4

### Methodology

#### 4.1 Introduction

Four assumptions guide my narrative data collection. The first is that premarital sex is risky<sup>117</sup> to either one, and/or all parties involved. In addition, Nigerians conceptualise premarital sex and negative outcomes, such as HIV/AIDS and unwanted pregnancies, as influenced by immorality.<sup>118</sup> Young people,<sup>119</sup> even those that engage in premarital sex, share this view. The second assumption is that multiple<sup>120</sup> variables differentially combine to influence young people's risk-prone sexualities. Rarely does one variable alone, for example poverty, account for sexual risk taking. The third assumption is that young people's socialisation<sup>121</sup> influences sexual risk taking in Nigeria. This is a paradoxical claim, which is verifiable by a close examination of gender socialisation, sexual attitudes/folklores, behaviour, norms and activities embodied in cultural memory and socialisation practices. Traditional socialization agents are also blameworthy because their view of premarital sex as immoral recommends its secret practise, denies young people access to information and necessary sexual health products.

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<sup>117</sup> I adapt UNAIDS (1998a, p.9) categorization of sexual risk behaviour to define sexual risk taking as behaviour and acts that predispose young people to unwanted pregnancies and acquiring sexually transmitted infections (STIs), which can lead to their disrupted development, ill-health and death. Such activities include early age at first sex, or marriage; having multiple/concurrent sexual partners; engagement in cross-generational sex and inconsistent use of contraceptives and condoms.

<sup>118</sup> Smith, citing different authors, proffers likely explanations for Nigerians conception of premarital sex as products of immoral behaviour preceding HIV/AIDS, which is linkable "to complex political economic issues such as the disappointments of development and democracy (Achebe 1983, Orewa 1997, Nwankwo 1999), the decline in economic well-being following the collapse of Nigeria's oil boom in the 1970s (Watts 1992), and tensions between kin that emerge with urbanization and exacerbated inequality (Bastian 1993) (Smith, 2004a, p.426).

<sup>119</sup> In addition, Smith advances reason for young people's ambivalent conception of premarital sex as both immoral and inevitable in Nigeria. According to him "on the one hand, parental, family, and religious messages assert that sex before marriage is immoral; on the other hand, premarital sexuality is associated with modern, educated, urban lifestyles (Smith, 2004b, p.224; see also Smith, 2004a).

<sup>120</sup> That is, one cannot attribute young people's sexual risk taking to variable X or Y solely – where the alphabets represent sexual risk taking influential factors. Instead, variable X, Y X, and/or F combine under different circumstances and on different young people to produce sexual risk taking. For example, it may be rare to attribute a young person's sexual risk taking act to sensation seeking alone. Usually unaccounted for are other influential factors such as peer pressure, gender norms, and poverty to explain a particular young person is sexual risk acts.

<sup>121</sup> For example, the mass-media-industrial-marketing-complex, educational system, the family, body politic, religious/pressure, and peer groups.

The fourth assumption is that there are linkages between current young people's sexual risk taking in Nigeria with their previous generational peers, which manifest as institutional and discursive continuities. Combined, these assumptions imply that young people's sexual risk taking in Nigeria is both a structural and agency in origin, and is best understood and explained with structuration theory, which is discussed earlier in literature review and continuously referenced subsequently.

To reiterate an earlier point, structuration theory as a sensitizing research model, is concerned with time and space bound structural and agential influences on action, such as sexual risk taking, and their mutually reconstitutive properties. Applied to empirical data collection, structuration theory invites clarification of influences on (and their interdependencies) young people's risk-prone sexualities, which are external, internal, agency and outcome in nature (Stones, 2005). Because social agents are embedded meaningfully in structural contexts, which offer both opportunities and constraints for action, methodological and interpretative primacy will not be accorded to agential or structural influences independently. Young people's contexts and conducts therefore, matter equally.

Thus, I approach the task of specifying young people's contexts and conducts through in-depth multiple case study research design,<sup>122</sup> which engages young people interactively, in the deconstruction of what I consider interrelated influences on their sexual risk taking. I adapt Stones' (2005) structuration empirical research brackets to McCracken's (1988) long interview<sup>123</sup> data collection technique, in a semi-structured questions format, to collect narrative data from young Nigerian university students. The main objective<sup>124</sup> is to elicit students' own perspectives on their risk-taking in sexual activity. The long interview is designed to elicit what O'Donnell and

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<sup>122</sup> Research design is defined as a "strategy...for undertaking a systematic exploration of the phenomenon of interest" (Marshall & Rossman, 1999, p.62) or as a "plan and structure of the investigation used to obtain evidence to answer research questions" (McMillan and Schumacher, 1997, p.33).

<sup>123</sup> The long interview is discussed in detail subsequently herewith in research method sub-chapter four (no 4) – titled data Collection Method: The long interviews.

<sup>124</sup> A second objective was to situate the study, respondents and their narratives within the context of dominant abstinence driven cultural norms on young people's sexuality in Nigeria and other national strategies deployed to mitigate sexual risk taking, especially the unintended outcomes, such as unwanted pregnancies, sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and HIV/AIDS in particular.

Cummins (1999) regard as robust narratives emanating from open and detailed discussions of a social issue (see Underwood, 2003 also).

Long interviews also facilitate the illumination of the complexities of young people's context and conducts in manner that advances the critical comparison of sexual risk activities across different Nigerian sub-regions (Adams et al., 1998; Leonard-Barton, 1990). The long interview also supports hypotheses and plausible theory suggestion (Glaser, 1965, p.438), based on the analysis and interpretation of empirical data, to confirm or refute my presumption of the structuration of young people's sexual risk taking in Nigeria. In essence, the long interview method facilitates the explanation, description<sup>125</sup> and plausible theoretical generalizations about young people's sexual risk behaviour.

Explanation and understanding, although interchangeably used in social studies, offer two distinct versions of social reality, which locate young people's sexual risk taking within a "right complex of meaning" framework (Hollis and Smith 1990, p.78-79, 200). Explaining presupposes the positivist traditions of the natural sciences. Explaining is deployed to investigate the causal powers of structural institutions, which exist independently, in time and space, but are brought to life during praxis. Furthermore, explaining facilitate the possibility of "generating and plausibly suggesting (not provisionally testing) many properties and hypotheses about" unprotected premarital sex or sexual risk taking (Glaser, 1965, p.438). Furthermore, explaining with contrast facilitate the verification or refutation of plausibly generated hypotheses, such as the structuration of sexual risk taking (Hollis 1994).

Understanding in contrast, encourage an interpretive hermeneutic stance of analyzing social action to capture the subjective and/or collective meanings of relational action and power, which young people, as social agents, discursively assign to structural enablement and constrain on one hand, their actions and its consequences, on the

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<sup>125</sup> Because the nature and source of sexual knowledge and action is intrinsically open and interactive, explanatory/descriptive research stance will best illuminate sexual risk taking. Explanatory/descriptive empirical research stance promote an understanding, description and explanation of young people's sexual risk with a reference to literature and narratives of young people that make-up the study population (Schnore, 1961). In addition, all social science research projects are themselves repetitive or recursive products of the social structure that (re)constitutes the very subject studied and vice-versa (research as internally self-referential, Giddens, 1992).

other, in an interconnected but non-sequential loop. In classical terms, understanding as a research framework, unlike explaining, precludes the study of society with the positivist methods and theories of the natural sciences (Hollis 1994, p.143-162; Hollis and Smith 1990, p.68-91; Lundquist 1993, p.42). Nonetheless, I do not apply the explaining and understanding research frameworks as dialectically oppositional frameworks. This is because I am persuaded by Wendt's proposal that the social sciences adopt a broader conceptualisation of *explaining*, which cover the causal and non-causal (constitutive) explanations (Wendt, 1998, p.117) of praxis, social order and disorder.

Following Wendt's proposal (Wendt, *ibid*), I apply the long interview method in an eclectic fashion, calculated to accommodate and maintain "epistemological openness" (Layder, 1998, p.41). This eclectic approach imposes on my research, a disciplined awareness of, and a critical reflection on the diverse and multiple<sup>126</sup> explanations and understandings of human praxis (Lundquist 1993, p.79), such as sexual risk taking. Such explanations and understandings ought to be derived from hermeneutically generated narrative accounts, which are juxtaposed against dominant sexuality literature. Specifically, such narrative data are collected from young people who admit involvement in, are capable of, and willing to render their subjective reconstructions of influences on their risk-prone sexualities. This is done in the best traditions of multiple case study research (Yin, 1984). Multiple case study research additionally advances the larger development studies normative and interdisciplinary character, especially the emphasis on a "comparative work, both theoretical and empirical...within a unified social science" (Mills, 1959, p.138).

Although case studies have been criticised for precluding generalizations that are of global utility, they are nevertheless useful for making contextual cross-sectional analysis and conditional generalizations about processes underlying social action, such as sexual risk taking. In this regard, my case study approach adopts Flyvbjerg's "power of the good example" recommendations (Flyvbjerg, 1991, p.149), for enhanced comparative study of, understanding and explanation of the complex

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<sup>126</sup> The literature review discusses the strength and limitations of dominant young people's sexual risk taking constructs.

interrelationships between recursively operational structural and agential influences on young people's sexual risk taking (Yin, 1994). The data collected from young people's sexual risk taking case studies in Nigeria however, will not mistake "local conventions for universal truths" (Gergen and Gergen, 2000, p.1032).

Instead, the cases are purposefully chosen for their critical bearings on the research problem, which is sexual risk taking. In essence, if research indicates that young people in Nigeria are influenced by "A" and/or "B", third parties may critique my research findings, deductions and conclusion on empirical grounds only related to my case studies, and not previously established and so-called universalizable truths. This is because "the causal conditions involved in generalizations about human social conduct are inherently unstable in respect of the very knowledge (or beliefs) that actors have about the circumstances of their own action" (Giddens, 1984, p.xxxii). This makes it harder, perhaps impossible, to generate hard cause and effect conclusions. Furthermore, the Nigeria case studies can furnish reproductive health programmers and academics with significant context relevant theoretical and/or practical insights, which will be useful in reproductive health interventions and monitoring.

Consequently, my study bridges the theory-practice gap (George, 1993) between sexual reproductive health programmes in Nigeria and various conceptual frameworks, declared by authors, or inherent in their writings, which are also drawn on by Nigerian university students' for their sexual conducts. Giddens calls this mutual dependence of social science and lay actors on each other to (re)constitute meaning, propagate action and maintain the social structure, double hermeneutic (Giddens, 1984).

#### **4.2 The kind of narrative data sought**

Structuration theory differs from linear conceptualization of young people and sexual risk taking. It argues that social conduct is influenced by a complex interplay of recurring and reconstitutive structural and

agential<sup>127</sup> variables with primacy accorded neither. In methodological terms, structuration theory requires investigators to carry out their studies in a manner that the totality of social relations as co-produced by agency and the social structure<sup>128</sup> in time and space are illuminated. The deconstruction process proceeds to reveal the inherent tensions, contradictions and interdependencies between agency and structure on one hand, and their reconstitutive capacities on the other. Young people know and can be discursively narrate their knowledge of social relations, which are embedded in practice as rules and resources, which govern relational sexual conducts.

Practically, my methodology promotes four disciplines, compatible with structuration process (see Giddens, 1979; 1984 and Stones, 2005). (1) It facilitates the discovery and illumination of external structures that influence young people's sexual risk taking: (2) it illuminates young people's subjective dispositions and attitudes towards sexual risk taking or their internal structures: (3) it facilitates the unpacking of young people's acknowledged or unacknowledged critical agency in relation to their sexual risk taking acts: (4) it aids the illumination of sexual risk taking outcomes – intended and unintended, known or unknown to young people. My methodology also furthers the clarification of the recursive processes and pathways through which sexual risks persist and is (re)produced in time and space. These datasets will form the core for understanding and explaining the influences on young people's sexual risk taking based on their experiential narratives, which will be compared and contrasted with dominant sexual reproductive health literature linear perspectives.<sup>129</sup>

The unpacking of variables that influence sexual risk taking and their interrelationships is realized with a combined investigation of young people's conduct and context. This is done in a manner that acknowledges the simultaneously enabling

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<sup>127</sup> The relevance of agency is demonstrated in its everyday application to evaluate conduct. For example, in educational and legal systems, young people are rarely absolved of responsibility for breaking institutional and normative rules, for example, cheating during an examination. It is therefore curious that the ongoing minimization of human agency in young people's sexual risk taking in favour of political-economic determinism is ongoing. The thesis departs from this tradition and accords primacy to neither structural determinism nor human agency. Instead, both are conceived as interdependent variables that are mutually constitutive.

<sup>128</sup> That is, the political, economic, cultural, and ideological components of society, their constraints, and opportunities manifested as rules and resources (social capital).

<sup>129</sup> Such will include problem behaviour, sensation seeking, alcohol, poverty, mass media, and socialization to mention a few.

and constraining character of structure. From this perspective, young people's agency mediates structural constraints and enablement. For example, there are concurrent opportunities and constraints on sexual risk taking, safe-sex practise and abstinence in the Nigerian society. Following structuration theory methodological sensitization, I interpret young people's sexual risk taking in terms of their relative perception of more sexual risk taking opportunities and benefits, rather than constraints. Discerning young people's perception of sexual risk taking opportunities, constraints, dispositions, practise and (un)intended outcome require that I direct my investigative lens onto their contextual and existential realities. This is in a manner that emphasizes structural duality, Kilminster's insight about the often unacknowledged and/or unknown consequences of action for a "plurality of people in webs of interdependencies" (Kilminster, 1991, p.98), and young people's positions-practices embedded in meso-level relationships in Nigeria ("in-situ") (Stones: 2005, p.81-84).

In addition, I do not presume that social action is always discursively meaningful, or produces only intended outcomes, merely because young people take sexual risks with knowledge and capability, defined by Sen as "a set of vectors of functionings, reflecting the person's freedom to lead one type of life or another...to choose from possible livings" (Sen, 1992, p.40). Reiteratively, young people have the option of abstention, safer sex practise with condoms and contraceptives, and sexual risk taking. The resolution of questions surrounding the influences on young people's preference of sexual risk taking is a typical structuration<sup>130</sup> challenge.

In essence, young people's sexual risk narratives ought to illuminate the "conditions governing the continuity or transmutation of" sexual risk taking structures and

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<sup>130</sup> The closest example of the application of the structuration theory to sexual risk taking is Travis Kong's investigation of self-identities of Hong Kong gay men within a global assemblage (Kong, 2000, cited in Stones, 2005). In this study, Travis Kong draws upon a few structuration tenets such as social agent's knowledgeable, purposive action and unacknowledged outcomes of action to collect and analyse data about the unintended consequences of the purposeful, yet social pressure induced *coming out* of gay-men to their family and society.

There is also a conflict studies application of structuration theory exemplified by Maclure and Denov, (2006, p.119) study of the structuration of child soldiers in Sierra Leone, West Africa, which "through the lens of structuration theory ...postulates the interconnectedness of structure and agency, ...Drawing from a series of interviews with a cohort of boys who fought with the rebel Revolutionary United Front (RUF), we map out their experiences and perspectives in a way that highlights the juxtaposition of profound social forces and the capacity for personal agency that underlay the process of becoming child soldiers." Other applications are in the information technology, labour market, education, addiction, product innovation, and family fields. See, Phipps (2001) Empirical applications of structuration theory for detail.



practices, "... and therefore the reproduction of social systems ... organized as regular social practices" (Giddens 1984, p.25). This perspective is contrary to the dominant conception of young people as risky and at risk by the Nigerian adult<sup>131</sup> oriented society (Lee 2001, p.5; Boyden, 1997; La Fontaine 1990). In addition, a structuration project requires the isolation and description of commonalities and differences in young people's sexual behaviour with a view to locate enduring motives, if they exist, and their sources in modern and historic Nigerian. That is, a historic identification of sexual risk rules, resources and practices in Nigeria such as those commented upon by Caldwell and colleagues that:

"from the research already reported, ...men do not claim to remain virginal until marriage, and even the oldest do not claim that society has ever demanded that they should" (Caldwell, Orubuloye and Caldwell, 1991, p.231).

The above historic masculine sexual attitudes alluded to by Caldwell et al., (ibid), will be tested on young people for their perspectives. The data sets described above will promote the understanding and explanation of the dynamic and variable agencies of young people in relation to sexual risks taking in context and time. Specifically, these datasets will illuminate the sources and content of young people's sexualisation and the real or imagined peer sexual behaviour within the same enabling and confining structural environment. Furthermore, they will facilitate the demonstration of the processes through which young people leverage social structures for sexual risk taking, thereby affirming and (re)producing the same structures (Waters 1994). These data sets will promote a critical engagement with contemporary young people's sexual risk context and conducts, which have properties suggestive of sexual conservatism, innovation, different or similar to earlier generations of young people. For as Roy Bhaskar observes:

"... society is not the unconditioned creation of human agency (voluntarism), but neither does it exist independently of it (reification). And individual action neither completely determines (individualism) nor is completely determined by (determinism) social forms". (Bhaskar, 1982, p.286).

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<sup>131</sup> This conception of young people is dominant even though supposedly rational and competent adults are themselves major participants and therefore implicated in young people's sexual risk taking.

### **4.3 Research site and access issues**

I conducted my fieldwork purposefully in four locations in Nigeria. These include Lagos, Benin City, Nsukka, and Abuja, the Federal Capital Territory. The locations are historically inhabited by four distinct Nigeria ethnic groups – Lagos (West - Yoruba), Benin (Mid-West -Edo), Nsukka (East - Ibo) and Abuja (North - Hausa/Kanuri). Lately, urbanisation and intra-country migration have transformed these locations into cosmopolitan centre, attracting different ethnic and tribal groups in Nigeria. In addition, four federal universities are located in these locations. These are university of Lagos, university of Benin, university of Nigeria Nsukka, and university of Abuja. These universities attract student's pan-Nigeria, due to their reputation for educational excellence and relative affordability compared to private universities. In essence, the sites are populated by both indigenes and migrant ethnic/tribal groups from other parts of Nigeria. Some of these are students, civil servants, private sector employees and business people.

My choice of research sites conform with the objective of providing as accurate as possible, an understanding and explanation of influences on young people's sexual risk taking in different Nigeria regions. The choice of sites also promotes an informed speculation about the possible existence of a sexual risk taking sub-culture in Nigeria, promotes intra-country gendered<sup>132</sup> complementarities and variations relating to young people's sexual risk taking, which is deducible from their narratives. To reiterate an earlier point, the choice of multiple case studies within Nigeria facilitates "generating and plausibly suggesting (not provisionally testing) many properties and hypotheses about" young people sexual risk taking (Glaser, 1965, p.438). These objectives impose a discipline of an almost 50-50 male to female young people sampling ratio at any given research site.

In substantive terms, my research commenced during a visit to Nigeria in December 2005, during which I established contacts in and around the universities of Lagos, Benin, Nsukka and Abuja. These contacts were subsequently engaged in episodic communication and interaction between 2005-2007 through phone calls, and visits,

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<sup>132</sup> Anecdotal evidence in Nigeria invests females from different ethnic groups with different levels of sexual freedoms and performance. For example, Yoruba, the Tiv and Idoma women are perceived to demonstrate greater degrees of sexual freedom than Hausa women.

each time I visit Nigeria. At each opportunity, I made introductions and explore the research topic for viability with my contacts. During the substantive fieldwork in 2007, my recruitment of participants for the study was a pragmatic affair. The main inclusion criterion was age and acknowledgement of sexual experience.

Participant recruitment is with the snowball technique. Snowball sampling entails the purposeful enlistment of a few initial participants, who subsequently recruits their peers. On arrival at each sub-site, I made several personal attempts to introduce the research purpose to potential subjects. These attempts were initially unproductive. Responses were polite but evasive. Subsequently, I leased a self-service room in one of the commercial student residences near each of the four regional Nigerian Universities for about one month each. While resident at these locations, I engaged a few residents in socio-political small talk, movie watching and later isolated a few gregarious individuals, often male co-residents, with whom I discussed my research purpose. Some of these individuals agreed to participate in my research. The initial three participants recruited their peers, on my behalf. Referred peers also recruited their own friends to participate in the study. Thus, I leveraged my relationships with the individuals that I subsequently refer to as my *primary contacts*. Through these primary contacts, I recruited other students.

Participants in the four locations were undergraduate students from the nearby Universities. Their age profile ranged from 18 years to 32 years. Typically, the interviews took place in the room I leased, in surrounding beer-parlours (pub-equivalents), internet cafes and student's rooms. The interview venues are determined by each participant's preference. The advantage of using subjective contact points is that they are informal, pre-existing and familiar to participants. Respondents were consequently, more relaxed and willing to discuss sexual related topics with little persuasion. A noise cancelling microphone and tape-recorder was used to record the interviews. Overall, sixty-four (64) interviews were conducted and tape-recorded. Among these, six (6) were recorded as field notes because the participants refused to be tape-recorded. All interviews and field notes were code-labeled for enhanced participant's anonymity and dated.

I also elected to interview service providers such as chemists<sup>133</sup> and pharmacists operating within the selected student communities. Two service providers from each of the four sites were interviewed to validate and/or refute young people's narratives about the prevalence of sexual risk taking and the associated use of sexual health products and therapies to manage the largely<sup>134</sup> unintended outcomes such as STIs and unwanted pregnancies. These chemists and pharmacies<sup>135</sup>, according to my sample, are the most accessible and young people-friendly primary sexual health service points. These service providers' ages ranged from 30 – 48 years old.

I was unable to get an equal male-female young people mix at all locations as I envisaged. This is probably due to cultural and gender socialization variables, which prescribes for *young females*, a demonstration of initial reluctance to perceived (unknown) *male requests*. Generally, my limited resources structured the narrative data collected. Regardless of these methodological challenges, I am convinced that my sample size and the geographical spread of my participants are adequate to make an informed speculation about, or refute my structuration of sexual risk taking presumption. In addition, my sample size and narrative data collected exceeds McCracken (1988) recommendation of eight (8) interviews in total, for long interviews<sup>136</sup> (see section 4.4 for discussions).

During the interview, participants initially seem more interested in my general experience of the UK than my subject matter. For example, some wanted to know “*If*

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<sup>133</sup> In Nigeria, there are two classes of official commercial stockists of drugs and related products. These are Pharmacies and Patent Medicine dealers. The relevant governmental regulatory agencies officially register both. Pharmacies are owned and operated by mostly university-trained pharmacists while Patent Medicine concerns are owned and operated by largely non-university trained businessmen/women who learned the trade via long non-formal training and practice from either existing chemists or pharmacies. Recently, the Nigerian pharmacy laws obligates Patent Medicine Dealers to have a professional university trained Pharmacist's register their trading premises if they are to stock and sell controlled drugs. Majority of the Patent Medicine Dealers are not registered premises and sell mostly over the counter medications.

<sup>134</sup> Outcomes such as pregnancy turned out not to be always unintended. There are narrative data indications that some young people may purposefully get pregnant for a number of reasons. Among them are testing their fertility capacities, 'hooking' a man of their choice for marriage and utilizing their pregnant states to extort cash from their male partners.

<sup>135</sup> Interviewing service providers such as chemists and Pharmacists operating within the selected student communities was an ancillary and elective exercise. They were anticipated to validate and/or refute young people's narratives about the prevalence of sexual risk taking and the associated use of sexual health products and therapies to manage the largely unintended outcomes such as STIs and unwanted pregnancies.

<sup>136</sup> The Long-Interview model recommends “no more than eight” interviews (McCracken 1988, p.37). Additional details are provided subsequently.

*life in the UK is better than life in Nigeria? If getting laid is easier there? Whether I will settle in the UK or return to Nigeria and so forth*” This was followed by some expression of surprise about my choice of topic – sexual risk taking. In essence, my identity in Nigeria during the research was simultaneously that of an insider and outsider. Some participants did not view me as one of them, instead, I was perceived as a “Nigerian residing abroad” first, and secondly, as a student researching sex.

A few potential participants were turned down because they were less than 18 years old, while others claim they were sexually inactivity.<sup>137</sup> Five potential participants demanded outright payment before their participation and were refused on ethical grounds. The majority of participants, significantly, refused my offer of an honorarium. I speculate the snowball recruiting process is most likely responsible for this. That is, subjects interpreted their participation largely as a favour to the individual that referred them to me and not as a service to me. Overall, participants were very willing to discuss the subject of sexual risk taking. This was a surprise to me considering that most institutional ethical committees are preoccupied with the so-called subject’s sensitivities, unwillingness and/or reluctance to discuss their sexualities. However, the use of locally meaningful synonyms such as *fun*, *bang*, *comb* and so forth may signify subject discomforts at directly using universalizable sexual terms.

Questions about same-sex relations generated controversies. Participants were curious about same-sex relations, especially as depicted in Western movies and internet pornography. My ignorance about same-sex relations and sexual practices precluded giving participants satisfactory answers. My limited resources dictated I redirect the interviews back to influences on heterosexual risk taking. Consequently, I made a conscious decision to remove questions about same-sex relations from the interview guide. At two sites, Benin and Nsukka, I was invited to attend student organized religious services, birthdays or other themed parties. For example, I was invited to “*worship with us*” or “*enjoy... and see for yourself instead of asking so many*”

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<sup>137</sup> I interpret sexual inactivity in two ways. The first associates sexual inactivity with virginity. The second associates it with cessation in having intercourse. Most of the students that claim sexual inactivity implied they were virgins.

questions". I was initially concerned that such invitations will influence the quality and quantity of data collected and was reluctant to consent.

My reluctance, I later found, was unfortunate. It cast me in a judgemental light. Some of my primary contacts reported that potential participants implied that I am a *slacker*<sup>138</sup> and suggested that I may alienate the "*happening guys*"<sup>139</sup>. I resolved this problem by a limited attendance or "joining-in" of these events. The extent that I am willing to "*live-the-life*" or "*see-the-life*"<sup>140</sup> as lived by the individual/group apparently influenced my acceptance or rejection by the *happening guys*<sup>141</sup>. Partying was a time consuming. It was also inconvenient because they were held from midnight into the small hours of the morning. Party attendance disrupted my life-style and sleep pattern. Nevertheless, I got access to a significant number of participants through party introductions.

My attendance of two religious services turned out to be counterproductive also. A few non-religious contacts that I established perceived and related to me as a "*Christian brother*" which resulted in their being evasive about their sexual experiences. This attitude is probably because most religious groups shun premarital sex as immorality, and expect sexual abstinence from their members. I subsequently refused further church attendance invitations on the grounds that I am agnostic.

#### **4.4 Data collection method: the long interview**

I used the long interview qualitative<sup>142</sup> research method (McCracken, 1988), to collect narrative data from young Nigerian university students. The long interview employs a "semi-structured question" format, which accommodates well thought-out questions in pre-set order, and is flexible enough to accommodate new ideas emerging during conversations (Merriam, 1998, p.74). The long interview with semi-structured questions promotes a speedy, yet in-depth understanding the multiple influences on

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<sup>138</sup> A term young people employ to describe their non-conforming counterparts.

<sup>139</sup> Another young people terminology for their socially active counterparts.

<sup>140</sup> *Live-the-life* or "*see-the-life*" are compound expressions that may encapsulate the spirit of living for the moment.

<sup>141</sup> Males that have a very active social life.

<sup>142</sup> The utilization of qualitative research accommodates structuration theory emphasis on human knowledgeability, purposive action and consequences. Therefore, qualitative method adopted is concerned with social meanings that are inherent in action and language. (Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Strauss and Corbin, 1990).

social agents in relation to their understanding and participation in sexual risk taking. Long interviews also promote a focus on the shared meanings emergent from young people's sexual risk taking narratives.

In essence, long interviews facilitate the understanding and explanation of sexual risk taking sexual attitudes and practices with a narrative reference to a sample of young people who compose the study population (Schnore, 1961). As a data collection method, the long interview is streamlined, resource and time efficient, suited to modern data gathering conditions associated with time-constrained individuals and groups who may have limited tolerance for long-term outsider (researcher) intrusion in their lives, such as young people involved in my study. The long interview process conforms to Agar's suggested guidelines for ethnographic studies in:

“...its openness, its willingness to approach complex behaviour in natural context, its lack of commitment to the common wisdom encoded in social science theory, its methodological flexibility in adapting elicitation and observation to the situational and personal demands of the moment and its stress on the quality of the relationship within which information exchange occurs”. (Agar, 1980, p.36).

Nevertheless, the long interview is distinguishable from ethnography by its employment of specific and structured open-ended themes with prompts as interview guides. Although the model recommends “no more than eight” interviews in all for a social study (McCracken 1988, p.37), I held more than eight interviews because I was initially sceptical about the adequacy of eight interviews to generate plausible understandings and explanations of young people's sexual risk taking in Nigeria. In addition, the long interview minimizes the indeterminacies and redundancies of unstructured interviews and promotes narrative data gathering without committing to repetitive, intimate and prolonged involvement and/or disruptions of participant's busy lives.

Four research steps recommended by McCracken (1988) were followed. The first step requires a review of literature on young people's sexual risk taking, to isolate explanatory themes, concepts and paradigms (see chapter 2). This was a deliberate and critical undertaking underlined by skepticism of what published and grey literature say about young people's sexual risk taking. The review of literature

enhanced the discovery and mastery of constructs, theories and relevant research data. The literature review also aided the generation of appropriate research questions and themes. McCracken (1988, p.31) refers to this process as "deconstruction" of academic literature.

In addition, my basic research question "what influences young people to take sexual risks" was posted on Yahoo Answers – a website devoted to peer-commentary to test its viability, and compare diverse peer generated answers for similarities, and/or differences with dominant literature related themes and prevalent lay experience. The Yahoo Answers placement and discussions of the topic took place intermittently for about two months. There were significant consistencies from these sources that assisted my development of a broader oral interview question themes. The emergent and dominant conceptual positions from literature, research themes, Yahoo Answer peer commentaries and explorative discourse with young people (in Nigeria) were contrasted with experience and the study premise that young people are socialized into, and elect to sexual risk in traditions best explained by structuration theory.

There is also a critical self-examination stage, the second step of the long interview model (McCracken, 1988, p.32). This entails my critical engagement with my experience, value and socialisation, as critical factors that impacts the study, whether acknowledged or not (researcher-as-instrument). This process promotes the explication of personal experience and its influence on chosen topic, research method, analysis, and interpretation. For example, I am Nigerian, and I grew up in an environment that remains hostile to young people's sexuality, while paradoxically celebrating, exploiting and affirming it. The mass-media-marketing-industrial complex and the prevalence of cross-generational sex formally via marriage and informally in transactional relationships are evidence of the paradoxical condemnation and exploitation of young people's sexualities.<sup>143</sup>

In addition, in my previous job as an advertising and marketing consultant, I have, on many occasions, researched, isolated, exaggerated, innovated upon and exploited

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<sup>143</sup> Sexualities in this context approximate both society imposed and young people's experiences and expressions of themselves as sexual beings.



certain features of young people's subculture to sell ideas, goods and services. Thus, my sexual risks taking experience as a young person and professional experience in Nigeria significantly influenced my choice of topic and premise that Nigerian young people are socialized into sexual risk taking.

The third step, in the four-step long interview research process, is the development of semi-structured questions as an interview guide. The guide is generated from personal experience, literature review, and suggestions from Yahoo Answers discussions. The guide ensures the coverage of pertinent research issues, necessary to understand the Nigerian sexual risk taking structuration process. The guide, (annexed 3 & 4), also creates room for participant answer categories that I did not anticipate (McCracken, 1988). For example, sexual curiosity emerged as an influence on young people's sexual risk taking narratives. Also emergent are the paradoxical positive influences of all contraceptive and abortion technologies (legal or illegal) on young people's sexual risk taking. That is, sexual intercourse freed from its traditional family reproductive functions, which Giddens calls *plastic sexuality*<sup>144</sup> (Giddens, 1992, p.2). The guide includes both the existing conceptualizations of sexual risk taking and emergent ones.

The semi-structured interview question guide is modeled after Patton's (1990, p.290-293) six criteria for interview questions. They include (1) the participant's biographic questions, (2) questions that seek respondent's opinions and values (sexual worldviews), (3) questions that seek descriptions of experiences and behaviour, and (4) emotion and feeling questions related to sexual risk taking. Emotions<sup>145</sup>, such as love, affection and pleasure were included in the questionnaire because I agree with Mestrovic that "the emotion of happy confident reliance on others, shared sentiments, and so on" are crucial for social agents to "act as Giddens' enabled, reflexive, and emancipated agent" (Mestrovic, 1998, p.99). This is probably what Johnson means by the signalling role of emotions in intimate relationships, serving to minimise "the boundary of within and between", but also 'communicates to others and organizes the self for action' (Johnson, 1998, p.ii). In addition, there were the activity projection or

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<sup>144</sup> According to Giddens, "plastic sexuality is decentred sexuality, freed from the needs of reproduction" (Giddens, 1992, p.2).

<sup>145</sup> The inclusion of emotions is based on the assumption that emotions often underline, set-off, configure, give meaning and purpose to heterosexual interactions and associated sexual risk taking among young people.

scenario questions, calculated to uncover what participant's will do in given sexual situations. For example, attitudes, dispositions and potential action options when confronted with sexual opportunities.

The semi-structured questions were open-ended and worded in a language familiar to participants. This minimizes the use of dichotomous yes or no answer categories. Several structured *yes, no and somehow* questions were included (annex 4). Both categories of questions, the structured and unstructured, are leveraged for first level validity testing of narratives. Effort was made to exclude leading questions with obvious responses. Although there are suggestions that the *why* questions be excluded from semi-structured interviews because of their propensity to agitate participants defensiveness, I include them nonetheless, because they excite participants thought and answer processes, after their initial defensiveness<sup>146</sup>, which rarely occurred. In addition, questions were phrased in neutral non-committal tones that are topic specific (Patton, 1990, p.295-316 and Seidman, 1998, p.69-70).

Because engendering young people's agential-reflexivity and capacity for change is important to my thesis, the existing explanatory frameworks and emergent ones are accommodated in the long interview. The accommodation and interrogation of emergent themes tested young people's reflexive capacities to challenge existing and dominant conceptualizations of their sexual activities. Throughout the interview, I paid attention to both young people's accounts of sexual risk taking - the inherent gendered meanings, contradictions, morality, rationalizations, tensions, context and conduct cues (Asbury, 1995). The illumination of these social interaction realities is consistent with classical ethnography research principles, which suggest that a research process be iterative, reflexive, and an outcome in context (Agar, 1990; 1996).

#### **4.5 The data collection process**

At the commencement of the interviews, each respondent's age is verified in ranges to promote respondent anonymity and limit biographical intrusion. For example, 18-22 years, 23-27 years and 28-32 years. Respondents were subsequently administered the consent form (annex 2), to read, ask questions, and sign. Informed consent forms

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<sup>146</sup> Participant's defensiveness, whenever they arise, is managed with patient iterative questions.

acquaints participants with the research topic, its objectives, their role, the option to refuse or withdraw at will and how the data collected will be used. Administering the informed consent forms also presented participants with opportunities to ask questions and/or clarifications about the study before the interviews (Seidman, 1998, p.49-62; Fontana and Frey, 2000, p.662).

General field-notes were kept in writing and electronic formats. The use of a thematic question guide with all participants, promoted consistency in researcher-participants discourse of sexual risk taking, data analysis and interpretation. In addition, the use of the thematic guide also improved methodological reliability (Yin, 1994). My overall research objective is to produce as accurate as possible narratives about influences on sexual risk taking in young people's words. The interviews averaged about two hours per participant, were tape-recorded and transcribed verbatim.

At the beginning of each interview, I sought permission from each participant to tape-record the interviews. Six refused (four females and two males) and their contributions were recorded on field-notes during and after the interview. The decision to briefly record significant ideas during the interview minimizes the potential for the human mind to forget and/or selectively remember a given narrative. The confidentiality of each participant's response is guaranteed in both field-note and/or electronic tape-recorded format. All respondents were offered opportunities to listen to their tape-recordings verify and/or repudiate the contents. Two males and one female participant accepted the offer to listen, review, confirm, and refute the contents of the field notes/tapes. None requested that changes be made to their taped interview.

Although few guidelines exist about the sequencing of semi-structured interview questions (Patton, 1990, p.294), the interviews commenced with non-controversial general-purpose descriptive questions that put respondents at ease (Merriam, 1998, p.82). The general-purpose questions were essentially grand-tour questions, biographical in nature, and were followed by a series of questions on topical issues (McCracken, 1988). The grand-tour questions cover issues related to respondents' perception of themselves, and future prospects (Patton, 1990). In addition, the grand-tour questions included interview prompts and probes, designed to elicit additional details and clarifications about influences of sexual risk taking and associated issues

emergent from young people's narratives. Answers to personal questions were invariably in the first person.

The questions later become more directed at the topic, inviting commentary on influences, motives, benefits and costs of sexual risk taking, based on the pre-generated thematic guide. In anticipation of respondents' topic sensitivity, the directed questions accommodated answers in the second and third person format, iteratively (re)corroborated by first person quantitative questions. This mixed-method approach enhanced my research in four ways. In the first instance, it affords participants the opportunity to give me reasonable access to as real life as possible, or a near substitute of, the variables that influence sexual risk taking, while minimizing the influence of topic sensitivity and my presence on participants. In the second, my mixed-method approach promotes potentials for comparing collected qualitative narratives against their quantitative counterparts. Thirdly, my mixed-methods approach facilitates analytical distinction between what respondents know of the dominant sexuality structural constraints and enablement, on one hand, and how they recursively combine to produce and maintain sexual risk taking praxis. Fourthly, my mixed-method approach also facilitates the verification of individual narrative veracity by comparing qualitative answers with their quantitative counterparts, for fits or misfits.

During the interview, concerted efforts were made to be a "benign, accepting, curious (but not inquisitive) individual who is prepared and eager to listen to virtually any testimony with interest" (McCracken, 1988, p.38), even when some narratives surprised me (Patton, 1990). Throughout the data collection process, attention is paid to subject impression management, topic avoidance, deliberate distortion, minor misunderstanding, and outright incomprehension of topic and/or questions. Iterative questions were used to manage arising interview communication distortions and to corroborate earlier answers. Iterative questions calculated to corroborate earlier answers were necessary to detect and minimize discursive inaccuracies and outright falsehoods, which are inevitable products of humanity and purposive agency.

Giddens is of the opinion that "a purposive agent...has reasons for his or her activities and is able, if asked, to elaborate discursively upon those reasons (including lying about them)" (Giddens, 1984, p.3). In essence, my methodology facilitate the

illumination of “*which* structures, *what* agencies, in what *sequences*” they influence sexual risk taking (McLennan, 1984, p.125, original emphasis) and “*who* did what, and *when*” and why (Parker, 2000, p.84, original emphasis). My methodology is governed by Giddens caution that a researcher:

“... not try to wield a methodological scalpel ... there is [nothing] in the logic or the substance of structuration theory which would somehow prohibit the use of some specific research technique, such as survey methods, questionnaires or whatever.” (Giddens, 1984, p.xxx).

#### **4.6 Limitations of the data collection method**

A major limitation of the long interview model of data collection is that it is dependent on subjective perceptions of dyadic and/or multiple sexual risk taking acts. It is reasonable to assume that significant parties in the sexual risk-taking act may agree on some issues, and have contrary opinion about others. This is a limitation of all self-reported data. The nature of the study is such that, on one hand, shame, shyness, and potential stigmatization for participating in the data collection could have reduced explicit disclosure of sexual risk influences and experiences. On the other hand, gender socialization and scripted behaviour may equally have influenced answers, such as young male's exaggeration of sexual risk influences and experiences. Nevertheless, these self-disclosure limitations are mitigated by my mix-methodology and the relative frank nature of the discussions across gender socialization barriers, which surprised me. For example, before the study, I assumed that only young Nigerian males watch pornographic movies. This assumption proved incorrect.

In addition, it is possible that participants did not completely tell the truth about their motivations and influences, either deliberately or because they could not remember the relevant details of influences on previous sexual risk taking activities. Furthermore, not all relevant answers that explain influences on young people's sexual risk taking is illuminated because of purposive agents' tendencies to reserve some aspects of their real lives for themselves, beyond public discourse and/or disclosure to friends and, especially outsiders. Moreover, although I sought permission from participants to tape-record the interviews, six declined. The consequence is that I was compelled to reproduce their perspectives based on my note

taking and recollections, during, and immediately after the interviews. These recollections are at best subjective interview reportage. In addition, generalizations and impressions derived from my field-notes may be tainted by my research bias, theoretical stance, literature and experience. In this regard, Giddens observes that:

"the concepts that sociological observers invent are 'second order' concepts in so far as they presume certain conceptual capabilities on the part of the actors to whose conduct they refer. But it is in the nature of social sciences that these can become 'first-order' concepts by being appropriated within social life itself" (Giddens 1984, p.284).

Non-electronic recordings of data in field-notes, nevertheless, are standard in social research. An additional methodological limitation is my participants' recruitment with snowball sampling technique. For example, this may have blocked my access to young people in same sex relationships. In addition, some participants expressed shock when I raised questions suggestive of homosexual practices. Two self-styled born-again Christians reacted negatively to same-sex relations<sup>147</sup> questions with attitudinal and verbal hostilities. They terminated the interview by walking away, citing First Corinthians, 6: verse 9-10,<sup>148</sup> espoused God's inevitable punishment of people that "*promote such western immoralities.*"

There is also the issue of my small sample size, and appropriate geographical coverage of the interviews within Nigeria. It can be argued that findings are not representative, therefore not generalizable for young people across Nigeria. In this regard, Minichiello, et al., (1995) underscores the limited utility of replicating contextualized investigations such as this. In addition, entering the fields through my "primary contacts" and their organic peer networks (via snowball technique) meant that my sample is not representative of all young people in Nigerian. This is a

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<sup>147</sup> Participant's curiosity about same-sex relations as practiced in Europe and North America were not taken at face value for two reasons. The first is a suspicion that same-sex relations among young people may thrive, but are currently not prevalent enough to manifest in a snowball sampling technique. The second consideration is that participants are embedded in a Nigerian culture that is hostile to sexual practices conceived as deviancy, and could have demonstrated normative condemnation homosexuality. This could have little or no impact on actual dyadic or multiple same-sex sexual preferences.

<sup>148</sup> "Do you not know that the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor male prostitutes nor homosexual offenders nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God" (1 Corinthians 6, pp.9-10, NIV (New International Version) and Leviticus 20, p.13 (NIV) - "If a man lies with a man as one lies with a woman, both of them have done what is detestable. They must be put to death; their blood will be on their own heads."

significant problem when dealing with a population sub-group as varied and dynamic, yet sometimes homogenous as young people.

Another limitation of my methodology is related with my tape recording of data. During data transcription, I discovered the service provider tape recordings were damaged by moisture. As a result, narrative data from service providers will not be reported or used for analysis. Service provider's narratives were supplementary to young people's sexual risk narratives.<sup>149</sup> Regardless of these outlined limitations, I ensured research rigour, informed analysis and conclusions by the following the following disciplines,

- the use of multiple intra-country case studies,
- the consistent application of theory to reach plausible suggestions of sexual risk influences theory
- the use of themed semi-structured questions to ensure consistency of questions asked of all participants and to accommodate emergent ideas and an,
- a complementary structured questions with pre-established answers
- the verbatim narrative data recording and transcription – for detail analysis of inherent nuances and ideas,
- the application of hermeneutics for interpretation, which accommodated researcher bias and excluded any claim to universal objectivity and,
- the detailed description of data collection, analysis and interpretation methodologies.

I also minimise the uncritical intrusion of bias and personal experience in my research by collecting data within critical social systems that generated them. I also iteratively render my research biography, in manners evocative of Ball's (1990), stipulation "that every ethnography be accompanied by a research biography, that is a reflexive account of the conduct of the research which, by drawing on field notes and reflections, recounts the processes, problems, choices, and errors which describe the fieldwork upon which the substantive account is based" (Ball, 1990, p.170).

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<sup>149</sup> The original intent is corroboration/refutation of young people's narratives about condom and contraceptive use with service provider opinions.

#### 4.7 Data analysis: structural-hermeneutics analysis

Data analysis process followed a repetitive (iterative) process of reading, re-reading, interpreting, re-interpreting, (re)coding, linking themes, and constructs, disintegrating, and integrating themes emergent from textual narrative data in the traditions of Creswell, (1998). Data analysis is the final phase of long interview process (McCracken, 1988). The essence of analyzing young people's narrative accounts about influences on their sexual risk taking is to establish classes of influence, their interrelationships, and mutually (re)constitutive roles in (re)producing Nigerian university students' risk-prone sexualities. This approach to data analysis combines a critical personal perspective, literature review, web-based global question and answers input from *Yahoo Answers*, and the collected narratives to illuminate how young people are sexualized into risk taking. My data analysis is arbitrarily organized to illuminate the four interrelated structuration moments and/or analytical stages, suggested by Stones, (2005). First, I deconstructed the collected narratives into two broad analytical brackets<sup>150</sup> - social agents context and conduct analysis, as they influence sexual risk taking. This approach embodies features of hard-core structuration process, characterised by:

“opposition to individualists... *approaches* ... they accept the reality and explanatory importance of irreducible and potentially unobservable social structures that generate agents. In opposition to structuralists, they oppose functionalism and stress "the need for a theory of practical reason and consciousness that can account for human intentionality and motivation..." These oppositions are reconciled by joining agents and structures in a "dialectical synthesis" that overcomes the subordination of one to the other, which is characteristic of both individualism and structuralism... Finally, they argue that social structures are inseparable from spatial and temporal structures, and that time and space must therefore be incorporated directly and explicitly into theoretical and concrete social research” (Wendt<sup>151</sup>, 1987, p.356 – the word in italics is mine).

Social agents context and conduct analysis serve as “selective and regulative guidelines” (Stones, 2005, p.130) for the narrative data analysis and interpretation. The methodological categories accommodate the meso-level or intermediate agent's positional-practices (attitudes, dispositions and peer relationships) that Giddens

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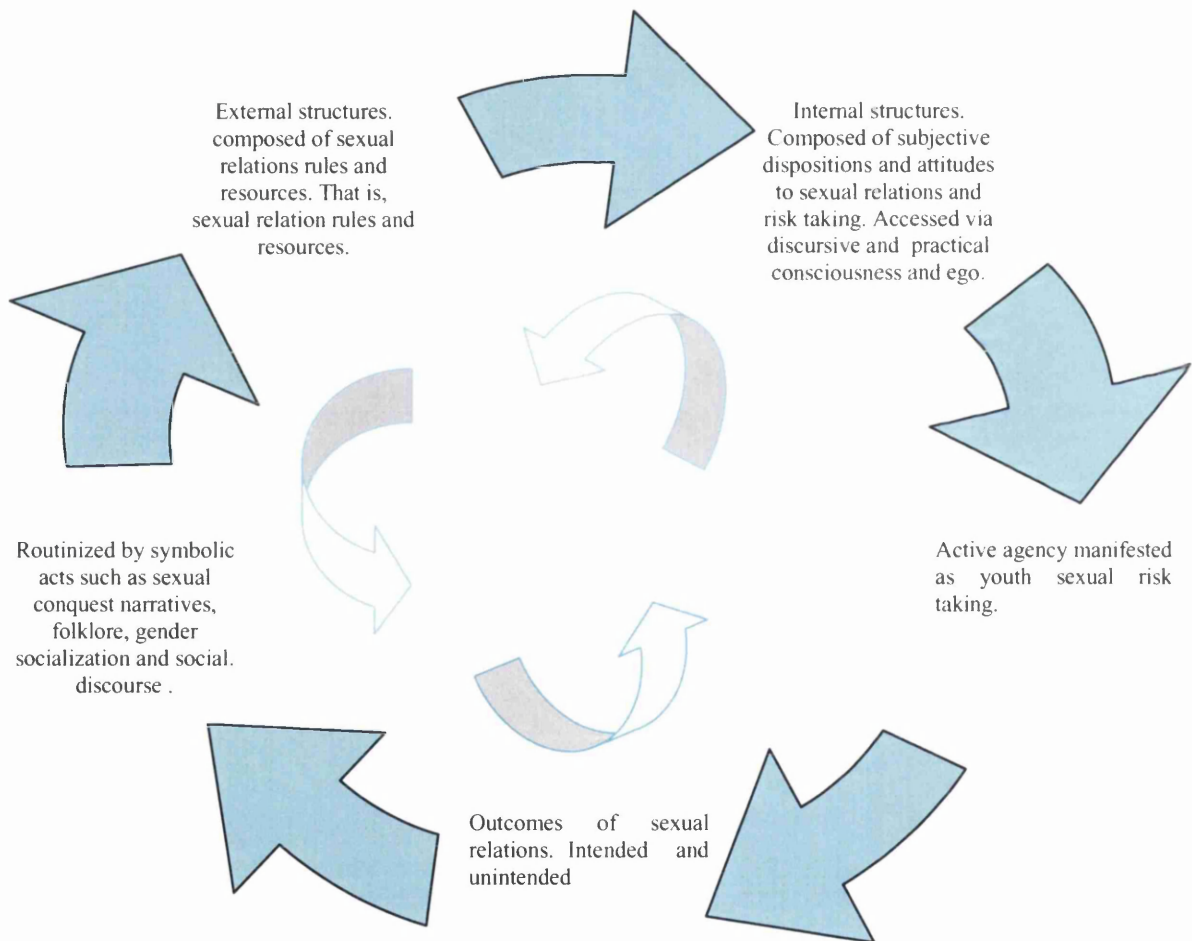
<sup>150</sup> The research brackets are social agent's context and conduct analysis. These analytical brackets, when expanded for their meso-level properties embody the four-structuration moments of external structure, internal structure, active agency, and outcomes of action.

<sup>151</sup> See Wendt, (1987, p.356) for his various quotations and adaptations from Thrift; Giddens; Bhaskar and Bourdieu for this synthesis of a “hard core” structurationist research project guideline.



structuration theory is criticised for neglecting. In essence, these brackets accommodate critical concerns for those moments “between large historical, spatial and social forces, on the one hand, and the situated practices of individual agents, on the other ... to identify meso-level networks of relations and practices” (Stones, 2005, p.6).

Within the broad analytical concept of social agents context and conduct analysis are further deconstructed into four sub-analytical elements of agents “external structures; internal structures; active agency and outcomes of action...based on the structural-hermeneutic core of the duality of structure” (Stones, 2005, p.189). In essence, structure is analysed as “the medium and outcome of the conduct it recursively organises” (Giddens, 1984, p.374). This perspective emphasizes Giddens' conception of structure as concurrently the means and end of social action.



**Diagram 1, Influences on sexual risk taking analytical cycle. Developed with key input from Stones, (2005)**

The diagram above is a structuration informed analytical cycle for young people's sexual risk taking in Nigeria. It schematically demonstrates how social agents are sexualized and contribute to the creation/maintenance of sexual risk structures, which in turn influence sexual risk taking. For example, an analysis of young people's narratives will isolate sexual risk taking promoting structures that manifest themselves as institutional, such as the mass media and modern political economic, rules and resources,<sup>152</sup> employed in sexual risk taking. Governing the structural-hermeneutic process is a discipline, yet subjective, assessment of agential collusion with the social structure in perpetuating sexual risk taking. Influences that are limited in time and space are classified as agential, for example, young people's sexual worldviews, attitudes, sexual activities and dynamic peer relationships.

Alternatively, influences that operate on a larger spatial and temporal scale with enduring historical roots are classed as structural. Examples are technology, markets, socialization agents/practices, sexual scripts, gender norms, the mass media, and the patterned relationships they produce such as alienation and young people's sexual risk sub-culture. Thus, my data analysis purposefully breaks up my transcribed data into the four structuration moments and analytical cycles espoused by Stones (2005, p.189), which embodies influences on young people's sexual risk taking. This assemblage of narrative data into groups, categories, and descriptive units presents a synopsis of my research findings.

Words, tone, context, non-verbal cues, internal (in)consistency, extensiveness, frequency, intensity, specificity of responses and unique ideas are essential components of my data reduction strategies (Krueger, 1994). For example, where previously fluent subjects hesitate before proffering an answer about their last sexual episode, their hesitancy is open to two or three interpretations. The first interpretation is that a participant's hesitancy may indicate embarrassment about the sensitive question asked. The second is that the participant may be reluctant or ashamed to provide immediate and/or factual answers to the question. The third is that the

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<sup>152</sup> Including social capital – Putnam defines social capital as those “...features of social life-networks, norms [including reciprocity] and trust – that enable participants to act together more effectively to pursue shared objectives” (Putnam, 1995, p.664) of sexual relations, sex and risks.

participant does not know or have an answer to the questions, or that s/he is incapable of discursively producing an answer.

These data reduction processes move my research beyond classic ethnographic description of factual social conditions (*what is*), accommodating respondents' rationalisations of influences, their actions, and potentially, strategies that can mitigate sexual risks. Thus, a structuration approach to young people's sexual risk taking promotes the benchmarking of narrative data and interpretations in agential (conduct) and structural (context) categories, especially as co-variables in the social (re)production and maintenance of praxis, such sexual risk taking. For example, young people's conduct analysis invariably uncovers:

“...category of knowledgeability (as part of an agent's internal structures) in a way that leads us back to the agent herself, her reflexive monitoring, her ordering of concerns into a hierarchy of purposes, her motives, her desires, and the way she carries out the work of action and interaction within an unfolding sequence”. (Stones, 2005, p.121-122).

An agent's context analysis, in turn:

“draws on the notion of knowledgeability, in the sense of conjuncture-specific internal structures, in order to lead us more clearly... out towards the external process of structuration whose relations with those internal structures we have said have previously been too little explicated in structuration theory” (Stones, 2005, p.122).

Furthermore, the utility of structuration theory conception of *structure* and *agency*, as two sides of a coin, instead of the classic social science one is also defensible. Giddens observes that classical sociological structural analysis distorts and limits understanding of the structuration process because of a conception of structure which:

“places in suspension the skills and awareness of actors, treating institutions as chronically reproduced rules and resources” (Giddens, 1984, p.375 and 378).

In contrast, classic agents conduct analysis, according to Giddens:

“places in suspension institutions as socially reproduced, precluding how actors reflexively monitor what they do; how they draw upon rules and resources in the constitution of interaction” (Giddens, 1984, p.375-378).

Two additional disciplines are required for young people's context analysis. These are firstly, an analysis of the identified external (structural) influences inherent in young people's narratives, their influences on young people's consciousness and the kind of agency they habituate. In addition, an analysis is made of the inherent differential power relations and resources differentially accessible to different young people in context (Stones, 2005, p.123-126). Secondly, because social agents retain enough knowledge for the sometimes counterfactual strategic thinking required for meaningful social relationships in a manner, that challenges structural and agential determinism (Stones, 2005, p.122); there is a requirement to specify sexual conduct opportunities and constraints that the Nigerian social contexts afford young people.

The influence of young people's contexts and conducts, inherent in their narratives, are compared and contrasted with dominant linear literature. Combined thus, these influences assist me in teasing out young people's knowledge of sexual taking influences, sexual behaviour options and why particular options, such as unprotected sex, is chosen over abstinence. The ultimate objective is to investigate sexual risk taking through the strategic contexts and conducts of social agents to isolate structural institutions and individual characteristics, which combine to produce and perpetuate sexual risk taking into influential structural properties of social life, and vice versa (Cohen, 1989, p.206).

For heuristic purposes, young people's conduct analysis is broken into two processes (Stones, 2005, p.123). The first process entails the discovery, from narrative data, of those broad-spectrum outlooks (*habitus* or disposition) of young people. For example, are "African males ...biologically predisposed to voracious sex with multiple partners"? (Orubuloye, Caldwell, and Caldwell, 1997a&b). Such sexual risk predispositions if valid, negate the possibility of young males practicing sexual abstinence. The second process of young people's conduct analyses links the identified agential dispositional frames onto their sexual and relationship worldviews. For example, does a polygynous society induce expectations that males ought to have multiple sexual partners? Does this expectation play any role in socialising young people to sexual risks? Alternatively, does a worldview exist among young females that they ought to be financially supported and protected by their male counterparts? Does this worldview, if valid, influence young females entry into transactional sex in

Nigeria? What role does this worldview play in the normalization of transactional sex?

These are typical challenges that young people's conduct analysis illuminates, which furthers the understanding and explanation of the structuration of sexual risk taking. Agent's context and conduct analysis therefore complement one another and cover areas the other fails to reach. They simultaneously embody Stones' recommendation that a structuration sensitive investigation cover agents, "conjunctionally-specific internal structures...of her own projects, whether in terms of helplessness or empowerment, or a complex combination of the two" (Stones, 2005, p.123-124).

#### **4.8 Data analysis – the process**

In practical terms, agential context and conduct analysis is made possible by the use of the iterative coding system to categorize, abstract, compare and integrate transcribed data into existing conceptual frameworks. Several research methodology writers<sup>153</sup> described coding for a continuous comparative data analysis, as employed by the thesis. Similar narratives, incidents, meanings, attitudes and rationalisations are assigned codes, which are "shorthand designation for various aspects of data" (Merriam, 1998, p.164-187). The coding framework I employ iteratively (with no set pattern) isolates narrative data themes and fits small narrative ideas into larger categories, transforming raw narrative data into easily managed and structuration theory meaningful concepts.

Iterative coding also promotes my development and plausible-testing of the respondents' concepts, suppositions, statements and ideas on influences on their sexual risk taking, which are then compared with dominant literature concepts and constructs. Iterative coding facilitates the assignation of concepts/ideas to established larger and/or representative theoretical categories/concepts, which transforms the original raw discursive narratives into universalizable concepts and constructs. In significant respects, my coding framework embodies selected tenets of the constant

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<sup>153</sup> See Glaser and Strauss 1967; Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Miles and Huberman, 1984; Strauss, 1987 and Strauss and Corbin, 1990).

comparative analytical method, whose tenets and features are discussed by Glaser, which is:

“concerned with generating and plausibly suggesting (not provisionally testing) many properties and hypotheses about a general phenomenon...some of these properties may be causes; but unlike analytic induction others are conditions, consequences, dimensions, types, processes, etc., and, like analytic induction, they should result in an integrated theory. Further, no attempt is made to ascertain either the universality or the proof of suggested causes or other properties” (Glaser, 1965, p.438).

My coding exercise was on different formats, ranging from field notes, Microsoft word and the margins of transcribed interviews. Electronic narrative data coding, storage and theme generation with Microsoft Word facilitates easy organization and retrieval (McCracken 1988, p.47) of themes. In addition, I analyzed the structured component of my interview guide (with their pre-established answers) with Statistical Package for the Social Sciences for windows (SPSS 16.0), to highlight frequencies and relationships between issues, answers, gender and age. These statistical answers categories are intended to verify complement and contrast respondents’ verbal narratives.

In addition to “plausibly suggesting hypothesis” (Glaser, 1965, p.438) about young people sexual risk taking, my coding process promotes the reduction of narrative data to influences, conditions, consequences, dimensions, types and processes which suggests an integrated theory (Glaser, 1965, p.438). In essence, my coding process uncovers the structuration moments and/or analytical cycles proposed by Stones, (2005, p.189), which are external, internal, agency and outcomes of action, their interrelationships, and how they (re)produce further sexual risk taking. In this manner, competing and interrelated codes are cross-linked with each other. The cross-referencing of influential themes about young people’s sexual risk taking was made easier by my adaptation from literature, preexisting concepts and constructs throughout the research process.

The majority of the emergent codes were descriptive; others are suggestive of systemic processes and interactions (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p.57). For example, the existing *poverty conceptual construct* does accommodate young people’s narratives about sexual risk taking influenced by a need to “meet-up” with their

perceived peer's material standards of life. Young people's inability to "meet-up" can also be assigned to the larger sexual risk taking as sexual exchange theme. Thus, the basic unit of analysis is participant's utterances/sentences in relation to specific questions asked (McCracken, 1988).

My categorisation of young people's sexual risk narratives is concurrently deductive and inductive. It is deductive because emergent narrative ideas are sometimes indicative of a *priori* constructs in literature. It was equally inductive because other sentences and utterances emerged that are not easily assigned to pre-existing constructs and concepts in literature. For example, curiosity about sexuality emerged from narrative data as significantly influential. The coding process is repeated on each interview transcript and comparatively on all transcripts. The dominant themes in one transcript are listed, and subsequently compared and connected with similar others in other transcripts. The emergent patterns are described; their influences and meanings in relation to sexual risk taking noted and linked with global literature and discourse. This process is both provisional and flexible enough to accommodate revisions, reinterpretations and the emergence of co-categories.

The second iterative stage of my analysis is data categories abstraction. With this process, I identified data patterns, which promotes the assignation and compression of conceptually meaningful narrative groups of statements, ideas and utterances into more global theoretical constructs, or higher-order conceptual assemblages. Furthermore, following Miles and Huberman's application of pattern coding method, I regrouped narrative data from categories that are more particular, a priori themes and emergent themes, into more general constructs (Miles and Huberman, 1984, p.67-69). For example, I compressed narratives that are suggestive of love and affection, within the larger abstract category of emotions. This way, my data abstraction process merges a series of theoretically significant utterances in narrative data, which are similar and/or connected, into larger meta-theoretical constructs (see Corbin and

Strauss<sup>154</sup>, 1990, p.7).

The third analytical stage is the comparison of categories and constructs. This process illuminates the logic, similarities, differences, consensus and contradictions across narratives. The process commenced at the theme development stage, the first and subsequent readings of transcribed data, as they were categorized, labelled and abstracted. The process is initially unsystematic, but assumed a systematic pattern as the research progressed. The comparison process is also an iterative one, modelled after the recommendations of Glaser and Strauss (1967), that analysts continuously evaluate utterances in narrative data with similar others to make explicit differences and similarities (see also Strauss, 1987; Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Strauss and Corbin, 1990). The benefit of data constructs comparison is that they link narrative data categories with each other and generate abstract or meta-observations (McCracken, 1988).

The fourth analytical process is integrating constructs to plausibly refute or validate my adaptation of structuration theory. On one hand, plausible refutation and/or validation of empirical research sensitizing theory such as structuration, entails the searching of transcribed texts for emergent themes whose comparison promotes data induction, in essence, the generation of concepts from raw data. On the other hand, plausible refutation and/or validation of sensitising theory promote data deduction. That is, the generation of concepts through hermeneutically circular and deductive process between one interview and the entire collection, for concept refinement and the extraction of theoretical significance narratives. For example, the collection of isolated constructs from all the interviews will be tested against theories discussed in literature review, such as sensation seeking, and the four critical moments of structuration theory, to establish holistic fits. The critical moments of structuration theory are the external influences; internal influences, agency and outcome of action, which recursively influence further action (see Stones, 2005).

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<sup>154</sup> According to Corbin and Strauss, "theories can't be built with actual incidents or activities as observed or reported; that is, from "raw data." The incidents, events, happenings are taken as, or analysed as, potential indicators of phenomena, which are thereby given conceptual labels. If a respondent says to the researcher, "Each day I spread my activities over the morning, resting between shaving and bathing," then the researcher might label this phenomenon as "pacing." As the researcher encounters other incidents, and when after comparison to the first, they appear to resemble the same phenomena, then these, too, can be labelled as "pacing." Only by comparing incidents and naming like phenomena with the same term can the theorist accumulate the basic units for theory" (Corbin and Strauss, 1990, p.7).



Furthermore, the iteration process promotes data verification via its critical and deliberate processes, which illuminates, confirms, challenges or refutes emergent conceptual models from narrative data and literature. Theory validation or refutation from data goes beyond theme identification to produce a "complex, conceptually woven, integrated theory; theory which is discovered and formulated developmentally in close conjunction with intensive analysis of data" (Strauss 1987, p.23). The axial coding model is adapted for the unification of identified categories and constructs (Strauss and Corbin, 1990). This process entails an outline of:

"the conditions giving rise to it (*sexual risks*); the *context* . . . in which it is embedded; the action/interactional *strategies* by which it is handled, managed, and carried out; and the *outcome* of those strategies". (Strauss and Corbin, 1990, p.97, words in italics is mine).

In other words, after illuminating fits, similarities, differences, critical linkages and integrating analyzed data, I ask the critical question, does structuration or political economic theory best embody the complex interrelationships, contradictions and (re)production of sexual risk taking? This is an iterative<sup>155</sup> introspective process that commences with the choice of thesis topic, methodology, data collection and analysis. In addition, abstract findings compared with the structuration process with the intent of highlighting the given conditions, agencies, contexts, strategies and outcomes of young people's sexual risk taking on the one hand and how agents, structurally reproduce these in time and space, on the other (duality of structure and agency).

The final process of data analysis is construct refutation. This involves a deliberate deferral of (dis)belief of the emerging utterances, narratives, categories, inferences, constructs and concepts until they are cross-linked and contrasted. There is also a deliberate and critical search for negative cases in narrative data that are indicative of alternative propositions, which could necessitate the reversal of assumptions and theory (Yin, 1994, p.26; Seidman, 1998, p.107-109). Adapting Belk et al., (1989), refutation process, the plausibility of emergent categories were sequentially evaluated in different Nigerian regions and context using each region and context as a practical measure of narratives that emerged in succeeding ones.

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<sup>155</sup> After a critical review of theories such as sensation seeking, problem behaviour, political economy among others, I find that structuration theory is most accommodating of the contradictions and interrelationships inherent in influences on young people's sexual risk taking.

Moreover, the structuration assumption of young people's sexual risk taking is continuously and critically contrasted with emergent themes, categories, constructs, and research literature. That is, a reanalysis and comparison is made of findings from each successive Nigerian context with previous ones and young people's sexual risk literature. Thus, the refutation process deliberately draws data from four varied sites to enhance the potentials for plausible generalization. It is based on the cross analysis of emergent themes with literature and experience that conclusions will be drawn about the influences of young people's sexual risk taking in Nigeria.

Specifically, my structuration of sexual risk taking presumption is iteratively challenged in a manner that facilitates the modification and/or elimination of unconfirmed propositions such as the influence of drugs and other narcotic agents on young people's sexual risk taking in Nigeria. Respondents did not confirm the influence of drugs and alcohol on their sexualities. Infact, most respondents claim they do not ingest either substance<sup>156</sup>, despite interview questions and prompts. A governing discipline for the whole thesis process therefore, is iteration.

The iterative process proceeds in a back-and-forth manner from research assumptions, methodology, data collection, analysis and interpretation stages. Iteration allows each stage to influence, challenge, refute and strengthen the other. Iteration excludes the sequencing different stages of the thesis. It sets aside interpretative judgment of utterances from the interviews until the reading and rereading of the individual and entire narrative data sets to establish fits or misfits with initially developed global themes and literature (Thompson, et al., 1989; Bergadaa, 1990; Hirschman, 1992). According to Thompson, an iterative research model is a:

“back-and-forth process of relating a part of a text to the whole... Interpretations are continuously revised as more of the text is grasped by the interpreter” (Thompson et al., 1989, p.141).

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<sup>156</sup> Alcohol is banned on most university campuses in Nigeria.

## **4.9 Data interpretation**

### **4.9.1 The researcher-as-instrument; influences on methodology and interpretations**

Researcher prejudices are implicated in their studies because of their complex socialization processes and life experiences. The “researcher is an instrument in her/his research” who “cannot conveniently tuck away the personal behind the professional, because fieldwork is personal” (England, 1994, p.84-85, Burgess, 1985). Pre-understanding and prejudice implicate the researcher, influence the choice of topic, methodologies and the interpretation of findings (Schwandt, 1997). Consequently, there is a critical need to specify a researcher’s pre-understanding and prejudice before commencement of the research process in the interest of rigour (LeCompte, 1987; Peshkin, 1988).

I assume both an insider and outsider role during the research process. These statuses nurture a dichotomy prevalent in qualitative social studies. The insider/outsider dichotomy arises because of my socialisation as a Nigerian who, nonetheless, conducted the study as a returning outsider because I study in Swansea, United Kingdom (see Jarvie, 1969). Based on the insider status, participants expect empathy and understanding of sexual risk praxis and rationalisations. Young Nigerian students interviewed demonstrate their expectations of researcher empathy and understanding of sexual risk taking narratives with frequent use of shorthand answers under the assumption that, as a Nigerian, I ought to understand them. For example, context-relevant words/phrases such as "toasting", "jonesing", "slacker", "condomisation" and so forth were used.

My insider status also facilitates the attainment of researcher-participants’ organic relationship in a manner described as a movement from "stranger to friend" (Powdermaker, 1966), and as a culturally perceptive stakeholder in the research process (Ciborowski, 1980; Cole and Scribner, 1974). Nevertheless, my insider role is not a simple one. In reality, it evokes Narayan’s observation about native researchers, who are insiders to limited degree because:

“we all belong to several communities simultaneously...people born within a society can be simultaneously both insiders and outsiders, just as those born elsewhere can be outsiders and, if they are lucky, insiders too” (Narayan, 1993, p.676).

Although I was born and socialised in Nigeria, my social class, background and experience differs from my study sample. The biographical and experiential differences between the study participants and myself invest me with prejudice/preunderstanding of sexual risk taking, which inevitably invades the research process, but is managed in different degrees. It is in this regard that the idea is advanced that “as communicating humans studying humans communicating, we are [all] inside what we are studying” (Ellis and Bochner, 2000, p.743). Yet sensitivity to my sexual risk taking experience and “the adoption of an informant's mode of thought” is guided by a “full use of his (*my*) own critical faculties” (Mead, 1959, p.38, words in italics mine), which means that:

“there can be no question of total commitment, surrender, or becoming. There must always remain some part held back, some social and intellectual distance” (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1986, p.102).

My outsider status, in turn, creates an investigator/subject distancing necessary for data collection, which facilitates research site exit. For example, while conducting a study in her hometown, Massachusetts, USA, Gilbert reports her lived-experience as “completely different from the women that [she] interviewed that [she] would not consider [herself] an ‘insider’” (Gilbert, 1994, p.92). This is the case with my fieldwork. An outsider researcher status minimises what Bogdan and Biklen (1998, p.52) describe as difficulties and sense of abandonment associated with insider/outsider dichotomy, most noticeable before departure from the field. The use of the intensive and less-intrusive long-interview data collection method also minimised research sites exit challenges. Thus, my insider and outsider roles are dynamic. Their influences invade topic selection, methodology, choice of research settings and interpretations (see Campbell, 1979; Goodenough, 1976).

Furthermore, I also assumed the role of an observer (see Bogdan and Biklen, 1982; Gold, 1958). My observation is not of actual sexual risk taking, but of young people’s contexts, attitudes and conducts, which influences sexual risk taking. I similarly leverage my awareness and experience of peculiar Nigerian macro and micro variables to understand and explain young people’s sexual risk taking. In this manner, personal experience, young people narratives and the dominant *problem-behaviour* oriented sexual risk literature are critically combined and contrasted to understand

young people's sexual risk taking in an environment of negative but weak normative sanctions against sexual risk taking.

My insider knowledge of Nigeria geography was useful in selecting, locating and establishing temporary research residence at the chosen sites. That is, the researcher experiential knowledge enhanced multiple case studies within the research site (Miles and Huberman, 1984), participant's selection (Honigmann, 1982; Peshkin, 1992). This minimizes the need for lengthy residence in any chosen site and prolonged intrusion in participant's lives. In addition, my insider status gave me insights I may not have had as an outsider (Rose, 1997), structuring my study to enhance its fit to local contexts and challenge the dominant sexual risk perspectives in literature (Guba & Lincoln, 1981). My researcher-as-instrument stance also promotes a semiotic or emic research stance. That is, the understanding, and explanation of sexual risk taking through a critical identification with young people (Gans, 1968), via their narratives. In corroborative commentary about the relevance of semiotic approaches to cultural studies, Geertz is convinced that:

"the whole point of a semiotic approach to culture is to aid us in gaining access to the conceptual world in which our subjects live so that we can, in some extended sense of the term, converse with them" (Geertz, 1973, p.24).

The importance of the semiotic approach is gleaned from Giddens observation that "the sociologist has as a field of study phenomena which are already constituted as meaningful. The condition of 'entry' to this field is getting to know what the actors already know, and have to know, to 'go on' in the daily activities of social life" (Giddens 1984, p.284). Several knowledge sources and communities facilitated this process (Peshkin, 1988, 1992). These include my reflexivity, peer discussions, reviews and commentaries in cyberspace such as Yahoo Answers, critical observations and comment from my Supervisor, Professor Neil Price.

A researcher's over-familiarity with subjects nevertheless, presents opportunities and challenges. Douglas Porteous, a geographer, reports that he was "clearly regarded as an 'insider' by interviewees from his village, which facilitated disclosure and reduced inhibitions" (Porteous, 1988, p.76). Conversely, he reasons that his insider status promoted participants unrelenting engagement with issues that were not crucial to his

research (Porteous, *ibid*). This thesis observed and recorded similar trends among participants in Nigeria who seem overeager to ask extraneous questions about the researcher's experience and the practice of same-sex relations abroad. Another advantage of the researcher-as-instrument stance is that it imposes the discipline to constantly challenge assumptions and methodologies, to determine whether crucial research questions or issues are minimized, ignored or excluded from the study because of bias, which is a product of prejudice. According to Kitchin and Tate:

“you may fail to notice pertinent questions or issues because of the inability to step back from a situation and fully assess the circumstances” (Kitchin and Tate, 2000, p.29, see Evans, 1988, p.205 also for similar comments).

Furthermore, Strauss, cautions that a total immersion and uncritical application of researcher as instrument can result in the investigator knowing “too much experientially and descriptively about the phenomena they are studying and so [end up] literally flooded with materials” (Strauss, 1987, p.29). I confirm Strauss’ (*ibid*) observation as true. However, I managed the challenge of being “literally flooded with materials” (Strauss, 1987, p.29), by categorizing data into the four empirical and analytical structuration abstractions proposed by Stones (2005), employed in my structural-hermeneutic interpretations, which is discussed next.

#### **4.9.2 Hermeneutic interpretation of sexual risk narratives**

Philosophical hermeneutics are concerned with the interpretational basis of knowledge and understanding (Bernstein, 1983; Bleicher, 1980 and Gadamer, 1989). Hermeneutics as an interpretative tool stipulate that textual interpretations relate the individual text and narratives with the collective whole before drawing subjective meanings from them. Thompson observes that “there does not exist a general hermeneutics, that is, a general theory of interpretation . . . there are only various separate and contrasting hermeneutic theories” (Thompson 1981, p.46). Regardless of Thompson’s observation, Bleicher stipulates two main challenges for hermeneutic interpretations, namely the determination of what a text says and the provision of directives about action (Bleicher, 1980, p.12).

The pertinent feature of hermeneutics interpretation, which I apply to transcribed data interpretation, is pre-understanding, or pre-judgement. The concepts of pre-

understanding or pre-judgement infer that historic and existing cultural traditions connect the subjects and the researcher (me) with my subject matter - sexual risk taking. Shared ideology, beliefs, myths, events, symbols, institutions and practices among other cultural templates connect the participants and researcher. For example, I share a generalised sexual risk taking experience with the participants, which are transmittable and understood discursively through the vehicle of language. Language and social practices are interrelated and interdependent. For example, the routinization of action and the need to transmit cultural routines may have induced language. Consequently, language embodies, explain, transmit and propagate action, such as sexual risk taking. Language permits the expression of discursive and contested meanings of sexual risk taking. As a result, hermeneutic interpretative traditions are required for data interpretation and analysis.

Hermeneutic interpretative traditions presuppose the pre-declaration of linguistically mediated pre-understanding and bias, which influence researchers' pre-judgement of social practices they investigate. For example, I have a *pre-understanding* of young people's sexual risk taking before I chose or investigated the topic. Without them, it will be impossible to conceive my topic, search and engage with dominant literature and make sense of young people's narratives on the subject of sexual risk taking. This is why the hermeneutic interpretive framework requires the continuous acknowledgement and accommodation of researchers' prejudiced and interpretative frameworks in an iterative and dialectic study process. The hermeneutic interpretive tradition is also consistent with the long interview method of data interpretation phase that prescribes researchers "review of cultural categories" that encompass and make manifest all kinds of subjective experience, assumptions and associations (McCracken, 1988, p.29-32) that make the researcher both a collector of data and an instrument of data collection through language.

In essence, language mediates the understanding of culture, experience, and texts. Heidegger stresses the linguisticity of understanding and explanation when he observed that a neutral researcher (and there are none) cannot understand contextualised texts because he lacks pre-inherited prejudice or pre-understanding conveyed via language (Heidegger, 1949). Hirschman reinforces this opinion in her observation that research is intrinsically subjective and structured by the researcher

values, which unavoidably influence subject of inquiry choice method, data collected, analysis and interpretation of findings (Hirschman<sup>157</sup>, 1986). Corroborating, Bhaskar observe that:

“social structures are concept-dependent, but not merely conceptual. Thus a person could not be said to be "unemployed" or "out of work" unless she and the other relevant agents possessed some (not necessarily correct or fully adequate) concept of that condition and were able to give some sort of account of it, namely, to describe (or redescribe) it. But it also involves, for instance, her being physically excluded from certain sites, definite locations in space and time”. (Bhaskar, 1989, p.174).

My pre-understanding of sexual risk taking is a product of “being-in-the-world” (Bleicher, 1980, p.118, citing Heidegger, 1949). Nevertheless, from hermeneutic perspectives, interpretative pre-understanding enables a researcher more than it constrains him. This is probably why Gadamer suggest that issues in life are knowable or unknowable solely through an agent’s reference point – which is *prejudice* (Gadamer, 1989). All social actors, including researchers, have this prejudicial point of reference, whether they declare or minimise them in studies and writings. In hermeneutics informed interpretations therefore, researcher prejudice is justified and necessary because it is the basis of human comprehension of social life.

Illustratively, my window to the world of Nigerian young people’s sexual risk taking world is mediated by shared sexual risk taking experience<sup>158</sup> as a young person who grew up with similar contextual opportunities and constraints for sexual conduct. Also influential, is my pre-understanding of existing sexual risk taking theories and literature, my observation and discursive experience of young people in developed countries such as the United Kingdom, Ireland, Netherlands and the United States. It seems that the same sets of broad-spectrum structural and agential variables, in different combinations for different young people, promote similar sexual risk taking activities in developed countries as well.

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<sup>157</sup> According to her, “the personal characteristics of ... researchers... influence the way they choose to conduct their research. These characteristics will affect, for example, the approach taken toward hypothesis generation-say, analytical or intuitive; the type of empirical investigations conducted- e.g., experiments or participant observation; the esteem in which science is held as a way of comprehending life; and the amount of objectivity/subjectivity with which research is believed to be imbued (Hirschman, 1985, p.225).

<sup>158</sup> In addition, my professional advertising/marketing experience leveraged manifest and latent young people’s culture to sell branded goods and services.



Furthermore, understanding in the hermeneutic tradition is greater than what we glean from texts because documentary studies (narrative texts) reconstitutes knowledge. In this regard, Ricoeur argues, "to understand is *to understand oneself in front of the text*" (Ricoeur, 1981, p.143; original emphasis). Nevertheless, in the process of understanding textual narratives (transcribed data), the space between the researcher and researched is bridged. This is the ontological basis of hermeneutic interpretations and underlines Gadamer's assertion that:

"...it is true in every case that a person, who understands, understands himself [or herself] ... projecting himself [or herself] upon his [or her] possibilities" (Gadamer, 1989, p.260).

As a result, the researcher's prejudice is inherent in analysis and interpretation of transcribed textual data. Therefore, hermeneutic analysis or perception is inherently a process of self-discovery, understanding, reflection, and development. It follows that the process of iteration – the reading, re-reading, analyzing, re-analyzing and interpreting transcribed texts illuminates social action, their possibilities, constrains and consequences subjectively. In addition, pre-understanding facilitates researchers and readers self-discovery. This iterative twirl is called the hermeneutic cycle. The hermeneutic cycle produces a more unified portrait of specific narratives and the collective whole. The iterative twirl also function to constantly challenge, test and (re)constitute acknowledged time, space and socially mediated researcher prejudice.

The hermeneutic cycle also stipulates that meanings of textual narratives data be derived from the cross-referencing of the individual narrative, the collection of study narratives, researcher's prejudice and relevant literature, to enhance understanding and explanation concurrently (Bernstein, 1983). For example, to capture influences on young people's sexual risk taking that are embedded in their sexual risk taking discursive narratives, a reading and re-reading of individual interviews and the collection of the collection of interview narratives (fifty-six) is required. Each reading and re-reading of transcribed texts, sometimes, offer similar and/or different insights and understandings of sexual risk taking. In addition, texts are employed as context and time dependent subjective rationalisations of praxis, and due to their recorded format, become examples of "enduringly fixed expressions of life" (Gadamer, 1989, p.387, quoting Droysen (1937, p.631). In essence, my narrative data, after recording

and transcription, does assume an independent existence. Another researcher who does not share my prejudice or preunderstanding of young people's risk-prone sexualities can interpret the recorded narratives differently.

Moreover, even though I am not the subject of interpretive inquiry, the action orientation, knowledge, worldview and practice interpretational basis of hermeneutic interpretations involve me in the study. As an illustration, how does a researcher evaluate a young person, provisionally called "Mr B's," account of sexual risk taking, which rationalises a *one-night stand* with reference to his need for fun? On one hand, if the researcher interprets Mr B's sexual act as *risky or sensation seeking*, that interpretation is from the researcher's pre-understanding of what constitute sexual risk practices or sensation seeking. Conversely, interpreting Mr B's sexual behaviour as *normal* presupposes a pre-understanding of what normal or safe sexual practices are. Both versions of prejudice draw from pre-existing enabling or constraining structural normative pools, which are embedded in cultural memory traces of society.<sup>159</sup>

Based on the foregoing analysis, hermeneutic interpretive traditions do not claim a capacity to capture or understand an irrefutable truth. Instead, it forces an investigator to see "somebody's own account of his [or her] behaviour or culture as epistemically privileged" an account of praxis as the researcher's reinterpretation of the account captures (Rorty, 1982, p.202). Hermeneutic interpretations in addition, introduces an investigator to the prevailing emotions, insights, and rationalities of subjects at a given time and place (Denzin, 1989). That is, applying the emic to explain the etic, to produce what Harris (1976) describes as scientific explanations for observed realities.

#### **4.9.3 Limitations of hermeneutic interpretation**

Regardless of the outlined advantageous applications, hermeneutics interpretations present methodological challenges. Some argue that hermeneutic interpretations are "subject to the false consciousness of pseudo normal understanding" (Habermas, 1980, p.191). Critical commentaries as this, derives from critical theorist's insistence that influential variables that are structural in origin remain outside human awareness. Consequently, critical commentators advance the argument that hermeneutical

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<sup>159</sup> Either way, both interpretations contributes to constraining and/or enabling sexual risk taking and the attendant dominant or sub-cultural normative pools which influences and maintains them in society.

interpretations render an investigator "blind to the perception of material factors that assert themselves behind the backs of social actors" (Bleicher, 1980, p.175). The net effect of this investigative myopia is that there are "systematically generated misunderstanding recognized as such-without, at first, being able to 'grasp' it" (Habermas 1980, p.191). For example, the hermeneutic interpretation of young people's sexual risk taking in Nigeria is a product of pre-understanding that could be tainted by my gender and socialisation - both structural influences on praxis, knowledge, understanding and explanation.

A critical response to hermeneutically induced weakness of systemic misunderstanding is that "in the mirror of language everything that exists is reflected" (Habermas, 1980; 1987; quoting Gadamer, 1967, p.118). As a result, it is difficult to discursively conceive of praxis without language. Language embodies action, enables the human thought process and is the vehicle to convey meaning through utterances and symbols. Corroborating this point, Rorty observe that truth, like language, is a human creation (Rorty, 1989) and is apprehendable through intuitive and expressive language. In a similar vein, Gadamer asks:

"who denies that our specific human possibilities do not subsist solely in language? One would want to admit, instead, that every linguistic experience of the world is experience of the world, not experience of language" (Gadamer 1989, p.546).

Other criticisms of the hermeneutic interpretative process include those that fault the use of researcher's prejudice and experience as a lens to study social action such as sexual risk taking. Instead, critical commentators recommend a value-free research because researcher prejudice distorts the understanding of participant's reality. The ideal role of the researcher, in the critical traditions, is to serve as a medium for understanding and conveying participant's meanings and not a co-creator of meanings. This view is similar to existential phenomenologist propositions that researchers hold in abeyance their prejudices. A counter argument for the intrusion of researcher's bias in studies is that it is inconceivable that researchers socialised in society can totally hold their prejudice and prejudgment at abeyance under any research condition. It is also possible that the dependence of hermeneutics on linguistics as a basis for understanding social action offers no uniform standard for

research interpretation. Responding to this latter criticism, Arnold and Fischer generated criteria for evaluating a hermeneutics informed analysis. They are:

“the interpretation must be coherent and free of contradiction. Themes must be documented. Observations should be supported with relevant examples. A command of the relevant literature will be evident. Tradition must be acknowledged. The interpretation should be comprehensible to the reading audience, given their [pre-]understanding. It should show "good will" by adapting to them and taking into account their world view. The interpretation should "enlighten." It is "fruitful" in revealing new dimensions of the problem at hand. "[What<sup>160</sup> is evident is always something surprising as well, like a new light being turned on," says Gadamer (1989, p.486). It yields insight that leads to revision of [pre-]understanding. This revision should be made quite explicit. The prose should be persuasive, engaging, interesting, stimulating, and appealing (McCloskey 1983). Allusions, metaphors, similes, and analogies serve hermeneutics well. The cultural literacy of the authors will be apparent” (Arnold and Fischer, 1994, p.64).

Furthermore, critics have expressed concern over the context-dependent discourse or dialogic constitution of hermeneutic interpretations. Critical theorists suppose that non-context dependent arguments, which promoted the Enlightenment and social thought, have ideally existed (Rorty, 1985), and are easy to apprehend. Hermeneutic proponents counter with the defence that the use of metanarrative theories is best minimized for a democracy of approaches. Emphasising this point, Rorty observes that instead of metatheories:

“what is needed is a sort of intellectual analogue of civic virtue—tolerance, irony, and a willingness to let spheres of culture flourish without worrying too much about their 'common ground,' their unification, the 'intrinsic ideals' they suggest, or what picture of [humankind] they 'presuppose” ( Rorty, 1985, p.172).

There are also criticisms of hermeneutic interpretative levels distancing. For example, the first level interpretation is young people’s original sexual risk experience that is transcended by discursive narrative recall. For example, are these recalls factual, representative of the action they describe or are they biased or both? This produces the second level interpretational problem of the quality of data captured. For example, does the captured data embody the facts and nuances of the original discursive narrative recall or not? The third level interpretive challenge is associated with how research protocols are applied to collect, analyse and interpret data. At this third stage,

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<sup>160</sup> What is evident is simultaneously surprising and inherent in the emergent narrative data themes. For example, there is a contradiction, perhaps ambivalence inherent in young people description of all sexual activity as risky despite widespread practice. The surprise is probably due to the researcher expectation that sexual intercourse with condoms ought to be considered a safe practice.

some narrative nuances and emotions present at the first and second interpretive levels are lost, ignored or minimised. Criticism of interpretive level distancing seems redundant because hermeneutic interpretive frameworks do not claim they produce unequivocal interpretations or unambiguous infiltration of social agents and their narrative accounts of praxis. That is, no claim is made of unequivocal accessing and representation of the complex subjective meanings inherent in social action.

The hermeneutic purpose is make, as close to social reality as possible, contextually informed observations about young people's sexual risk taking. For example, hermeneutic interpretations of sexual risk narrative data combine three data sources. The first data source is from young people's narrative accounts of their risk-prone sexualities. The second is from the dominant conceptualisations of young people's sexualities contained in literature. The third is derived from my pre-understanding of young people's risk-prone sexualities, influenced by my socialisation, life experiences and worldview. These are critically combined for an informed assessment of influences on young people's sexual risk taking, their dispositions to sexual risks, young people's variable agencies, and perceptions of constraints, opportunities, benefits and consequences of sexual risk taking. These goals iteratively promote the illumination of sexual risk taking as praxis, systemic and analytical linkages between subjective participant's narratives, researcher's pre-understanding and established conceptual frameworks in published and grey literature (Holbrook and O'Shaughnessy 1988).

While acknowledging the limitations that the hermeneutic circle of pre-understanding, reliance on language and on contextual understanding of time bound action as vehicles for transmitting meanings impose on my study, there is logic and inevitability to its enabling role. This is because a researcher's prejudice is the most potent tool for partial or complete infiltration of social agents' subjectivities and praxis in a manner that promotes jettisoning the structure-agency dichotomy. Prejudice similarly, stipulates that conceptualising praxis in society is dependent on our subjective socialisation, values and experience. It is through the hermeneutics fusion of horizons – that is, the minimization of object-subject divisions; researcher-researched and so forth, that critically illuminating account of our shared humanity

and action is possible. In this regard, Geertz suggests that hermeneutic governed analysis can:

“open (a bit) the consciousness of one group of people to (something of) the life form of another, and in that way to (something of) their own” (Geertz, 1988, p.143).

#### **4.10 Justification for methodology - research sites and respondent selection**

It is nearly impossible to study any subject in its entirety due to time, resources and other logistical constraints. My study, especially its methodology, is structured by five challenges. Among these are: (1) my limited resources: (2) the limited period within which I must conclude my thesis: (3) there are additional challenges posed by different intra-country geographies, and between the potential respondents and myself. Furthermore, my methodology is designed to: (4) minimize the ethical challenges associated with discussing premarital sexual risk taking with young people. Parents, guardians, adults and young people themselves pervasively construe premarital sex as immoral and purposeless in Nigeria. This latter challenge recommend that I conduct my study with young adults, 18-32 years, who are away from home, are knowledgeable, sexually active, willing and capable of giving informed consent for interviews: (5) the fifth challenge is an ethical imperative to minimize the exploitation of ethnicity,<sup>161</sup> often conflated with culture, which is exploited to explain risk-prone sexualities, create and nurture risk groups. In essence, the exploitation of ethnicity in sexuality studies contradicts the enlightened ethical concern:

“as to diseases, make a habit of two things - to help, or at least do no harm” (Hippocrates - cited in Munson, 2000, p.32 and 34).

I also felt a need to minimise concerns about "power and the unequal hierarchies or levels of control that are often maintained, perpetuated, created and re-created during and after fieldwork" (Wolf, 1996, p.2) based on exploitation of ethnicity and culture. In a bid to manage these challenges, I pragmatically leverage my preunderstanding of the Nigerian geography and young people's location within it to select my study sites, respondents and methodology in a generalising manner. My generalising approach is

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<sup>161</sup> I define ethnicity as the assumed shared physical characteristics of a group with presumed common heritage. The social construction of ethnicity is described as "one of the most fundamental divides in social life" (Rubin, 1995). As it is used today, ethnicity and culture replaces *race*, which is associated pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial "past abuses and biological connotations" that 'race' often invokes" (Marks and Worboys, 1997, p.5).

in turn, influenced by two considerations. (1) I seek both the different and common influences that the different sites may present, especially those most amenable to cost-effective sexual health interventions across<sup>162</sup> Nigeria. I take this route because local contexts matter but must be situated within:

"global history and contemporary globalization must be part of our understanding of masculinities. Individual lives are powerfully influenced by geopolitical struggles, imperialism and colonialism, global markets, multinational corporations, labour migration and transnational media" (Connell, 2003b, p.2)

With over 250 ethnic groups in Nigeria, it is impractical to develop and implement sexual health interventions based on ethnicity alone. (2) Another consideration for selecting respondents and multiple sites is to enhance an efficient and comprehensive elicitation of diverse sexual risk taking influences. I envisage that emergent commonalities in diverse sexual risk accounts from the different sites will support a rigorous<sup>163</sup> and plausible analysis of, and the generation of actionable conclusions, that will mitigate influences on young people's sexual risk taking. In essence, my methodology is a response to the impracticality, perhaps impossibility, of an encyclopaedic detailing of all sexual risk taking influences. In essence, the multiple sexual risk taking influences, and their recursive ramifications, cannot all be discussed. Therefore, for practical and logistical reasons, the unelaborated influences may probably outnumber their explicitly discussed counterparts herein. Confronted with multiple influences, their varied conceptualisation, my limited recourses and time frame, it became imperative to consciously *begin* my research by selecting a starting-point. According to Said, this is the:

"idea of beginning , indeed the act of beginning, necessarily involves an act of delimitation by which something is cut out of a great mass of material, separated from the mass, and made to stand for, as well as be, a starting point, a beginning ..." (Said, 1979, p.16).

A significant part of my delimitation of influences is a decision to exclude ethnicity. Research ethics, experience and literature indicate that the operationalization of

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<sup>162</sup> At the end of my study, there were no critical differences in young people's sexual risk taking that could be attributed to their geographical locations.

<sup>163</sup> Deconstructing the gendered construction of meaning, action and associated influences on sexual risk taking requires innovative methodologies to elicit and facilitate the presentation of robust and thick descriptions (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992)

ethnicity in sexuality studies and intervention practice are ultimately counter-productive (see Kelleher 1996; Ahmad, 1996; Fenton, 1999; Pearson, 1986). I will discuss this claim in detail in due course. It is important, however, to emphasize that ethnicity and associated cultures are not linear influences on sexual identity formation and practice. A host of structural influences on daily life mediate the content, meaning and influences of ethnicity. These include the mass media, religion; age, race gender etc (see Sen, 2006 for a discussion of identities and their varied ascriptions and constructions). In essence, multiple variables, in structurationist terms, recursively combine to influence patterned social behaviour, such as young people's sexual risk taking. Besides, my exclusion of one negatively over-exploited influence by sexuality studies, such as ethnicity, does not minimise my study's validity because:

"[P]eople from any ethnic background will have a number of structures giving relevance to their lives, with their culture and ethnicity being only one such structure which people utilise in making decisions about how to live and how to cope with problems of illness" (Kelleher 1996, p.84).

It is pertinent to demonstrate how the operationalization of race and ethnicity, although usually well intentioned, invariably create and nurture risk-groups, and in consequence, systemic social, political-economic isolation and discrimination of victims. The creation and nurture of risk groups in sexuality studies and intervention practice is based on an ethnicity, and hence, *cultural sexual uniqueness*<sup>164</sup> thesis. Fenton (1999) argues that the dominantly conflated notions of ethnicity is intended to construct bounded sameness based on assumed or proven ancestry, shared worldview, culture, dress, language, and in sexuality studies, sexual behaviour. He underscores the variability and contested nature of shared culture, especially the difficulty of a fixed definition of people and behaviour.

Nevertheless, a fixed definition of people and behaviour is the hallmark of sexuality studies which employ "potted guides to culture, rarely written by minorities themselves" which "have become a vital source of instant 'expertise' on these cultures, which are thought to cause so many health problems" (Pearson, 1986, p.53).

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<sup>164</sup> Premarital sexual risk taking is a common human trait. For example, Buss and colleagues report that less than 3% of north American adults enter matrimony as virgins (Buss et al., 1990; see Wellings et al, 2006 also). The same is probably true for most of humanity. Similarly, Buss document other similarities across 37 cultures, such as males selection of mates based on physical attractiveness, women's emphasis of wealth and earning power in selecting mates. My study corroborates these set of Buss and colleagues' findings.



The counter productivity of essentialist and rigid conception of ethnicity and culture is illustrated in Ahmad description of essentialized culture, which is:

"stripped of its dynamic social, economic, gender and historical context, culture becomes a rigid and constraining concept which is seen somehow to mechanistically determine people's behaviours and actions rather than providing a flexible resource for living, for according meaning to what one feels, experiences and acts to change" (Ahmad, 1996, p.190).

Increasingly, human sexual practices, especially young people's, seem more alike than unique.<sup>165</sup> This is most likely because "ethnic boundaries are also sexual boundaries - erotic intersections where people make intimate connections across ethnic, racial, or national borders. The borderlands that lie at the intersections of ethnic boundaries are "ethno sexual frontiers" that are surveilled and supervised, patrolled and policed, regulated and restricted, but that are constantly penetrated by individuals forging sexual links with ethnic "others." (Nagel, 2000, p.133; original emphasis). Consequently, I argue that the ethnicity and *cultural sexual uniqueness* thesis, in late modernity, is no longer an unequivocal concept. Education, modernisation, human rights projects and globalization have jointly weakened the validity of the cultural uniqueness thesis, in relation to sexual behaviour. Yet ethnic sexual profiling continues to create:

"a catalogue of checklists of cultural stereotypes which are regarded as essential characteristics of particular cultural/racial types" and leveraged for their further socio-political and health impoverishment (Ahmad, 1996, p.195).

In addition, my methodology also illustrates the socially constituted nature of sexuality knowledge and practices. It is also challenges the dominant social science attribution of risk-prone sexualities to groups based on their assumed ethnic and cultural uniqueness. For example, I chose not to emphasize my respondents' ethnic and religious affiliations based on a conviction that sexual risk taking is not unique to any ethnic, cultural and religious group. My convictions are corroborated by my study, which did not indicate any ethnically unique sexual behaviour. It is also corroborated by Wellings and colleagues more comparative global sexuality studies, which unequivocally demonstrate that sex and associated risk taking are shared

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<sup>165</sup> My conceptualization of sexual behaviour is similar to Malinowski's (1960; 1961). He suggests that humans share some universal basic needs. Sexuality and related reproductive practices are examples.

human behaviour, always involving others, and not an exclusive practice of selected cultures, ethnic groups, class, race, religion, and ethnic/tribal affiliations (see Wellings, et al., 2006).

My methodology embodies a reflexive and critical evaluation of the *imaginary thresholds* that separates human groups and is a progressive emancipation from our predilections towards dichotomous labels and position-practices emanating from them (Said, 2001). In essence, my methodology minimizes the predilection of sexuality researchers and commentators to presume and attempt to demonstrate discrete and *separate spheres* (Brod, 1994) for the people and the sexes, based on ethnicity, which is a modern decoy for accentuating biological and health superiority and difference.

This close association of ethnicity with ill health is called the *prism of heritability* (Duster, 2003). The *prism of heritability* concept describes the uncritical linking of disease to individuals based on their assigned ethnic (and racial) groups based on the failure of positivism and science to ameliorate all human problems. For example, the sexual knowledge, attitude and practice gap (KAP-gap) thrives despite modern scientific advances in sexual health delivery and management systems. Positivists' inability to rationalise<sup>166</sup> the KAP-gap, for example, curiously appropriate qualitative indices such as race, ethnicity and culture to explain differences or enduring behaviour. This is largely understood to have:

"...arisen out of the boundaries of modern science, as the explanatory force that takes care of what natural science cannot. But because it is born of this gap, culture has always been defined negatively in terms of what it is not. The work that culture does is the work that cannot be done any other way; it is that which sweeps up after the proper, rational work has been done, tidying up the aporias<sup>167</sup> that remain" (Maxwell, 2002).

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<sup>166</sup> Merton comments on this "tendency in sociological theory to attribute the malfunctioning of social structure primarily to those of man's imperious biological drives which are not adequately restrained by social control. In this view, the social order is solely a device for "impulse management" and the "social processing" of tensions. These impulses which break through social control, be it noted, are held to be biologically derived. Nonconformity is assumed to be rooted in original nature.' Conformity is by implication the result of an utilitarian calculus or unreasoned conditioning. This point of view, whatever its other deficiencies, clearly begs one question. It provides no basis for determining the nonbiological conditions which induce deviations from prescribed patterns of conduct (Merton, 1938, p.672).

<sup>167</sup> Difficulties in understanding culture, motivation, values and action.

The outcome of risk classifications is social labelling of groups as vectors of diseases, such as HIV (see Haour-Knipe & Aggleton, 1998). Societies also stigmatize and discriminate against them, which Malcolm et al., (1998) argue is a significant barrier to inclusive and effective STI and unwanted pregnancy prevention. Members of the categorized risk groups are often targeted with unfair preventive practices such as compulsory quarantine, testing etc. Constructed at-risk groups also face HIV-related stigma and discrimination, which "is layered upon other stigmas associated with race, gender, homosexuality, drug use, promiscuity etc." (Lee, Kochman & Sikkema, 2002, p.310).

Currently in the USA, "early accounts of African sexuality *still* echo those untamed, hypersexualized characteristics assigned to Native Americans and such accounts were equally convenient justifications of enslavement and exploitation of Africans by Europeans and later Americans" (Nagel, 2000, p.122, citing Hartman 1997 and Jordan 1968; word in italics mine). Similarly in Nigeria, evidence is beginning to emerge that young people from Idoma and Tiv ethnic groups from Benue State, which manifest high HIV prevalence rates are already experiencing systematic socio-economic exclusion and discrimination (see Hilhorst, et al, 2004). Nevertheless, my de-emphasis:

"of race as a category of biomedical research is not meant to suggest that the social category of race (*or ethnicity*) is not real, or that race as a key dimension of stratified societies does not exist... Race is socially, not biologically meaningful; it is 'real' because we have acted as if certain people at certain points in time, were inferior" (Lee et al., 2001, p.39; words in parenthesis is mine).

Instead, my approach leverages empirical findings, experience<sup>168</sup> and emergent literature to challenge the dominant notion that ethnic uniqueness uniquely confers significantly risk-prone sexual position-practices on selected groups compared with others, who are usually hegemonically dominant. What is gained by my de-emphasis of tribal or ethnic identification of respondents is the lack of nurture of old, and/or the (re)creation of new risk groups and cultures. In addition, the use of race and/or culture to explain risk practices and categorize sub-populations as 'high risk groups' is said to endow the concept of culture with the hegemonic power of distancing and

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<sup>168</sup> Moreover, my site and respondents selection strategy is not intended to privilege my Nigerian insider status versus outsider perspectives in the Mertonian sense (Merton, 1972). Neither is my approach intended to dissolve the prevalent cultural differences which structures and is structured by multiple societal structures and relationships.

subordinating affected groups (Schiller et al., 1994). Furthermore, at-risk or risk-prone labels help:

"(re)produce stigmatising boundaries between so-called 'at risk' and 'normal' populations. Such boundaries were maintained through the normalisation of this difference" (Grover 1987, cited in Brown 2000, p.1274).

Keeler further this argument in the observation risk categories focus on "behaviours that are often considered deviant or promiscuous, contributing to a less-than sympathetic attitude toward those afflicted" (Keeler, 2007, p.615). To worsen their states, the socially constructed at-risk groups are often the most disempowered, marginal, hard-to-reach and vulnerable in any country. To date, the culturally prejudiced Caldwell and colleagues' (1989) pronouncement that sub-African cultures are sexually promiscuous still reverberates in lay, academic and preventive sexual health circles. In addition, young people, sex workers and gay men are disproportionately depicted as risky and at risk (see Yang and Southwell, 2004; Shoveller & Jonhson, 2006). Consequently, because I do not wish to contribute to the creation and maintenance of risk groups by referencing their unproven unique<sup>169</sup> sexualities, based on ethnicity, and hence culture, I did not focus on my samples' ethnic/cultural affiliations.

#### **4.11 Emergent methodological and presentational challenges**

My original conception of young people's sexual risk taking, as a research problem, turned out rather simplistic. In its original form, I intended to uncover varied influences on young people's sexualities and make actionable intervention prescriptions to address them. My suspicion then is that the sexual knowledge, attitude and practise gap (KAP-gap) is primarily due to linear conceptualization of sexual risk taking and associated interventions they inspire. Combined, linear conceptualizations of young people's sexualities and allied interventions fail to confront their interdependent, concurrent and recursive risk-prone sexual context and purposive conducts. Young people's sexual risk taking accounts confirm my assumption.

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<sup>169</sup> Even anal sex is not unique to gay couples. Heterosexual couples practice it too.

Although most compatible with my goal of analysing the complex data I collected, structuration theory did not easily lend itself to empirical application. Its original presentation by Giddens' is laden with impenetrable language (1979; 1984). Consequently, one must read structuration rescue attempts by proponents such as Stones (2005; 2001) and Cohen (2000;1989) and paradoxically, criticisms by antagonists such as Archer (1995; 1988;1982) jointly and variously to begin to understand associated concepts of structuration theory and render it empirically operational. In this regard, Antwi-Nsiah & Huff observe that:

"translating Giddens' general propositions into propositions that relate to specific social structures that mediate and are reproduced through particular kinds of situated practices is challenging (Antwi-Nsiah & Huff, 1994, p.179).

I overcome the aforementioned challenge with a creative mixed method research that combines Giddens' original exposition of structuration theory as a sensitising guide, Stones' (2005) structuration research brackets and McCracken (1988) long interview method. My mixed method data collection approach is intended to minimise the raging paradigm wars over positivist or interpretivist research approaches. This war have solidified into discrete research cultures "one professing the superiority of *deep rich* observational data and the other the virtues of *hard, generalizable ...*data (Sieber, 1973, p.1335). The paradigm wars have also nurtured the *incompatibility thesis*<sup>170</sup>, which suggests that both positivist and interpretivist approaches cannot be creatively combined for more robust empirical studies (Howe, 1998). My study proves that with inquisitive creativity, both approaches can be productively combined.

In a temporary truce, I apply mixed methodologies to elicit, analyse and interpret data in a manner that is easily understood by proponents and antagonists on both sides of the research method debates. My approach is a reflexive acknowledgement that personnel who staff the social development industry, which develop and implement sexual health interventions, hold worldviews that are nurtured by this divisive heritage of incompatible qualitative (inferior) versus quantitative (superior) research dichotomies. It is my opinion that the paradigm wars, divisions, postures and calcifying debates are unnecessary, reduces cooperation, data mining and the

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<sup>170</sup> For example, Lincoln, an interpretivist, insists that "accommodation between paradigms is impossible ...we are led to vastly diverse, disparate, and totally antithetical ends" (Lincoln, 1990, p.81).

effectiveness of associated interventions. This is because data is often (un)consciously generated, interpreted and operationalized to further vested interests on either side of the raging paradigm wars. In the process, the original goals of interventions are lost and their beneficiaries sidelined. Like Giddens, I also:

"...wish to escape from the dualism associated with objectivism and subjectivism... but neither, as I try to make clear, do I accept a viewpoint close to methodological individualism" (Giddens, 1984, p.xxvii).

Instead, I treat both qualitative and quantitative paradigms like *structure* – as two sides of a coin. Each side is concurrently strong and weak, but are nearly unassailable when employed together. My mixed methodology is also a recognition that people living with HIV/AIDS (PLWHA), and indeed, those at risks, do not care for these research paradigm wars that privilege academic and social development industry elites. Finally, my mixed research approach is a recognition that the mitigation of sexual risk taking on the long run will depend on cooperation and mutual understanding on both sides of the research divide. More importantly, it is rare that solutions to daily existential problems manifest as solely positivist or constructivist variety. Policy invariable reflects both paradigms, to greater or lesser degrees.

Returning to an earlier issue, I was warned by peers that I would spend a significant amount of time, reading, understanding and subsequently explaining structuration theory and its concepts because most people find it unfamiliar, judge it complex and do not voluntarily apply it to their studies. In fact, the preponderant advice is to follow the dominant trend of applying linear paradigms to my research problem, which I *ambitiously* declined. In hindsight, taking the well-trodden route, common to sexuality studies, would have made my PhD experience relatively easier, perhaps faster. Alternatively, the easier route would constitute what Giddens calls a retrospective move towards methodological individualism:

"the comfort of established views" which can "easily be a cover for intellectual sloth" (Giddens, 1984, p.xxii), which structuration theory seeks to avert.

With my creative methodology, I was able to elicit varied and robust narratives that forced a slight reconsideration of my earlier research vision. However, the

hermeneutic richness and vastness of data collected leveraging structuration theory as a sensitising guide created additional challenges. One challenge is related to the analytical distillation of practical prescriptive and hermeneutically rich *actionable* recommendations from data. In essence, there are analytical and discursive challenges inherent in teasing-out young people's contextual and sexual conduct imperatives from varied and complex data. This challenge enlivened my interest in what I perceive as the concept/construct unifying features of structuration theory along the lines of the four research brackets proposed by Stones, (2005).

Implicitly, the need arose to illustrate the complex structuration theory terminology with practical features and examples from substantive sexual risk taking narratives. I resolve this challenge by adopting a discrete non-conflationary presentational style of influences on sexual risk taking which will serve a varied audience, especially those unfamiliar with structuration theory. What is gained by my application of structuration theory to categorise recursive sexual risk taking influences as external, internal, agency and outcome in orientation is detailed clarity of actionable influences and a related demonstration of their interrelationships. Conversely, what may be lost is a more organic presentation. This is probably a limitation of my data analysis employing the four analytical moments of structuration theory.<sup>171</sup>

Regardless, the influences of young people's sexualized context and conducts should be correctly read as products of strategic and tactical external sexuality rules and resources (such as the mass media and political economy), which influences their generalizable habitus and conjuncturally specific knowledge of sexuality. These combine to create and/or preserve internal structures such as young people's positive sexual worldviews, emotions, variable knowledge of their sexual context and conduct norms. My study explains that young people draw upon both external and internal structures with active and purposive agency for contextually meaningful and relational sexual praxis. Young people's sexual praxis, in turn, produces (un)intended

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<sup>171</sup> I explained in Chapter 2, and iteratively subsequently, that my choice of structuration theory followed a complex process of conceptual deconstructions, criticisms, and comparison of multiple approaches to understanding young people's sexualities. This resulted in the de-emphasis of multiple and plausible theories such as political economy, problem behaviour, edgework, poverty, peer, mass media, ignorance and sensation seeking theories, which are reviewed in Chapter 2. My de-emphasis of these theories and constructs does not mean they are invalid. They are de-emphasized for their linearity, and because they are laden with dialectical confinements that either overemphasized or minimized structural determinism or agency.

outcomes, which (in)directly impact upon their original external (their context) and internal (position-practices and conducts) structures, setting off the structuration process of sexual risk taking process anew. Young people's successful performance of sexual risk taking and their mostly positive experience of it further consolidate their position-practices towards sexual risk taking.

My presentation of interrelated and recursive influences in discrete blocks and sub-headings are iteratively linked in my discussions. I employ words and concepts such as recursive, interrelated, interdependent, influential etc to reduce the seeming disjunction between data collection, analysis and presentation. I also employ young people's renditions of the recursive interrelationship among influences in my discussions to minimise data abstractions, which are valorising of narrow positivist orthodox versions of reality throughout the thesis. For example, one such account summarises the interrelatedness, recursiveness and interdependence of influences:

"... it is not like you watch something and decide to do it immediately. I think you must want to do it before and the media just encourages you. Pornography for example, has a very, very big effect on youths. When you see people having sex, you are seeing it life. It is stronger than hearing about it. It sort of wakes up the urge to do what you see" (Interview 46 - Female).

In relation to peer influence, their hold combine with young people's felt needs and active agency, and:

"...boils down to individuals. You know your limitations and strength. You do what you think is best or beneficial to you. For example, I have had opportunities to become a drunk, criminal and those bad things. But I have not. I am here... by His Grace. Because I have always used my self-restraint. Though there are so many options in life, at the end of the day, it is up to you to select what is best for you. Nobody puts a gun on your head and say have sex or forces a girl to agree to have sex – unless of course, it is rape. The way the sex thing goes, the boy or girl can stop it anytime – although it is difficult. But it is possible and it happens" (Interview 1 - Male).

#### **4.11 Conclusion**

To sum up, my methodology is influenced by the assumption that structure and agency are co-influences on young people's sexual risk taking. So far, I have been discussing my mix-method research design. First, I indicate the nature of data I seek as adaptive of Stones (2005), structuration brackets for empirical research. Stones' (2005) research brackets recommend the collection of data relating to external influences; internal influences; the input of variable agency, and outcome of sexual



risk taking, as they recursively influence further and similar actions. I also discuss McCracken's (1988), long interview method, which I leverage, via semi-structured questionnaires, to collect narrative data on the critical moments of the sexual risk taking structuration process.

The long interview, with its hermeneutic twirl, promotes a detailed deconstruction of young people's complex and interrelated context and conducts, as they influence their risk-prone sexualities. This approach furthers my critical comparison of sexual risk practices across different Nigerian sub-regions (Adams et al., 1998; Leonard-Barton, 1990), without mistaking "local conventions for universal truths" (Gergen and Gergen, 2000, p.1032). The preceding caveat is necessitated by the limitations associated with my sampling method and size.

I also pre-declared my role in the research, as researcher-as-instrument. This status suggests that I conceive, conduct, and interpret my study with prejudice - a product of my "being-in-the-world" (Bleicher, 1980, p.118, quoting Heidegger, 1949). I stipulate that my preunderstanding of young people's sexual risk taking enables, rather than constrains my study. This is because my prejudice forces me to see young people's "account of ... *their* behaviour or culture as epistemically privileged" an account of action as my reinterpretation of their narratives can capture (Rorty, 1982, p.202, words in italics are mine).

Structural hermeneutics governed my data interpretation and analysis. This necessitated an iterative reading, re-reading, interpreting, and re-interpreting, (re) coding, linking themes, and constructs, disintegrating, and integrating themes emergent from narrative data, adapting Creswell's, (1998) approach. My purpose is to establish classes of sexual risk taking influences, associations, and suppositions that are assignable to, or can critically challenge the critical structuration moments (see Stones, 2005). In sum, my outlined methodology allows me "... to see and talk about the world *as young people do, and by accessing young people's sexual contexts, conducts and worldviews, I expect ... to understand social action*" (Murray and Ozanne 1991, p.137, words in italics are mine), in this case, sexual risk taking. My grasps of young people's worldviews and understanding of influences on sexual risk taking, and how these influences interact is presented in chapter 5.

## Chapter 5

### Research findings

#### 5.1 Introduction

The central assumption of my thesis is that young people's sexual risk taking is best accounted for by the structuration process. The structuration process requires the illumination of "...social systems in terms of shifting modes of institutional articulation ...which consists of social practices – are organised in and through the behaviour of contextually located actors" (Giddens, 1989, p.300). The illumination of the structuration process proceeds with iterative sensitivity to the potentials for lay actors to appropriate sexual risk taking knowledge and practice from structural institutions on one hand, and the capacity of lay actors to influence the same structural institutions, on the other. In other words, I present a synopsis of young people's strategic and sexualized context and conducts, how these are mutually (re)constitutive, and combine to (re)produce sexual risk taking. My findings are presented in two broad sections. The first section deals with respondent profiles and the second, fifteen themes distilled from young people's sexual risk taking narratives.

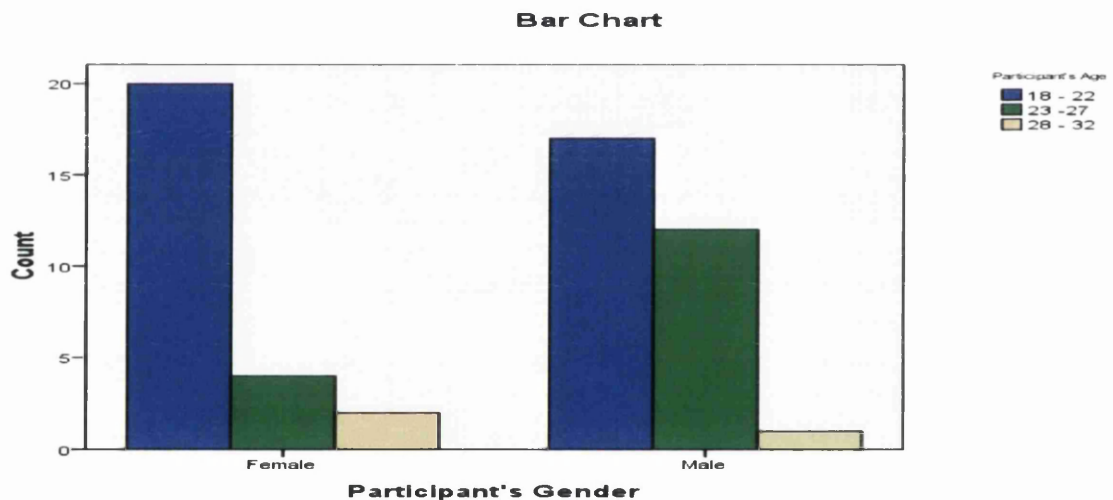
- Theme 1 describes young people's definitions of sexual risk-taking.
- Theme 2 the prevalence of sexual risk taking.
- Theme 3 reports on mass media influence.
- Theme 4 on peer influence on sexual risk taking.
- Theme 5 report findings on parental sexual socialisation of young people.
- Theme 6, on the influence of poverty or social exchange (an influence/outcome of sexual risk taking).
- Theme 7 is about respondents' disposition to sexual risk taking.
- Theme 8 elaborates the influence of commitment, love and emotion on sexual risk taking
- Theme 9 is about pleasure/sensation seeking, an influence and outcome of sexual risk taking.
- Theme 10, young people's agency in sexual risk taking.
- Theme 11 detail outcomes of sexual risk taking, such as STIs, young people's awareness of them, and how this awareness influences sexual risk taking.
- Theme 12 illuminates outcomes of sexual risk taking, unwanted pregnancy, and how this influences sexual risk taking.
- Theme 13 is about partner selection.
- Theme 14, condom/contraceptive use.
- Theme 15, abortion, and their influence on young people's sexual risk taking.

## 5.2 Respondents' profile

Respondents are students, resident in four major Nigerian urban centres: Lagos (Southwest), Benin (Midwest), Nsukka (East) and Abuja (North and Federal Capital Territory). They attend respectively, the University of Lagos, University of Benin, University of Nigeria, Nsukka, and University of Abuja. Their profile and regional locations are:

Participants	Lagos	Benin	Nsukka	Abuja	Total
Males	8	7	7	8	30
Females	6	8	7	5	26
Total	14	15	14	13	56

Fifty-six (56) substantive interview narratives were transcribed verbatim: twenty (20 = 35.7%) of the transcribed interviews were females' and seventeen (17 = 30.4%) were males age between 18-22 years old. Four (4 = 7.1%) were females and twelve (12 = 21.4%) were males, aged between 23-27 years old. Two (2 = 3.6%) are females and one is male (1 = 1.8%) age between 28-32 years old. Bar chart 1 shows respondents' age and gender profile.



**Bar Chart 1, Respondents age and gender profile.**

## 5.3 Theme 1 - respondents' definition of sexual risks and examples

Respondents proffer that sexual risk taking is all premarital penetrative sexual intercourse, with or without the protection of condoms and contraceptives, with a single or multiple sexual partners, because condoms are not 100% effective. In their words, respondents insist "... having sex without protection could be risky" (Interview 6 – Male); or that "people having oral sex, you know, indiscriminate sex,

you know, too many partners, you know, without use of condoms and all that, you know. I believe those are examples of sexual risk taking” (Interview 31 - Male). Other definitions include:

"All sex is risky – condoms are not 100% effective" (Interview 51 Male).

"Ehmn... unless you are married, all unprotected sex is risky... you cannot really know the other person well" (Interview 6 - Male).

"All unprotected sex acts are risky to at least the woman" (Interview 11 – Female).

"Yes, why not – all sex is risky even for married people. It all depends on trust. If you don't trust your partner, you are in trouble. That is the way it is." (Interview 46 – Female).

Young people however, differ on specific examples of practices that constitute sexual risk taking. The predominant sexual risk practices cited by all respondents are unprotected sex without condoms. Other sexual risk practices cited are sex with strangers, sex with commercial sex workers, rape, dry sex, the withdrawal method, and sex without contraceptives. Ninety-one percent (91%) of respondents indicate that kissing is not risky and all indicate that smooching is not risky. Moreover, sixty-seven percent (67.9%), made up of mostly males, insist that oral sex is risky. See table 1 and 2 in annex 1.

#### **5.4 Theme 2 - the prevalence of young people's sexual risk taking**

There seems to be inevitability to young people's sexual risk taking, according to Nigerian university students' narratives. As some put it, "I think it is something that is bound to happen sooner or later. So, I guess, maybe advise them, but don't take it to the extreme. It will still happen. It's just a natural process, they will want to experiment early" (Interview 16 - Male). Alternatively:

"Young people have always had sex I guess. It does not matter what adults think. They will always have sex. I guess I don't have an opinion about this. Most things are just the way they are. I mean, did you not do same?" (Interview 11 - Female).

In a seeming contradiction of the claim that premarital sex is inevitable, young people also assert that premarital sex is morally wrong. For example, in answer to the question, *what is your opinion about young people having sex*, female respondents answer, "it is certainly not right...if they are still very young. It causes a lot of disease

and problem in the future. Like early sexual intercourse causes womb damages and tearing...it is certainly not right" (Interview 21 - Female). Alternatively, "personally, I think, ehh...one should be married before involving herself in sexual relations. It should be within the matrimonial home, within the married couple" (Interview 41 - Female). Male university students express similar normative sentiment about premarital sex. For example, one is of the opinion that "young people, sex, and the risk involved? I believe it's something ...you do at the right time. It's not something you take as a habit. That's the way I see it" (Interview 31 - Male).

Alternatively, "my opinion about young people having sex is that eh... you know the world we live in now is very, very much corrupt. Outside God, it is very much difficult to abstain. Although they may say abstain, abstain, it is not all that easy" (Interview 6 - Male). Regardless of the expressed normative sentiment, only two (2) out of fifty-six (56) respondents admit they are not sexually active at the time of interview, even though they previously were. Table 3, annex 1, show this trend. Of this latter abstaining pair, the male admit he was previously sexually active, but involuntarily abstains because of a recent break-up with his girlfriend. He is yet to acquire a new girlfriend. The other, a female, admits she used to be sexually active, but electively abstain, despite the fact she has a boyfriend.

When respondents were asked *if they ever took sexual risks*, typical answers given are "yes - every time I do it with my boyfriend... We don't like condoms - my boyfriend and I, so we do it just like that" (Interview 11 - Female): or "yeah, I think every time you sleep with a girl, you take risks...there is a fear that something might happen after" (Interview 36 - Male). Seventy-three percent (73.2% = 41 respondents) do not regularly (consistently) use condoms. See Table 4, annex 1.

### **5.5 Theme 3 – the mass media and its influence on sexual risk taking**

Young people believe that the mass media is influential on their sexual risk taking knowledge acquisition, habit formation and sexual risk taking process. Respondents' example of the mass media include books, magazines, internet, television, radio, mobile phones, movies, regular movies, pornography, advertisements and mode of dressing, which influences on sexual risk taking. The relative influence of different constituents of the mass media is however, not uniform. For example, some were

identified as more influential, but not hierarchically superior to others. The *influential* media include television (strongly influential by 50%), pornography<sup>172</sup> (most influential by 100%), internet (most influential by 80.4%), mode of dressing (influential by 42.9%) and magazines (influential by 51.8%). See tables 5, 6 and 7 for details, in annex 1.

The *weakly influential* media include radio (weak by 66.1%), mobile phones (weakly influential by 73.2%), cinema (weak by 46.4%), and advertisements (weakly influential by 46.4%). See Tables 8, 9, 10 and 11 for detail, in annex 1. Thus, young people's narrative accounts reflect the mixed and varied influence of the mass media on sexual risk taking. Nevertheless, there is emphasis on the influence of the internet, television, pornography and female sexy modes of dressing. Underpinning this point, young people are of the opinion that:

"If media include the internet, magazines, porn etc, then yes. They influence young people's sexual risk taking. But not all of them. Some of the time the messages I see and hear advice you to play safe. I have not seen any that says young people should take sexual risks. Even in the movie *Booty Call*<sup>173</sup>, the guys there wear condoms" (Interview 16 - Male). Alternatively,

"What they watch... could be part of it. But it is not the whole story...although changing the content of the media can help, there are other factors" (Interview 41 - Female).

Due to mass media influence, male respondents conclude that sexual risk taking is inevitable. In their words, "it is difficult not to participate in this sex thing ...from what you watch on TV, to the internet and even the way these babes dress, guys have to respond" (Interview 51-Male) or "images create lasting impressions and ...TV, magazines and web picture too, movies, music videos and all that" (Interview 16 - Male). Young females agree that audio-visual media are most influential. They claim they *learn* sexual risk taking from "books, TV, internet and movies" (Interview 11-Female), or from "reading books, watching TV and movies, surfing the internet etc (Interview 46 - Female).

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<sup>172</sup> Pornography is accessed on VHS, DVDs, video CDs, on the internet, mobile phones and via tabloid magazines and comics.

<sup>173</sup> *Booty Call* is a Hollywood movie, featuring Jamie Fox.

## 5.6 Theme 4 - peers and their influence on sexual risk taking

Peer relations have significant and varied influence on young people's sexual risk taking. Peers influence partner choice, entry into sexual relationships, sexual debut, condom/contraceptive use, sexual networking, transactional sex, and other forms of sexual risk taking practices through modelling, advice, social pressure and normative sanctions. All young people interviewed (56 = 100%) agree that peers have influence on each other's sexual risk taking. Peer influence occurs in an environment where young people have unencumbered sexual information access and believe their peers are sexually active. See table 12, annex 1, for details. For example, in response to the question, "can you give an example of a sexual health topic you usually discuss with friends? Answers include:

"examples? (laughter) How to do it, who is doing it, who is not, orgasms, who looks sick, healthy, pregnant, those kinds of things" (Interview 46 -Female).

"who is a finer girl, who is sleeping with who, how many girls you have? How many times you have done it, which girl does it well (laughter) and all that. Any topic at all relating to girls and sex! (Interview 6 - Male)

Table 12, annex 1, show that just seven (7 =12.5%) of the young people interviewed (56 =100%) think their friends abstain from sexual intercourse. Forty-nine (49 = 87.5%) do not think their friends abstain from sexual intercourse. Young people maintain that peers will tease, insult and ridicule them (sanctions) if they are not sexually active and/or admit sexual inactivity. Moreover, peer sexual pressure cuts across gender lines. Male and female respondents narrate similar peer influence, in the form of covert and overt pressure to engage in sexual risk taking. Female respondents are of the opinion that:

"if all your friends have boyfriends and they do what they do and you see them, it's so easy for them, you might just want to try it too" (Interview 21 - Female). Alternatively:

"it is not influence... it is pressure. Sometimes they tell you straight what to do sexually, other times, they kind of put thoughts in your mind...They will call you a baby and ask you to excuse them whenever they want to discuss any topic as real women. That kind of teasing. But it goes on daily in your room and hostel that some girls finally succumb" (Interview 46 - Female).

For young males, peer influence is similarly powerful. Response to the question - *will your friends laugh at you, insult or tease you if you tell them you have never had sex*

produced passionate responses such as, “of course, definitely they will. I will never have any peace among them” (Interview 31 - Male); or “yes, but that is the way things are. It’s part of growing-up. Nobody will believe a guy like me does not have a girlfriend or is not having sex for that matter” (Interview 1 – Male). Regardless of the preceding, young people observe that the influence of peers is not linear. Peer influence and pressure are mediated by individual predispositions towards sexual risk taking. For example, young people comment that peer influence:

“...boils down to individuals. You know your limitations and strength. You do what you think is best or beneficial to you. For example, I have had opportunities to become a drunk, criminal and those bad things. But I have not. I am here... by His Grace. Because I have always used my self-restraint. Though there are so many options in life, at the end of the day, it is up to you to select what is best for you. Nobody puts a gun on your heard and say have sex or force a girl to agree to have sex – unless of course, it is rape. The way the sex thing goes, the boy or girl can stop it anytime – although it is difficult. But it is possible and it happens” (Interview 1 – Male).

Similarly, female respondents confirm the mediation of peer pressure/influence by personal predispositions to sexual risk taking. They suggest, for example, that one cannot blame peers for sexual risk taking because most of the time:

“I have already made up my mind about what to do sexually” (Interview 26 - Female).

“It’s not like your friends will force you to have sex or something, although that can happen. It is more like they ...kind of make what they do normal and okay” (Interview 21 - Female).

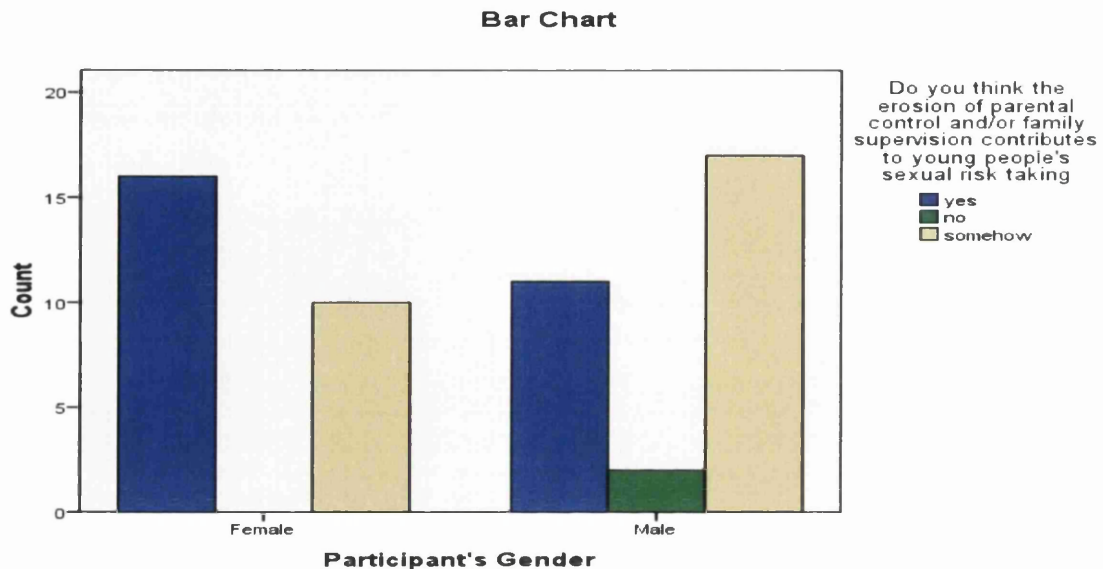
“After some time of being friends, you find yourself behaving like them. That’s it. That’s it” (Interview 31 - Female).

### **5.7 Theme 5 - parents and their influence on sexual risk taking**

Young people implicate their parents in their sexual risk socialization and practice. Parents are implicated via everyday parenting role that are gendered in content and anticipated outcome. For example, young males are socialised to be more adventurous socially and sexually. In contrast, young females are socialised to be chaste and virgins until marriage. As a result, while young males derive enhanced social reputations from vaginal sex, young women lose their social reputations (double standards). In addition, young people significantly associate sexual risk taking with increasingly limited and ineffective parental supervision of their wards, due to modern economic pressures on both parents to work outside the home to materially sustain their households. Table 14, annex 1, depicts this finding.



**Bar Chart 2, do you think the erosion of parental control and/or family supervision contributes to young people's sexual risk taking?**



From Bar Chart 2, twenty-seven (27 = 48.2%) respondents believe the erosion of parental control and/or limited family supervision influences sexual risk taking. An equal number of respondents believe the erosion of parental control and/or family supervision *somehow* contributes to young people's sexual risk taking. Only 3.6% (2 respondents) believe the erosion of parental control and/or family supervision does not contribute to young people's sexual risk taking. Young people also employ sex for oppositional practice. For example, having sex and flaunting the behaviour is said to be a form of rebellion that girls employ to hurt their parents. According to one respondent, some girls use sex “to fight their parents. They just get satisfaction from knowing their parents know they are doing it and are very angry (laughter), people are strange” (Interview, 26 - Female).

For other respondents, parental everyday behaviour is sexualising. According to a male respondent, “if your father is a polygamous person, you will see nothing wrong in having three girlfriends, because you can end up marrying all of them. It is the influence from your father that has done that” (Interview 36 - Male). Related to the preceding, a female respondent attribute her skills at managing her boyfriend to (un)conscious imitation of her mother. According to her, “I didn’t even realize I noticed how my Mum manages ... my Dad until now. But that’s how I manage my

boyfriend too and it works! (Laughter)” (Interview 11 - Female). Most male respondents claim their parents discourage their sexual activities. Answers to my question, *with who can you talk about sex and such related issues*, produced such answer as:

“Haaaa... You can’t talk about such things (*as sex*) at home with your parents or your junior ones who think you know everything (laughter) (Interview 6 – Male; phrase in italics mine).

“My parents, it (*sex*) is a kind of forbidden topic in my house. My parents are very religious. From the TV, basically (Interview 16 – Male; word in italics mine).

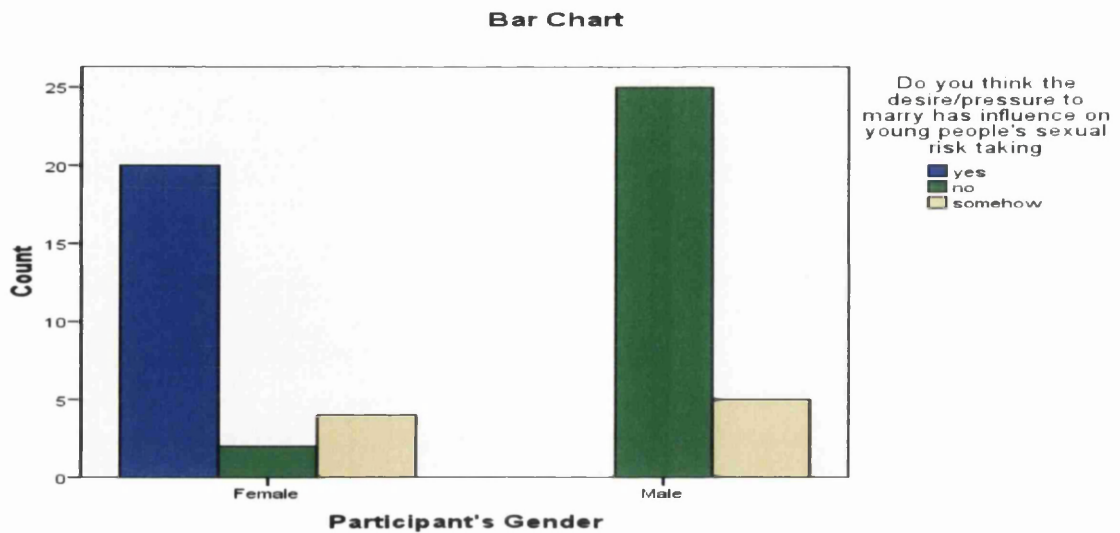
In contrast, female respondents cite parental scolding and direct inquiries about heterosexuality:

“Of course parents contribute, especially mothers. Some will ask you regularly if you have somebody. That is, if you have somebody taking care of you. What do you think they mean by that? It is another way of saying do you have a boyfriend?” (Interview 56 - Female).

“When you are about to graduate, the same parents who did not want you to sleep around suddenly want to know if you have somebody to marry. They will keep asking you in so many ways to introduce somebody. Like they will tell you, that your friend or this your friend just got married. They forget that because you were a nice girl at school you did not go-out with anybody. So who will you introduce? (Interview 49 - Female).

Bar Chart 3 show that young people are divided about the influence of pressures and desire to get married and sexual risk taking. Most girls (76.9%) answered in the affirmative, while boys (92.6%) answered in the negative.

**Bar Chart 3, do you think the desire/pressure to marry has influence on young people sexual risk taking?**



Interview narratives highlight parent's refusal, inability and/or discomfort to engage with young people's manifest sexualities. According to a male respondent, parents often express shock whenever sex or related topics arise. For him, "if you are girl and mention ahmn...a guy's penis, it's like ahh! Jesus Christ! What brought your mind to that? And they will get so annoyed with you ... because most of them, they were not brought-up like that, they are not really comfortable discussing such things with their children. Because they feel the more you tell them, the more they will get spoiled, or the more they will go and try it and explore it" (Interview 36 - Male). A female respondent is similarly of the opinion that:

"most times parents are not always good at it. They are not really... let me put it this way...in some homes, children tend to get strict orders from parents. Don't do this and don't do that. Nothing else! They don't want to know how you feel. So if they say don't sleep with this boy or that boy, it goes the normal way ...into one ear and out of the other. And you know they are not always around, so you will wait and say okay, Daddy is not around, so I can do this or that (Interview 2 - Female).

Male respondents generally express the same sentiments. "I have a strict father, even if sometimes he brings up this issue, I am like, *I beg talk and let me go* ... you know, because I know everything will boil down to – don't do this, don't do that... and I am like he is just disturbing me and maybe its normal. You will think in his time he did it and is now depriving me" (Interview 36 - Male). Thus, the role of parents in sexualising young people is mixed. These include parental behaviour, attitudes, direct

advice and scolding, and most importantly, what parents fail to do and/or say. In this regard, a female respondent is convinced that sexual risk taking by young people will continue until “parents must accept that their innocent children are having sex. Religious bodies and the government too. Then we may see positive action” (Interview 11 - Female).

### **5.8 Theme 6 - Poverty/social exchange and influence on sexual risk taking**

Definitions of poverty by young people indicate it is subjectively perceived, as an inability to *meet-up* or match peer material possessions. For example, a young male defines poverty as “a condition of inadequacy and cuts across material and immaterial stuff. For example, if somebody is ignorant, he is poor as far as I am concerned. It is an inability to meet your needs” (Interview 1 - Male). In contrast, a female respondent suggest that poverty is “not being able to meet your needs... not really the needs, but as in ... maybe your parents are poor and you are not able to meet your needs, financially” (Interview 21 - Female); or “a girl’s inability to meet-up...you know, among girls on campus, there are standards you must meet to belong and not be laughed at. You know, your hairstyle, how long you wear it; mobile phone, you dress style etc. Most parents can’t meet these needs - so having boyfriends or sugar daddies tend to help out” (Interview 11 - Female). Table 13, annex 1, show that more than half of respondents agree that poverty either directly influences sexual risk taking (33 = 58.9%), or somehow influences sexual risk taking (23 = 41.1%). All young people interviewed however, claim they are not poor.

In addition, there is a general agreement that poverty influences young females more than males into sexual risk taking “because..., well, they tend to need the money more desperately...it is mostly the girls who want more money. They tend to want to do more money intensive things than the guys (Interview 16 – Male). A female respondent is of the opinion that although poverty influences “mostly girls, it is not as if girls are generally poorer than boys, or feel the lack more. But then, they are the ones that can do something about it with their bodies (laughter)” (Interview 21 – Female). Other female respondents agree that poverty influences more girls than boys into sexual risk taking because “they (*boys*) are so different from us. They can exist for a semester on one pair of jeans! Imagine a girl wearing one pair of jeans every day? She will die of shame (Interview 11 – Female; word in italics mine).

Another respondent observes that poverty “is the reason some girls do it. But for some others it is greediness. They call it *runs* – but it’s really prostitution” (Interview 46 - Female). A young male sums up the gendered influence of poverty in limiting the capacity of males to attract and keep sexual partners, while differentially influencing young females into sexual risk taking in the opinion that:

“...I think that poverty has an effect on the person because you ... flashier you are, the more girls try to cluster around you. But if you don’t have those things ...like you don’t have the up-to-date ... what is in vogue now like *baffs*, most people won’t really come around you. You find out that most times you be on your own. But for a girl, even if you don’t have what is in vogue, you have what they want (laughter). So they will not really look into how you dress” (Interview 36 - Male).

Most young people assess the wealth of potential and actual sexual partners with overt material standards and manners of speech (including confidence). For example, in answer to the question, *how do you know your partner is poor*, young people gave the following answers:

“Her attitude, behaviour, the way she treats certain issues and things, you will realize that she lacks means (Interview 16 - Male).

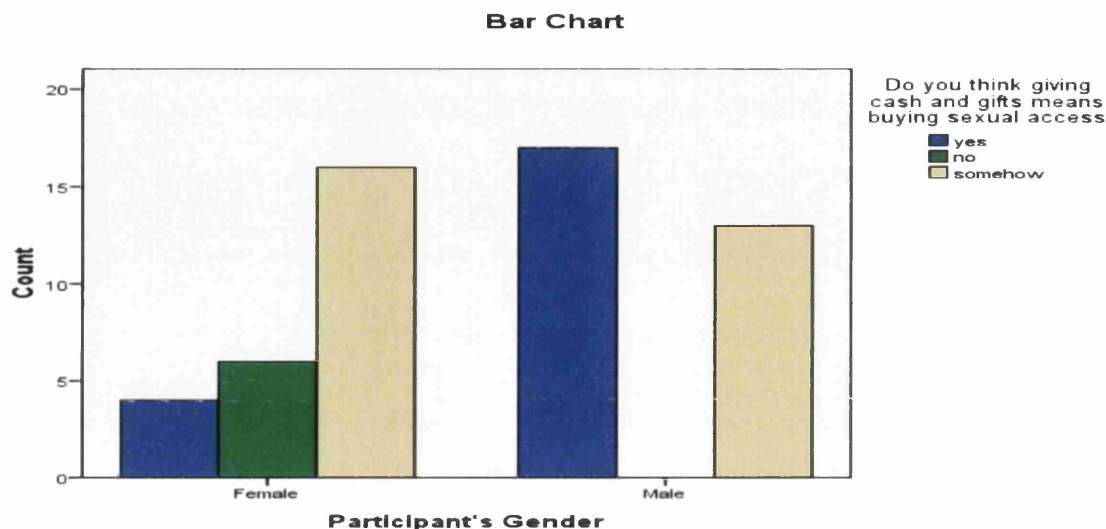
“Generally, the way he looks talks, think and what he wears” (Interview 11 - Female).

Young people are however, divided about the absolute role of poverty on sexual risk taking. For some respondents, poverty influences “a very tiny fraction ... because if you ask..., they say health is wealth. If you take sexual risks and become infected with AIDS, all the money in the world will not make you a normal person any longer. So I don’t think it’s worth it” (Interview 16 - Male). Alternatively, “to some extent, yes. It’s not just poverty. There are other reasons as well ... I will tell you something, most girls use poverty as their excuse because people will be more sympathetic. There is this Oyinbo (*white*) researcher that came - that’s what my roommate told her. My roommate’s father is not poor. I have been to their house. The man is very rich - yet the oyinbo believed her” (Interview 11 – Female, word in italics, mine) and for another girl, poverty influences “some girls... but not everyone (Interview 21 – Female).

However, giving and receiving cash/gifts from males to females is significantly implicated in sexual risk taking. Bar Chart 2 and Table 17 depict this finding. While

15.4% (4 of 26) females admit that giving, cash and gifts imply buying sexual access, 56.7% (17 of 30) of males say it does. 61.5% (16 of 26) females and 43.3% (13 of 30) male respondents however, agrees that giving cash and gifts *somehow* implies buying sexual access.

**Bar Chart 4, do you think giving cash and gifts means buying sexual access?**



Moreover, the giving and receiving of cash and gifts emerged as a media to demonstrate love, affection, maintain relationships and reaffirm male dominance. There is unanimity about the multiple utility of cash and gifts among respondents. According to male respondents, “some boys want their girlfriends to look one way, so they are ready to spend anything to achieve that. So, yes, gifts and money giving and receiving is a part and parcel of relationships today” (Interview 16 - Male). Another respondent expresses the opinion that cash and gifting are, “part of relationships” (Interview 46 - Female), or that cash and gifts are:

“Part and parcel of relationship building. I cannot think of a relationship where a guy does not spend money on recharge-card, hair, gifts and even outright cash giving. That relationship won't last. But it can also be because of poverty. But it all depends on the extreme we are looking at. Because in every intimacy, there is bound to be a show of responsibility... It is also about relationship building process...no...maintenance. Yes relationship building and maintenance (Interview 1 - Male).

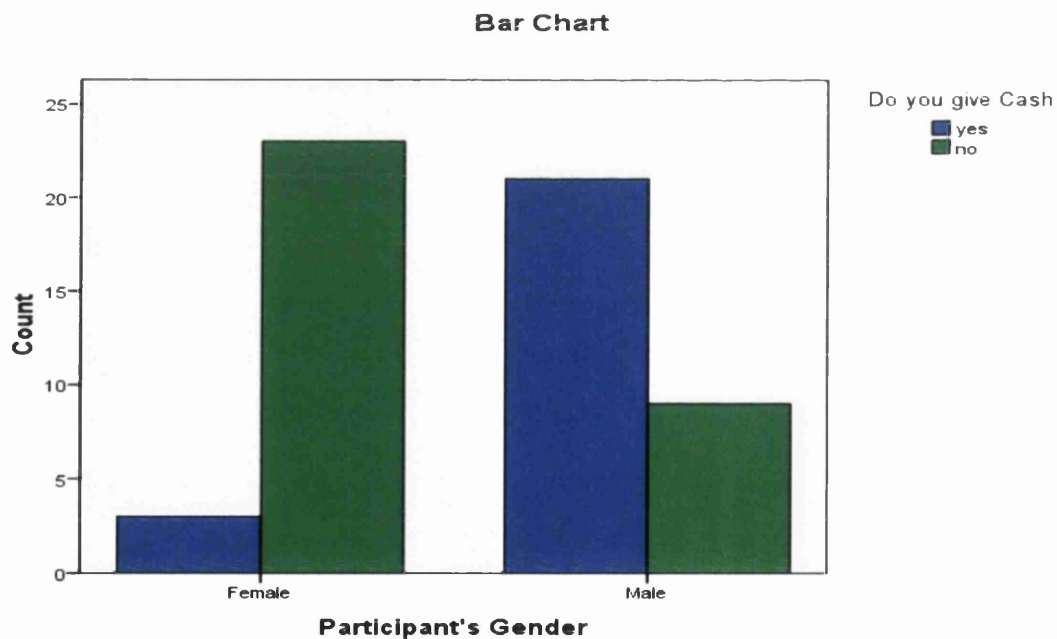
There is also agreement among respondents that males give the most money and gifts in relationships. Various reasons are given for this state of affairs. They range from

normative expectations that young males maintain their girlfriends financially, to young males exploiting their control over material resources to sexually exploit females. These sentiments are mirrored in narratives that imply young males “are supposed to be the ones in charge. So it is expected of them. The girls receive most money, because they are supposed to be taken care of” (Interview 16 - Male) to “that is how they attract you and keep your interest - until they get what they want. (Interview 11 - Female). A male respondent insists that cash/gifting is “what you do to maintain a relationship as a guy. For girls, they give their body. It’s as simple as that” (Interview 36 - Male). A female respondent sums it up:

“Sex is a way for a girl to say thank you to a boy who gives her attention, gifts and ... material support. That is the only thing boys want from girls around here... no matter what they say” (Interview 41 - Female).

Bar Chart 5, shows that 88.5% (23 out of 26) of female respondents admit they do not give their boyfriends cash while 70% (21 out of 30) of males admit giving girlfriends cash.

**Bar Chart 5, do you give cash to boyfriend or girlfriends?**



Respondents are similarly divided along gender lines about the absolute influence of cash and gift giving on sexual risk taking. Young females were more ambivalent

about the influence cash/gift giving on sexual risk taking, inferring that when in-love, male non-compliance with normative cash/gift giving can be overlooked, and when not in-love, it can end the relationship. Young males agree with the latter part of the female assessment about the role of gifts/cash on sexual risk taking. In answer to the question, *what will happen if you do not give/receive gifts/money in a relationship*, young people gave the following typical answers:

"It depends on why she is dating you. If she is expecting money always and you don't give, she will see you as someone who is selfish. But for me, there is a difference between needs and want. If she needs the money, I don't see any reason why you shouldn't give her. But if she wants the money, I don't see any reason why you should give her" (Interview 16 - Male).

"It depends on where the relationship is at or is heading. If you love him, you probably just tease him about it. If not, and there are no future marriage prospects, you dump him and move on" (Interview 11 - Female).

#### **5.9. Theme 7 - young people's sexual predispositions and influence on sexual risk taking**

Young Nigerian university students interviewed have positive life outlooks, most likely benefiting from strong family connectedness and support to complete formal education, establish a business and/or seek paid employment. None indicates intention to dropout of university even though they admit the Nigerian socio-political environment will challenge their academic and career aspirations. None similarly expressed any verbal and/or attitudinal support for sexual recklessness. As one young male put it:

"I don't believe that *something must kill a man* thing that you read in books. Nobody wants to die. People just want to have fun. It is just unfortunate that ehmn... this dreaded virus is happening in our time" (Interview 6 - Male) or:

"nobody sets out to get a disease like HIV, it happens as an unintended consequence of having sex" (Interview 11 - Female).

Young people interviewed nonetheless, express overt curiosity about sexuality. Fifty-51.8% admit that curiosity is influential on sexual risk taking, while 48.2% claim curiosity is somehow influential. Table 14, annex 1, shows this trend. Young people are paradoxically ambivalent and predisposed to sexual risk taking. All respondents (56 = 100%) advance the opinion that it is ideal that young people abstain from sex, even though sexual risk taking is normative. Indeed, young people interviewed, without exception, believe they must cultivate and maintain heterosexual relationships

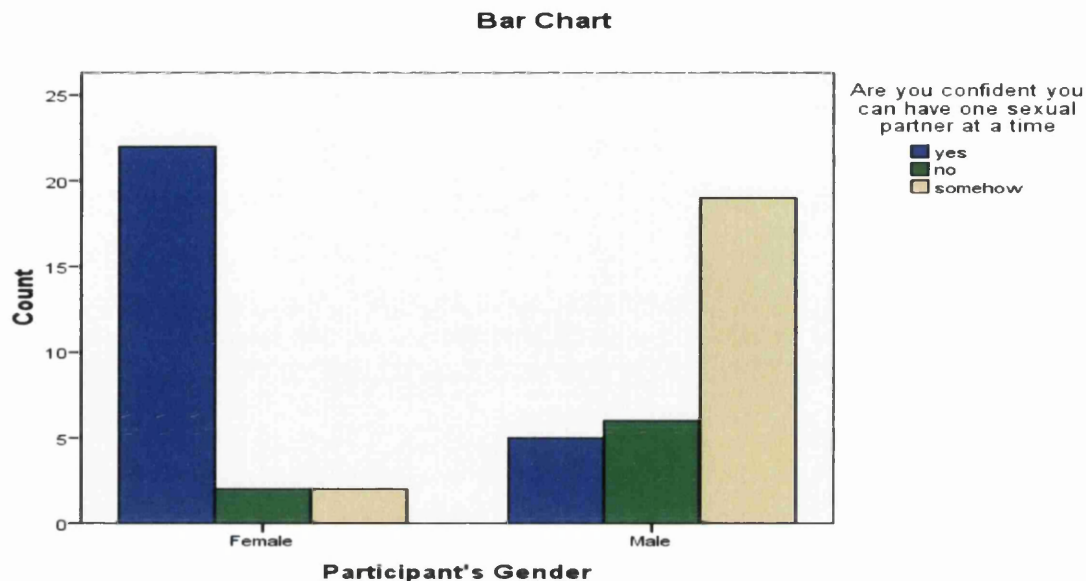


(boyfriend or girlfriend), for which unprotected premarital sex is a key component. Table 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20 and 21, annex 1, depicts young people's narratives with associated frequencies indicative of widespread predisposition to sexual risk taking.

Furthermore, when asked, *do you think having a boyfriend means you must take sexual risks?* Young people were evenly divided in their opinion. 48.2% said yes and 46.4% answered in the negative. Table 16, annex 1, depicts this distribution. Despite respondents' seeming 50-50% split opinion about the role of having a boyfriend/girlfriend in sexual risk taking, most are unsure they can refuse their boy/girlfriend's sexual advances. Table 17, annex 1, illustrates that only 2% are sure they will resist sexual pressure from their boyfriends/girlfriends. In addition, when young people were asked if it is possible to have a non-sexual relationship, 80.4% said no, and 19.6% said yes. Table 18, annex 1, shows this distribution.

Table 19, annex 1, demonstrates that young people interviewed are not very certain they can abstain from sex. 19.6% claim they can abstain, 46.4% claim they cannot and 33.9% are sure they can "somehow" abstain from sex. Nearly all respondents (98.2%) admit they cannot avoid sex until they marry. See Table 20, annex 1. An additional evidence for young people's positive disposition to sexual risk taking is that 96.4% of the sample interviewed are sexually active, and in a heterosexual relationships at the time of the interview. Furthermore, respondents' positive predisposition to unprotected premarital sex also manifest in their increasing preference for serial monogamy, with a significant sexual risk taking component, over sexual abstinence and multiple/concurrent sexual partners. Serial monogamy is the growing form of sexual relationship, which recommends keeping only one sexual partner at any time. Due to relationship attrition, serial monogamy necessitates having more than one sexual partner in a lifetime, which elevates young people's exposure to STIs. Bar Chart 6, show this trend.

**Bar Chart 6, are you confident you can have one sexual partner at a time?**



In addition, young males, based on their accounts, are much more theoretically predisposed to casual sex with multiple concurrent partners than females. Although only one male admits to having multiple sexual partners and casual sex, at the time of interview, the majority of males interviewed responded in manners that suggest they will indulge in casual and multiple partnered sexual risk taking if the opportunity presents itself. Bar Chart 6 show the frequencies of typical responses to the question *are you confident you can have one sexual partner at a time*. Young people waver between certainty (48.2%) they can keep one sexual partner at any time and uncertainty (37.5%) they cannot keep one sexual partner at a time.

Young people also indulge in symbolic impression management to create, maintain and reconstitute themselves to be more sexually attractive. Impression management is a micro-level individual activity that allows young people to (un)consciously present and represent themselves in sexually appealing manners daily through mode of dressing, choice of campus residence, manner of speech, performance in competitive sports, and material possession displays calculated to attract the opposite sex. The social and economic material displays (showing-off) enhance the status of young males and their capacities to attract females. Females believe their social and economic material displays attract more males to them.

Female respondents particularly indulge in what Goffman, (1983) call *self-presentations*, which are sexual in nature, via dress styles and provocative conducts calculated to attract male attention. In this regard, young people are divided about the role of sexualised modes of dressing on sexual risk taking. Table 21, annex 1, shows that 41.1% and 42.9% consider sexualised modes of dressing weakly influential and influential on sexual risk taking respectively. Sexual self-presentation or displays can enhance or tarnish constructed social reputations. Conversely, for young men, keeping multiple sexual partners enhances social reputation, while abstinence or serial monogamy tarnishes social reputations.

Social reputations for young women are more ambivalent, often dependent of careful constructions of a chastity façade, despite periodic references to their sexual activity. For example, in answer to the question *as a boy, how important is it to remain a virgin*, male respondent's claim that "that will be hard for me .... As a boy, most times you say the person is joking... (Hesitant laughter). It's not really realistic" (Interview 1 – Male) or that "to me personally, I don't really see a big-deal to remain a virgin" (Interview 9 – Male). Other male responses mirror similar incredulity about male virginity. For example:

"(Laughter), a boy? A virgin? These days? It is not important at all. In fact no boy will admit it (laughter)" (Interview 31 – Male)

"(Long laughter), ahh, from a boy's point of view, virginity is like a curse. Majority of the guys, they look at virgins as a nuisance... not you, you have to do something about it" (Interview 36 – Male)

In answer to the same question, *as a girl, how important is it to remain virgin?* Female respondents equivocate about the decreased significance of virginity in modern life. This sentiment is embodied in opinions such as "these days it is not important. But I think it is good. If you are a virgin, you can avoid all these relationship problem like heartbreak, disease and pregnancy...But I will tell you one thing, it is not very easy to remain a virgin today" (Interview 2 - Female) or "well, you have confidence in yourself, you have respect for yourself. Eventually, when you have a partner and you tell your partner you do not want to have sex, ...every reasonable guy will want to respect that" (Interview 21 – Female). Other responses also mirror the emergent irrelevance of female virginity. They include:

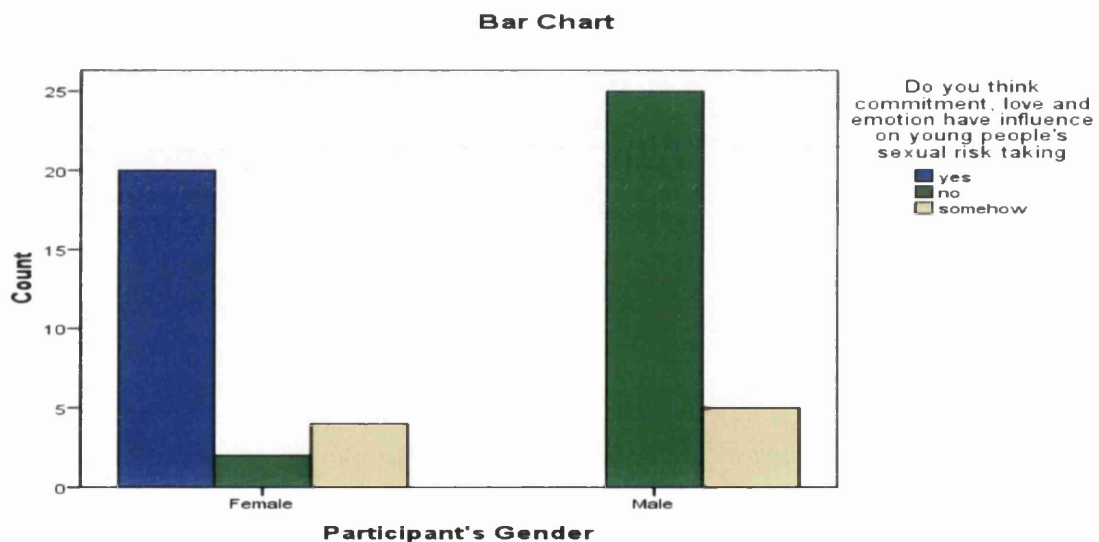
"Not very. That's old school What's the point of that? Nobody except the virgin cares about it. It's a burden ... I think. These days, I hear every girl is expected to get pregnant before wedding. How do you achieve that if you remain a virgin?" (Interview 11 – Female).

"Well, it's no longer important these days. It used to be in the past. At least that is what my grandmother says. She said your parents take pride in it and boast about it..., and that many suitors will court you. She also said your husband would reward your family for marrying a virgin. These days, things have changed – nobody cares about that anymore" (Interview 46 – Female).

**5.10 Theme 8 - commitment, love, emotions, and influence on sexual risk taking**

Young people are divided about the influence of commitment, love and emotions on sexual risk taking. 35.7% are convinced emotional variables are influential, while 48.2% claim it is not. Bar Chart 7 shows the distribution of respondents' opinion on the role of emotions, or its lack, on sexual risk taking.

**Bar Chart 7, do you think commitment, love and emotion have influence on young people's sexual risk taking?**



Nevertheless, variables related to love and affection, for example, reduces the likelihood of condom use. Condom uses by partners, who believe they love each other, evoke distrust for the other's sexual behaviour and/or history. Sex in the context of emotionally driven relationships, such as love, is often a medium to bolster relationships, demonstrate affection/love and derive sensations. For example, when asked the question *when in-love, is sex and sexual risk taking more acceptable*, 76.9% of young females (20 out of 26) agree love, emotion and commitment influence sexual risk taking. According to one, sex "is the best way to show love ... Don't mind

those that tell you it does not matter and that they abstain. Most of them do everything else but have sex. It's the best way to keep a boy faithful" (Interview 49-Female). Other responses mirror the inevitability of sex in romantic relationships. They include the fact that sex, when in-love is:

"Normal... even natural and expected. More enjoyable, you know ... the after-feelings linger. Last longer. Mind you, I am talking about the feelings for girls (Interview 11-Female). Or that,

I don't know about acceptable, but I know it is more likely to occur (Interview 41-Female).

For most males, answers to the question *when in-love, is sex and sexual risk taking more acceptable* were different. According to one, although love and emotions influence sexual risks, "it is one of those habits we are copying from oyinbo<sup>174</sup> people. That kind of Romeo and Juliet love cannot really exist in this environment. I don't think there is selfless love that a girl will die for a boy or the boy for the girl. No way! (Laughter). The kind of love you see here is when you are maintaining your girl properly; she will say she loves you. When you stop, she will disappear! So yes, I believe some young people think they do it for love, but we are all the same. We do it for what we can get. Nothing goes for anything. Nothing is free in Freetown!<sup>175</sup> (Interview 6 - Male). Nevertheless, five males (16.7%) agree that love and emotions *somehow* influences young people's sexual risk taking:

"...because there is this free-float-thing when you love somebody. And people believe that when you love somebody, you have sex. The closeness is heightened, you know, the bond is stronger" (Interview 16 – Male).

Majority of males (83.3% = 25) express distrust about the influence of love and emotions, insisting that heterosexual relationships are just about sensation seeking for most males and sensation/material benefits for females:

"Love... love don't really push boys. It's all about pleasure and satisfaction...and ego like I said. Boys, in the normal sense, we pretend a lot, we pretend to love and ... because if you don't show love, they won't let you do what you want to do (laughter). So you have to show love...eh... so I don't think most guys do it for love" (Interview 39 – Male).

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<sup>174</sup> *Oyinbo* is Nigerian vernacular for white westerners or foreigners.

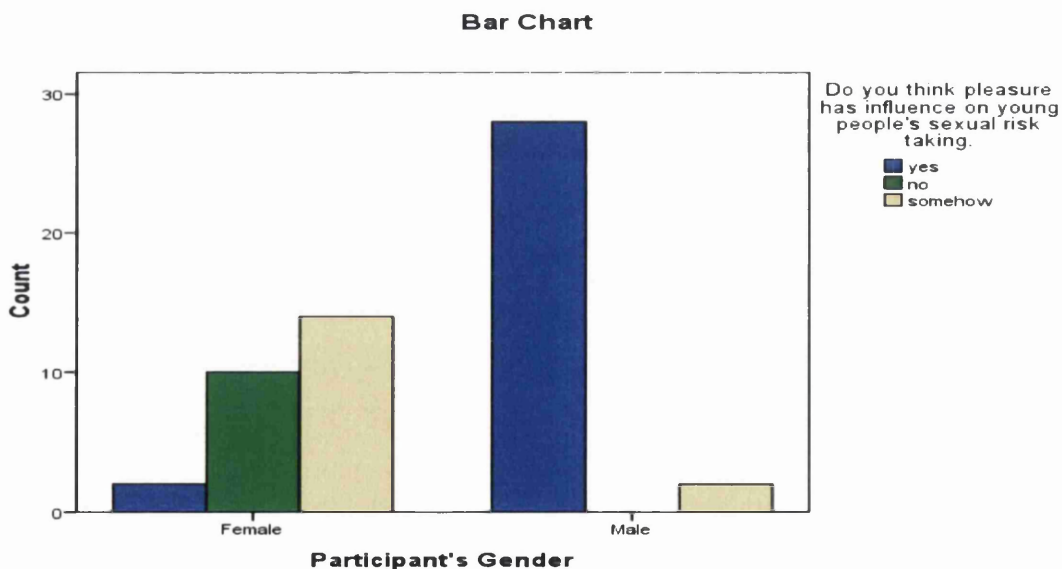
<sup>175</sup> This is a play on words, which strongly connotes that in life, nothing is given without reciprocal expectations. In Nigerian heterosexual relationships scripts, males give money/gifts and females show appreciation by granting generous males sexual access.

### 5.11 Theme 9 - pleasure or sensation seeking and influence on sexual risk taking

Sensation seeking is implicated in young people's sexual risk taking. Young people, especially young males readily agree that sensation seeking and enhanced social reputation are major drivers of masculine sexual risk taking. For example, there are claims that sex is "very good (laughter), the pleasure. My rep goes up too ...people think I am a ladies' man" (Interview 51 - Male) or "sex to me is more or less like an adventure" (Interview 1 - Male). Another acknowledges, "the first time I had sex, I was very proud (laughter). It was... like an exciting accomplishment in my life. I told all my friends" (Interview 36 - Male).

Unlike males, young females are more ambivalent about the role of pleasure/sensation seeking in sexual risk taking. Most talk about sex as *doing it*, indirectly imply they indulge in sex for a variety of reasons such as "for pleasure, love and affection and to please him. (Long pause) ... Sex also calms me down when I am worried" (Interview 11 - Female) or that sex is a "spur of the moment thing, affection, love, to please my boyfriend, when I have the urge etc. It depends" (Interview 46 - Female). Bar Chart 8 shows the frequencies of young people who admit to the influence of sensation seeking on sexual risk taking.

**Bar Chart 8, do you think pleasure has influence on young people's sexual risk taking?**



For young women, sex serves more functions than sensation or pleasure. Two female respondents capture the comparative utility of premarital sex for either sex; "...for boys, I think it's a fun and pleasure thing. I think doing it tells them that they are men... something to boast about to their friends. I slept with ABC – you know. For a girl or woman, it can be calming; shows affection, love, caring, sometimes fun and pleasure too" (Interview 11- Female) or that "sometimes, not really the sex ... But maybe cuddling, kissing – that's important, but in some other relationships, it is very important" (Interview 26 – Female).

In contrast, sex for young males, is all about pleasure. Typical response to questions about the role of pleasure in sexual risk taking is that, "any player will tell you it's all about pleasure, then ego (laughter). It's as simple as that...but women love to make things complicated" (Interview 9 – Male). Alternatively, sex is why "most guys go into relationships... that's like 50% of the reason why guys go into relationships...Yes, it is fulfilling for guys, gives pleasure and is usually at the expense of the girls feelings" (Interview 16 – Male).

Young people's positive predispositions to sexual risks produce four attitude types (see Giddens, 1990, p.135-137), which directly relates to variable sexual risk taking agencies. The first is a pragmatic acceptance of sexual risk taking, such as young male's acceptance of sexual risk taking for pleasure only or young females engaging in sex to please their boyfriends. The second is sustained optimism about taking sexual risk without negative outcomes, for example, young people's attempt to mitigate unwanted and negative sexual risk outcomes by careful partner selection. The third is cynical pessimism about the inevitability of sexual risks/outcomes, which produces fatalism or the so-called *something must kill a man* attitude to sexual risk taking. The fourth is a radical engagement with sexual risk taking in the form of anticipatory negative outcome management/control with condoms, contraceptives and/or abstinence. These will be discussed in detail, with emphasis on their gender manifestations, in the subsequent discussion chapter.

#### **5.12 Theme 10 - young people's agency and influence on sexual risk taking**

Young people's agency in sexual risk taking is evidenced in their contemplation, execution and acceptance of scripted behaviours that lead to unprotected premarital

sex. Scripted sexual behaviour includes flirting, joking and sexualised conduct that is intended to attract pre-selected mates. Male scripted behaviour includes trendy dressing, ownership and display of status enhancing and expensive electronics gadgets and showing interest/concern for particular female's affairs. Young males are however, normatively expected to complete the relationship formation process by formally approaching and asking females to become girlfriends. Young females normatively postpone immediate acceptance of males proposals/advances until *trust is built* through familiarity and/or continued social pressure by the male, his and recruited female peers, on the female to accept the male's proposals to become his girlfriend. They call this normative delay in accepting male suitors *forming*, that is, *playing-hard-to-get*.

Apparently, young people embark on relationship formation and consummation process because they simply can and it is not illegal. According to one respondent, "there is no form of restriction, it's not criminal" to engage in premarital sexual relations (Interview 1 – Male). Another observes that it seem young people engage in sexual relations because they simply can. According to him, it's "something like that... that is why we all do what we do. It is part of the story" (Interview 9 – Male). Other responses were more ambivalent. They include:

"It is not that simple...there is pressure from friends and boys too. But nobody can really force you to do what you want don't do. So I will say yes" (Interview 2 – Female).

"(Laughter)...that is a trick question. But I think it is true. As long as you are biologically functioning well.... That is why most girls go to universities far from home. They gain their freedom from parents and relative to what they like...yes, that is true" (Interview 56 – Female).

There are also material, sensory, social rewards that normatively reinforce conformity with sexual risk taking sub-culture, which combine with sexual scripts to reinforce normative sexual risk taking agency. For example, there are social expectations that women should not initiate the relationship process or the sexual act. Young people were asked about the influence of such scripts, for example, *is it appropriate for only boys to chase and seduce girls*. Below are some answers:

"...I think they rule our lives. They are part and parcel of relationships today. Even boys that pretend to be enlightened



sometimes act in obedience of ...what you called... sexual scripts" (Interview 11- Female).

"I don't think a girl should ask a guy out. It is not proper. This is Africa. But girls are doing it now already o! But I don't think I can go and ask a boy out" (Interview 21 – Female).

Young males were asked the question reversed, *is it appropriate for girls to chase and seduce boys* and responded differently. For example:

"That is not the way it is supposed to be...because in the end, that is, after the boy takes what he wants, he won't respect the girl again" (Interview 6 – Male).

"Yes, that is the way it is supposed to be, otherwise, the boy will not respect the girl" (Interview 31 – Male).

In consequence, sexual communications in heterosexual relationships are normative and ambiguous. Young females seem more prone to sexual communication ambiguity. For example, in answer to the question, *when a girl says no, to a boy's toasting or sexual interest, does it really mean no?* Typical answers given include, "not really. That is what she is expected to say when a boy toasts her or wants to do it. She is not supposed to make it too easy for him. Strangely enough, boys expect her to say no the first time too! It's called *forming*. A girl has to *form* a bit" (Interview 46 – Female). For many males, "yes can mean no and no can mean yes. It depends on their mood and topic" (Interview 1 – Male). Other similarly ambivalent responses include:

"(Long laughter)...is that what the boys said? (Laughter) ...well something like that. If you say yes too fast, they will think you are cheap, so you can say no to stress them further and find out how far they will go..." (Interview 49 – Female).

"I think girls love to be pressured into saying yes, so they can blame the boy later if anything goes wrong. If they say no, there is nothing any boy can do, unless it is rape... has a girl ever closed her thighs on you? If they have, then you will realise how difficult it is to force them to do anything they don't want to do" (Interview 51 – Male).

Young people are aware of the implications of having a boyfriend or a girlfriend. According to a female respondent, "...we all know what it means for a guy or babe to say they have a girlfriend or boyfriend. So when a guy is toasting a girl, she knows that ultimately he will want to have sex. Everybody knows that. The guy too, kind of knows he will need to shower the girl with gifts and presents to maintain the relationship...and the girl knows that they will have sex to maintain the relationship.

If not, generally, they won't last. That is the way these relationship thing work around here, simple. If anybody tells you anything different, they are just lying or deceiving themselves (Interview 41 - Female). Alternatively, "most people know that these relationships end in having sex" (Interview 16 - Male). Other young people have similar things to say about heterosexual relations and sexual risk taking, they include,

"of course. If a boy toasts you, every girl knows what he wants or what he means. He is actually getting to know you to ask for sex, simple. No matter what anyone claims. Boys are not fools. The same thing when a boy gives you money and gifts, he wants something in return – sex. Everybody knows these things. But some girls believe they can control boys after taking money and gifts from them. They always end-up in trouble" (Interview 26 – Female).

"Every girl knows that a toaster want to have sex with her. Same thing, when a girl accepts a boy's toasting, they both know the boy will maintain the girl financially and protect her generally" (Interview 6 – Male).

In relation to responsibility for sexual risk taking, there is unanimity among young people (92.9%) that sexual partners share responsibility for risk taking. Only 4% indicate that sexual risk taking is the responsibility of males alone. Table 22, annex 1, depicts this trend. Regardless, all respondents credit males with the introduction of, but not sole responsibility for, novel risk practices in relationships. Agency in sexual risk taking is also demonstrated by various activities they engage in that promote sexual risks. Such activities include visiting sexual partners, having sex without condoms and contraceptives. In relation to social visits, a female respondent observes that:

"I know most girls may lie and blame their boyfriends about their sexual... what do you call it, risks. But every girl going to visit her boyfriend knows what will happen when she gets there. So to me, if you don't want to have sex, don't go" (Interview 16 – Male).

A male respondent similarly observe that:

"My man, don't be deceived...these girls know exactly what they are doing or what they want even though it doesn't look that way all the time...I suspect they behave the way they do to make guys feel manly and take care of them financially and otherwise" (Interview 51– Male).

Having sex without condoms/contraceptives is common among young people. Two major reasons account for this trend. The first is that condoms are said to reduce sexual pleasure and the second is that condoms seem to indicate distrust. Table 23, annex 1, show that majority of sexually active young people 73.2% do not use condom regularly even though 96.4% (Table 24, annex 1) admit sexual activity. The pervasiveness of sexual risks and young people's agency is illustrated in their answers to the question *which risky behaviour do I indulge in most?* Table 25, annex 1, shows that majority of young people take sexual risks such as sex without condoms and/or contraceptives. Young people's sexual risk taking agency has strategic and tactical components that will be illustrated in the data discussion and analysis chapter.

### **5.13 Theme 11 - young people's awareness of STIs and influence on sexual risk taking**

Young people interviewed are aware that STIs are transmitted through unprotected sex. Although none indicated having HIV or personal knowledge of any HIV victim, four admit to knowing a peer who had Candida and gonorrhoea. Young people know they can contract STIs from sexual risk taking. According to them, by engaging in sexual risk taking "there is a high chance that they will get infected with STI and of course the HIV thing" (Interview 16 – Male) or "okay, the girl may get disease and spread it to all her partners. She may get pregnant and not know whom the father is. If word spreads that she is *easy*, then her *rep* is ruined. Even girls will gossip about her. (Long thoughtful pause). But you know that it does not follow that a girl experiences all these things because she has multiple partners. Some girls who do it know how to take care of themselves" (Interview 11 – Female). Other narratives include:

"Of course, you get AIDS... Manmi (*my-man*), your guy contracted gono a couple of times. But gono is treatable, not like AIDS. So I try...I don't want to die and I don't want to stop living either. So I try to select my girls carefully" (Interview 51 – Male).

"Sleeping around only produces one thing – AIDS. Some people are lucky. They sleep around and don't catch it. Many people are not so lucky, one attempt and they are in trouble" (Interview 56 – Female).

Young people are also aware of the alternate routes of contracting STIs like HIV through blood transfusion, use of medical equipment not properly sterilized. Respondents (56 and 100%) acknowledge there is no cure for HIV/AIDS. Sexual abstinence, according to respondents, is the only foolproof method of avoiding STIs.

Such sentiments are mirrored in comments such as “avoid premarital sex... well... those that cannot abstain should always protect themselves with a condom” (Interview 41 - Female), and “to abstain is the best ...” (Interview 36 - Male).

Personal risk perception among young people in relation to STIs is low. All, but one respondent admitted to ever having STI. The rest claim they never had STI and three claim they know peers who had STI. For example, in answer to questions such as *do you think you may have STI or HIV* - answers range from “no, I am very sure of myself” (Interview 21 - Female) or “no... but the risk is always there, as long as you are in a relationship” (Interview 6 - Male) to “no, I am not supposed to be at risk (laughter). I am in a committed relationship” (Interview 46 - Female).

Young people are also uncomfortable with blood testing to know their HIV status. In response to the question, *would you like to be tested for HIV/AIDS?* Young people typically gave the following answers. “Not really – it is an additional burden to the mind” (Interview 1 - Male) to a hesitant “if it is necessary” (Interview 26 - Female). Based on these findings, young people are keenly aware of the risk-prone nature of sexual risk taking. They are nonetheless, socialised and predisposed to sexual relations and consequent risk taking. To reiterate a young male’s observation, “I don’t believe that *something must kill a man* thing that you read in books. Nobody wants to die. People just want to have fun. It is just unfortunate that ehmn... this dreaded virus is happening in our time” (Interview 6 - Male).

#### **5.14 Theme 12 – unintended pregnancy and influence on sexual risk taking**

Pregnancy in the context of young people's premarital sexual relations is mostly accidental and stigmatising. Paradoxically, pregnancy in this context can also be planned. That is, premarital pregnancy does not always arise from carelessness, ignorance, lack of condom and contraceptive use. Unprotected sex and pregnancy in the context of young people’s relationships are sometimes leveraged to bolster relationships, to blackmail male partners into marriage, to extort money, ostensibly for abortions, anticipated to test the fertility of either or both partners, and employed as a tool to secure immediate escape from parents and home.

Regardless, young people's commentary about unwanted pregnancy is significantly gendered. For 76.6% of males (23 out of 30 males), pregnancy is typically "no big deal...every smart girl knows how to avoid it or take care of it...and I roll with smart girls" (Interview 9 - Male). Others are more ambivalent in their attitude towards unwanted pregnancy. They simultaneously worry about the outcome, such as impending fatherhood and usually insist on abortion. Typical male attitude is that "pregnancy is bad news...a player is not down for the pregnancy thing. Its babe's way of grounding you. If it happens, you take action and insist, if the babe refuses...then off you go. No paddy for jungle<sup>176</sup>" (Interview 51 - Male).

On the contrary, 92% (24 out of 26) of female respondents largely blame males for "getting you pregnant and not caring...all they know is abort it, abort it" (Interview 2 - Female), even though young females (26 = 100%) are aware that "you can use contraceptives, or be sure of your safe period before having sex" (Interview 21 - Female) to prevent unwanted pregnancy. In addition, young females do not consider unwanted pregnancy a big risk, compared to STIs as some comments imply. For example, most respondents interviewed are unsure they will use contraceptives consistently because they practise serial monogamy "are faithful to each other and that has worked well so far in preventing STD and HIV. But pregnancy, I don't know. I am sure we will deal with it if it arises" (Interview 11 - Female). Furthermore, a young female implies that girls have a right to use whatever leverage to get what they want. Others declined to discuss the utility of unwanted pregnancy for male control. Typical comments include:

"What is wrong in girls using what they have to get what they want? Boys do it all the time. You people will be together; you will do everything for them hoping that one day they will propose. But they usually don't. So if getting pregnant will do it, why not. Mind you, once you tell them you are pregnant, they just run away or want you to abort it...boys" (Interview 49 - Female).

### **5.15 Theme 13 - partner selection and sexual risk taking**

A major influence on young people's sexual risk taking, and on the means employed to mitigate concerns about STIs and unwanted pregnancy, is their ability for partner selection based on social, emotional and material considerations. Partner selection is a scripted behaviour that involves conscious and unconscious assessment of potential

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<sup>176</sup> Roughly translated, this means there is no gentleman in the jungle, or in a merciless world.

sexual partner's sexual risk or STI status via social familiarity, physical appearance, comportment, family background/wealth, manner of speech and other subjectively perceived indicators of good health and suitability for potential marriage. For young males, partner selection for sexual relations is driven by feminine physiology mostly. For example, physical beauty, contoured shape, trendy dressing, course of study and overall aura of females are essential parameters. Known or suspected family wealth are bonus attributes. Accordingly, it is said that:

"you know they are from good homes the way they behave...carry themselves. You can even try them a couple of times with money, if they fall, do your thing and run" (Interview 55 - Male).

"selecting babes...first and foremost, they must be beautiful...shapely too and well mannered too, the kind of girl you can proudly introduce to your Mum" (Interview 37 - Male).

Similarly for young women, "you have to be careful about the boys who toast you that you agree to...after all, you have your future to think about" (Interview 2 - Female) or that careful partner selection in sexual relationships are "very important in this environment of disease. You can avoid HIV in a relationship where trust is 50-50. It also ...the only way you can learn about each other, get committed and possibly marry in future" (Interview 11 - Female). Based on these subjective socio-economic parameters, young people decide partners, sexual debut and condom use with selected partners.

#### **5.16 Theme 14 - condom and contraceptive availability and use**

Another influence on sexual risk taking is the ready availability, use and/or none use of contraceptives, including condoms<sup>177</sup>. 88.4% of young females (23 of 26) do not use birth control pills and/or morning after contraceptives. This elevates the threat of unwanted pregnancies. Typical female response to questions about contraceptive use is "I will not use those. They are dangerous to a woman's health" (Interview 46 - Female). Neither do young people regularly use condoms, making the risk of contracting STI constant. Table 26, annex 1, shows that 73.2% (41 of 56) respondents do not use condoms regularly.

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<sup>177</sup> Condoms serve dual purposes – they offer protection from STIs and unwanted pregnancies to sexual partners, if properly and consistently used. Contraceptives, on the other hand, are primarily used by women to prevent unwanted pregnancies, before and/or after unprotected sex. Postinor, a brand of morning-after pills, is the contraceptive of choice among the study sample.

While female condoms are said to be scarce, male condoms reduce intimacy. In addition, young people, especially females insist that condom use does not transmit the idea of love, trust, and commitment. Other challenges of regular condom use are reflected upon:

"Well, you are guy now. What do you do when you get an opportunity and there is no condom? Walk away? No! (Laughter). I am telling you, it is not easy to walk away from free sex (laughter). When you tell some girls, I don't have condoms, wait and let me go and buy from the chemist around the corner. By the time you come back, they are gone or no longer in the mood. Some will even tell you it is because you don't trust them that you want to use condoms... when it is really because you can't really trust each other. It is very complicated" (Interview 39 – Male). Or,

Unprotected sex seems reserved for well-liked and *committed* partners. For example, "if it is with my own girl, I am not confident I can avoid sex. Because I try to monitor when she is unsafe. That is when we use condoms. When she is safe, we do it without condoms. But with bush-meat<sup>178</sup>, you have to *condomise* all the time" (Interview 6 - Male). For females, typically, "if partners trust each other and are committed, why do they need condoms? Maybe when it's unsafe for the girl to have sex. It's complicated I guess. Somehow, condoms suggest sleeping around" (Interview 11 - Female). On the contrary, young people are most likely to use condoms 76.8% (43 of 56) with partners they don't trust. Table 27, annex 1, shows this trend.

It is also claimed that condom use is low because "cost is one thing. They may not be able to afford them. Then you have ignorance and believe that AIDS is not real. There is carelessness also, condoms may not be available when you need it most, and it is difficult to just say I am not doing it because there is no condom...you also find that some girls do not like guys using condoms. They say it means you don't trust them. Personally, I use it, but it is not the same thing as skin-to-skin". On the other hand, female respondents suggest feminine capacities to negotiate condom use and complicity in unprotected sex in the observation that condom use:

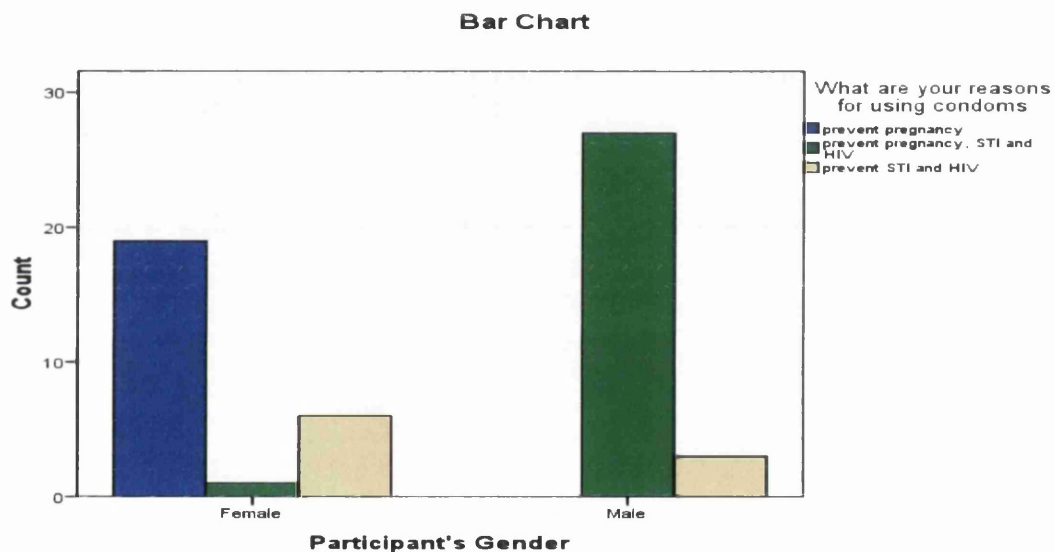
"depends on the individuals. Is she ready to get pregnant? ...So, she should protect herself and support the guys in using condoms" (Interview 41 - Female). Or that "sex without condom can get a girl pregnant and more emotionally attached to the boy" (Interview 11 - Female).

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<sup>178</sup> Bushmeat is a derogatory term for off-campus girls dated by male university students.

Young males largely claim ignorance of female contraceptive use such as birth control pills. According to one male, "if they use contras, they don't tell me or ask me. As long as they are not knocked-up, I don't worry myself about that" (Interview 51 – Male). For young females, contraceptives have "bad side effects. It can prevent you from getting pregnant when you are finally ready, or give you cancer. But condoms, well, I think they are alright. Most people use condoms" (Interview 46 - Female). In addition, condom use is gendered. Most males use condoms to prevent STIs and females use it mostly to prevent unwanted pregnancies. See Table 28, annex 1, which shows that 90% (27 of 30) of males use condoms primarily to prevent pregnancy, STI and HIV, while and 73.1% (19 of 26) of females use condoms to prevent pregnancy. See also Bar Chart 9.

**Bar Chart 9, what are your reasons for using condoms?**



**5.17 Theme 15 – abortion and influence on sexual risk taking**

The availability of abortion is another key influence on young people's sexual risk. Although abortion is illegal for unmarried young girls in Nigeria, it nonetheless remains a method of last resort. Young people, male and female, are aware of this last resort and discuss it rather openly. For typical male respondents, abortion is a very practical matter that female sexual partners ought to take if they fail to prevent unwanted pregnancy. This is reflected in such comments, as "this is Nigeria. Most guys if they get a girl pregnant, they believe in abortion. That is normally not an issue" (Interview 16 - Male) or "if ... you people come together in sexual intercourse



without any plans for contraceptives and abortion, of course you are bringing another life into being (Interview 1 - Male).

Young females express similar sentiments, which are underlined by notions of guilt, shame and fear. These sentiments are reflected in comments such as I "use condoms when I am unsafe, contraceptives and abortion if all else fails. I cannot get pregnant before marriage. My parents will kill me (uneasy laughter)" (Interview 11 - Female), or "around here, there is marriage, abortion or you drop-out of school" (Interview 41 - Female) and "you have condoms, contraceptives, pills, etc. Personally, I think natural method is safer and better. If all fails, you have abortion as the last resort" (Interview 46 - Female). The fear of parental negative reaction, guilt, shame and post-abortion worries surrounding unwanted pregnancies is mostly borne by females, and is expressed by two male respondents to the effect that:

"We are talking about unwanted pregnancy which may in the long-run lead to abortion which may endanger the life, the future, and the dreams of the person involved. Then you are talking about in terms of guilt and disappointment" (Interview 1 - Male). Or,

"I don't really subscribe to abortion and all that, but if they can prevent it from the onset by using condoms and contraceptives...I think they have led to an increase in young people sexual risk taking" (Interview 36 - Male).

Similar feminine sentiments are:

"Okay, during these festive seasons, a lot of young people will have unprotected sex. There is a higher incidence of girls coming into the teaching hospital after festivals and celebrations with post abortion complications" (Interview 21 - Female). Or,

"It [*sex*] is risky because the girl will end-up having an abortion if you are not ready for the baby. It is very risky because having an abortion; you might lose your womb or die (Interview 26 - Female, word in italics, mine).

### **5.18 Conclusion**

I conclude by noting that the reported themes are inter-dependent, influence each other and young people in their operations in the Nigerian time and space, and vice versa. For example, young people's scripted dating behaviour is influenced by, and influences social norms. Social norms influence mass media practice, which influences the political economy and young people anew. The preceding example clarifies an earlier puzzle posed by Archer, which relates to "the vexatious task of

understanding the linkage between 'structure and agency" (Archer, 1995, p.1), how they influence each other, and are influenced by varied young people's risk-prone agencies.

Consequently, even though individual choice everywhere is structurally limited by two variables, i.e. structured behaviour alternatives, codes, rules, norms and conventions stipulating appropriate behaviour among alternatives, (Bauman, 1999<sup>179</sup>), innovation, choice and elective action remain facts of life. The significance of this assertion and other research findings are substantively discussed in the next chapter.

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<sup>179</sup> Bauman argues, in relation to consumerism, that individuals are not free – "that in all cases the agents are not autonomous: they do not compose the rules which guide their behaviour nor do they set the range of alternatives they are likely to scan and ponder when making their big or small choices" (Bauman, 1999, p.79).

## Chapter 6

### Analysis and discussion of findings

#### 6.1 Introduction

This chapter analyses young people's narratives on sexual risk taking, within a structural-hermeneutic framework. A structural hermeneutic framework takes into consideration Nigerian university students' sexual risk taking contexts, conducts, dominant problem behaviour oriented literature and my pre-understanding (researcher-as-instrument), with a critical reference to young people's narrative accounts of sexual risk taking. Because structural investigations and analysis, in structurationist terms, requires that "we should place emphasis squarely upon the constitution and reconstitution of social practices" and not on categorising<sup>180</sup> structure (Giddens, 1989, p.298), I employ Stones'<sup>181</sup> (2005) empirical analytical brackets to analyse "the subtle interplay between the intractability of social institutions and the options they offer for agents who have knowledge, but bounded discursive awareness, of how those institutions work" (Giddens, 1989, p.298).

Influences on sexual risk taking identified in the previous chapter, using Stones' analytical brackets are external, for example, the mass media, peers, social exchange and plastic sexualities or sexual emancipation. Identified influences are also internal in nature, for example, intermediate variables such as respondents' gender, differential knowledge/reflexive capacities and predispositions to sexual risk taking and so forth. Furthermore, there are agential components to sexual risk influences, represented by the actual sexual risk taking praxis. The outcome of sexual risk taking, especially young people's experience of positive or negative outcome, further influence sexual risk taking. Such outcomes include sexual pleasure, material gains, love or STIs, which reinforces sexual dispositions and/or engender needs for safer sexualities.

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<sup>180</sup> "Investigating 'structure' in structurationist sense is more than simply looking for patterns in how the behaviour of some individuals connects with that of others. It means delving into the subtle interplay between the intractability of social institutions and the options they offer for agents who have knowledge, but bounded discursive awareness, of how those institutions work" (Giddens, 1989, p.298).

<sup>181</sup> Essentially, Stones' contribution to structuration theory extends Giddens' original "ontology-in-general" to accommodate "ontology-in-situ." Ontology-in-situ, according to Stones, is derived from Giddens original general abstraction on the study of, and nature of action, but extended to facilitate empirical studies of society, action and existence. Ontology-in-general refers to Giddens general abstraction on the study of, and nature of action (Giddens, 1976; 1979; 1984).

Three key issues underline findings. The first issue is that young Nigerian university students are ambivalent about unprotected premarital sex, especially in relation to dominant abstinence-until-marriage prescriptions. Specifically, young Nigerian university students contradictorily claim it is ideal to abstain from sex. Concurrently, nearly all respondents acknowledge their sexual risk activities. It is likely that young people's ambivalence towards abstinence-until-marriage versus unprotected premarital sex influenced their contradictory narratives about the ideals of abstinence-until-marriage and the inevitability of unprotected premarital sex. In 2004, Smith<sup>182</sup> documents similar norm-practice ambivalence (2004, a&b). The gap between normative sexual ideals expressed by young people and their sexual conducts evoke Giddens' conception of structure, and indeed action, as "embedded ... in a diverse, fragmentary and sometimes contradictory series of practices... in which it is recursively implicated" (Giddens, 1989, p.298).

The second issue that underline my findings is that *influences*, on young people's sexual risk taking, are co-dependent, simultaneously enabling and constraining (Stones, 2005; see also Giddens, 1976; 1979; 1984). In essence, respondents' sexual risk taking are products of contradictory institutional sexualisation (external structures), mediated by variables such as positive predispositions to unprotected premarital sex, gender and emotions (internal structures), is achieved with self-sexualisation, sexual presentations and purposive action (agency), and produces intended and unintended consequences (outcomes). These influences and outcomes combine to influence further and additional sexual risks activities. It is in this sense that influences on, and the conduct of sexual risk taking are concurrently the medium "and outcome of the practices which constitute" them (Giddens, 1981a, p.27).

To cite a specific example, peer influence, in structuration terms, is boundless, gendered, co-dependent and mutually reconstituting with the mass media. On one hand, peers can acquire sexual knowledge/practice, which they pass on, from television, pornography and books in a manner that:

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<sup>182</sup> Smith attributes young people's ambivalence to "Nigerians view HIV/AIDS as a social problem that is the result of immorality, emblematic of a widely shared sense that most of the country's worst problems-poverty, inequality, corruption, crime, and now HIV/AIDS-are the result of immoral behaviour. The sense of moral decline in Nigeria long precedes HIV/AIDS, and is related to complex political economic issues such as the disappointments of development and democracy ..." (Smith, 2004a, p.426).

“a girl that hears or reads things about orgasms, like you are not a real woman if you never had one, she may go from boy to boy trying to experience it” (Interview 46 - Female).

On the other hand, the mass media, a structural institution, is itself influenced by the historic and current repertoire of young people’s sexual practices. This is because mass media programmes evolve to meet pre-specified consumer needs, leveraged from intensive demographic and psychographic<sup>183</sup> profiling of audience/consumers. Thus, there is co-dependency among influential variables, which precludes linear<sup>184</sup> conceptualisations and hierarchic models of sexual risk taking. Instead, structure is conceived as a duality (Giddens, 1976, 1979, 1981, 1984). Young people demonstrate an awareness of the variability and co-dependency of influences in their narrative accounts. Illustratively, respondents narrate the co-influence of sexual predisposition, poverty, peer influence and agency on sexual risk taking:

“...a girl who is not rich gains admission into a University. She is assigned a hostel. There will probably have roommates of mixed background - some rich, average and poor. But she will probably not know this because they all seem to own the same things which she does not have. To really fit in, she must acquire them. Some of her roommates will invite her, if she is pretty, to outings, parties and introduce her to men. Some will even explain the game to her. She generally takes over from there. There, I have said it. Something like that” (Interview 11 - Female).

Similarly, a male respondent illustrate the co-influence of the mass media and personal predispositions and agency:

“...even the internet, nobody forces people to pay money and log-on to porn sites. You must have sex on your mind before you go there. In fact, that is why most guys browse over-night. The internet is just like...helping you satisfy your need. But people are always looking for someone to blame...it’s not my fault, the internet made me do it (laughter)” (Interview 39 - Male).

The third issue that underline my findings is that respondents differentially exploit pre-existing family/religious institutional rules (including norms) such as those that proscribe premarital sex, and leverage family/personal resources such as money for sexual self-presentations, sexual partner acquisition, and associated unprotected premarital sex. For example, respondents infer they take sexual risks because, “well... it

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<sup>183</sup> A marketing and advertising term for the study of segmented consumer income, social attributes, values, attitudes.

<sup>184</sup> In reiteration and in structuration terms therefore, structure and agency are not in dialectical opposition. Instead, they are interrelated, recursively influential (self-repeating), insidious and co-dependent to the extent that neither the structure nor agency can be construed discrete or independent of the other.

is not illegal” even though “it is immoral” (Interview 1 - Male). Alternatively, “... well, you know, being a Christian and all that, it’s (*premarital sex*) wrong. But then, under certain circumstances, let says, you want to find out what sex is all about, how it feels. It is kind of okay” (Interview 46 - Female). As a result, I present young people as "skilled practitioners, with taken-for-granted knowledge, who not only know the meanings of rules but can use them in interaction" such as sexual risk taking (Dyck, 1990, p.463).

Based on the foregoing, I argue that sexual risk taking evolves and thrives because of pre-existing patterned influences, which are accommodated by young people’s sexual predispositions, relationships needs, agencies and anticipated outcomes, which in turn, enables and constrains unprotected premarital sex. Respondents’ narrative accounts of their risk-prone sexual conducts, therefore, emphasises multiple and interrelated influences. These include biological, cultural, agency, historical and peer influences, to mention a few. Young people present unprotected premarital sex as psychologically and socially rewarding, potentially, but not always, risky to respondents.

It is important to state a caveat. The cross application of findings to other contexts and sexual conducts could be limited by three variables. (1) My use of snowball sampling technique, which was used for respondents’ recruitment, which limits the representativeness of findings. (2) The incidence of under reporting or over reporting, which cannot be precisely determined, despite the (pre)test reliability of mix-instrument used. (3) Respondents’ accounts may partly reflect the dominant culture prescriptions of abstinence-until-marriage or modern safer sexuality Abstinence, Be faithful, and Use Condom (ABC) prescriptions currently pervasive in Nigeria. Findings, analysis and discussions, nevertheless, can facilitate educated and plausible speculations about influences on young people’s sexual risk taking on broader national and/or global levels.

Detailed analysis and discussions of findings and their specific implications on BCC, are presented in sections, with Stones’ structuration analytical brackets (Stones, 2005, p.189-197). The first analytical bracket presented is the implications of findings on young Nigerian students’ external influences, the second analytical bracket presents findings in relation to internal influences , the third examines findings in relation to

young people's agency, and the fourth examines the nature of and role of sexual risk taking outcomes on further similar activities. The last section examines the recursiveness of sexual risk taking, offering a perspective on it.

## **6.2 Findings and external structures of sexual risk taking**

External influences on young people are patterned institutional rules and resources, which facilitate sexual risk taking. Patterned institutional rules and resources emanate from, and are sustained by emergent reproductive health technologies and socialisation institutions such as the mass media, family and religious organisations. The rules and resources are simultaneously enabling and constraining of sexual risk taking. Respondents depend upon structural institutions to learn about, constitute the meaning of, and perform sexual risk taking. As a result, respondents assign blame to structural institutions for their sexualisation. For example, in response to the question, *as a girl, for example, must you have a boyfriend? Why?* Female respondents mostly answer in the affirmative:

“yes, because if you plan to get married someday, you have to get to know people and meet people. You can't just wake up one day and just get married. To whom?” (Interview 26 - Female).

In the same vein, male respondents are of the opinion that:

“At a certain age, let me say from 18 years, let me say it is not like compulsory, but it is advisable because it is a progression for what happens in future. If you don't, you will be postponing the sad or bad days (Interview 16 - Male).

From these examples, the meaning and justification for having a boyfriend, which is often a prelude to sexual risk taking, is constituted from, achieved with institutional rules/norms related to the family and marriage institution. Four implications of external influences are discussed further below.

### **6.2.1 Peer influence is significant, indirect and dependent on young people's sexual risk predispositions**

Peer influence, an example of external influence on young people sexual risk taking, is powerful, variable, non-linear and dependent on their positive predispositions to sexual risks. Peer groups are complex and fluid. They include, but are not limited to classmates, roommates, friends, same age neighbours and extended family relatives. Peer pressure is inducement “...to appear independent, pressure for recognition, pressure to appear mature or grown up, and pressure to have fun” (Newman, 1984,

p.146). Pressure from peers can come from same-sex peers and heterosexual peers (see Buga, et al., 1996; NPPHCN, 1996). For example, sexually experienced females exert peer pressure on younger girls to conform with or emulate their sexual behaviour for exchange or social approval purposes. According to a female respondent, peer pressure on roommates reluctant to engage in sexual risk taking enabling behaviour such as heterosexual dating is common. They:

“will not leave you alone, especially if you are in the same room with them. When they are talking and you come around, they will all keep quite or ask you to leave because you are a small girl...and we don't want to spoil you. So you are cut off from everybody in the room even though you live there” (Interview 2 - Female).

Another observes that if you are not sexually active:

“they will treat you different, like a small-girl. Whenever they start discussing stuff like that and you walk-in, they just stop... Anyway, it generally makes you uncomfortable. It's like you are not their equal” (Interview 21 - Female).

This finding is consistent with literature suggestive that adolescent peers exert influence more on close friends than acquaintances (see Wood et. al., 1997; McPhee, 1996). For young males, peer pressures similarly manifests as instigations and advice to conform to or prove manliness via sexual activities with single, concurrent and preferably, multiple sexual partners for enhanced peer accolade, admiration and social status. Non-conforming behaviour is sanctioned with disapproval such as insults and/or isolation. One male respondent argues that:

“...these days, it's better to have one girl than not to have at all, or have many. There is the dreaded disease to think about. If you have one and you people are faithful, then it is all right. All these abstinence talk is just talk...nobody abstains. That is what you tell your parents and pastor. That is what they want to hear” (Interview 9 - Male).

Another male respondent states that if you do not have a girlfriend your peers:

“... will laugh at you, they will tease you, you can join any gist, and they will call you small boy, Mommy's boy and all that. In short, you will never have peace if you are not doing it” (Interview 9 – Male).

Peer influence - and young males response to it confirm previous research findings about the importance of social reputations derived from actual, and exaggerated display of heterosexuality by males (see Weekes, 2002; Varga, 1997; Anderson, 1993; Wight,



1994; Lear, 1997; Okonkwo, et al., 2005; Izugbara, 2004; Alubo, 1997). Peer influence, in addition, proceeds by modelling and imitation of sexual behaviour. Female respondents indicate that peer modelling and associated imitative behaviour are common and predisposes young people to sexual risk taking. For example:

“it’s not like your friends will force you to have sex or something... for instance if all your friends have boyfriends and they do what they do and you see them. It’s so easy for them, you might just want to try it too” (Interview 21 - Female).

Another female respondent suggests that peers are influential because:

“their advice, gossips, stories and tales are always with you. You tend to recall these when the situation arises. Even before you agree to date ... you tend to assess his prospects based on so many things including what your friends will think and say when they meet or hear about him” (Interview 11 - Female).

Sexual risk taking is similarly influenced by direct peer advice and suggestions about how to *carry on* sexual risk practice. By way of illustration, a female respondent narrates the following story:

“this girl that was assigned to our room last year. She is obviously poor from her clothes, and things. A few days later, there was a party and she refused to go. Some of my roommates actually sat her down and gave her the scope. You know how to attract rich boys or men. Every day, since then, they give her a little lecture. Last month she moved out of the room into a flat in town. That’s the formally shy village girl for you (laughter)...she learned fast. Today, I can’t even *meet-up* with her unless I do what she does, which I won’t. (Interview 46 - Female).

The same female respondent however, argues that:

“it is not influence... it is pressure. Sometimes they tell you straight what to do sexually, other times they kind of put thoughts in your mind...They keep telling you the same thing over and over again and if you are not strong, you will fall for their advice one day. And trust me, their advice is not always good” (Interview 46 - Female).

Males give similar narratives indicating that sometimes peers give direct advice on how to take sexual risks:

“if they think you are slacking. At other times you learn about these things when they are boasting about their sexual escapades” (Interview 6 - Male).

From the above narratives, sexual pressure and influence from peers can be direct and indirect. Regardless, young people interviewed insist peer pressure does not proceed on

a cause and effect path, but are mediated by the recipient's sexual predispositions and felt-need, including sensation seeking. All respondents attest to this indirect and non-linear character of peer influence, which is mediated by young people's internal dispositions and agencies. Representative narratives by females suggest that although peers are influential:

“... [An] individual like me will finally decide to do this or that. Your friends can put pressure, but it is up to you to resist it or not. Do you know how many times I have been invited to the government house for parties? They have recruiters in the hostels who go about inviting girls to big-men parties. They send their luxury cars down every weekend to pick up girls who return with plenty of cash the following week. So do I just go because I am broke? So their opinion is important to some extent. But if you mean do they tell me what to do, no. Although you can be pressured to have sex, but finally doing it is your choice. It depends on your personality” (Interview 46 - Female).

Another female respondent observes “...you cannot really say this friend made me have sex without condom or that one made me have multiple sexual partners. But their ideas stick with you and make you very curious. So, depending on what you really like to do as a person, one advice or friend may be more powerful than others” (Interview 11 - Female). Male respondents agree. Another respondent observes that although friends can actually sit you down and teach you about sex, “... it does not work like that. Mostly, guys want to have girlfriends and sex anyway. So you find you associate with guys you think are already doing it. From that moment, it's about observation, conversation and imitation... it boils down to individuals.... You do what you think is best or beneficial to you” (Interview 1 - Male). Another male respondent concludes:

“only a fool will do something simply because his friends want him to do it. Life is not that simple...all this peer influence thing, have you noticed people say it only when they are in trouble...if I get a first-class degree, will I say my friends helped me? No! I will say I studied hard and did myself. But if I am caught cheating, stealing, in secret cults or impregnating a girl, that is when I say my friends made me do it...it is not that simple. Nobody, unless it is rape, has sex blindfolded. You can always say no, but you won't because of the benefits. It's as simple as that (Interview 51 - Male).

### **6.2.2 Poverty matters, but its significance as a factor in sexual risk taking is variable**

The influence of poverty on respondents' sexual risk taking is not linear or inevitable. Instead, the assumption that poverty drives unprotected premarital and intergenerational sex “misrepresent the character of relationships where implicit understandings link material expectation to sex and are not entirely separate from everyday life” (Leclerc-

Madlala, 2004, p.2). Females leverage the material and cash gifts from males to acquire the accessories of modern everyday life such as mobile phones, exotic hairstyles etc. These accessories are implicated in further sexual self-presentations, self/peer esteem and attractiveness and are facilitative of further sexual risk taking (see Leclerc-Madlala, 2004, p.2 also). In this regard, cash/gift exchanges between heterosexual partners are normative and serve to initiate, maintain and revalidate sexual relationships. Consequently, cash/gift exchanges:

“...shows that maybe you care or something. Not necessarily that you are poor... not everybody does it for money. Some of my friends date boys who don't have money and they do it. That's not for money” (Interview 21 - Female).

“...if it is a relationship, you don't call it payment, but something you do for your girl (laughter). Well, that is the way it works around here?” (Interview 16 - Male).

Cash/gifts exchanges among respondents in heterosexual relationships are inevitable components for demonstrating love, care and is a vehicle for relationship reaffirmation and maintenance. This challenges linear interpretations of the function of cash/gift exchanges prevalent in heterosexual relationships in sub-Saharan Africa, as driven mainly by poverty (see Gupta, 2000, Mane, et al., 1994; Weiss and Gupta, 1998; Heise, et al., 1999; Varga, 2001, Wojcicki and Malala, 2001; Campbell 2000; Orubuloye, et al., 1992). The tendency to conflate sexual exchanges in Africa with prostitution is a product of “western ideology” which “separates “real love” from monetary exchange (see Collier 1997; Illouz 1997; Zelizer 2005), so that sexual practices that blend long-term relations of mutual affection with overt economic exchange violate analysts' implicit moral and analytic categories” (Swidler and Watkins, 2006, p.2). The non-validation of poverty as an influence on young Nigerian university students interviewed could also be due to their middle-class background.

Nonetheless, 58.9% (33 of 56) of respondents interviewed agree (*answered yes*) that poverty directly influences sexual risk taking. Other respondents, 41.1% (23 of 56), agree that poverty *somehow* influences sexual risk taking. More females, (69.2% = 18 of 26), than males, (50% = 15 of 30 males), link poverty to sexual risk taking. That more female respondents' than males associate poverty with sexual risk taking is another indication of the incorporation of social research findings into everyday action and its rationalisation. The poverty construct is the most dominant associated with sub-

Saharan African sexuality studies (see Gupta, 2000, Mane, et al., 1994; Weiss and Gupta, 1998; Heise, et al., 1999; Varga, 2001, Wojcicki and Malala, 2001; Campbell 2000; Orubuloye, et al., 1992; 1997a&b). According to 65.3% (17 of 26) of respondents interviewed, poverty does not proceed in linear terms to influence sexual risk taking. Instead, poor girls already predisposed to sexual risk taking exploit sexual relations for money based on pre-knowledge of, and capacities to exploit their femininity to do so. For example:

“...it is not as if girls are generally poorer than boys, or feel the lack more. But then, they are the ones that can do something about it with their bodies (laughter)” (Interview 21 - Female). Alternatively,

“...not every young people has sex because they are poor. Like I said, there usually are other reasons. Most girls use poverty as their excuse because people will be more sympathetic” (Interview 11 - Female).

Even though poverty is relative and is not easily (dis)proved as an influence on sexual risks, it is significant to note that respondents did not admit they are poor, or take sexual risks to earn money. My observation is that respondents’ over-estimate their socio-economic status. Some seem well off, while others do not. As a result, respondents’ denial they are poor could be due to pride, or reflect normative disinclination for non-commercial sex workers to admit they seek financial rewards from sexual relationships. In this regard, male respondents agree that even though young people’s heterosexual relationships increasingly have an element of material exchange, but:

“...it is not nice to think about it that way. Where is the love and all that? (Laughter), but the reality is that if you like a girl and you want to have sex with her, you give her gifts and money first to impress her. If she is impressed, she will let you have sex and pretend you pressured her. That is how the game is played” (Interview 6 - Male).

The preceding offers alternative explanations about the roles and meanings of cash/gift exchanges in heterosexual relationships. Thus, instead of such deduction drawn from the study of well-off young women in Mozambique that “the primary motive for transactional sex is economic” the idea is advanced that multiple factors drive heterosexual relationships (Hawkins, et al., 2005, p.iv). Cash/gift exchanges can serve to nurture and validate male affection for female sexual partners. In addition, female partners often have “emotional attachment or expectations beyond exchange of sex for money and other economic benefits” from the relationships, contrary literature claims (Hawkins, et al., *ibid*; see also Nyanzi, et al., 2001; Nnko, et al., 2001; Balmer, et al., 1997).

This is because female respondents narratives suggests they agree to males' sexual propositions after evaluating their long-term potentials, if all goes well, for marriage and family. According to a female respondent, this is principal reason for having a boyfriend in the first place. "...You need to develop someone for the future. You can't just jump into marriage with someone. You have to start from somewhere..., but you have to be really very careful about it" (Interview 21 - Female). Viewed from this perspective therefore, sexual exchanges cannot be adequately accounted for by linear constructs, such as poverty alone. Indeed, emerging re-conceptualization of poverty and transactional sex show they "are more about satisfying 'wants' as opposed to meeting 'needs', and may reflect a desire to acquire what Handler (1991) referred to as 'symbol capital', in this case symbols of a modern and successful life" (Leclerc-Madlala, 2004, p.2, citing Handler, 1991).

Similarly, based on a Malawian study, Swidler and Watkins argue, "the standard narrative, linking them to prostitution and emphasizing the exploitation of poor, vulnerable women by wealthier, more powerful men, misses a great deal of what motivates and sustains such sexual patterns" (Swidler and Watkins, 2006, p.2). Young Nigerian university students interviewed observe that cash/gift exchange to affirm male affection, continued interest in the relationship, which is rewarded often with frequent unprotected sex. More to the point, cash/gift exchanges for sex are not unique to sub-Saharan Africa<sup>185</sup>.

Males are expected to give cash/gifts, which their girlfriends are expected to accept. Among respondents interviewed, more males (70% = 21 of 30) than females (11.5% = 3 of 26) give cash gifts. This trend validates the normative and social expectation that males, socially and financially, nurture females, in whom they have proprietary sexual interest. Consequently, for male respondents, cash/gift giving is typically about impressing girls and securing sexual access of recipients. For example, males believe "you can use gifts and cash to trap these girls and do what you want..." (Interview 6 - Male). Alternatively:

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<sup>185</sup> Transactional sex is reported elsewhere, although it is only linked to poverty in sub-Saharan Africa (see, Berglund, et al., 1997 in Nicaragua; Eyre, et al., 1998 in the USA; Puri and Busza, 2004 in Nepal; Whittaker and Hart, 1996, and Scrambler and Scrambler, 1997 for London, United Kingdom).

“...guys give cash and gifts that will impress girls, ehen... They think the more valuable the gift they get, the more you love them (laughter). Some of them are very smart, like in class, but when it comes to men, they don't know anything at all, ehen. Because the more cash and gifts they get, the more sex the boy will demand and they can't refuse. Nothing goes for nothing” (Interview 6 - Male). Or,

“...if you accept cash and gifts from me, in return you have to pay me back... those things are not free of charge. There are always strings attached to it and most times the guys tend to be satisfied if you give him sex...even if he has given you millions. And even girls sometimes capitalize on that... after all, I will give him my body, so let me keep taking as much as I can grab...” (Interview 36 - Male).

All male (30 of 30) and 15.3% of female (4 of 26) respondents' infer that, sexual risk taking inevitably follows female receipt of cash/gifts. This inference is consistent with findings among young people in Nigeria that male sexual pressure on females who receive cash/gifts from them is normatively expected and acceptable (Akinyemi, et al., 1996; see also Leclerc-Madlala, 2003 for similar findings in Southern Africa). Young women agree: “...unfortunately yes, because the guy giving you all the gifts and cash will pressure you until you give-in or return his property. If you cannot return his gift and cash, what else can you do” (Interview 41 - Female). “The more money a boy gives to a girl, the more sex she will have with him. And the more sexual risks she will take with him” (Interview 26 - Female).

While cash/gifts facilitate sexual risk taking, not all sexual risk taking is induced by cash/gift exchanges. Instead, female respondents emphasise that the relative quality and quantity of cash/gifts received from males facilitates subjective evaluation of male suitors/sexual partners' affection, love, interests, nurturing attitude and ironically, male valuations of the female's worth. In other words, cash/gifts:

“show you how much the person cares about you” ...and that “you feel very bad when gifts are not given at all. It shows that maybe the guy doesn't care or something” (Interview 21 - Female).

“...they demonstrate love, affection and a caring attitude” (Interview 11 - Female).

In addition, 46.1% (12 of 26) of female respondents believe that receiving cash *somehow* means whatever sexual desires of the giver will be met, while 38.4% (10 of 26) female respondents answered *no*, insisting that “someone can receive gifts and cash from you and still refuse to sleep with you. Lots of girls do it. Although that is what most guys think that accepting a gift is a code for accepting their demand for sex” (Interview 21 - Female). Significantly, more than half respondents believe cash/gift

giving and receiving implies securing and granting sexual access, including unprotected sex, even though heterosexual relationships are not typical market transactions. Young people interviewed are, in addition, certain about what happens when cash/gifts or sex are not given or received in relationships. For females, male neglect to serenade them with cash/gifts means inattentiveness and a lack of love/affection, which can end the relationships. For example:

“[M]ost times the relationship will end if there is no understanding”  
(Interview 21 - Female).

“[T]he girl may not take her toaster seriously and the relation may never start or end if it has” (Interview 11 - Female).

Conversely, for males, female reluctance to grant sexual access results in the termination of the relationship. That is:

“the boy will get tired of wasting money and the relationship will end. Some boys can make trouble for the girl - demanding the return of their gifts/money or even rape” (Interview 9 - Female).

“no action (*sex*), no cash, no gifts – that’s the way it is. Unless you guys already agree not have sex at the beginning...which is not easy”  
(Interview 36 – Male, word in italics mine).

Based on the preceding analysis, there are insufficient grounds to generalise that “a good deal of female sexual behaviour in Africa can be best understood as strategies for economic survival and adaptation to patterns of male dominance in low-income countries” (Edward, 1994, p.100). The socio-economic specifics of populations and contexts under study ought to be outlined and specified in conclusions devoid of over-generalisations. For example, 30% (9 of 30) males claim they don’t give cash to their girlfriends and are still in the relationship. For this category of respondents:

“not everybody doing it gives and receives money or cash. As hard as it is to say this, there are some loving relationships, even on campus”  
(Interview 1 - Male).

“although some girls do it to get money..., not everybody do it for money. Some of my friends date boys who don’t have money and they do it. That’s not for money” (Interview 21 - Female).

Cash/gift giving and acceptance is, thus, an inevitable component of young people’s strategies for forming and maintaining heterosexual relationships. Cash/gift exchanges are normatively reinforced, expected and practised by both sexes, and not necessarily driven by poverty. Cash/gift giving is scripted. Males leverage cash/gifts to symbolically communicate/secure sexual female interest/sexual access. Females utilise

the quantity/quality of cash/gifts received to evaluate the level of male love, commitment and concern for their emotional/material welfare, and hence, their suitability as sexual and/or potential husbands. These deductions do not obviate transactional sex driven by poverty, the elevation of sexual risk taking within relationships formed and maintained by cash/gifts, but invite contextual and subjective appraisal of the role of cash/gifts in young people's heterosexual relations.

### **6.2.3. The mass media is indirectly influential – it normalises sexual risk taking**

The mass media is indirectly influential on young people's sexual risk taking via reaffirmation, introduction and normalisation of old and emerging sexualities. Mass media influence is insidious because it addresses "our most serious concerns: interpersonal and family relations, the sense of happiness and contentment, sex roles and stereotyping, the uses of affluence, the fading away of older cultural traditions, influences on younger generations, the role of business in society, persuasion and personal autonomy, and many others" (Leiss, et al., 1997, p.1). The mass media is in the vanguard of commercialisation of sex, intimacy and the sexualisation of work and recreation (Adkins, 2002; Zelizer, 2005). In other words, the mass media advances the ongoing pornographication of culture<sup>186</sup>, uncensored and plastic sexualities (Bauman, 2003; McNair, 2002; Hawkes, 1996; Giddens, 1992).

Mass media influence proceeds via sexualised content of programmes, promotions, issues, agendas, and advertising, which are broadcast on media channels such as television, radio, mobile phones/other hand held devices and are linkable to identifiable sponsors. Sexually erotic themes, and how to perform sexually, calculated to arouse and instruct audience are published in books, magazines, the internet and broadcast daily electronic media, such as radio and television. Young people are major consumers of these media outlets. The inundation of public space with sexualities, the commoditisation of romance, emotion and sex as recreational and lifestyle services with a price tag, is so pervasive that it has been compared with commercial marketing of services (Sanders, 2005; Brewis and Linstead, 2000; Chapkis, 1997). Relevant narratives by respondents, however, indicate indirect mass media influence on sexual risk taking:

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<sup>186</sup> Pornographication of culture refers to the pervasiveness of sexually explicit materials intended to arouse audiences and consumers in private/public space and media.



“...let me say they contribute 60%. Without their knowing it. They do. Because theirs is to sell products and services... by so doing, they influence their viewers based on the packaging. Yes, it contributes” (Interview 1 Male).

“I think what girls see in movies and read about love, romance and relationships in novels like Mills and Boons, Barbara Cartland etc influences what they do sexually. These books definitely influenced my expectations and response to males that *toast*<sup>187</sup> me. In most of these books, the man is always tall, successful, romantic etc and the women always yield to them in the end (laughter)” (Interview 11 - Female).

The print media, such as romance and love novels, also normalise sexualities and predispose young girls to romantic love, which is often a prelude to, and an influence on, sexual risk taking. A female respondent explains that mass media influence “...is not that easy to explain because you watch these things everyday without ...knowing..., no, consciously copying what you see. But over the years, you will be surprised that what you do is similar to what you watch. I don’t know if I have answered your question” (Interview 41 - Female). The influence of the mass media on young people’s sexual risk taking varies by gender, disposition and most significantly, by context. For example, young people are more likely to imitate sexualised media contents when they are with peers and away from home. This is why universities in Nigeria are important sites for sexual risk taking.

In relation to gendered mass media influence, female respondents prefer mass media programmes such as TV soap operas (e.g. *Sex and the City*), sex and relationship advice from magazines and newspapers, romance novels, female models and glossy beauty/fashion magazines. Local media consumed by females include increasing sexualised home videos and magazines such as *Hearts and Hints*. Corroborative evidence from female respondents’ are that “I like soaps, drama and romantic stories from books like *Mills and Boons*” (Interview 56 - Female), or that “I like romantic books, soap operas and movies” (Interview 11 - Female).

The mass media also expose young people to directly risky behaviours such as sexual networking, serial monogamy, and oral sex. The mass media further exposes female respondents to scripted behaviour, which are preludes to sexual risk taking, such as dating, flirting, and sexy fashion/dress styles among others. The linkages between

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<sup>187</sup> Local parlance for a boy asking a girl out and/or to become his girlfriend.

fashion and sexualities are indirect, related to sexual knowledge and sexual self-presentations, in a manner that validates Attwood argument:

“... [There is a] conflation of sex, fashion and beauty through a linking of sexual pleasure with women’s self-fashioning and appearance may make it easier to address women as sexual agents. It allows for the production of codes that are able to signify a safe and confident form of sexuality and to generate a range of practices that make possible the production of a femininity constructed around a self-possessed autoeroticism” (Attwood, 2005:398).

Young males are particularly vulnerable to the influence of female sexy dressing and appearance. For example, “lipsticks or women’s clothes. The way those models wear them.... There are certain ways harlots used to dress and you can tell immediately that this is a whore. But nowadays, it’s hard to say who is well dressed or who is a whore. Because of the way most girls dress, you can’t tell Peter from Paul (laughter)” (Interview 1 - Male). Another male is convinced that sexy mode of dressing is one way for girls to initiate sexual activities in that “they have many ways of starting it, ... like fake fights, hitting you, dressing and carelessly showing you their bodies etc (laughter)” (Interview 6 - Male). Females disagree, insisting that:

“well, I still don’t think I am responsible for how my dressing makes a guy feel or think. I think it’s part of the bad African culture – men trying to control how women dress. I think some boys will love how you are dressed and others won’t... anyway, girls dress to be attractive – I don’t know (laughter). It’s complicated” (prolong laughter) ... Well, I think to some extent you are responsible for the way you behave. In another way, you are not because of your environment. For example, on campus, that is the way most happening girls dress, I mean they wear body hugging and other revealing clothes. That is the standard”. (Interview 46 – Female). Or that,

“it is not my fault that boys are always staring at my body...that is their problem, not mine. I dress the way I like...and it is very nice ...I mean, you feel very good when you know the effect you have on them...even some lecturers” (laughter) (Interview 2 - Female).

Trendy dressing is important to males as well, but could be incidental to females because “even if you don’t have what is in vogue, you have what they want (laughter)” (Interview 36 - Male). Males *hustle* and through personal industry, family, relatives and crime to acquire money, obtain the necessary trendy clothes and gadgets with which to impress girls, secure female sexual access and nurture sexual relationships (sexual risk taking resources). Female respondents are aware that the major challenge males face “is getting enough money to impress girls. I hear they do all sorts of nasty and even criminal things (Interview 46 - Female). Trendy dressing gets young people noticed in

their social circuit. Trendy dressing is invaluable for young people's feelings of identity, solidarity, belonging and sexual activity because:

"the flashier you are, the more girls try to cluster around you. But if you don't have those things ... you find out that most times you be on your own" (Interview 36 - Male).

"...everyone wants to look good and be loved by friends. One sure path to that adoration is material wealth. Even on campus here, all these yahoo<sup>188</sup> boys get all the fine girls. Why? Because they have loads of cash, pimped-up rides, laptops, phones etc. They even live in very expensive hostels. How do you compete with that? Simple...you hustle for money. That is why most guys go into crime and this yahoo thing" (Interview 1 - Male).

The internet has become a very important source of sexual information for young Nigerian university students interviewed. For example, respondents claim:

"...usually, I research my problems. Online, I mean. Many have had similar problems... Also, you are anonymous - with such names as code12 (laughter). You know, you can afford to actually talk about sex and sexual problems. Those you are talking to don't know you and you don't know them. I like that. Girls talk ... gossip I mean!" (Interview 11 - Female).

For young males particularly, the internet, movies, pornographic magazines are significantly implicated in sexual risk taking. Pornography, on the internet particularly, emerges from young people's narratives as the major source of male sexualisation. Even female respondents are aware of the influence of pornography on males. For example:

"Once [guys] see half naked girls on TV, they have sex in their minds" (Interview 26 - Female).

"...I think what boys see in movies, internet and magazines influences their sexual risk taking attitudes. My boyfriend is always carrying on about this and that sexual position and style he saw somewhere" (Interview 11 - Female).

Males agree, but insist that pornography on TV or internet influence sexual risk taking indirectly. According to one, pornography:

"... contributes...but you can't just say because I watched blue film that is why I take sexual risks. Although...like what we are saying, images create lasting impressions and ehmn...TV, magazines and web-pictures too, movies, music videos and all that. All these things, there is a way it pressurises one sexually, it spurs you to indulge in especially risky behaviour" (Interview 1 Male).

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<sup>188</sup> Yahoo boys refers to young males engaged in internet related advanced fee fraud or locally known in Nigeria as 419.

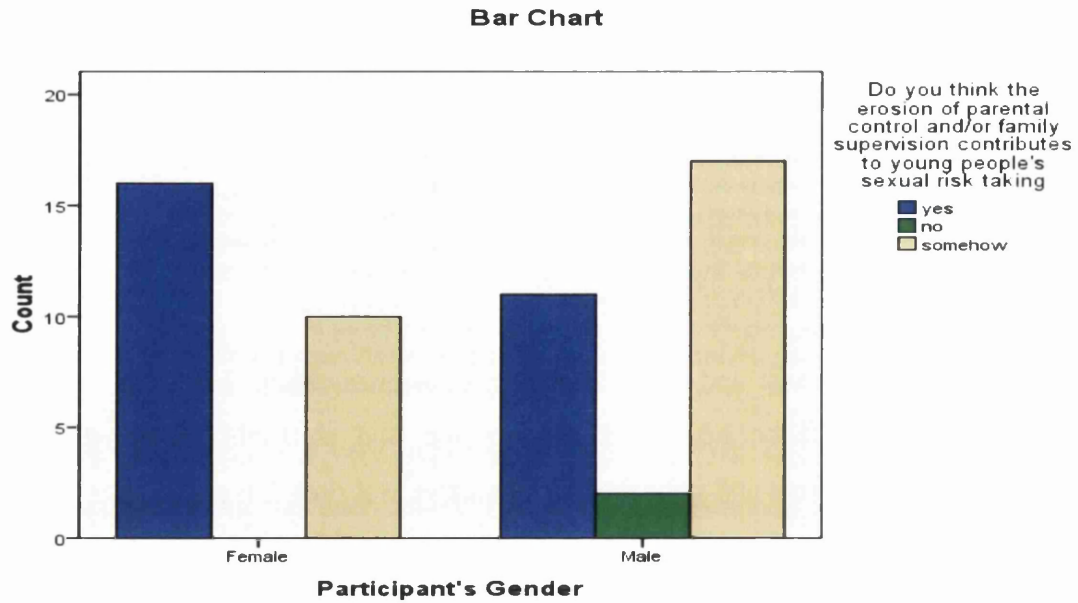
In agreement with males, a female responds eloquently explains the complex interrelationship between the mass media and young people's sexual risk taking:

“...maybe the media is responsible for 50%. The other 50% belong to young people themselves and other factors. Okay. It is not like you watch something and decide to do it immediately. I think you must want to do it before and the media just encourages you. Pornography for example, has a very, very big effect on young people. When you see people having sex, you are seeing it life. It is stronger than hearing about it. It sort of wakes up the urge to do what you see” (Interview 46 – Female).

Sexual empowerment and enlightenment programmes, which teach safe sex through monogamous fidelity, negotiated condom use and so forth, broadcast on radio, television, billboards and published at interactive websites, have also been blamed by media regulators and states for sexualising young people. For example, the Advertising Practitioners Council of Nigeria (APCON) suspended in 2002 a condom radio advertisement from Population Services International (PSI), an interventionist sexual health agency, on charges of disseminating sexually enticing messages privileging a culture of premarital sex and condom use (PSI, 2003). Other states in Nigeria, such as Bauchi, currently under Shari'a law, similarly banned condom promotions on state-owned media because advertisements in contention normalise and legalises fornication and adultery (Awofadeji, 2004). These bans may have been influenced by an endemic fear among the religious right and interest groups that BCC programmes influence young people's sexual risk taking, and is a thus, a form of media censorship.

#### **6.2.4 Reduced parental supervision influences sexual risk taking**

Parental sexualisation of respondents, especially girls is indirect, contrary to early research assumptions influenced by socialisation practices/patterns in developed countries (see Levine, et al., 1994; Nichter, 2000; Ogle and Damhorst, 2004; Lamb, 2002, 2006; Tolman, 2002). Parental sexualisation of young people in Europe and North America take the form of direct encouragement and material facilitation of wards to dress as starlets with precocious clothing, high-heels, jewellery, miniskirts, wearing lipsticks, revealing tops, tight jeans and facilitation of cosmetic surgery (see Nichter, 2000; APA, 2007). Instead of the preceding sexualisation patterns, young Nigerian university students interviewed associate reduced/minimal parental supervision with sexual risk taking in Nigeria. See Bar Chart 2.



**Bar Chart 2. Do you think the erosion of parental control and/or close family supervision contributes to young people’s sexual risk taking?**

Reduced parental supervision of young people demonstrates interrelationships between sexual risk taking influences. For example, rapid social and economic changes necessitate family dislocation in Nigeria and diminished parental supervision of young people due to increasing need for both parents to work outside the home to support their family, in formal and informal sectors of the Nigerian economy. The demands of modern political economies promote parental involuntary abdication of primary socialisation duties to structural and external influences such as the mass media and peers. Among respondents, all but two believe that reduced parental control contributes to sexual risk taking.

A further demonstration of interconnectedness of influences is that the young accelerate and facilitate minimal parental supervision by deliberately choosing universities and colleges away from home, close family and community supervision. Universities serve as major locales or sites for respondents’ sexual interactions, are employed tacitly to communicate, sustain meanings of sexualities, and are regional hubs for uninhibited encounters with recursive influences, such as social change<sup>189</sup>, and the serialised nature of respondents’ sexual risk taking (see Giddens, 1984, p.xxv).

<sup>189</sup> Social change in Nigeria is "a shorthand [term] for a whole series of influences that are altering not just events on the large scale but the very tissue of our everyday lives" (Giddens, 1994, p.18).

### **6.2.5. Condom quality in Nigeria is suspect, and contributes to young people's sexual risk exposure.**

Compounding the multifaceted nature of influences on young people's sexual risk taking is the poor quality of condoms imported into Nigeria. Respondents' narratives indicate that condoms are not very reliable because "condoms burst, tear and leak" (Interview 46 - Female), and does "not offer you 100% protection" (Interview 21 - Female). Alternatively, that, "it (*condoms*) smells breaks or tears and interferes with pleasure" (Interview – 41 – Female, words in italics mine). Male respondents attest that:

"having sex itself, is risky. Because, if you look at it, the popular ... ehmn, ideology is use a condom. But the condom does not offer you a hundred percent protection. You know Gold Circle is the most popular condom in Nigeria. It cost twenty Naira for a packet. It is the cheapest. Most people tend to make fake copies of Gold Circle and that is what most people buy and use. There is a tendency that using that kind of condom will not really offer you the normal percentage of protection. The rest are quite expensive, most young people can't afford them" (Interview 16 - male).

Young people's opinion about unreliable condom quality is validated by research. A condom quality study conducted in 1999 concludes that USAID supplied condoms "did not compare well with the requirements in the current international standards for condoms (Beckerleg, and Gerofi, 1999, p.4; see also Esu-Williams, 1995). Widespread concern and proven low quality of condoms sold in Nigeria influenced the National Condom Quality Assurance and Testing Laboratory in 2002, to test and endorse Gold Circle Condoms. In addition, The Society for Family Health (SFH) in 2006 launched *Life-style* condom in an attempt to address the product quality issues associated with Gold Circle condoms.

### **6.3 Implications of findings on young people's internal structures and how influences recursively influence sexual risk taking**

Young people's internal structures are composed of "conjuncturally specific" and "general-disposition" influences, which are simultaneously associated with action (Stones, 2005, p.87). "Conjuncturally specific internal structures" are sexual risk knowledge internalised from social learning and modelling which are influenced by respondents' subordinate socio-economic statuses, dependency on adults, structural

institution and expert control, modernity<sup>190</sup>, and normative expectations for sexual abstinence (Stones, 2005). For example, respondents' social statuses are created and reinforced by adult normative expectations of young people as immature risk takers.

Respondents' internal structures are also influenced by taken-for-granted "general-disposition structures" to sexual risk taking (Stones, 2005). Taken-for-granted positive predispositions to sexual risk taking are respondents' enabling attitudes, inherent in narrative accounts, which attest to an ambiguous normality of sexual risk taking. For example, even though premarital sex is "wrong from the biblical point of view" it is a "normal thing in the real world" (Interview 46 - Female). Alternatively, "sometimes most young people have sex, not because ... they really want to, but because they see everybody around them doing it. And they feel abnormal if they are not doing it" (Interview 16 - Male). Positive predispositions to sexual risk taking are produced by respondents' unintentional sexual socialisation, life experiences, different needs and agency. That is, respondents positive sexual risk predispositions are influenced by a succession of patterned institutional practices, rules (including norms) and resources capable of self-reproduction, leveraged with differential and contextual knowledge for action (Giddens, 1984), such as sexual risk taking.

Respondents' internal structures, furthermore, link them to peers in a manner that suggests the existence of a sexual risk sub-culture, promotes patterned acquisition, adaptation and reconstitution of knowledge/skills necessary to form heterosexual relationships, which often culminate in premarital unprotected sex. Seven implications of findings on young people's internal structures, which promotes sexual risk taking and has the capacity to reconstitute the same sexual risk taking initiating influences, are discussed below.

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<sup>190</sup> Modernity, according to Giddens, "refers to modes of social life or organisation which emerged in Europe from about the seventh century onwards and which subsequently became more or less worldwide in their influence (Giddens, 1990, p.1). A good example of modernity and its globalize influences on young people's sexual risk taking is plastic sexuality (1992) – the liberation of sexualities from male control and the dictates of the family and procreation, to the realm of personal rights, where sex now serve functions of identity, relationship configuration, pleasure, power and income generation.

### **6.3.1 Young people are ambivalent about sexual risk taking, but not ignorant of the course, benefits and costs**

Young people's sexualities are products of their ambivalent sexual socialisation and personal predispositions towards premarital sex. For example, gender socialisation of females to please males (e.g. sex as duty to a boyfriend), the legality of premarital sex, reluctance to abstain from sex or practice safe sex, the lack of enforceable counter-norms that support sexual abstinence and female respondents' duplicity as knowledgeable agents who daily navigate social, economic and politics of sexualities for individuated ends. Indeed, female respondents are convinced that:

“only a foolish girl will think a boy is toasting her for laughs. Sex is part of it and most girls know this. So if you allow someone to have ... sex with you, who do you blame” (Interview 46 - Female).

“...we all know what it means for a guy or babe to say they have a girlfriend or boyfriend. So when a guy is toasting a girl, she knows that ultimately he will want to have sex. Everybody knows that” (Interview 21 - Female).

In other words, female respondents know that male toasting is a scripted sequel to unprotected premarital sex, a form of sexual risk taking. Both male toasting and female acquiescence validate and reinforce the dominant and gendered sexual normative order. In addition, young people derive individuated benefits such as social esteem, sensations and peer approval from sexual risk taking and social activities preceding it, such as toasting or being toasted. Differential gendered benefits of sexual risk taking challenge the notion that activities leading to it, and its outcomes, are exclusively “male-privileging” (Izugbara, 2004, p.2 and Ahmed, 1990; see also Kelly and Parker, 2000). Respondents' sexual risk taking accounts reflect both normative sexual double standards discussed by Izugbara (ibid) and sexual emancipation:

“For boys, I think it's a fun and pleasure thing. I think doing it tells them that they are men, something to boast about to their friends” (Interview 11 - Female).

“of course. Boys want sex, girls want love and hopefully marriage more than any other thing. That did not come out well - but you know what I mean. Nobody says it like that...I think it may be different from person to person. For example, some girls may do it for money, some boys for sex. Others for love or to be praised and admired by their friends. I guess it depends” (Interview 11 - Female).

In addition, sexual risk taking is not due to negligence of inherent risks associated with premarital sex. For example, young people interviewed know that by engaging in unprotected premarital sex:



“you could get STD (*sexually transmitted diseases*) or pregnant”  
(Interview 46 – Female; words in parenthesis is mine).

“... a lot can happen. First of all, there is increased tendency that they may contract STI, and then there is the most dreaded disease of all, HIV is one, then two, of course we are talking about unwanted pregnancy which may in the long-run lead to abortion which may endanger the life, the future, and the dreams of the person involved. Then you are talking about in terms of guilt and disappointment”  
(Interview 1 - Male).

Furthermore, unprotected premarital sex among respondents is not due to alienation or a lack of ambition in life. Respondents displayed positive life outlooks, family connectedness, ambition and hope. That is, respondents do not have “low expectations for their futures” (Harris, et al., 2002, p.1010). Without exception, respondents believe they have prosperous future prospects, which are associated with good health and wealth. Typical commentary about the future includes:

“I hope that after graduation and my national service, I get a good job and hopefully settle down in the next three years (Interview 6 - Male).

“... *I hope to have* a very good life. I am actually studying medicine right now. By the grace of God, I will like to be a very good medical doctor. I want to reach-out to people, that is the essence of my studying medicine” (Interview 21 – Female, words in italics are mine).

Despite this positive view of the future, respondents indicate they cannot abstain from premarital sex, which is consistent with literature indicative that young people everywhere take sexual risks (see Wellings, et al., 2006, p.1723). Also illustrated in young people’s narratives, are complex evidence of social control of sexualities manifested as dominant abstinence-until-marriage norms driven by the family, religious bodies and reflected in the politics of sexualities in Nigeria. Respondents’ sexualities are also enabled and curtailed by marriage ambitions, fear of tarnished social reputations, ethnic/tribal mating preferences and incest taboos. The universities, perhaps recognising they are sites for sexual risk taking, segregate respondent’s residences by gender. In the last two and half decades, the fear of contracting HIV/AIDS has emerged as a major form of control of young people's sexualities and has influenced on periodic abstinence, serial monogamy and selective condom use in an environment of widespread sexual risk taking and heterosexual transmission of HIV.

### **6.3.2 Contradiction underlines young people's sexual risk narratives**

Young Nigerian students interviewed generally affirm that premarital sex is morally wrong<sup>191</sup>. As a result, they associate premarital sex, with or without condoms/contraceptives, with sexual risk taking. They also gave more specific examples of sexual risk taking. These include casual sex, sex with multiple partners, anal sex, oral sex and transactional sex. Conceiving premarital sex as sexual risk taking meets the credibility “criteria used by agents to provide reasons for what they do, grasped in such a way as to help to describe validly what it is that they do” (Giddens, 1984, p.374). In addition, conceiving all premarital sex as sexual risk taking suggests young people's partial subscription to, (1) mainstream cultural and religious abstinence-until-marriage BCC, which expressly stipulate that premarital sex is morally wrong for young people and prescribes sexual abstinence in its place (see Izugbara, 2007 for details). (2) In reality, interviewees take sexual risks, actively circumventing the dominant culture abstinence prescriptions with knowledge, skills and subjective rationalisation of praxis.

(3) Even though respondents claim that only sexual abstinence guarantees avoidance of unwanted outcomes of premarital sex such as STIs and unwanted pregnancies, they do not abstain from sex. (4) In addition, even though young people interviewed are aware that consistent/proper condom use significantly reduces STIs and unwanted pregnancies, they do not use condoms consistently. Young people's distrust of condoms is a product of usage experience, which indicates that condoms tear, leak or break during sexual encounters. Respondents associate condom unreliability with user error and poor product quality. I am of the opinion that young people's distrust of condoms is counter-intuitive, failing to meet the validity criteria “appealed to by social scientists to justify their theories and findings and assess those of others” (Giddens, 1984, p. 377). This is because consistent condom use makes sex safer from STIs by at least 90.7% to 98.6% (see Vaughan 1981; Grady 1986; Jones 1992; Weller and Davis, 2003; NIH, 2004; Pinkerton, and Abramson, 1997; Hatcher 1998 for discussions).

Young people's association of all premarital sex with sexual risk taking, nevertheless, demonstrates purposive agency, contextual knowledgeableability (even if misapplied),

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<sup>191</sup> Wellings and Wadsworth report similar findings among young people in Britain in the 1980 (Wellings and Wadsworth, 1990).

about constraints and enablement of risk-prone sexual activities. Their contradictory attitudes and remarks about sexual risk taking demonstrate an appreciation and demonstration of structural contradictions, which is principally due to young people's socialisation and unique life experiences. It is also a product of the "double hermeneutic," which describes how social actors "...routinely reincorporate social science concepts and findings back into the world these were coined to illuminate or explain" (Giddens, 1989, p.251). Since lay incorporation of social science findings is not rigorous, contradiction of terms and practice are to be expected.

Young people's contradictory association of premarital sex with sexual risk taking also evokes Bauman's claim that "humans are morally ambivalent" when confronted with ambiguous and contradictory impulses (Bauman, 1993, p.10-11), such as unprotected premarital sex. In addition, respondents' association of premarital sex with sexual risk taking calls to mind the "difficult relationship between the 'is' and the 'ought' in social action; that is, between how we actually behave and how ethical principles insist we should act...and why actors fail to adhere more closely to moral norms" (Cohen, 2000, p.82). For example, respondents' assert that premarital sex is immoral, yet acknowledge they take sexual risks, despite their knowledge of norms proscribing premarital sex, the relative efficacies of condoms, and knowledge of negative consequences of sexual risks. Specifically, sex without condoms/contraceptives is the most prevalent of sexual risks that respondents admit to taking: a third (19 of 56) admit they indulge in sex without condoms, while two-thirds (37 of 56) admit they indulge in sex without both condoms and any form of contraceptive. This underlines the reality that what people say is often very different from what they actually do<sup>192</sup>.

Similarly, respondents gave normative remarks about condom/ contraceptive effectiveness and a willingness to use them, which contradicts their accounts of inconsistent use. The same contradictions and ambivalence underline narratives about the relationship between having a boy/girlfriend and unprotected premarital sex. 48.2% (27 of 56) assert that having a boy/girlfriend makes premarital sex inevitable, while 46.4% (26 of 56) claim it does not. Regardless of the expressed ambivalence about

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<sup>192</sup> Similar norm-practice gap were reported in related studies in Britain and the USA. Even though respondents' normatively condemned extramarital sex, adultery remains the major reason for divorce (Scott, 1990; Harding, 1988). I interpret this as suggestive of a high prevalence of adultery, despite its normative status as immoral.

having a boy/girlfriend and premarital sex, 96.4% (54 of 56) admit their current relationship is sexual risk oriented. Thus, respondents' knowledge of sexual risks practices, protective actions and/or risk outcomes, according to their narratives, did not translate into self-efficacies - actual safer-sexual behaviour (such as abstinence). This indicates a difference between knowledge/attitudes towards safe sex with contraceptives and actual sexual behaviour, called the KAP-gap.<sup>193</sup> A similar deduction is made by a study of 2,388 Nigerian undergraduates, which concludes, "all respondents were quite knowledgeable about HIV/AIDS but few sexually active ones took precautions to prevent HIV transmission" (Arowojolu, et al., 2002, p.60).

In addition, young Nigerian university students interviewed are not altogether ignorant of cause and protective measures against STIs and unwanted pregnancies as sexual risk literature over-generalises for young people (see UNAIDS/WHO, 2005; Wagbatsoma and Okojie, 2006; Onoh, et al., 2004; NPC, 2003; Arowojolu, et al. 2002; Otoide, et al., 2001). As a further test of respondents' confidence in associating premarital sex with sexual risk taking, I asked, *are there sexual behaviours that you think are not risky?* Answers include:

"bros, the only way you can avoid disease these days is not having sex at all. There is nothing like safe sex. You read every day about people who use condoms and fall victim. Even condom companies do not claim 100% protection... I think it's something like 87-95%... I don't know. But even 5% risk of HIV is a very serious life and death matter. But that does not mean people will stop. You just need to be more careful of where you put it (laughter). (Interview 51 - Male).

Female respondents similarly share the above characterisation of abstinence, safe sex and unprotected sex. In answer to the same question, *are there sexual behaviours that you think are not risky?* A female respondent is of the opinion that:

"I am not sure there are any - I think the whole sex thing is riskier to a girl than boy. A girl may get STD, HIV, pregnant, get used and dumped by a guy. Don't forget the disgrace - who suffers more disgrace in sexual matters. Besides, if my anatomy knowledge is to be believed, girls will get infected easier than boys (Interview 11 - Female).

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<sup>193</sup> Kap-Gap as applied herein, approximates the significant and contradictory gap between positive sexual health and contraceptive knowledge/attitudes and actual practice by young Nigerian university students. Kap-Gap, as a concept was originally applied by Westoff and colleagues to a five country study of unmet family planning need for women (Westoff, 1978; Westoff and Pebley, 1981). The re-application of the concept from the 1990s mainly argues the case that there is a Kap-Gap for males also, and proponents advocate targeting couples, especially men for effective family planning take-off (Ezeh *et al.*, 1996; Ngom, 1997; Bankole and Ezeh, 1999).

Young Nigerian students interviewed contradictory association of premarital sex with sexual risk taking and their concurrent practise of premarital sex, nevertheless, present opportunities and challenges for creative BCC. On one hand, there are opportunities for abstinence-until-marriage communications initiatives and programme support for those yet to sexually debut and/or cessation of sexual activities for young people already sexually active. On the other hand, there are opportunities for condom/contraceptive use promotion, negotiation and usage skills acquisition, which will emphasise the relative safety of consistent condom/contraceptive use, even with associated imperfections, over unprotected sex regardless of all respondents' personal efforts to mitigate sexual risk occurrence, for example, by careful partner selection and intermittent condom use. For as a female respondent insists, in response to questions about the (im)morality of premarital sex:

“having premarital sex is not right in the first place, full-stop. So if you must do it, do it safely, preferably get married” (Interview 41 - Female).

### **6.3.3 Young people have low personal risk perception**

A major implication of influences implicated in young people's sexual risk taking is that they promote low personal risk perception for exposures to STIs and unwanted pregnancies. Four interrelated variables promote and sustain respondents' low personal sexual risk perception. (1) The relative access to sexual risks mitigating technologies such as condoms, which protects against STIs/unwanted pregnancies, and abortion resorted to as a last resort, to terminate unwanted pregnancies. (2) As a result of social change, for example, the human rights projects, young people place excessive confidence in their personal abilities<sup>194</sup> to select sexual partners who look healthy and prosperous to reduce their exposures to STIs, and secure financial security to pay for abortion or marry their sexual partner, if unwanted pregnancy occurs.

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<sup>194</sup> Other criteria for partner selection include physical attributes such as beauty/handsomeness, ethnic/tribal backgrounds, undergoing prestigious field of study like law or medicine, and have marriage potentials. Partner selection is thus, based on full or limited social acquaintance, partial/mutual disclosures of personal biographies and observation of social/sexual conducts.

Despite these personal efforts at sexual risks mitigation, respondents are exposed to unintended outcomes of unprotected sex, which they engage in, to secure individuated benefits, and to maintain and secure their relationships. The unreliability<sup>194</sup> of partner selection based on physically observable and social indices corroborate emerging studies (Smith, 2004; Harrison, et al., 2001; Waldby, 1993) based on careful partner selection to reduce sexual risk exposures (Chapman and Hodgson, 1988; Greig and Raphael, 1989).

Thirdly, the unwanted and negative outcomes of sexual risk taking, such as STIs are not widespread enough to warrant increased risk perception and/or immediate behaviour change. Respondents, except one male, claim they never had STIs. In addition, only four respondents admit knowing peers who had STI in the past. (4) Nearly half of the study respondents (42.8% = 24 of 56, i.e. 15 males and 9 females) claim they are HIV/AIDS negative, based on results from a recent HIV status testing, notwithstanding their sexual behaviour. HIV/AIDS status testing was instigated by external firms/industries demand for compulsory HIV/AIDS status testing before industrial attachment (IT). Testing negative for HIV speculatively, boosts young people and their partner's confidence about the efficacy of various and current methods employed to mitigate STIs, especially partner selection and periodic condom use, when the female partner will likely become pregnant. Similar low perceptions of risk are reported for outpatients at an STD clinic in South Africa (Blecher et al., 1995).

Another indication of social change induced low sexual risk perception is that virginity, among Nigerian university students interviewed, has lost its previous preferred and normative status. Young people's narrative accounts indicate that virginity currently lacks a "purpose or benefit" (Interview 46 - Female) or is "part of your experience ...that you lost your virginity alongside... growing-up and learning" (Interview 36 - Male). Nevertheless, elective virginity, which respondents associate with abstinence, is ideally "important because that way you will avoid all sexual health risks and pregnancy... Yes, it's better but not easy" (Interview 46 - Female). As a result, virginity is:

"... not as common. Most people, here now, they say if you have not done it, you are like out of the circle. And majority they say, wins the vote. And majority are non-virgins. So they tend to be in a group. So when you are not...when you are still a virgin or you have not done anything like...and when they are discussing such things...your friends say ahh... small boy, get out of here.... So you want to be in that circle. So you go and do what you have to do to belong<sup>195</sup>" (Interview 36 – Male, word in italics, mine).

"no longer important these days. It used to be in the past. At least that is what my grandmother says. She said your parents take pride in it and boast about it..., and that many suitors will court you. She also said your husband would reward your family for marrying a virgin. These days, things have changed – nobody cares about that anymore" (Interview 46 - Female).

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<sup>195</sup> Roughly translated, 'to belong' literarily means seeking membership of, or active conformity with the dictates of a valued peer group.

Respondents' account of the previous normative status of virginity challenges Caldwell and colleague's claim that "Africans neither placed aspects of sexual behaviour at the centre of their moral and social systems nor sanctified chastity" (Caldwell et al., 1989, p.192). Respondents' accounts also paradoxically indicate that for males, "virginity is like a curse. Majority of the guys, they look at virgins as a nuisance... not you, you have to do something about it" (Interview 16 - Male). This latter narrative corroborates Caldwell and colleagues thesis for young Nigerian university male students, at least.

#### **6.3.4 Respondents are sexually emancipated, which significantly influences sexual risk taking**

A key trend that emerges from the analysis of young people's sexual risk taking narratives confirms Giddens' writings about sex freed from the constraints of repetitive pregnancies and male domination (Giddens, 1992). Essentially, Giddens' thesis is about the reconstitution of female sexuality from reproduction and male control into a "medium of a wide-ranging emotional reorganization of social life" (Giddens, 1992, p.182; 1991; 2000). Sex thus freed, is now vehicle for self-realisation, affirmative action, love and intimacy. The emancipation of sexuality in Nigeria is the product of human/gender rights projects, contraceptive availability, access to illegal abortions and social change in Nigeria. Because "contraceptives and condoms are available if you want them" (Interview 21 - Female), young people see no reason to avoid unprotected sex merely to avoid pregnancy, as was the case before the contraceptive revolution because:

"pregnancy is no longer a big deal, nobody avoids sex just because of that. They say, know your way, a smart matured girl cannot just get pregnant...unless she is trying to hook you" (Interview 31 - Male).

"I ... sometimes use condoms when I know I am not safe" (Interview 46 - Female).

Periodic condom use, although inadequate to protect young people from STI and unwanted pregnancies, should be encouraged and extended by BCC. In addition, condom availability in Nigeria should be strengthened with the inclusion and promotion of female condoms, whose use complement one another and enhances young people's protection from STIs and unwanted pregnancies. In relation to male condoms male respondents observe, "condoms are everywhere" (Interview 36 - Male). Alternatively,

“condoms are cheap, for twenty Naira<sup>196</sup>, you can get a pack of four, there is even a manual on how to use it with pictures (laughter) (Interview 39 - Male). Nonetheless, respondents are certain about the paradoxical role of condom availability in promoting premarital sex, commenting that it:

“...has led to an increase. Because, before, when condoms were not as common as it is now, people tend to use withdrawal method. And how do you ...how are you so sure that you will be able to control yourself when you get to that peak? And so, people were scared of trying...but now you have condoms and they tell you its 99% safe, it's strong, it won't do this or that, and so you are more confident. And so you go... swimming. And now they tell you that condoms now prevent sexually transmitted diseases, like even HIV... they have given us a guide or they have given us something to protect us... so... what's stopping us now?” (Interview 36 - Male). Or that,

“...yes, girl's ability to take care of pregnancy contributes to sexual risk taking... because these days, they are no longer afraid of getting pregnant or getting caught pregnant. There are so many things they do to control before or after like using condoms or abortion.” (Interview 6 - Male).

Eight service providers interviewed corroborate the prevalence of condom availability and frequent purchase by young people, even though young people use them infrequently, in reality. Typical observation is that “next to paracetamol (*painkiller*), condoms are really fast moving” (Interview 7 - Service-provider, words in italics mine). Thus, young people are keenly aware of the options presented by the contraceptive revolution. According to a female respondent, “I think most girls will slow down if they know they can't control pregnancy or AIDS” (Interview 46 - Female). Other girls agree, mostly opining that, “...girls used to worry themselves sick after sex about pregnancy. These days some take the morning after pills such as postinor and that's it. Yes it's true” (Interview 11 - Female). Alternatively, “I think condoms and contraceptives are not bad. But yes, they have increased sexual risk taking, because girls are not as scared of pregnancy today as they were before from the stories I have heard. They know what to do when they get pregnant” (Interview 26 - Female).

Sexual emancipation also normalises unprotected premarital sex for respondents. Literature details erstwhile reluctance to discuss sex and sexualities in sub-Saharan Africa and elsewhere (see Yeh, 2002; Puri, 2004; Lear, 1995; Robinson, et al., 1991;

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<sup>196</sup> Twenty Nigerian Naira is equivalent to 0.092 British Pounds and 0.169 US Dollars. From <http://finance.yahoo.com/currency/convert?amt=20&from=NGN&to=GBP&submit=Convert> Converted August, 28, 2008.



Lear, 1997; Nyanzi, Pool, and Kinsman, 2001; Harrison, et al., 2001 and Kisekka, 1973 cited in Heald, 1995). Regardless of the normative prescription for silence about sexuality, respondents were willing and open<sup>197</sup> in discussing their sexual activities. Another indication of sexual emancipation is respondents' acknowledgement that sensation seeking influences their engagement in premarital sex. Males, however, normatively instigate the sexual act, purchase condoms and suggest its use, while females control the pace of the relationship, especially sexual intimacy. Females control the occurrence of premarital sex by periodically *allowing* male respondents' sexual access via *deliberate/accidental* visit of males in their residences, direct and indirect instigation of sex (see Christopher and Frandsen, 1990, cited in Cate, et al., 1993). Female respondents observe:

“everybody knows the score. When you go visit your boyfriend alone in his room, anything can happen! (Laughter)” (Interview 41 - Female).

“it is not just boys who want sex, girls want sex too. Even though it is not proper to talk about it in Nigerian culture, girls have many ways of starting sex with boys” (Interview 11 - Female).

Another symptom of sexual emancipation is the increasing frequency of females chatting-up (toasting) males in Nigeria. Young males agree that female appropriation of erstwhile male normative prerogative is on the increase. Majority of respondents, (80% = 45 of 56) are nonetheless uncertain about this development. Comments include:

“I don't think a girl should ask a guy out. It is not proper. This is Africa. But girls are doing it now already o! But I don't think I can go and ask a boy out” (Interview 26 - Female). Or that,

“... girls chase boys too – just not openly. If a girl likes a boy, who is not showing interest in her, she can do so many things quietly that will get his attention and start the *toasting* (long laughter). But its girl's secret – I won't tell” (Interview 11 - Female).

### **6.3.5. Sexual risk taking is common and begins early**

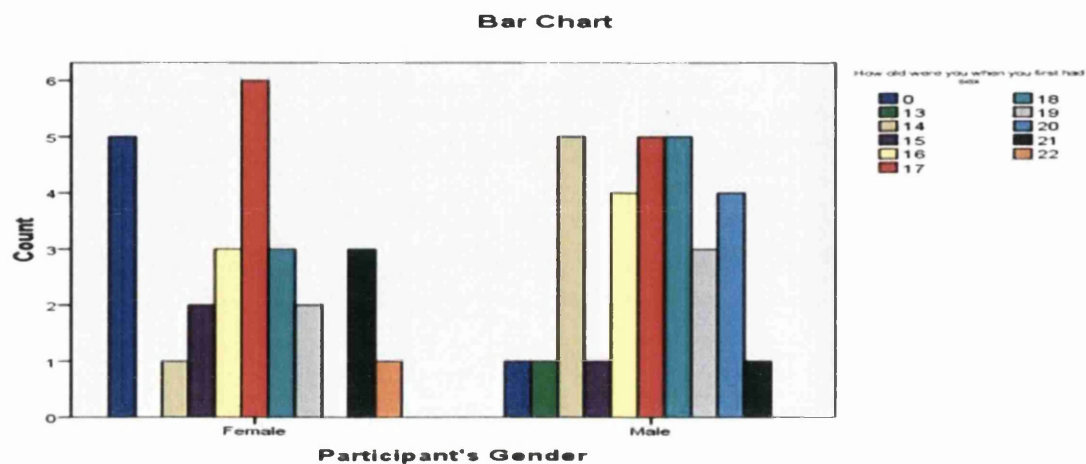
Sexual risk taking is common and begins early among study respondents. Early sexual debut occurs despite young people's awareness of associated risks of unwanted pregnancy and STI. The overall median age at sexual debut for respondents is 17<sup>198</sup>

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<sup>197</sup> It is important, nonetheless, to stress that an increasingly open attitude displayed by young people towards premarital sex is not indicative of promiscuity or the popular nothing-to-lose attitude. That is, having unprotected sex without thought of its potentially negative health consequences and personal development, an attitude associated with promiscuity (Luster and Small, 1994; Ohannessian and Crocket, 1993; Plotnick, 1992).

<sup>198</sup> This conforms with the Nigerian Demographic Health Survey result of 17.9 years (NPC/DHS, 1999; see also Makinwa, 1991).

years. The average age of sexual debut for respondents is 15.5 years. For females, it is 14.4 years and 16.5 years for young males. Respondents' young age at sexual debut implies overall long-term sexual risk exposures because of early and sustained sexual risk behaviour and more lifetime sexual partners, which are associated with STI transmission (Michael et al., 1998). See Bar Chart 10.<sup>199</sup>



**Bar Chart 10, Nigerian university students' gender and age at sexual debut**

In addition, unprotected premarital sex is common. For example, 96.4% (54 of 56) of respondents admit they indulge in unprotected sex at the time of the interview. The deduction that sexual risk taking is common is made by comparing young people's narratives with UNAIDS (1998) indicators<sup>200</sup> for prevalence of sexual risk taking. Respondents claim that:

“98% of people do it. Some of my friends talk.... They tend to tell you things... I have sex with my boyfriend and that... I missed my period etc.” (Interview 41 - Female).

“very common. Everybody does it. But most people are not in trouble ... maybe because they are in a committed relationship where the partners are faithful” (Interview 11 - Female).

The finding that unprotected premarital sex is common among young people is consistent with a recent survey of Nigerian undergraduates, which reports that “87%

<sup>199</sup> From Bar Chart 10, zero years represents five females and one male who declined to indicate age at sexual debut. Five female respondents refusal to indicate age at sexual debut speculatively could mean their relatively young age at sexual debut and/or compliance with normative pressure against admitting premarital sex. One male refusal on the other hand, may imply sexual debut at a relatively late age and normative pressure to comply with local masculine ethos that preclude any adolescent male sexual inactivity.

<sup>200</sup> UNAIDS indicators include knowledge/awareness of HIV/AIDS risk route, reported incidence of casual sex/sex with CSW, condom use, age at sexual debut, sexual networking/number of sexual partners, reported incidence of premarital sex, condom availability and sexual networking (UNAIDS, 1998a).

were sexually active and 66% had more than one sexual partner, while 17.5% have had clandestine abortion” (Arowojolu, et al., 2002, p.60). Another study estimates that “610,000 abortions are being performed in Nigeria annually, despite the restrictive abortion laws in the country, where a penalty of 7-14 years is prescribed for the abortion seeker and provider respectively” (Henshaw, et al., 1998 and Adewole, et al., 2002 cited in Oye-Adeniran, et al., 2005, p.134; see also Archibong, 1991; Nichols et al., 1986). Early sexual debut is significant because it usually means more lifetime sexual partners and sustained exposure to unprotected sex and associated outcomes such as STIs and unwanted pregnancies. The commonality of sexual risk taking, nonetheless, is not indicative of promiscuity among respondents. For example, only one male, of fifty-six respondents admits he has four girlfriends. Serial monogamy is more common than sexual networking. No respondent admitted patronage of CSW.

#### **6.3.6. Young people will not abstain from sexual risk taking because they are favourably predisposed to it, and it is normative**

Young people are favourably predisposed to sexual risk taking. This is a crucial and often neglected influence on young people’s sexual risk taking. Personal dispositions are internal states, which arises from direct socialisation and modelling on contextually appropriate sexual conduct in society. For example, males interviewed explain their involvement in sexual relationships and risk taking in terms suggestive of sexual adventurism and score keeping. According to a male respondent:

“...being with the other sex is a challenge. And as a challenge, they ... feel this level of achievement when they sleep with a girl. So, they have this sense of fulfilment...this ego. ... Because even within us, within guys, when guys talk, you know, it’s like, I slept with that girl. You know the way they play hard to get, so they will be like ...hailing you. Correct man! Correct man! So, you want to be at the apex within your friends. So you tend to go after more girls to get more stories to tell your guys. So that’s what really pushes guys, not that is it is always enjoyable. But the... commendation they get from their friends ...the ahmn...praise and all other things” (Interview 36 – Male).

“Ah... sex to me is more or less like an adventure... and eh...most people like indulging in sexual activities to satisfy their curiosity... considering the fact that they may have heard so many words ...and seen memorable and exciting things about sex. And so, they want to be part of the experiment in quote...it is better you experience it than imagine it” (Interview 1 - Male).

Young males’ narratives suggests an ideal preference for concurrent multiple sexual relationships, which the prevalence of HIV/AIDS negates. The sexual ideal of concurrent multiple relationships and score keeping by males and the opposite for women is

embedded in folklore (see Izugbara, 2004; Smith, 2004; Asencio, 2002; Holland et al., 2000; Schifter and Madrigal, 2000; Wood, et al., 1998; Amuchastegui, 1998; Ankomah, 1998; Rubin, 1990; Clayton, 1972). Virginal sexual penetration is accorded higher peer acceptance/social status than platonic relationships for males. For females, virginal sex paradoxically erodes social status as uncorrupted or chaste. Female respondents, nevertheless, comment of the cultural contradiction, which recommends chastity on one hand, and compliance with gendered/family institution advancement ideals often leveraged from heterosexual relationships and associated life learning:

“... if a girl doesn't have a boyfriend until she marries, she may not know how to relate and handle boys. If you enter one relationship and it doesn't workout, you learn from it and use the lesson in the next one to know when things are going wrong. That is why this abstinence think does not work. Everybody expects a nice girl to finally get married and have children – how do you do that without taking sexual risks of some kind? So, I think these relationships prepare you for your future role. You learn what makes men happy, angry and all that, and how to pick the right one and protect yourself. If you don't learn it now, you may end up being used by boys” (Interview 46 - Female).

Three dispositional or position-practice types are discernable from the analysis of young people's sexual risk narratives, employing Giddens' human “adaptive reactions” to risks (Giddens, 1990, p.134-137). The first is that respondents pragmatically accept sexual risk<sup>201</sup> taking as necessary components of their existence, in concert with a consideration of (un)intended outcomes of sexual risks, such as STIs, and peer approval. With reference to unintended outcomes, respondents attempt to mitigate them by careful partner selection, periodic sexual abstinence and selective condom use. Young people's pragmatic acceptance of sexual risk taking is equally evidenced by their sexual presentations of themselves with impression management.<sup>202</sup>

Flirting and sexy dressing<sup>203</sup> are examples of impression management leveraged especially by female respondents to communicate sexual attractiveness and/or

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<sup>201</sup> In contrast, another risk-taking study such as Stephen Lyng's edgework indicates that edgeworkers anticipate and look forward to the life threatening features and potential outcomes of their activities. That is, they are engaged in “boundary negotiation – exploration of “edges”...the boundaries between sanity and insanity, consciousness and unconsciousness, and the most consequential one, the line separating life and death” (Lyng, 2005, p.4).

<sup>202</sup> Impression management is so pervasive that previous research reports no differences between impression management activities such as flirting and sexy-dressing, targeted at peers and/or strangers (Bohra and Pandey, 1984).

<sup>203</sup> Female flirting and sexy modes of dressing are non-verbal sexual communication cues that simultaneously communicate sexual availability/desire. Flirting also minimizes the negative social consequences of overt sexualities such as sexual rejection. In addition, flirting is an ambivalent behaviour, its motives and target is refutable without social loss of face.

availability. Conversely, males attract females by creating impressions they are considerate, kind, trendy and wealthy. Young males respond to female sexual cues as flirting and sexy dressing with *toasting/chatting-up* or invitations to become girlfriends. Females usually pretend to consider these offers, before agreeing to well liked and often anticipated male suitors. Female respondents reject unlikely male suitors or accept their propositions for sexual exchanges. A subjective determination of the emotive content of the sexual relationship influences unprotected sex, and its lack, influences condom use. Nonetheless, young people in emotive and committed relationships also periodically use condoms as a contraceptive device to prevent pregnancy.

The second set of attitudes deducible from young people's sexual risk narratives is cynical pessimism. This disposition type manifests as young people's direct engagement with sexual risk anxieties, such as STIs and unwanted pregnancies with "cynicism ... a humorous or a world-weary response to them and anachronistic celebration of the delights of the here-and-now" to mitigate these concerns (Giddens, 1990, p.136). Only 3.5% (2 of 56 (and males) displayed this disposition. According to one, it is difficult to abstain from sexual intercourse:

"when hormones start swirling, something must happen. It is difficult to stick to one babe...look around you; they are all fine in different ways...and lonely too. I think they need guys like me" (Interview 52 - Male). Another maintains,

"all you need to do is condomise all the time, and you will be okay. I can only be young once, but I don't want to die. So I am a condom man, love or no love" (Interview 9 - Male).

The latter two male respondents theoretically agree they will have sexual intercourse with any girl who offers as long the "girl is not ugly...even if she is ugly; they are the same down-below (laughter)" (Interview 52 - Male). "Cynical pessimism ... and anachronistic celebration of the delights of the here-and-now" are exceptional, but unrepresentative findings among respondents, which I interpret in cautionary terms (ibid). This is because, contrary to my pre-interview expectations to find widespread sexual networking among respondents, their narratives demonstrate significant caution in engaging sexual partners, and managing the resultant heterosexual relationships.

Respondents, in addition, displayed attitudes suggestive of a "radical engagement...an attitude of practical contestation towards perceived sources of danger" (Giddens, 1990,

p.134-137). That is, young people adopt attitudes and practices that minimise the sexual risk component of heterosexual relationships, for example, with selective condom use. Others periodically abstain because they broke-up with partners, which is common, or as a deliberate choice, which is rare. Only one female respondent in a heterosexual relationship among interviewees claim she abstains from sexual intercourse, even though she was previously sexually active. Other respondents adopt serial monogamy to mitigate sexual risks. In this latter regard, a female respondent observes:

“STD and HIV/AIDS I am not worried about because I am in committed relationship and you are supposed to be faithful (laughter). Anyway, my boyfriend and I have done HIV screening a number of times and it’s always negative” (Interview 46 - Female).

Thus, respondents practise serial monogamy, in conscious attempt to mitigate unintended sexual risk taking outcomes via trust, commitment, mutual fidelity, periodic abstinence and condom use because, “these days, it is the only way you can protect yourselves from disease in a relationship” (Interview 21 - Female). Males expressed similar sentiments. According to one:

“we use the natural birth control method and condoms to avoid pregnancy. For the dreaded disease, we practice faithfulness. That is why I do not have several girlfriends. I encourage my girl to do the same. I tell her, I know myself and am faithful to you and you should be faithful to me too. That way we will be safe from disease” (Interview 6 - Male).

In general, all respondents demonstrate significantly high positive predispositions towards sexual risk taking consistent with Giddens observation that, “loss of virginity for a boy, as from time immemorial, continues ... to be a misnomer: for boys, first sexual experience is a plus, a gain,...for girls, virginity is still something seen as given up” (Giddens, 1992, p.51).

### **6.3.7 Romantic love matters – and influences female sexual risk taking**

Sexual emancipation, especially the increased freedom that young people enjoy away from closer family supervision, combines with mass media, peer influence, and personal dispositions of young people to influence the formation of, and maintenance of sexual relationships that often culminate in unprotected premarital sex. Unprotected sex, according to young people, is a sign or, and is employed to validate “romantic

love<sup>204</sup> ...entered into for its own sake" and maintained at partners discretion and satisfaction (Giddens, 1992, p.58). Although romantic love<sup>205</sup> is mostly associated with Western societies (Denmark, et al., 2005 cited by Schäfer, 2008), emergent studies report its prevalence across cultures (Jankowiak and Fischer, 1992). All female university students interviewed (except one) strongly agree that emotion and romantic love influences sexual risk taking. This finding corroborates the linkages between "emotion and motivations ... as a generic quality of sexuality ...expressed through bodily sensation, in a communicative context; an art of giving and receiving pleasure" (Giddens, 1992, p.201-202).

Emotions thus, stimulate deep-seated and primal needs among heterosexual partners for affection, appreciation, love, equality, emotional support and indispensability to one another (see Jamieson, 1999; Galotti, et al., 1990; Roscoe, et al., 1987). These felt needs are in turn sustained by a series of sexual self-presentations, impression management and sacrifice and action, such as sexual risk taking. A number of narratives confirm the importance of romance in maintaining sexual relationships. They include:

"women are very emotional. If they love a guy, and the guy does not want to use a condom, they will just give-in quietly to make him happy. Because if their man is happy, they are usually happy" (Interview 26 - Female).

In answer to the question, *will you refuse a boy you love sex*, another respondent observe that:

"it is easy to say I will refuse, but in real life, anything can happen. So I don't know what I will do" (Interview 21 - Female).

Female respondents' narratives about the benefits of romantic love indicate that romantic love relationships are more emotionally fulfilling, last longer and bestow benefits as such as "sexual satisfaction and happiness, especially in the fantasy form of romance..." (Giddens, 1992, p.62). For example:

"you feel...how do I say it...alive, happy and satisfied. You will be very proud of your boyfriend and do anything for him if you love him" (Interview 56 - Female).

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<sup>204</sup> Romantic love<sup>204</sup> or "intense attraction that involves the idealization of the other, within an erotic context, with the expectation of enduring for sometime in the future" (see Jankowiak and Fischer, 1992, p.150; Giddens, 1992; Crouter and Booth, 2006; Florsheim, 2003a and b; Giordano, 2003).

<sup>205</sup> Alternatively, romantic love and egalitarian ethos is transposed from Western democracies, by globalisation and human rights projects, to emerging democracies, displacing religion as arenas for personal reflexivity and meaning (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 1990; Burkart, 2000 and Illouz, 2003, cited by Schäfer, 2008).

Another female is of the opinion that being in-love:

“makes it easier to have unprotected sex, it doesn’t sound right now, but in that situation, it does” (Interview 46 - Female).

Conversely, romantic love relationships can cause distress, pain and emotional instability when you:

“get used and dumped by a guy” (Interview 11 - Female).

These narratives corroborate Smith’s ethnographic study of courtship, which report that “young Igbo men and women in Nigeria are far more likely than their parents and grandparents to insist on choosing their marriage partners” based on “notions of romantic love and emotional intimacy” (Smith, 2001, p.129). Female narratives about love and emotions are also consistent with dominant global media prescriptions for love, sex and relationships (SSHRN, 1999; see also Izugbara, 2004; Ejikeme, 2001). The majority of female respondents, nevertheless, validate the influence of love and emotion on sexual risk taking. One female respondent however, disagrees, she argues:

“well, I will refuse (*sex*). Unless he is willing and ready to marry me...then we can have sex every day, if he likes” (Interview 41 – Female, words in italics mine).

In contrast to females, male respondents’ narratives play-down the role of emotions on sexual risk taking. Males account for their sexual risk taking by referencing sensation seeking, ego and self-image, derived from enhanced peer status (keeping scores), an attitude consistent with literature (see Harrison, et al., 2001; Varga, 1997; Eyre, et al., 1998). Male preoccupation with pleasure and ego could be because, (1) Male respondents are emotionally immature. (2) They are not ready to marry, still intent on sowing their wild oats. (3) Males normatively understate and under-report the influence of emotional attachments to their girlfriends during the interview because of social pressure that precludes males showing any form of weakness/traits associated with women, such as emotion and love.

Other studies in Nigeria associate male reluctance to publicly validate the influence of emotions, such as love, on sexual risk taking to local and gendered socialisation for sensation seeking, sexual adventurism, repression of emotions and risk-prone worldviews (Izugbara, 2004; Izugbara and Ukwaiyi, 2003; Izugbara and McGill 2003; SSHRN, 1999; Asanga, 1998; Gbarale, 1999). Probably because of the immediately



preceding account, male respondents are dismissive<sup>206</sup> of the influence of romantic love and emotions on sexual risk taking. Typical and corroborative narratives indicate:

“you find out that going with a particular girl, ... what we are after is not really affection or love per say. It’s rather, in place of love, its infatuation or rather lust. Get what you want and get out” (Interview 1 - Male). Alternatively,

“Love? I don’t know whether the word love really exist. Because concerning my girlfriend, maybe when I want to get something from her or just to please her at the moment, I can tell her I love her. Ehm... so the word love depends on circumstances or occasions. I don’t know if it is real. But I know it works on women” (Interview 6 - Male).

Respondents also utilise unprotected sex to affirm and maintain romantic love and, possibly, future marriage partners. Marriage intentions are normative for all study respondents, who expressed the intention to get married in the near future. Because of the preceding discussions, even though romantic love matters, it predisposes and influences respondents to take sexual risk taking.

#### **6.4 Implications of findings on young people’s agencies, and further sexual risk taking.**

##### **6.4.1 Explaining young people’s unequal agencies.**

De Certeau, et al., (1980) postulate two types of agencies, which are inherent in respondents’ narratives. These are tactical and strategic agencies. Applied to sexual risk taking, young males sexual risk agencies are tactical in nature, directed at immediate sexual gratification, in a manner that validate the claim that males are sexually adventurous and prone to sensations seeking (see Parsons, et al., 2000; Giddens, 1992, p.79 for similar deductions). For example, “most guys have it like this...what they really want is just to have fun and thereafter tell the girl to go her way” (Interview 1 - Male). Alternatively:

“around here, you are not a real man unless you have experienced sex. Preferably with several girls” (Interview 6 - Male).

Male sexual adventurism and sensation seeking, are therefore depicted as tactical acts, which exemplifies “...‘ways of operating’: victories of the ‘weak’ over the ‘strong’ . . . clever tricks, knowing how to get away with things, ‘hunter’s cunning’, manoeuvres, polymorphic simulations, joyful discoveries, poetic as well as warlike”, but an act of the

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<sup>206</sup> The preceding analysis however, does not imply any conclusions about males (in)capacities to fall in-love or be in-love. Illuminating male (in)capacities for romantic love requires further research. Instead, analysis suggests that emotions or romantic love is weakly associated with male sexual risk taking.

weak (De Certeau 1984, p.xix–xx; De Certeau, et al., 1980). Based on tactical interests in immediate sexual gratification, male respondents exploit the simultaneously constraining and enabling sexual rules and resources, such as those that prohibit premarital sex, prescribe abstinence, and social capital (resources derived from family, industry and relatives), to leverage female emotionality and subvert prescribed chastity norms for sexual access. Based on their narratives, male respondents' sexual risk cycles seem to be “blow by blow, moving from one tactical manoeuvre within and against the system to another, utilising the gaps which the particular combination of circumstances open in the control of the proprietary power” of females over the sexual act (Jackson, 1981, p.33). For example:

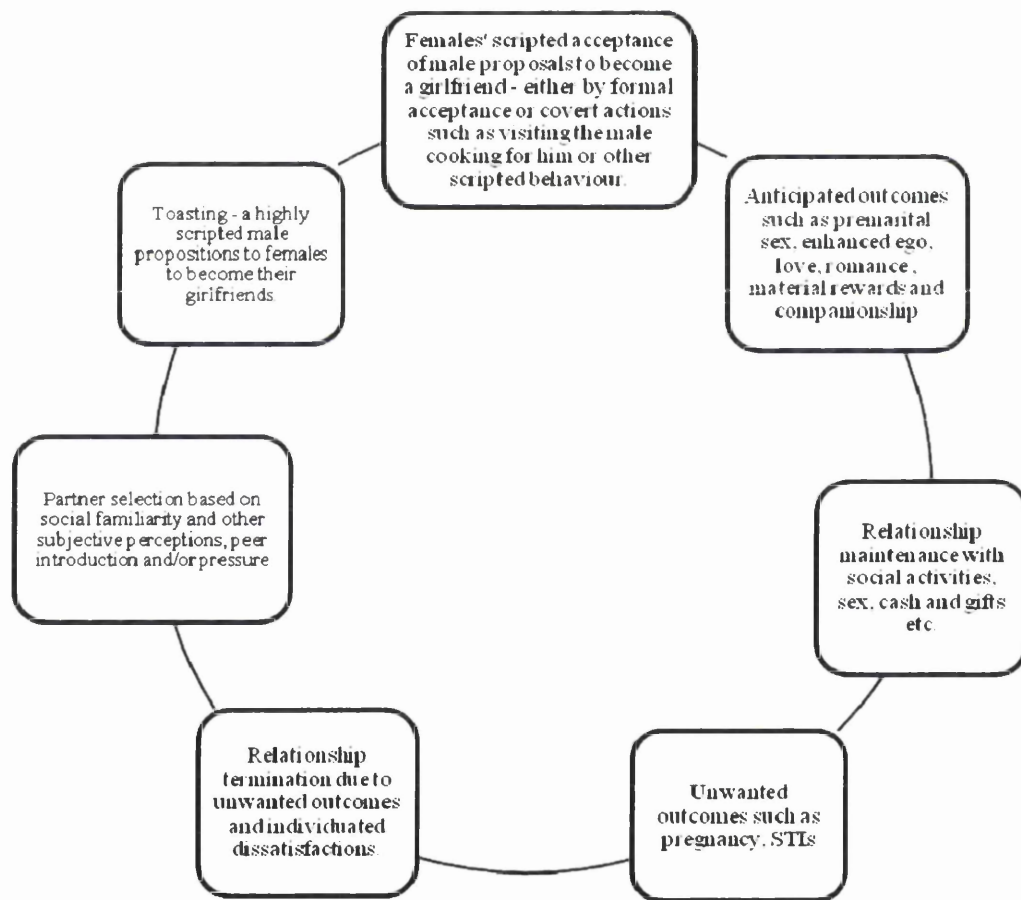
“toasting can start anywhere...when you see a girl, keeping to herself, very pretty and well behaved. When you are gathered with your friends, they will say, look at that nice girl, she doesn't have a boyfriend, let's try and see who will get her” (Interview 3 - Male).

Other research has noted similar behaviour, which suggests males scheme to secure females complicity for sexual intercourse with wile, deception and false promises (see Eyre, et al., 1998; Farrer, 2002). Male success in authoritatively securing female compliance often leverages existing gender hierarchies, money and charisma. Securing female sexual compliance for sex also depends upon deliberate cultivation of, or social acquaintance with females, followed by propositions to become girlfriends, demonstration of affection and care with cash/gifts, female (in)formal agreement by saying yes, and/or assumption of a girlfriend's role. At this point, females take over the relationship, determining the levels of sexual intimacy with behaviours and actions calculated to maintain the sexual relationships and derive individuated benefits with periodic visits of males and sexual intercourse.

Unprotected sex, however, sometimes produces unwanted outcome such as pregnancy and/or STIs. Unintended outcomes test young people's sexual relationships, because they are often unwilling or incapable of assuming responsibilities for their occurrence. For example, unwanted pregnancies could be viewed as calculated by females to secure marriage from unresponsive males. Alternatively, females could employ unintended pregnancies or their threat to extort money from males' to secure illegal abortion. Similarly, STIs evoke mutual suspicion of infidelity among partners. Sexual relationships among respondents interviewed, terminate for five reasons. First among

them is when partners do fall out of love or romance. The second condition is that partners may cease to perceive or derive individuated benefits from the relationship. The third condition is when partner(s) are infected with STIs, which evokes suspicions of infidelity and distrust. The fourth reason for break-ups is unwanted pregnancies, partner(s) rejection of abortion and marriage as viable options. The fifth reason is suspicion of, or certainty of the other partner's infidelity.

After breaking-up, individuals often commence a new search for new sexual partners, which furthers sexual risk taking. See Diagram 1. A careful reading of the sexual risk taking cycle demonstrates that, at any point in the cycle, males can stop the process. For example, any young Nigerian university male, can desist from starting a sexual relationship by not toasting or chatting-up girls. Similarly, female respondents can refuse male propositions and/or sexual advances. Instead, respondents elect to duplicate the sexual risk cycle to meet subjective and/or mutual ends.



**Diagram 2, Young people's sexual risk taking cycle**

Female respondents' agency is both tactical and strategic. Female agency is tactical because women, like men, are susceptible to the lure of sexual pleasure, enhanced

feeling of self-worth and peer approval associated with heterosexuality. Strategic agency on the other hand, “moves from a position of strength, involves the delimitation and territorialisation of space, and gains control by objectifying and circumscribing. A Cartesian gesture, if you will: to circumscribe one's own in a world bewitched by the invisible power of the other” (De Certeau, 1984 cited in Maclean, 1987). Female agency is strategic because women can imply sexual availability, promise sex, allow sex, and by implication exercise control over male sexual passion.

Female respondents leverage their sexualities and collude with males for sexual risk taking. However, female respondents often nurture longer-term intents such as marriage from the relationships. Female leverage of their sexualities for proprietary control of males’ sexual passion is a form of domestication and delimiting of male sexual territories. For example, female respondents insist on male fidelity and commitment to the relationship over sexual networking, the latter is more compatible with male respondents’ tactical need for sexual gratification before HIV/AIDS. According to one narrative, the basis for female devotion to a male lover is:

“...if he loves you, cares, is willing to do things for you - buy you gifts, support you when you are broke is there for you... those kinds of things. Does not have another girl. You just know anyway” (Interview 11 - Female).

Young females, in addition, objectify males as unemotional sex addicts, while duplicitously seeking similar ends. Female respondents imply that males are unemotional and only intent on having sex:

“they can sleep with anybody, anytime and anywhere and boast about it. Most girls can't do that, you know. It is like their thing talks and feels for them ...laughter” (Interview 46 - Female).

“...you must watch-out for your future... by accepting only boys that can take care of you now and in future. Because boys, all they know is sex, once they get it, that's it. They go looking for other girls. So you must find ways to control...no manage them...I mean their interest in you...and one good way is sex” (Interview 56 - Female).

Similar to male respondents, females could, at any moment in the sexual risk cycle change or halt the proceedings, if they so choose (unless they are being raped<sup>207</sup>). For example, they can refuse male propositions, refuse cash/gifts, refuse to grant sexual access and can terminate the sexual act at any time. They do not do this for multiple reasons, including sensation seeking, the possibilities of marriage and sexual exchange. The latter, sexual exchange, unequivocally demonstrates female agencies. That is, female demand or acceptance of males gifts/cash, which both sexes acknowledge are generosities and vehicles for signalling and securing sexual access. For example:

“...in Africa, girls have the mind-set that they must be taken care of by boys. And the boys want sex, so they usually give-in. Sometimes it is peer pressure or because their friends are doing it. Maybe if a girl gets a nice boy that she feels she can marry and the boy wants sex, instead of losing him, the girl may give-in to keep the boy and the relationship going” (Interview 26 - Female). Or that,

“... yes, sex is a way for a girl to say thank you to a boy who gives her attention, gifts and ... material support. That is the only thing boys want from girls around here... no matter what they say. (Interview 41 - Female).

Over ninety-two percent (92.9% =52 of 56) of respondents demonstrate knowledge, as active social and sexual agents, by admitting responsibilities for sexual risk taking. All respondents (male and female), acknowledge that males, without exception, want sex. Similarly, All respondents, without exception, are aware that females, want commitment, romance, emotional relationships and possibly marriage, in addition to other individuated benefits.<sup>208</sup> Female respondents demonstrate agency by accepting male cash/gifts, and by granting them sexual access – often with complex intents, such as domesticating<sup>209</sup> them for companionship, marriage and as a cash/gift source. Similar to females, male respondents demonstrate their agencies in persuading females, with charm, wile, cash and gifts, to grant sexual access as soon and as often as possible. As a result, I advance the argument that male respondents have the illusion of power and

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<sup>207</sup> Female agencies are non-existent in contexts of rape, whose meanings are value laden and should be conceived contextually. For example, a woman cannot easily accuse her husband of rape in Nigeria. Sex in the context of marriage, is often interpreted as a duty couples owe each other. This conception of sex may have been transposed to unmarried heterosexual relations because it is compatible with respondents' accounts of sex as a duty, or sex to please a partner.

<sup>208</sup> Like other realms of risks studies, (see Lyng, 2005), sexual risk taking has its benefits. They included heightened sexual pleasure, material/social rewards, peer esteem etc.

<sup>209</sup> Female domesticate males with the promise of, and restriction of sexual access. Females additionally deploy variable emotions, for example, “...if a guy insists on using a condom with a girl he is already having sex with, she will accuse you of not trusting her and start crying and all that...” (Interview 36 - Male).

control over heterosexual relationships. Substantive power over heterosexual relationships and unprotected premarital sex resides in females.

#### **6.4.2 Respondents' agencies, rules, resources and sexual risk taking**

Based on structuration conception of agency, no respondent is powerless to practise safe sex or abstain from sex. A reiteration of Giddens' discourse of rules of legitimation and signification (Giddens, 1979), demonstrates how unequal knowledge and exploitation of rules and norms facilitate sexual risk agencies among young people. In sexual risk taking terms, rules of legitimation normatively regulate sexual conduct, for example, the sub-cultural norm enabling premarital sex for young people. Sub-cultural rules make sexual risk taking "seem correct and appropriate" (Turner, 1991, p.525). Sub-cultural norms also facilitate respondents' learning of old and emerging sexualities. Within the same Nigerian context, mainstream rules and norms unsuccessfully attempt to regulate (un)protected premarital sex.

Rules governing premarital sex norms are simultaneously enabling and constraining of respondents sexualities. For example, dominant mainstream norms constrain premarital sex, recommending abstinence instead, while young people sub-cultural peer norms, including popular culture, enables premarital sex. All respondents demonstrate an awareness of the benefits and costs of engaging in premarital sex. Despite their knowledge of sexual rules, young Nigerian university students discriminatorily, and with unequal agencies, take sexual risks instead of abstaining or practising safer-sex with condoms and contraceptives. In other words, respondents demonstrate agency by choosing to act one way and not the other, which is discriminatory action (see Bandura, 1971 and 2001; Giddens, 1981a&b and 1984). Electing to take sexual risks and not abstain, for example, entails knowledge of, capacity to exploit and circumvent constraining or enabling institutional rules and resources for individuated ends.

Rules of signification, on the other hand, facilitate respondents' understanding of symbolic communication and interpretation of verbal and non-verbal sexual behaviour. These include a series of sexual scripts deployed during sexual interactions. For example, chatting-up (toasting) language and behaviour that recommends males persuade reluctant females to become their girlfriends. Other scripted behaviours that facilitate sexual risk taking include sexy dressing, gifts and cash, attendance of private

parties, heterosexual social visits and instigating peers to pressure potential sexual partners to agree to dating, among others. Rules of signification communicate sexual intentions (toasting), availability, (via social visits, self-presentations, flirting or sexy dressing), and relationship maintenance through caring attitude (with cash/gifts and sex) and acceptance (via intimacy and sex).

Resources are constituents of the social structure leveraged and reproduced by respondents during social interactions (see Giddens 1984, p.15) that culminate in sexual risk taking. Resources utilised by young people are of two kinds, authoritative and allocative resources. Authoritative resources derived from respondents' differential physiological attributes and capacities to exploit them to control/direct peers towards sexual risk praxis (beauty, sex, handsomeness, wile, charisma). Allocative resources in contrast, are exemplified by money and other material support, from parents, relatives and peers. For example, at the end of holidays, before returning to school, respondents often visit family, friends and relatives to accumulate cash, trendy clothes, shoes, electronic gadgets and so forth.

Parts of the money young people accumulate are converted to sexual risk taking resources. That is, they are deployed to, or employed indirectly to acquire assets such as trendy clothes, cash gifts and electronic gadgets with which they *pimp-up* themselves to impress the opposite sex, secure sexual partners and maintain sexual relationships. In essence, males leverage resources to symbolically declare sexual intentions and/or caring attitude towards females. Females show appreciation for the cash/gifts received by allowing sexual intimacy and similarly utilise the money/gifts obtained from males for further self-presentations to enhance their beauty and attractiveness to males, which renews the sexual risk cycle. Thus, respondent's agencies leverage rules and deploy resources to secure heterosexual cooperation for sexual risk taking.

All respondents credit males with risky innovative sexual practices such as oral sex, which they consider risky. For example, males "are always trying new things (laughter)" (Interview 26 - Female). For males, introduction of innovative sexual risk practices such as oral sex is rationalized as an example of dominant culture and gendered expectations of male leadership, transferred to premarital sexual relations.

Consequently in response to the question, *which partner has more influence on what sexual activities they practice?* Male respondents answer:

“... the man. If you are a real man, you will be able to control your girls” (Interview Male - 6).

“As a man, you have to control things or...you know, your girl will not respect you” (Interview 31 - Male).

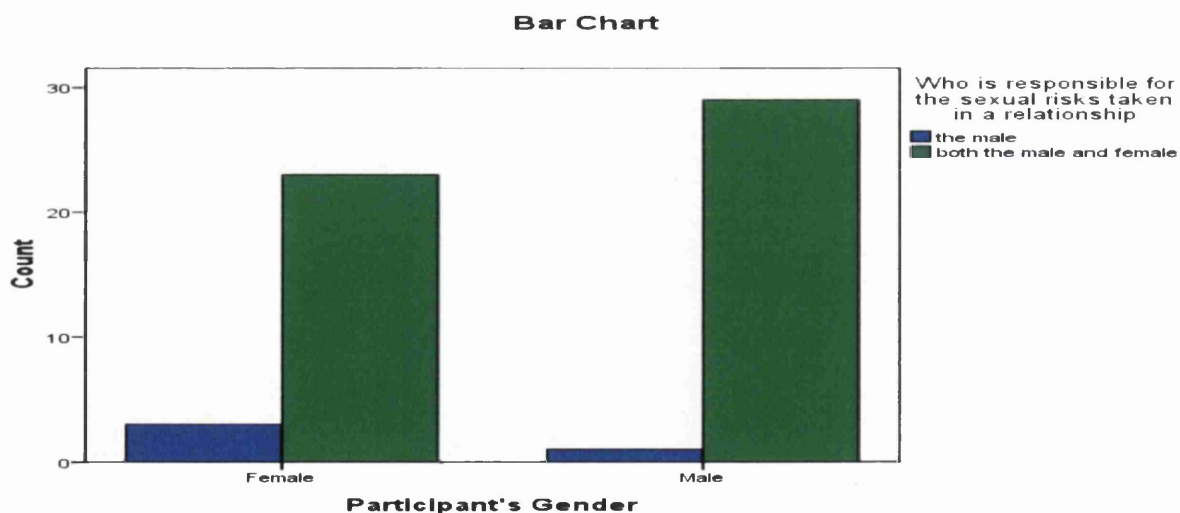
“The males again. They are always exploring!” (Interview 11 - Female).

“The male. But like I said, some girls are wild (laughter)” (Interview 11 - Female).

Regardless of the preceding, respondents agree that partners mutually share ultimate responsibilities for sexual risk practices within relationships. See Bar Chart 11. Specifically, 88.5% (23 of 26) female, and 96.7% (29 of 30) male respondents assert that partners in relationships are mutually responsible for actual sexual risk practices. In answer to the question, *is it accurate then to conclude that you are responsible for your sexual risk taking acts and consequences?* Female respondents (88.5% = 23 of 26) essentially observe:

“...like I said before, involving yourself in sexual activity is a personal thing. Even when friends encourage you or tend to influence you one way or another. Or even if your parents are not there for you, to give you advise and things like that, I think it still depends on you” (Interview 41 - Female).

“Of course. Look, I know most girls may lie and blame their boyfriends about their sexual... what do you call it, risks. But every girl going to visit her boyfriend knows what will happen when she gets there. So to me, if you don't want to have sex, do go” (Interview 46 - Female).



**Bar Chart 11, Who is responsible for sexual risks taken in a relationship?**



Respondents' knowledge of, and previous experience of sexual pleasure from unprotected sex, for example, increases the possibility of future reenactment of the same sexual acts that produced positive experiences. In this regard, female respondents observe:

“condoms are artificial barriers...and it is not the same thing using them compared to not using them..., it does not matter what anybody says... it is the spread of disease that is making their (*condom*) use popular” (Interview 21 – Female, words in italics mine).

“it (*condoms*) is not the same thing. Even I don't like it too. It's the same thing with most of my friends – but girls are not supposed to talk about such things (prolonged laughter) even though I do. It's my life” (Interview 46 – Female, word in italics mine).

The reality therefore, is that agency as an influence on sexual risk taking, cuts across gender barriers. Both male and female respondents play scripted, yet dynamic roles, which promotes and sustains sexual risk taking. Nonetheless, literature and lay opinion about male dominance and sexual exploitation of females are long standing, emotive and difficult to refute empirically and unequivocally. Female exploitation and vulnerability thesis are sustained today by the obvious normative double standards surrounding sexual discourse and practice (see Dankoski, et al., 1996; Robinson, et al., 1991). Regardless, I advance the argument, based on my findings, that there are significant grounds to assert female duplicity in sexual risk taking among my study respondents, who are not altogether ignorant, weak and vulnerable compared to male respondents, but are active participants in sexual risk taking.

#### **6.4.3. Sexual risk taking is oppositional practice.**

Inherent in respondents' sexual risk taking agencies is power, conceived by Foucault to be simultaneously creative and domineering (Foucault, 1980). This conception of power creates room for action as resistance, incidental and directed against influential institutions or structures, such as parents, school authorities and religious bodies. In essence, young people leverage sexual risk taking to challenge and resist their subordinate statuses, the authority of parents and educational administrators, in manners that challenge, aggravate and disrupt the normative requirement for conformity with prescribed norms, such as sexual abstinence. In other words, sexual risk taking is “oppositional practices of everyday life” (De Certeau, et al., 1980, p.5). In relation to parents, for example:

“...children tend to get strict orders from parents ... do this, don't do that, because most times, that is what parents do. And if you tell a child you must not sleep with a girl or do this or that, it goes the normal way ...okay, Daddy is not around, so I can do this” (Interview 36 – Male).

Female respondents make similar assessment of parents:

“...I have friends that grew up in families where the parents say it's wrong, it's wrong, it's wrong, everyday” (Interview 46 - Female).

Parental concerns about sexuality and their deep-seated inability to deal with it, in relation to their offspring and wards, induce respondents to take sexual risks, portrayed as intermittent, secret and mostly unsafe (Brooks-Gunn and Paikoff, 1997; Miller, et al., 1993). Parents and older relatives view premarital sex negatively, expecting their wards to abstain from sex. In addition, parents and older relatives disapprove of condom use and possession, because they suggest sexual activity and promiscuity<sup>210</sup>. A female respondent observes that her uncle, who is her role model “has a different idea about who I really am. You know the good-girl/bad-girl idea. He will faint in shock, if he knows I live with a man now. Most couples I know do so now - to some extent” (Interview 11 - Female). Thus, respondents' association of premarital sex with sexual risk taking embody the larger Nigerian society disputes and ethical divisions about concurrent abstinence-until-marriage and condom promotion, which are unrealistic and self-serving<sup>211</sup>.

Young people also seek, and take opportunities to leave home, increase personal freedom with associated reduced parental supervision. The emergent freedom is leveraged for sexual risk practices. For example, respondents claim their choice of universities away from home, as a calculated bid to secure freedom from parental rules on sexual practices. According to respondents, sexual risk taking is influenced by this freedom:

“to choose and act in any manner you desire, especially when you are a bit far from home...down here in school, there is a lot of independence... and you know what that means. But at home, you have to do ahh...it secretly, if at all”. (Interview 1 - Male).

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<sup>210</sup> This characterisation reflects the double standards automatically employed in Nigeria to evaluate and pronounce gendered judgement about sexual activities.

<sup>211</sup> There is concurrent room to promote condoms/contraceptives, which offers respondents more protection than non-use on one hand, and sexual abstinence promotion, which realistically offers 100% protection from unwanted biological outcomes such as pregnancies and STIs to young people who elect to abstain, on the other.

“...these people go out or come to a place like the university where everybody is doing it - you know- and they want to know what it feels like” (Interview 46 - Female).

Sexual risk taking as resistance, however, does not (yet?) overthrow the dominant abstinence-until-marriage sexual order that it challenges. Sexual risk taking inevitably occurs within the structural opportunities and constraints of structural institutions. In other words, young people are aware of the normative proscription of premarital sex, but contest its proscription by taking sexual risks. Furthermore, sexual risk taking rhetoric does not match actual sexual risk practice. Not all respondents who take sexual risks experience unwanted outcomes. Young people know this, even though current BBC initiatives do not embody these facts.

Consequently, the task of inculcating in young people sexual “values, beliefs, and codes of behaviour that will integrate them into institutional structures of the larger society” (Herman and Chomsky, 1988, p.1) by expert information channels<sup>212</sup> via BCC in Nigeria are challenged by contradictions, which renders respondents’ sexualities problematic, and places the burden of change on young people alone. Placing the burden of change on young people alone further alienates them and progressively drives them towards informal advisory networks<sup>213</sup> that are non-critical of expressed sexualities such as peers and the internet. For example, all respondents (56 of 56) will consult a friend first when confronted with any sexual challenge.

Expert sexual health communication and discourse also present young people in policy and practice as troublesome instead of troubled; as offensive, instead of the offended; and as at risk to themselves, others and dominant social values (Whyte, 2004; Smith, 2003; Smith, 2003; Goldson, 2000; 2002). Expert sexual health communication and discourse similarly evolve narrow interventions, which disregards the structural sources of sexualities and the benefits of sexual practice, in attempts to manage complex sexualities. For example, there are assumptions that young people are ignorant and

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<sup>212</sup> Expert channels of sexual health information are exemplified by, but not restricted to IEC and BCC information disseminated via the mass media, which in their classical forms “serve as a system for communicating messages and symbols to the general populace... and to inculcate individuals with the values, beliefs, and codes of behaviour that will integrate them into institutional structures of the larger society” (Herman and Chomsky, 1988, p.1).

<sup>213</sup> Informal advisory networks are drawn from local practitioners’ sexual risk taking experience, and usually details advantages, disadvantages and means of mitigating unwanted outcomes of sexual risk taking. Localised sources of sexual risk information can also be incorrect, which places respondents at further risk taking based on incorrect information.

giving them the right information alone will prevent sexual risk taking. Missing in this assumption are the complex structural and agential drivers of sexual risk taking. As a result, dominant discourse about premarital sex in Nigeria is driven by abstinence-until-marriage initiatives fostered by pre-existing cultural/religious sentiments, and funding support from PEPFAR<sup>214</sup>.

Abstinence-until-marriage stakeholders are now organised and called *The Nigeria Abstinence Coalition* (Okechukwu, 2004 and Monwuba, 2004 cited by Human Rights Watch, 2004). The sexual risks protective potential of abstinence-until-marriage is overrated. Marriage does not exclude anybody from contracting STIs. STI-free partners, who are virgins or practise mutual fidelity are the only ones absolutely protected from STIs. Recent findings in Africa that the majority of new infections occur within marriages support this deduction (Stanecki, 2002; see also Nakamura, et al., 2002 cited by Sinding, 2005 for similar deductions about Cambodia). Consequently, I propose that BCC initiatives continue their support for serial-monogamy, cast as “Be faithful” in ABC initiatives, because of inherent attributes such as commitment, sexual fidelity and faithfulness, currently prevalent among respondents to reduce unintended outcomes of premarital sex, such as STIs and unwanted pregnancies.

In addition, sensational mass media reports render young people’s sexualities problematic. Two broad and pervasive sensational media reporting styles have been identified as the dread<sup>215</sup>, and the vividness<sup>216</sup> communication factors supposed to sensitize and heighten targets fear of a given risk practice (Slovic, et al., 1981; Kahneman, et al., 1982; see Combs and Slovic, 1979; Thaler, 1983 also). Headlines in Nigerian newspapers include “HIV/AIDS scourge threat to humanity, says Obi” (Ujumadu, 2008, *Vanguard*) and “HIV/AIDS: US to Treat 12m Patients” (Nwezeh, 2005, *This Day*). Others are “Ogun records increase in HIV/AIDS cases” (Charles, 2006, *Guardian*) and “HIV/AIDS: Enugu leads prevalence rate in S/East” (Nkwopara,

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<sup>214</sup> U.S. President’s Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief.

<sup>215</sup> The dread factor, on one hand, influences the degree to which people perceive risk as pervasive, universal and life threatening. It is associated with externally induced sexual risk assessment of personal vulnerability to a given risk.

<sup>216</sup> The vividness of risk, on the other, presents risk as more likely to occur. Together, the dread and vividness of messages factors influence the acceptance and/or resistance to safe sexual health messages.

2008 *Vanguard*). In fact, Journalists Against AIDS analysis of media content conclude that reports about HIV/AIDS lack the prerequisite science and control information, (Journalists Against AIDS, 2003, p.7–15).

Indeed, BCC in concert with abstinence-until-marriage initiatives communicate behaviour and “moral principles that exalt themselves by degrading human nature” (Dewey, 1922, p.2). A significant part of the human nature is sexual. Because of BCC's degradation of premarital sex as promiscuous and always risk-prone, expert sexual health communications fails to reflect respondents' sexual experience. This paradox of different sexual meanings and purposes erodes expert social and moral authority, and render them less believable by young people. Accordingly, respondents feel obliged “to conceal their sexual activity from significant adults in their lives, including parents, teachers and health workers. The secrecy and shame associated with sexual stigma deny young people access to the resources they need in order to make, and implement, informed decisions about their sexuality and sexual health (Wood, and Aggleton, 2005, p.1). Young people's narratives indicate they find the contradiction between BCC messages and their sexual experience unhelpful. According to one:

“some people think the church should preach only abstinence and not promote condom use. But it's obvious, that many in church that have fun will not be bold enough to face their pastor and say I had fun yesterday twice and all that. But rather they will say, we know our ways are crooked and God should help us to make it straight and all that” (Interview 1 - male).

“... everyday you go to church and they say it's wrong, it's wrong – and you are instilled with that mentality ... That is why most of these born-again do it secretly especially with each other or outsiders” (Interview 46 - Female).

Sensational media reports and abstinence-until-marriage initiatives have another unintended consequence. Their redundancy and unrealistic expectations (that young people will abstain from sex) desensitise young people. In addition, young people know from experience that STIs do not necessarily follow every (un)protected premarital sexual act, even though they are scared of contracting HIV/AIDS:

“All you hear is don't do it, don't do it because of AIDS! Meanwhile, everybody is doing it! So, I think it's about knowing your way and associating with correct people and you will be all right (Interview 51 - Male).

“everybody does it. But most people are not in trouble ... maybe because they are in a committed relationship where the partners are faithful” (Interview 11 - Female).

In addition, respondents observe that although NACA is making awareness progress, expert sexual health initiatives are limited by the normative and inspirational status of premarital sex. For example:

“...I wouldn't say all those messages have not been fruitful. They have been fruitful... I believe ... it stems from the point of deprivation. Some people will say you had fun, you were a rolling stone as young man. Why are you now sermonising to me that I should abstain from sex and all that, when it's my turn... abstinence is not realistic ... and ... let's face it, not everybody that takes bad action experiences negative repercussions?” (Interview 1 - Male). Alternatively that,

“all you hear is that sex is bad, sex is bad...but is that true? (laughter). You are a human being, can you say it is bad? Meanwhile everybody is doing it and don't have AIDS. Mind you, everybody knows you can get STI, STD, and AIDS from sex if you are not careful ... But that is not enough. So I think the messages are good, but they are not ...ehmn...real, practical. Who can abstain from sex these days? Even those born-again that claim they don't, do it, do it in secret. That is why everybody pretends nowadays” (Interview 2 - Female).

From the preceding narratives, it is evident that respondents' premarital sexual experience is neither dangerous nor life threatening. In fact, it is pleasurable, conferring social, emotional and other benefits to practitioners. Actually, respondents have become adept at managing unintended consequences of sexual risk taking, except HIV/AIDS. These salient and often understated facts are absent in expert HIV/AIDS communications in Nigeria. Moreover, despite sensational reports, and the pervasiveness of sexual risks, no respondents admit having and/or knowing anyone who has HIV or has died of HIV. On the contrary, nearly half underwent externally induced/voluntary<sup>217</sup> HIV status testing (42.8% = 24 of 56) and tested negative in the immediate period before the study.

#### **6.4.4 Respondents will not use condoms consistently**

Young people's agencies are evidenced by irregular condom/contraceptive use. Ignorance and affordability issues are not the reasons for irregular condom/contraceptive use. Respondents attest to the availability and relative

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<sup>217</sup> HIV testing is a good example of the structuration process of action. External industries (structures) demand it before accepting students (agents) for Industrial Attachment (IT) (intended outcome). Respondents have the option (with knowledge) of complying, looking for IT opportunities elsewhere, or skipping IT altogether (agency or elective action). Each option has advantages and disadvantages that respondents are aware of before they make a choice.

affordability of male condoms<sup>218</sup>. For example, “what is not available – condoms? They are everywhere. It is even cheaper than Coca-Cola or Pepsi. Ask for them in any chemist, you will find them” (Interview 41 - Female). Female condoms are however, scarce and expensive. According to a female respondent, “I have seen it like in a shop only once. I think it’s like scarce and really expensive ...and a girl like me cannot afford to buy it every time I want to” (Interview 46 - Female). The service providers interviewed corroborate young people’s assertions that male condoms are available, affordable and frequently purchased, in contrast with female condoms.

Respondents are aware that consistent condom/contraceptive use can prevent pregnancy and STIs to a significant extent. For example, “condoms are for protection against disease that you can get from sleeping around” (Interview 46 - Female). Alternatively, “not using a condom is very risky because ... you can never know where the dreaded virus can come from” (Interview 6- Male). Young people, despite knowledge of relative condom efficacies<sup>219</sup> and capacities to buy condoms do not use condoms consistently (73.2% = 41 of 56). Others, 26.8% (15 of 56), claim they do. Inconsistent condom use is a product of complex personal, cultural and environmental factors, which I further break down into eight sub-variables (see Browne and Minichiello, 1994, also). First, condoms are said to interfere with sexual pleasure (see chapter 5, especially sub-section 5.16 for discussion).

Secondly, insistence on condom use signals distrust of a sexual partner (see Gupta, 2000; Mac-Phail and Campbell, 2000; Obbo, 1993 a&b; 1995, 1997; 1999), unless there is a shared concern about unwanted pregnancy. (3) Decisions about condom use are contextual, fluid, instantaneous and temporary, for males especially. For example, in answer to the question, *as a boy, should you refuse the opportunity to have several sexual partners, and why?* Answers range from, “the wise thing to do is to refuse. That

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<sup>218</sup> Nonetheless, literature about condom availability in Nigeria is contradictory. For example, a Deliver 2002 survey found that condoms were out of stock in 75% of health service facilities surveyed (John Snow International/Deliver, 2004, cited by Human Rights Watch). A DFID study of availability report that, “availability of most commodities is above 75% at all levels (Druce, and Oduwole, 2005, p.5). Based on the author’s experience of supply chain challenges in Nigeria, a 50% availability level, mostly in urban areas, is proposed. The implication of the foregoing is that data on condom availability, sales and reported use ought to applied with caution (see Plautz, and Meekers, 2007; Keating, et al., 2006; Eloundou-Enyegue, et al., 2005; Price, 2001). Based on respondents’ narratives, condom purchase does not equate self-reported use.

<sup>219</sup> Compared to unprotected sex.

is the wise thing to do... the only problem about that spot is that it is very inviting (laughter) (Interview 1 - Male) to:

“...well, you are guy now. What do you do when you get an opportunity and there is no condom? Walk away? No! (Laughter). I am telling you, it is not easy to walk away from free sex (laughter). When you tell some girls, I don’t have condoms, wait and let me go and buy from the chemist around the corner. By the time you come back, they are gone or no longer in the mood. Some will even tell you it is because you don’t trust them that you want to use condoms... when it is really because you can’t really trust each other” (Interview 6 - Male).

Female respondents are more circumspect about casual sex. All claim they will refuse because:

“it is not right morally and health wise” (Interview 21 - Female).

“that’s not the way girls are basically. Girls like monogamy. Besides, if a girl wants to be respected, she should never do that. At least she should not be caught doing that. She will be called names like ashawo, easy, loose etc (Interview 11 - Female).

The implication of the above is that what young people do (in terms of sexual activities) usually contradicts what they say. In addition, while female respondents (except one) claim that condom use is unnecessary if you “are in a committed relationship and trust each other” (Interview 46 -Female), male respondents blame females for irregular and low condom use:

“of course, girls are the problem. Once you root out the condom, their face will change. They think you use it because they are not faithful and untrustworthy... meanwhile it is for protection” (Interview 9 - Male).

“Ehmn...well... it’s about trust. You cannot plan a future with someone you don’t trust. And when you trust a girl and you are already having sex, what is the need of a condom? Except when she is not safe of course... And if a guy insists on using a condom with girl he is already having sex with, she will accuse you of not trusting her and start crying and all that... Many people don’t like condoms ... Most of time you find guys use condoms when they have new girls, extras, bushmeat<sup>220</sup> or playing away match (laughter)” (Interview 36 - Male).

The reason for inconsistent condom use is that male respondents are unwilling to defer sexual gratification, when condoms are not available, which facilitates sexual risk taking. Male respondents account for their inability to defer sexual gratification, when condoms are not available. According to one:

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<sup>220</sup> Bushmeat is a code word for non-university girls that male university students date. According to young people’s university sub-culture, dating Bushmeat openly is not recommended. It diminishes the male university students peer status. It is interpreted as an inability and/or inadequacy to date female university students.



“you can get carried away...sex is very powerful (laughter)”  
(Interview 1 - Male).

“condoms may not be available when you need it most and it is difficult to just say I am not doing it because there is no condom”  
(Interview 36 - Male).

The preceding underscores male weakness when confronted with sexual opportunities. It also highlights, theoretically at least, potential female capacities to control the sexual act, and by extension, outcomes. These findings could be leveraged to challenge dominant sexual hierarchies that privilege males. More telling is a narrative about variable agencies and the unprotected sex process. A male respondent recalls:

“...the method that I used was not very, very safe. Because it was at the insistence of my partner actually. I requested for a condom but the wave of her desire was just too high that ... and the condom was not within reach. Although I tried withdrawal method which is very, very unreliable. Outside the fact that I had a high chance of contracting the HIV virus and other STIs, two, there is also the risk of unwanted pregnancy (Interview 1 - Male).

The fifth reason is that condom use progressively decreases the longer the sexual relationships lasts or when you are in-love (see Harrison, et al., 2001; Foreman, 2003; Stephenson, et al., 1993 for similar findings). Accordingly, a female respondent rhetorically asks:

“when in-love or a committed relationship, why do you need a condom? Unless someone is playing around” (Interview 2 - Female).

“we are in a committed relationship and trust each other. We don’t need a condom for that (*sex*)” (Interview 46 – Female, words in italics, mine).

Males agree with the preceding female assessment of condom use observing, “if you really trust a girl and she is neat and decent, I don’t think a condom should come into that relationship. More often than not, girls believe boys who insist on condom use distrust them” (Interview 16 - Male). Consequently, irregular condom use therefore connotes emotional commitment and mutual trust among partners in heterosexual relationships, essential for sexual relationship maintenance. Condom use in this context is supplementary and calculated to achieve the practical objective of pregnancy prevention, not necessarily STI control. For example, in answer to the question *why do you use condoms and contraceptives* in a committed relationship, answers range from:

“we use it (*condoms & contraceptives*) when it is not safe to have sex without it - pregnancy wise” (Interview 11 - Female) to “I use the natural birth control method and sometimes condoms when I know I am not safe” (Interview 46 – Female, words in italics are mine).

Otherwise, condoms are significantly (100% = 56 respondents) indicated for sexual relations with an untrustworthy partner. I argued therefore, that condom use among respondents demonstrates both risk perception (to prevent pregnancy), risk avoidance (condom use with untrustworthy partners) and positive action to boost relationships (affirm love and commitment) and create avenues for diffused responsibility for sexual risk taking. For example, “I did all I could, so it’s not my fault”. (6) Despite the vigorous attempts by the ABC initiatives to normalise condom use, most respondents will not have condoms on their persons regularly, despite the likelihood that sex will occur. This is especially the case among couples in new relationships. However, many young men have condoms hidden away, which they pretend to find and introduce. Female cooperation is crucial because condom introduction and use:

“is not that easy or simple. It depends on the boy and girl, and the age of the relationship. In new relationships, people usually use condoms more ... I think. But the more serious and stable the relationship, people use condoms less. I think it’s all about trust. Yes – trust. If you trust your partner, what do you need a condom for? (Interview 11 - Female).

Regardless, regular possession of condoms is associated with immorality and promiscuity. In addition, among couples in a more stable relationship, regular condom possession denotes the carrier pre-planned sexual intercourse, which preferably and normatively should occur spontaneously. Respondents work hard at not creating impressions of sexual promiscuity. For example, young males worry about the sexual facade created for parents and pastors, which are diminished by chance discovery of condoms on young people. Accordingly, if you have:

“a condom in wallet? Say a pastor or a younger one asks you for change or something and the thing drops as you open your wallet, what will they think. Of course you pastor will read a lot of meaning into it, even your Dad too. They will think this guy is promiscuous” (Interview 1 - Male).

“this is Nigeria, no parent, however liberal, will like finding condoms in your room or pocket. It sends the wrong message. Mind you, they know you do it (laughter)” (Interview 3 - Male).

Similarly, female respondents’ social reputation can be severely diminished by possession of condoms, introducing condoms and/or insistence on condoms use. This behaviour is normatively proscribed, and associated with sexual promiscuity and expected only from prostitutes. A young female explains:

“I don’t think it is the normal thing to do. Image is everything in Nigeria. A girl will be thought of as loose or *ashawo* if someone finds a condom in her purse. All you need to do is tell your man you can’t do it without a condom and he will run to buy one. It’s that easy, (laughter) so why bother” (Interview 46 - Female).

“it is not nice for a girl to do that (*have condoms*), maybe the boys. But if I have a boyfriend who always has a condom in his pocket, I will be very careful being alone with him. It’s as simple as that (Interview 41 - Female).

All male respondents corroborate female’s assessment of condom possession and use negotiation in relationships. According to one, “...in our culture, we tend to think girls who carry condoms are promiscuous” (Interview 16 - Male). As a result, young people will not insist on condom use or declare they have one to their sexual partner very easily. These findings are consistent with literature suggestive that having condoms equates with sexual promiscuity for women (see Smith, 2004; Leclerc-Madlala, 2003; Kaufman and Stavrou, 2002; Varga, 2001; Wojcicki and Malala, 2001; Campbell, 2000; Ankomah, 1998; Berglund, et al., 1997). Possession of condoms is socially enhancing for males among peers (see Asencio, 2002; Bedimo, et al., 1998; Holland, et al., 1998; Giddens, 1992), and not among significant adults in their lives.

The seventh reason for inconsistent condom use is that not all young people know how to use condoms correctly, despite condoms packages coming “with manuals, indicating how to use them” (Interview 16 - Male). The lack of skills to correctly use condoms may be widespread because 36.6% (11 of 30 males) attest to it. According to narratives, “most guys ...they will tell you they can’t use condoms or they don’t know how to use them. So they just take sexual risks” (laughter)” (Interview 6 - Male). Another suggests that, “I think some people don’t know how to use them and remove them during the fun. Stuff like that...” (Interview 1 - Male). The implication of incorrect use of condoms are that condoms “will burst or break or all that. So I don’t think there is any sexual activity that is not risky” (Interview 36 - Male).

Female respondents’ have negative attitudes and misinformation about contraceptives such as pills, IUD and so on. All female respondents, except one, are convinced that contraceptives are detrimental to long-term aspirations to become mothers. In answer to the question *how confident are you that you would be able to use contraceptives consistently if you do not desire to get disease and/or pregnant*, narratives range from:

“never, those things (*contraceptives*) are not good. They spoil your womb” (Interview 49 - Female) to “not very confident. Besides, I don’t use modern contraceptives. They can affect your reproductive system negatively... I mean, they stop you from becoming pregnant when you finally want to” (Interview 46 – Female, words in italics are mine).

Low contraceptive usage due to fear of negative future interference with fertility and health has been reported in numerous studies in Nigeria (see Amazigo, et al., 1997; Abdool-Karim, et al., 1992; Makinwa-Adebusoye, 1992), and indeed in most developing countries. A respondent inaccurately<sup>221</sup> explains female unwillingness to use contraceptives thus:

“... they are mostly hormones and have long term adverse effects like ovarian cyst or cancer. The most common one here is postinor; it’s a kind of morning after pill. It is not really a daily contraceptive pill – those ones are scarce and expensive anyway” (Interview 46 - Female).

## **6.5 Outcome of sexual risk taking (intended and unintended)**

Respondents’ narratives demonstrate they engage in unprotected premarital sex for complex and interwoven purposes: for sexual gratification, for material reward or social exchange, for recreation, to secure marriage partners, for satisfaction of curiosity, to gain love, affection and connectedness, to satisfy partners sexual demands, to confirm personal desirability, to test fertility status, and to gain peer acceptance and popularity (see Plummer, 2003, for similar detail). Respondents also recognise that unprotected sex can produce undesirable outcomes such as pregnancy and STIs, and that fear of such outcomes has led to a rise in serial monogamy. The most widely narrated of these outcomes are discussed below.

### **6.5.1 Intended outcome of sexual risk taking - sexual gratification**

The most intuitive and least discussed reason for sexual risk taking is the derivation of sexual gratification, through sensations. It is also a difficult concept to investigate because respondents and investigators assume that the meaning and value of sexual

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<sup>221</sup> The World Health Organization explains that attitudes and worldviews about contraceptives, such as those that my respondents “are based on scientific studies of contraceptive products that are no longer in wide use, on long-standing theoretical concerns that have never been substantiated, or on the personal preference or bias of service providers. These outdated policies or practices often result in limitations to both the quality of, and the access to, family planning services for clients... While some concerns have been expressed regarding the use of certain contraceptive methods in adolescents (e.g., the use of progestogen-only injectables by those below 18 years), these concerns must be balanced against the advantages of avoiding pregnancy... increased risk for STIs, including HIV. Proper education and counselling both before and at the time of method selection can help adolescents address their specific problems and make informed and voluntary decisions. Every effort should be made to prevent service and method costs from limiting the options available (WHO, 2004b, p.3 -15).

pleasure or sensations are self-explanatory, and universal. In addition, it is likely that religion and morality exert significant influence on sexuality discourse, especially those relating to sexual pleasure in Nigeria despite the remarkable levels of sexual emancipation demonstrated by respondents. As a result, it is not surprising that respondents are remarkably reticent<sup>222</sup> about discussing sexual pleasure. Young Nigerian university students' reticence at discussing sexual pleasure, perhaps, accounts for respondent's delivery of narratives mostly in third person formats and utilisation of innuendoes to describe the sex and the sexual act. For example, *doing it, having fun and/or or everybody does it*.

Respondents also imply/invoke their assumed shared sexual risk experience with the researcher to explain/justify sensual sexual pleasure. For example, in response to the question, *what is sexual pleasure? Is it different for boys and girl?* Respondents gave answers such as:

“bros, we all know what pleasure means...after all, a headmaster was once a pupil” (long laughter) ... pleasure, pleasure...you can't define sexual pleasure, but you know it when you feel it (Interview 51 - Male).

Female respondents' answers were similar to males:

“(Laughter)...it is not easy to define. It's one of those things like happiness” (Interview 41 - Female).Alternatively,

“I don't know o! (Laughter)” (Interview 21 - Female).

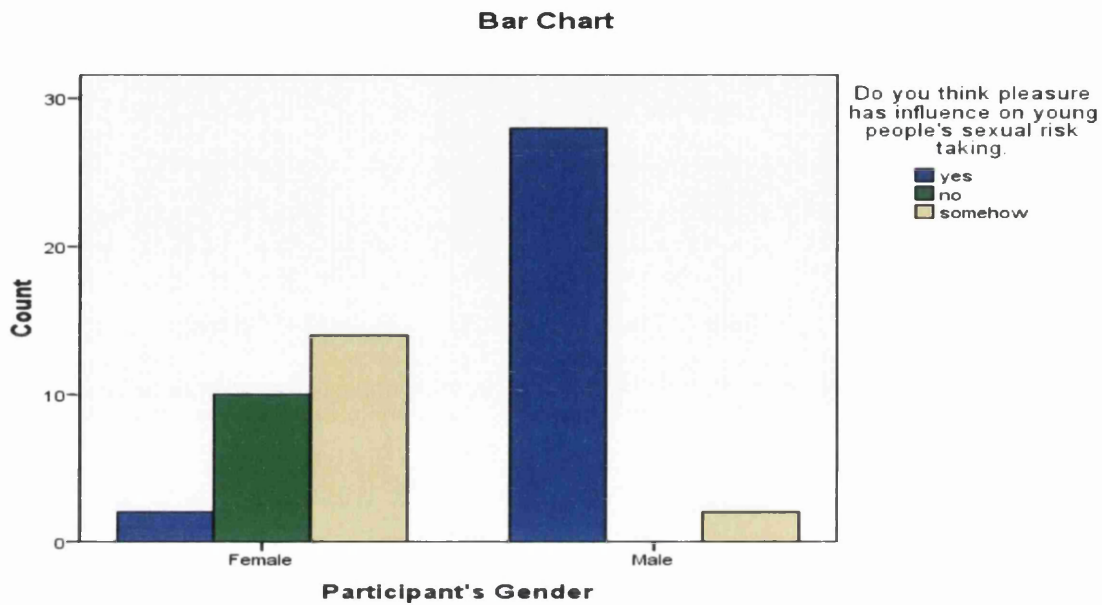
Nonetheless, when asked, *as a girl do you expect to give and receive sexual pleasure in relationships?* The same female respondent was emphatic, “yes now! What is worth doing is worth doing well (laughter)” (Interview 21 - Female). As a result, it seem unequivocal that the knowledge of, and/or experience of sensual sexual gratification remain an important influence on young people's sexual risk taking. Respondents' accounts, nonetheless, suggest that *sensual* sexual gratification, differentiated from just having sex, is rarely the only benefit of sexual risk taking. Instead, sensual sexual gratification combines with other anticipated and desirable outcomes in promoting sexual risk taking. For example:

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<sup>222</sup> This reticence could be due to three issues. The first is that they may be embarrassed about describing sexual pleasure. The second is that they may be influenced by the prevailing negative moral climate against premarital sex in Nigeria, and the third is that they may be uncomfortable describing sexual pleasure to a total stranger (the researcher).

“Well, I think it depends on the individuals. For girls sex is more than just pleasure... maybe for boys, because they will sleep with anybody given the chance” (Interview 21 - Female).

“[I]t depends on the people. Sometimes it’s for pleasure, money, love and so on. But for girls, I think it’s usually for love or out of pressure from guys they are dating. You know women, they are easily swayed and convinced. These guys they convince them that they love them. So, and they believe... or let’s say they want to be convinced” (Interview 41- Female).



**Bar Chart 8, Do you think pleasure has influence on young people's sexual risk taking?**

The preceding narratives indicate complex benefits: satisfying sexual needs, maintaining a relationship, love and affection, material gain, satisfaction of promiscuity. Young people’s narratives also dispute prevailing assumption in literature that mostly males seek sexual sensations (see Izugbara, 2004; Zuckerman, 1983 a&b; Caldwell et al., 1989; Wood, et al., 1998; Ankomah, 1998). They also challenge linear conceptualisations of sexual risk taking. Instead, they invite subjective and contextual considerations of influences on subjects. Respondent’s accounts also suggest inordinate male sensual sensation seeking. More males (93.2% = 28 of 30) than females (7.7% = 2 of 26) respondents agree (answered yes), that sexual risk taking is all about sexual pleasure. See Bar chart 8. Male respondents’ narratives corroborate this claim:

“for the women, it (*sex*) is an emotional thing, a heart thing. But for guys it is mostly physical. They are just interested in having sex. The women are interested in relationships, something wholesome” (Interview 16 – Male, word in italics is mine).

“it’s all about pleasure and satisfaction...and ego like I said. Boys, in the normal sense, we pretend a lot, we pretend to love and ... because

if you don't show love, they won't let you do what you want to do (laughter). So you have to show love...eh... so I don't think most guys do it for love" (Interview 36 - Male).

BCC interventions can no longer ignore or minimise sexual pleasure and its role on risk taking. Sexual health interventions must focus on balancing perceived benefits of sensual sexual pleasure alongside associated risks inherent in sexual activities leading to it.

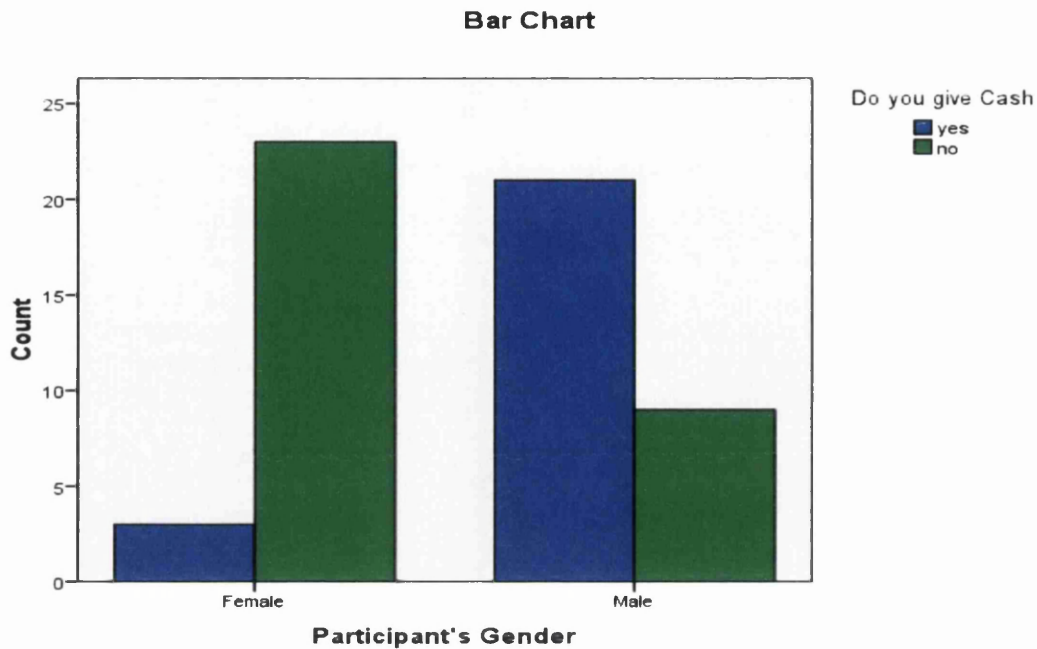
#### **6.5.2. Intended outcome of sexual risk taking - material reward**

Mostly female respondents derive material reward from sexual risk taking. In relation to the preceding, mostly males, (70% = 21 of 30 compared with females, 11.5% = 3 of 26), give cash gifts to female partners, prior to, and subsequently after premarital sex (see Bar Chart 12). What female respondents do with male cash/gifts challenges the notion of poverty as the principal influence on respondents' sexual risk taking. Female respondents do not use the cash gifts received from males for daily survival needs. Instead, the cash/gifts are employed to acquire materials for perennial sexual self-presentation, such as hair weaving, purchase of body-hugging clothes etc., which are at best, psychographic in nature. These application of male cash/gifts to physical beauty enhancement projects inevitably predisposes female respondents to further male attention, toasting, and ultimately, sexual risk taking. This finding may be skewed because majority of respondents could be considered as coming from middle-class socio-economic background.

The utilisation of male cash/gifts to emphasise physical looks and to acquire trendy lifestyles, may explain why female respondents contend that cash gifts demonstrate male love, affection and caring attitudes towards them. Translated this means it is the duty of male suitors and boyfriends to enable their girlfriends quest for enhanced physical sexual attributes, in line with prevailing peer trends. According to two male respondents:

"some boys want their girlfriends to look one way, so they are ready to spend anything to achieve that. So, yes, gifts and money giving and receiving is a part and parcel of relationships today (Interview 16 - Male).

"these girls who are constantly demanding money for phone-credit, cosmetics, hair-making and all that (laughter). It's like once you tell them you like them and they agree, they transfer all their problems to you... That is why most guys are always hustling and sometimes commit crime to meet-up (Interview 6 - Male).



**Bar Chart 12, Do you give cash?**

Although the demographics of the current study sample and female use of male cash/gifts explains why respondents do not consider poverty influential on their sexual risk taking, the opposite may be true for poorer, out-of-school young people. Young people, who are poorer, unemployed and so on, may well take sexual risks for survival purposes. This, once again, invites subjective and contextual considerations of influences on sexual risk taking devoid of sweeping generalisations.

**6.5.3 Unintended outcome of sexual risk taking – STIs**

Young people’s conception of sexual risk taking (see section 1.2) demonstrate awareness of undesirable outcomes such STIs and unwanted pregnancies. For example, indulging in sexual risk taking increases the “chance you will get infected with STI, and of course the HIV thing” (Interview 16 - Male) or that “there are lots of diseases around now. And if you are not protected by a condom, you can fall victim” (Interview 21 - Female). A female respondent eloquently expresses the complex potential outcomes of sexual risk taking:

“okay, the girl may get disease and spread it to all her partners. She may get pregnant and not know who the father is. If word spreads that she is ‘easy’, then her rep’ is ruined. Even girls will gossip about her...” (Interview 11 -Female).



Consequently, respondents use condoms in casual sex encounters, but not in more stable relationships where they need to affirm trust and commitment (see Goldberg and Fischhoff, 2000; Horvath and Zuckerman, 1993; Thorton, et al., 2002 for similar findings). Other respondents attempt to mitigate the risk of diseases by entering and maintaining monogamous relationships built on trust, mutual self-disclosures and sexual fidelity. Female respondents worry more about:

“pregnancy! That one is immediate. You see the result, maybe in 2-3 months. You worry about what people will think and say about you. But disease takes a little longer to show and it is not visible to the public. Not that I want to get disease, but that’s the way most girls view this thing” (Interview 46 - Female).

During the study, no respondent admitted having STIs even though they knowledgeably cited examples of STIs, such as gonorrhoea, syphilis, chlamydia, herpes etc. Respondents further claim that while these STIs could be treated with antibiotics, HIV/AIDS cannot. In addition, young people interviewed are aware that STIs, such as gonorrhoea, manifest faster in males than females. Accordingly, respondents observe:

“well, gonorrhoea and syphilis, people dread them but believe they can be cured. And ehmn... you know girls, they are not scared about gonorrhoea in the sense that they believe they can know boys who have gonorrhoea. But a girl that have gonorrhoea you cannot know easily” (Interview 6 - Male).

“for STDs, some are treatable if you detect it early. You see some of these diseases manifest faster in males than females. Most times girls don’t even know they have them until it gets complicated and more difficult to treat” (Interview 21 - Female).

Partly based on their convictions they can manage majority of STIs associated with premarital sex, young Nigerian university students interviewed engage in unprotected premarital sex for individuated/collective benefits.

#### **6.5.4 Unintended outcome of sexual risk taking- unwanted pregnancy**

Respondents also know that sexual risk taking could culminate in unwanted pregnancies. Conversely, they are aware that consistent condom use reduces sexual risk outcomes and that sexual abstinence eliminates the risks of STIs and unwanted pregnancies. In contradiction of these sexual knowledge states, respondents take sexual risks by not abstaining from sex or using condoms consistently. For example, a female respondent is of the opinion that “basically, they (*young people*) should avoid sex, if they can’t, then they must use condoms all the time. But for us it is faithfulness and natural birth control (Interview 46 – Female, words in italics, mine).

No respondent was certain he/she would use contraceptives consistently in the near future because “in my relationship, we are faithful to each other and that has worked well so far in preventing STD and HIV. But pregnancy, I don’t know. I am sure we will deal with it if it arises” (Interview 11 -Female). Apparently, the individualized and/or mutual benefits respondents derive from sexual risk taking, combined with careful partner selection, mutual fidelity, periodic sexual abstinence/condom use when females they think they are fertile, and availability of morning-after pills/illegal abortions reinforce respondents’ beliefs in personal/mutual control of STIs and unwanted pregnancies. Respondents are keenly aware that HIV/AIDS defeat most sexual risk precautions.

As a result, a male respondent observes, “most guys if they get a girl pregnant, they believe in abortion. That is normally not an issue” (Interview 16 - Male). Girls made similar comments about the ease of obtaining abortion to remove unwanted pregnancies. In their words I, “use condoms when I am unsafe, contraceptives and abortion if all else fails. I cannot get pregnant before marriage. My parents will kill me (laughter)” (Interview 11 - Female). More explicitly, a female respondent observes that although abortion is illegal in Nigeria:

“that doesn’t stop girls in trouble. Besides, it can be done in minutes now and it’s affordable. Some of all these chemist, pharmacist and clinics do it. When did you leave Nigeria, you must know these things!” (Interview 46 - Female).

As a result, condom use by male respondents in committed relationships is primarily for STI prevention, and secondarily, for pregnancy prevention. In response to the question about which outcomes are most worrying:

“diseases like STD and HIV/AIDS. Pregnancy, well, I try to monitor that with my girl. But for bush-meat, I always condomise” (Interview 6 - Male)

“diseases of course, unless you are blindly in-love” (Interview 16 - Male).

For female respondents on the other hand, pregnancy prevention is significantly more important. One can infer that the main reason females negotiate condom use is to prevent unwanted pregnancies, which is consistent with existing literature (see Cragg, et

al., 1993; Marston, 2004). According to female respondents, pregnancy prevention is imperative because:

“it (*pregnancy*) is very visible you know (laughter) (Interview 46 - Female).

Another surmise that,

“boys have to worry about only getting disease. For girls, it is disease; pregnancy; ruined reputation; family rejection and an uncertain future. Yes - it is worse for a careless girl than boys” (Interview 11 – Female, word in italics is mine).

### **6.5.5 Unintended outcome – HIV/AIDS**

Although most respondents<sup>223</sup> claim they have one sexual partner (serial monogamy), at the time of interview, male respondents claim that HIV/AIDS is the main reason they do not have more sexual partners. This is because, unlike females, male respondents were uncertain they would refuse spontaneous casual sex opportunities if they arise. Typical male commentary about casual sex indicates ambivalence:

“the wise thing to do is to refuse. That is the wise thing to do... the only problem about that spot is that it is very inviting (laughter). You have to be very, very careful. Because you are dining with the devil. And if you want to dine with the devil, I believe any meal that is on the table may be poisoned (laughter). It’s true. So you understand” (Interview 1 - Male). Or that,

“...refuse to have sex? (Laughter) Me? I always want to have sex (laughter), so I am not confident. I will be lying if I say that I will be able to refuse sex... even if I don’t like the girl, (another long burst of laughter) (Interview 6 - Male).

Nevertheless, respondents’ narratives support the deduction that serial monogamy is emerging as the dominant form of heterosexual relationships among respondents. For example, 98.2% (55 of 56) indicate they have only one sexual partner at the time of interview. The increasing preference for serial monogamy is the result of HIV/AIDS communications success, especially ABC. In addition, it is a product of prevailing popular culture romantic love ethos, which saturates local and international media consumed by respondents. Respondents’ emphasis of serial monogamy in addition, conforms with sub-cultural premarital sexuality norms that prescribe young people keep one sexual partner at any one time and avoid social damage to reputations (see Stephenson, et al., 1993; Wight, 1994; Lear, 1995). Serial monogamy is associated with romance, faithfulness, commitment and sexual passion in relationships. Commitment:

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<sup>223</sup> Only one male respondent claim he has more than one sexual partner. According to him, “I currently have more than four of them on the burner, you know” (Interview 51 - Male).

“matters very much to girls, I think. For me, for example, I date one boy at a time. I expect him to do the same. No promiscuity and all that. That is why I am confident enough to have sex without condom. If I ever think he is unfaithful, that is it, the end of the relationship and I will get another person I can trust” (Interview 46 - Female).

These subjective considerations, for example, protection from STIs via serial monogamy, the need for romance, the ready availability of contraceptives, sensation seeking, sexual exchange and so forth combine to replace the erstwhile “external criteria” for relationship formation and maintenance such as parental wishes and procreation (Giddens 1991, p.6). Serial monogamy is characterised by mutual self-disclosures, declarations of love, continuous monitoring of the self and other (Giddens, 1991, p.76), unprotected and novel sexually risky practices.

In essence, serial monogamy promotes heterosexual relationships as sites for “self-exploration and moral construction” (Giddens, 1992, p.144), creating for respondents psychological and ontological security. Even though serial monogamy, and associated faithfulness, commitment and trust are vehicles for mitigating sexual risks, respondents in such relationships are nonetheless, more likely than others<sup>224</sup> to engage in unprotected sex and more frequently, leveraging it to (re)affirm their relationships. Young people interviewed imply that the associated trust and commitment in serial monogamies ought to minimise their sexual risk exposures because partners supposedly practice mutual fidelity. In response to the question, *is it okay to have sex without condoms if a girl is in a committed relationship?* Respondents’ narratives include:

“well, I don’t know about right. But that’s what happens. Condoms are for protection against disease that you can get from sleeping around, right? So, if you and your boyfriend are not sleeping around, what do you need a condom for? Pregnancy is no longer a big deal – you can plan for it or against it” (Interview 46 - Female).  
Alternatively,

“...commitment matters a lot o! Next to condomization, it is the only way to avoid the dreaded disease...At least I think...so. But when you trust a girl, you will do everything with her without condoms, that is sexual risks” (Interview 6 - Male).

## **6.6 Conclusion – young people, society and the persistence of sexual risk taking**

In the preceding analysis, I argue that young people are sexualised by their context, personal and peer conducts. These sexualisation structures are interrelated, re-

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<sup>224</sup> Young people who abstain from sex or regularly use condoms/contraceptives.

constitutive and insidious. I also indicate that apart from its intended collective/individuated benefits, sexual risk taking occasionally produces unintended outcomes, such as STIs and/or unwanted pregnancies. Both the (un)intended outcome, via their associated benefits to young people and costs to society, galvanise peer and public discourse about manifest sexualities. While peer discourse largely recommends premarital sex, a form of sexual risk taking, public discourse in Nigeria essentially condemns it as immoral and deploys sexual health interventions to promote sexual abstinence, or mitigate risks, at least.

The foregoing illustrates the linkages between structural influences,<sup>225</sup> young people's sexual conducts, its outcome and role of peer/public discourse in propagating sexual risk taking further (see diagram 3). Furthermore, even though influential sexualisation structures, pre-date respondents interviewed, the structures, nevertheless, "exists in, and through the activities of human agents" (Giddens, 1989, p.256), in a manner that simultaneously constrains and enables each generation to creative action and rationalisations. Similarly, all pre-existing and emergent institutions grapple with existing and emerging sexual agencies of young people. This is how sexual risk taking is inadvertently normalised in society.

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<sup>225</sup> Again structure in structurationist terms is a duality, comprising institutions and agency. Structural institutions such as the family and mass media manifest themselves to young people as enabling and constraining sexuality rules and resources.



**Diagram 3. Young people, society and the persistence of sexual risk taking**

Normalisation of action, we are told by Giddens, is imperative for “continuity of the personality of the agent ... and to the institutions of society” (Giddens, 1984, p.60). This is why young people’s sexual risk taking persists in Nigeria. Acknowledged by adults or not, normalisation entails the realisation that sexual risk taking is acceptable for young people, cannot be eradicated, but can be contained. This is because the subject matter of sex is pervasive, to the extent that elective neutrality from sexual practice for respondents interviewed is impossible, because sexuality:

“proceeds from a man; then it sets up reactions in the surroundings. Others approve, disapprove, protest, encourage, share, and resist. Even letting a man alone is a definite response. Envy, admiration, and imitation are complicities. Neutrality is non-existence. Conduct is always shared...it is social whether bad or good” (Dewey, 1922, p.16-17).

Regardless of the above, BCC stakeholders, such as NACA and the mass media in Nigeria, adopt a problem behaviour orientation and stereotyping of young people’s sexualities to evolve linear health interventions. The same interventions publicise sexual

risk taking, because to disseminate an idea, such as safe sex, invariably introduces its opposite, unprotected sex. The pervasive creation and maintenance of sexual risk stereotypes by state institutions such as NACA is described as "the subtlest and most pervasive of all influences" because "we are told about the world before we see it" (Lippmann, 1922, p.89-90). The resultant BCC interventions thus propagate exaggerated versions of sexual risk taking.

Academic research, such as this thesis, is another prime example of what Giddens calls double hermeneutic, or the "mutual interpretive interplay between social science and those whose activities compose its subject matter" (Giddens 1984, p.xxxii). That is, the insidious influence of social research on the object and subject it investigates, through lay incorporation of findings into everyday practise. For example, my inquiries into the prevalence of dry sex may have introduced the concept to respondents previously unaware of the practice. This claim is deducible from answers such as "I don't know what that means. But if I interpret literally, it is very risky. Are you telling me that people do that?" (Interview 16 - Male). Alternatively, "if it means sex without natural lubrication, it is very risky because you might injure the lady and there will be abrasions and fluid transfer" (Interview 26 - Female). It is possible that some respondents will incorporate dry-sex into their repertoire of sexual practices.

Two broadly opposing, yet mutually constituting, meanings of premarital sex exist in Nigeria. The first is premarital sex as recreation/oppositional practice, which is shared by young people, and the second relates to the problematical conception of premarital sex and sexual risk taking fostered by the dominant culture. Each version of premarital sex gives meaning to the other. The two meanings are co-dependent and dialectically reconstituting. For example, the problematical notion of premarital sex suggests young people engage in it because they are rebellious and promiscuous. Paradoxically, adult-controlled institutions nurture young people's sexual rebelliousness and promiscuity, even though they purposefully take sexual risks, with agency, for individuated ends.

In structuration terms, adult controlled institutions sexualise young people. Concurrently, young people's practise of premarital sex, with active agency, (re)produces and sustains the social structure. Thus, the sexualisation of young people by social and commercial institutions, and their agencies in taking sexual risks

exemplifies Giddens' notion of structural duality. The "duality of structure ...relates to the fundamentally recursive character of social life, and expresses the mutual dependence of structure and agency... both medium and outcome of practices that constitutes those systems" (Giddens, 1979, p.69). Accordingly, respondents' sexual conducts are not altogether new. Firstly, they learn their sexualities from socialisation, personal and peer experience of mainly positive outcomes of sexual risk taking. Secondly, respondents' sexualities reflect and advance reasons for<sup>226</sup> historic and modern sexual practices in manners that underline the contradictory and dual relationships between structure and agency, especially taboo and desire. These are the key vehicles for mainstreaming sexual risk taking.

In essence, sexual risk taking is mainstreamed when a significant number of young people repeatedly adopt patterned sexual behaviour, whose outcome, such as STIs, generate social discourse, condemnation and/or interventions, which invariably validate/reproduce the original structural influences leveraged earlier for action. Social discourse about sexualities also link young people in across time and space in manners suggestive of a sexual sub-culture. My data indicates that sexual risk taking thrives in the Nigerian society because respondents discriminatorily navigate the enabling and constraining sexualised environment with knowledge, predispositions and variable agencies.

Respondents' sexualities furthermore, validate, challenge and reconstitute the dominant/original sexual order that influenced them in the first place. The dynamic inter-dependencies of sexual risk taking influences, activities and outcomes proceeds from a "tension between the privatising of passion and the saturation of the public domain by sexuality" (Giddens, 1992, p.197). These have significant implication on young people's sexual health, wellbeing and BCC interventions evolved to manage it. The consequences of my findings that sexual risk taking is concurrently influenced by young people's context and conducts are discussed next.

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<sup>226</sup> According to Giddens, "all social reproduction occurs in the context of 'mixes' of intended and unintended consequences of action; every feature of whatever continuity a society has over time derives from such 'mixes', against a backdrop of bounded conditions of rationalisation of conduct" (1979, p.112).



#### 7.1 Introduction - the social production of gender

In the previous chapter, I highlighted the differences and similarities in young people's sexual risk taking socialization, sexualisation, worldviews, practices and outcomes. I juxtaposed young people's qualitative accounts with their quantitative counterparts. My goal in doing this is to explain the (dis)similarities between hermeneutically mediated narratives and their more emotionally bare quantitative counterparts. The goal is to illustrate, in as qualitatively believable and statistically representative manner as possible, prevalent responses to key sexual risk taking influences. In this chapter, I intend to focus on presenting young people's hermeneutically gendered and robust accounts of their sexualities. As embodied in their sexual risk accounts, gender is a structure-generated rule and resource, which facilitate generative practical action, such as sexual risk taking and associated rationalisations. Gender, in this regard, has three features. It is an internalised value; it can be drawn on, and it is an "automatic gestures or the apparently most insignificant techniques of the body" (Bourdieu, 1984, p.466).

My focus on gender does not imply its asymmetries can independently explain young people's risk-prone sexual worldviews and practices. Instead, it is precipitated by its critical emergence during data collection, with an attendant methodological requirement that its meanings and trajectories be further amplified (Strauss and Corbin, 1990, p.49-50; see also Bogkan and Biklen, 1992, p.27-30). In young collective narratives, young people *draw on* and *work on* gender "structures that shape and define society" and their sexual lives (Staheli 1993, p.133). Gender, from this perspective, Gender is a property of societal structures (Connell, 1987; see also Renold, 2004; see Butler, 2005: 1999: 1997; 1993 also). It is not merely a constraint<sup>227</sup> on sexuality, but is one of its various enabling and enduring structural<sup>228</sup> influences and acts.<sup>229</sup>

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<sup>227</sup> "Constraint here refers to the structuration of social systems as forms of asymmetrical power, in conjunction with which a range of normative sanctions may be deployed against those whose conduct is condemned, or disapproved of, by others" (Giddens, 1984, p.173).

<sup>228</sup> Structure is employed here in a structurationist sense – involving "rules and resources recursively implicated in social reproduction; institutionalized features of social systems have structural properties in the sense that relationships are stabilized across time and space" (Giddens, 1984, p.xxxi).

Young females on campuses, for example, leverage gender properties in scripted heterosexual performance to generate power, allocative and consequently authoritative resources from males. Conversely, for young males, gender is an authoritative resource, equally implicated in their continuous attempts to legitimize their so-called normative control over heterosexuality. As "structures of domination," gender "flows smoothly in the processes of social reproduction" and is affirmed, appropriated, adapted and challenged by either sex for sexual risk taking (Giddens, 1984, p.257).

Nevertheless, gender makes it possible to delineate "different way(s) of knowing" (Dyck 1990, p.465; UNAIDS, 2000a), and *doing*, which are synonymous with young males and females, based on young people's narrative accounts. Young people's different and similar sexual position-practices are easily apprehended through these different ways of knowing and doing, which they typically associate with males (masculine), and females (feminine), which are (un)consciously held by Nigerians. It follows then that gender is comparable to Bourdieu's concept of "habitus,"<sup>230</sup> and is instantiated (comes alive) through routinized daily performance.

Thus, gender categories, for example "*femininity* and *masculinity*, is not what we are, nor the traits we have, but effects we produce by way of particular things we do" (Cameron, 1998, p.271; emphasis mine). Better still, doing femininity and masculinity "consists of managing such occasions so that, whatever the particulars, the outcome is seen and seeable in context as gender appropriate or, as the case may be, gender inappropriate - that is, *accountable*" (West and Zimmerman, 2002, p.12). In relation to sexual risk taking, young male and female respondents render sexual risk accounts that they deem gender normatively appropriate, which is often a variable

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<sup>229</sup> West and Zimmerman are of the opinion that gender is an act. They further compare gender to *doing*, which "involves a complex of socially guided perceptual, interactional, and micropolitical activities that cast particular pursuits as expressions of masculine and feminine 'nature'" (West & Zimmerman, 2002, p.3-23).

<sup>230</sup> Habitus are "systems of *durable, transposable dispositions, structured structures* predisposed to function as structuring structures, that is, as principles which generate and organize practices and representations that can be objectively adapted to their outcomes without presupposing a conscious aiming at ends or an express mastery of the operations necessary in order to attain them. Objectively 'regulated' and 'regular' without being in any way the product of obedience to rules, they can be collectively orchestrated without being the product of the organizing action of a conductor" (Bourdieu, 1990, p.53). Habitus approximates young people's external/internal socialization and sexualisation, which is simultaneously "a structuring and structured structure" process emanating from the "historical work of succeeding generations" (Bourdieu & Wacquant 1992, p.139; emphasis mine).

hybridization of dominant feminine and masculine standards. In essence, respondents managed the interview in a manner that ensures "whatever the particulars, the outcome is seen and seeable in context as gender appropriate or, as the case may be, gender inappropriate - that is, *accountable*" (West & Zimmerman, 2002, p.12).

It is my believe that young people's gendered and sexualized habitus offer concurrent opportunities and constraints for perceiving, communicating, defining, behaving and understanding themselves and others. Young people also indulge in gendered self-socialization and sexualisation, which I argue emanate from their contradictory sexualization and agencies, which are deployed to cope with a significantly gendered and sexualized world. Thus, an effectively socialized male, for example, will strive (position-practices) not to be *homos* and *sissies*, nor manifest feminine traits such as unassertiveness, domesticity, "sheepishness, weakness and a silly indirectness in social relationships" (Willis, 1977, p.45). Similarly, an effectively gendered female will ideally avoid premarital sex or subversively practise it in relative secrecy to avoid the label of a slut, or *ashawo*, in Nigerian vernacular. In essence, "we become gendered subjects from our gender performances and the performances of others towards us" (Robinson, 2005, p.25) employing our physical bodies<sup>231</sup> such that;

"we cannot construct gender as entirely separate from our bodies; to think that we can is a Cartesian delusion. Nor can we treat the body as neutral; gender is not written on a blank body, it is constructed partly from (and in some cases in opposition to) our embodiment" (Paechter, 2006, p.130; see also Paechter, 2007).

The point being made is that gender concurrently influences sexual risk taking as a resources and constraint. Young people differentially access, affirm, adapt and exploit gendered structures of signification, legitimation and domination for unprotected premarital sex. As situated agents in Nigeria, young people employ gender structures in constituting the meaning of, and defining the nature of their sexual relationships as predominantly heterosexual, with significant unprotected sex content. Gender structures also facilitate young people's assignation of normative roles and attitudes for intimate sexual partners. They also employ gender structures in acts of signification, such as the communication of sexual interests, and for comprehending sexual communications. Young people's comprehension of sexual cues leverages the

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<sup>231</sup> Giddens is similarly of the opinion that "fundamental to social life is the positioning of the body in social encounters" (Giddens, 1984, p.xxiv).

dominant heterosexual semantic rules and norms<sup>232</sup>, which legitimizes heterosexual relations, unprotected premarital sex within a committed relationship and normatively reject homosexuality.

One way of communicating our sexual beings, interests and (un)availability is by exploiting our gendered bodies in sexual self-presentations as beautiful, handsome, curvaceous, muscular sexy, hot etc. Sexual communication is varied – employing a whole gamut of verbal and non-verbal cues, overt and covert behaviour. For example, while young female students can flaunt their bodies and looks, young males attempt to impress idolised females with trappings of wealth and associated high social status. Both sexes employ flirting, smiles, lusty gazes and other sexually precocious innuendos, language and scripts to communicate and understand sexual intentions. In addition, young people concurrently employ gender structures in the exercise of issue specific dominance, such as sexual relationships. They also leverage resources, rules, and their sexuality to achieve individuated/collective goals (see Cloke, Philo and Sadler 1991; Dear and Moos 1994). In this regard, young female university students exploit their gender and sexuality to attract potential toasters/mates. Their sexuality are also assets with which they can secure resources for further sexual self-presentations:

"it takes two people or sometimes more (laughter) to successfully do this sex thing. I know its popular to blame it on boys, but girls are not as foolish as they pretend to be. You need to see how they plan to attract a particular boy they like. Sometimes, it is the boys that are foolish" (Interview 46 - Female).

Based on this performative conceptualization of gender, it is neither "simply absorbed" (Clark, 1993, p.81) nor is its performance simplistic and linear. The

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<sup>232</sup> Sexuality in Nigeria is a product of evolving norms/rules that are concurrently implicit and/or explicit, which is (re)produced by the dominant discourse about gender, sex, age, economic status, religion, ethnicity and so on (Dixon Mueller, 1993; Zeidenstein and Moore, 1996). Therefore, I situate young people's sexual risk taking narratives within an eclectic complex of essentialist, socialisation, social constructionist, post structural constructionist paradigms of gender (see Population Council, 2001; Heald, 2003; Kim-Puri, 2005), within a post-modernist political economy, emotions, and purposive agency (see discussions on emotions in my literature review and findings).

mutability, adaptability, multiple influences on and hence, the dynamism<sup>233</sup> and variety<sup>234</sup> of gender probably provoked Sedgwick's observation that:

"as a woman, I am a consumer of masculinities, but I am not more so than men are; and, like men, I as a woman am also a producer of masculinities and a performer of them" (Sedgwick 1995, p.13).

Leveraging young people's narrative accounts, I will illustrate the influence(s) of masculinity and femininity on sexual risk taking under distinct sub-headings for explanatory purposes. These are the sources of, and construction of masculinity and femininity in Nigeria; manifest masculinities and femininity among young people; masculinity, femininity and emotion; masculinity, femininity and attitude to unprotected premarital sex; masculinity, femininity and interpretation of sexual structures of signification; masculinity, femininity and health seeking behaviour; masculinity, femininity, sexual pleasure and influences on condom and contraceptive use.

## **7.2 Sources of, and the construction of masculinity and femininity in Nigeria**

Gender in Nigeria is both ascribed and socially constructed. In post-modernity, gender has become a dynamic and mutable<sup>235</sup> concept attributable to contextually patterned behaviour and practices (performativity<sup>236</sup>), which structures heterosexual relationships (see Morrell, 1998; UNAIDS a&b, 2000). Consequently, even though

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<sup>233</sup> It is not surprising therefore, that young people narrative accounts indicate that masculinity and femininity, in their routine daily performances, do not reflect the "range of popular ideologies of what constitute ideal or actual characteristics of 'being a man' or indeed a woman" (Collier, 1998, p.21; see Butler, 1997a&b for gender and performativity).

<sup>234</sup> A gender analysis of young men must take into account the plurality of masculinities in sub-Saharan Africa. Versions of manhood in Africa are: (i) socially constructed; (ii) fluid over time and in different settings; and (iii) plural. There is no typical young man in sub-Saharan Africa and no single African version of manhood (p.v).

<sup>235</sup> Izugbara in a study of patriarchy in Nigeria contend that it is "oppressive, male-biased discursive subjectivities have three familiar traits: They are, (1) homophobic (i.e. support the hatred and fear of men who step out of or challenge traditional male roles), (2) penis-centred (i.e. glorify and idolize traditional imageries of masculinity and male sexual prowess and encourage the objectification of women and their body), and (3) male-privileging (encourage the ideology of double standard in which males feel morally and physically edified by multiple sexual encounters while women are held as morally and physically tarnished by the same)" (Izugbara, 2004, p.2). My findings, among middle-class young Nigerian university students concurrently validate and challenge Izugbara's contention.

<sup>236</sup> Judith Butler defines gender as "an act which somebody performs; an act somebody acts is, in this sense, an act which was performed long before this somebody appeared on stage. Therefore, cultural gender is an act which is repeated, which, like a script, lives longer than the actors who appear in it, but which needs these actors to be updated and presented as reality again" .... "Talking in terms of a performance, the actors are always already on stage. Like a script can be performed in many ways and like acting requires both the text and its interpretation, the body, marked by gender, plays its role in a culturally limited bodily space and embodies interpretations within already specified limits" (Butler, 1997b, p.409-410; see also Butler, 1997a).

young people are born into a significantly gendered and overtly patriarchal Nigerian society (Izugbara, 2008 and 2004; see Pearce, 2001 also), they nevertheless, differentially internalise and perform their gendered socialization, sexualisation and scripts. Gender socialization and sexualisation in Nigeria varies also vary with sexual differentiations. Its trajectory and effectiveness relies mostly on observation, (un)intentional modelling and parental instruction. Indeed, the Social Sciences and Reproductive Health Research Network (SSRHRN) maintain that young males learn masculinity from:

"both formal and informal means, such as jokes, social ridicule and insinuations, a man is informed of what society expects from him. A non-conformist is made aware of his difference. The society exerts strong pressure upon anyone that deviates from the socially accepted gender roles, letting a male know when he is failing 'to be a man' (SSRHRN, 2001: 97; see Smith, 2007 also).

Harper, for example, observe that fathers drive their sons masculine socialization – because “no father wants his son to grow up being a ‘pussy,’ ‘sissy,’ ‘punk,’ or ‘softy’ terms commonly associated with boys and men who fail to live up to the traditional standards of masculinity” (Harper, 2004, p.92). Normative masculine standards prescribed and recommended for young males include independence; adventurism, leadership etc (see Walker, 2001). There are constant admonitions to act like a man, avoid alcohol, smoking and girls.

The last admonition, avoiding girls, is primarily due to parents concerns that their sons will get girls pregnant, and can be forced into early marriage, and not the literary fear of females. Parents also worry about the unwanted outcomes of unprotected sexual activity, such as STIs, especially HIV/AIDS. There is also a masculine emphasis for males' to assume the role of primary economic providers and household heads. Based on these characterizations, I make the deduction that male socialisation trajectories are underscored by a paradoxical fear of manipulative femininity, mostly as beings who tie males down with family and domesticity. This fear is triggered by:

“a strong, negative emotion associated with stereotypic feminine values, attitudes, and behaviours ... learned primarily in early childhood when gender identity is being formed by parents, peers, and societal values” (O’Neil et al., 1986, p.337).

However, in modern risk societies (Beck, 1992), young people variably internalize gender schemas, by existential necessity. They convert gender schemas into generalized and specific dispositions, which facilitate meaningful perception, communication, apprehension and practice of sexuality, including risk taking. Gender facilitated sexual dispositions and schemas are similarly transposable to different and organized praxis beyond the limits set by young people's socialization and sexualisation. In this instance, the collected narratives indicate that, as young people mature, they progressively take up the gender construction projects, which are intricately bound with modernist egalitarian plastic sexualities<sup>237</sup> (Giddens, 1992). In sum, young people agree that gender socialisation is daily contested with oppositional knowledge, attitude and praxis. For example:

"Some people are raised in nice Christian or Muslim homes and still do it (*unprotected premarital sex*) (Interview 26 - Female).

"... because some of us are brought up in a very disciplined and strict home-bases. Along the way now, we just ehmn... pick up these habits from friends...the internet, well, they are also parts of society (laughter) (Interview 16 - Male).

In contrast, the contents and trajectories of feminization of young females are more structured,<sup>238</sup> designed to reduce "danger and vulnerability" (Izugbara, 2008, p.586). Females' close proximity with men/boys are cast as the major sources of feminine danger and vulnerability, which culminates in STI states, unwanted pregnancies, abortion (and death), or early/forced marriage and tarnished social reputations. Young females are thus, expected to be chaste, passive, incurious and docile beings, whose existence revolves around good conducts, which enhances their personal and family social status in their communities. Thus, to be feminine, among other position-practices, is to avoid risks (unrelated men/boys), be affectionate, compassionate, loyal, sensitive, sympathetic, kind, tender, forgiving and understanding (Kolb, 1999).

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<sup>237</sup> Giddens, (1992) defines plastic sexuality as sexualities freed from traditional constrains of male domination and unwanted pregnancies, by modern reproductive health products/technologies and human rights projects (see Giddens, 2000; 1991 & 1992).

<sup>238</sup> This is partly due to parental fears that discussing the sexual components of masculinity and/or femininity will predispose (position-practices) their wards to sexual risk taking. Furthermore, the dominant presentation of women's sexuality as dangerous and risky is also a major source of vulnerability (Nickelodeon & Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation, 2001). Nevertheless, the burden of gendered sexual socialisation in the Nigerian family seems to primarily fall on mothers/women. Also discernable in mothers' instructional and admonishing tones is admiration of their sons assumed sexual activities, consternation and incredulity at their daughters' sexuality.

To be feminine also means to repress sexual desire (see Tolman, 2002; Lees, 1993). Significantly, more mothers than fathers' impact gendered knowledge and position-practices on their wards (Orgocka, 2004; Pluhar & Kuriloff, 2004; Walker, 2004). In addition, the feminization of young females is more intensive, compared with the masculinisation of young males. Izugbara attributes these instructional asymmetries to parents widespread believe:

"that discussing matters of sexuality with female children was more important than doing so with male children. Whereas young women were generally viewed as very prone to deceptions and likely to make mistakes that could ruin their futures, young men's sexual behaviours were frequently spoken of as likely to put young women into trouble" (Izugbara, 2008, p.586).

Confirming this observation, a female respondent observe that avoiding the unwanted outcome of feminine sexuality "is why most parents advise girls to stay away from boys before marriage. If you can do that, you will avoid their trouble...yeah" (Interview 41 - Female). In contrast, participating parents in Izugbara's study "were unequivocal in their belief that, unlike girls, boys were more likely to take care of themselves" (Izugbara, 2008, p.586). Based on the above discussions, I plausibly deduce that the content and trajectories of young females' feminization are designed to nurture the fear of males, their sexuality, minimize sexual learning/practice opportunities and undermine the significance of sexual pleasure (see Bhana, 2006 also). Consequently, sexuality, especially sex, for an effectively feminized female is:

"a problem<sup>239</sup>, in relation to risk, vulnerability, ill-health and violations of *the self*, rights, and on how to say 'no' to risky sex, rather than how to say 'yes' or even ask for a broader range of safer sex options (Jolly, 2007, p.9; citing Klugman 2000; Correa 2002; Petchesky 2005; words in italics mine).

Regardless of the above characterization, the structural/self<sup>240</sup> feminization of young women and the masculinisation of males enhances meaningful daily existence to a "greater or less degree according to context and the vagaries of individual personality"

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<sup>239</sup> Nevertheless, every young person interviewed take sexual risks, despite the dominant cultural construction of young people's sexual practice as immoral; closed to parent-child discussion (Nickelodeon and Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation, 2001; Wallis and VanEvery, 2000); and despite the ethical/moral challenges imposed on parents by their conceptualisation of young people as "innocent" and "corruptible" with an inherent assumption that they need to be safe-guarded from sexuality (see Wallis and VanEvery, 2000 and Gabb, 2004).

<sup>240</sup> Self sexualisation include personal projects (in)voluntarily adopted and adapted by young Nigerian girls which are modelled after western beauty standards (see Becker 2004; Humphry & Ricciardelli 2004; Becker et al. 2003; Lee 2000).



for "ontological security"<sup>241</sup> *expressing an autonomy of bodily control within predictable routines*" (Giddens, 1984, p.50; original emphasis). Young people, as situated agents, in their daily acts, including sexuality, perennially affirm, contest and (re)produce the same structures that concurrently enable and constrain their sexualities. Accordingly, although gender is learned, it is more substantively achieved than ascribed in Nigeria (see Connell, 2003a).

Gender confers on all young people varied sets of generalized, conjuncturely specific sexuality knowledge and practical consciousness,<sup>242</sup> which facilitates discriminatory sexual performance and the "reflexive monitoring of" same activity "... [as] a chronic feature of everyday actions and involves the conduct of not just the individual but also of others" (Giddens, 1984, p.5). Practical consciousness enables young people to discriminatorily leverage, and creatively (re)combine, generalizable knowledge (*know-how*) about gendered heterosexuality. It also influences their more specific positive predispositions towards unprotected premarital sex, variable and positive interpretations of sexuality rules and access to resources with active and purposive agency, to meet individuated and/or collective needs. In essence, young people acquire these often taken for granted pro-sexual risk taking stance from the duality of their internal structures and active agency, which are influenced by their external structures. These states of sexual being foster such consciousness that:

"...nobody can tell me that sex is bad. It's some of its consequences that are bad. So if you want to do something meaningful, separate some of the negative consequences from the good and deal with them ... People should be preaching and teaching safe sex instead of all these abstinence talk. Who abstains? We are all deceiving ourselves. Even born-again Christians do it in secret "(Interview 11 - Female).

Alternatively that:

It's (sex) all over. It's on TV, internets, magazines; on the streets ...you name it. Its even in the family...at a stage in life, some parents pressure their male kids to have girlfriends. I hear it happens to females too...especially when they are about to graduate. Parents start asking them if they have someone to marry and all that (Interview 1- Male; word in italics is mine).

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<sup>241</sup> General existence related anxiety-controlling mechanisms, which predisposes social agents undergoing anomie to resort to tried and tested (traditional) worldviews and practices to reclaim stability.

<sup>242</sup> Giddens explains that practical consciousness is "what actors know (believe) about social conditions, including especially conditions of their action, but cannot express discursively, no bar of repression, however, protects practical consciousness, as in the case with the unconscious" (Giddens, 1984, p.375).

### 7.3 Manifest masculinities and femininity among young people.

Young people's sexual risk taking narratives indicate varied masculinities and femininities instead of hegemonic masculinity or sexually passive femininity. This finding paradoxically conforms with, and challenges the dominant sexuality literature that advances hegemonic masculinity<sup>243</sup> and sexually passive femininity as the primary cause of negative sexual health outcomes differentially experienced by females, compared with males. Manifest masculinities in young people's sexual risk taking accounts mirror Connell's (1993) proposal of four distinct masculinities.<sup>244</sup> Narratives representative of *hegemonic masculinity* suggests that engagement in heterosexual sex is a *test of manhood* (see Beeker et al., 1998), and that sex serves the primary sensation seeking interests of young males alone. Only two male narratives, out of thirty, conform to hegemonic masculinity. In responses to the question, *what range of sexual activities is permissible in ... a relationship, hegemonic masculine answers indicate it is:*

"What the man wants! He is in-charge... like I said before, the first time you sleep with a girl that is when she can decide, after that, you are in-control" (Interview 31 - Male).

In contrast, the remainder fifty-four narratives variously indicate the above view is not necessarily correct. Both male and female respondents generally challenge the dominant conception of masculine authority and femininity helplessness, but paradoxically reinforce notions of female complicity is sustaining masculinity:

"... I think it depends on how you question the authority, quietly or loudly; in secret or public. I think if you do it privately, the man will go away happy thinking he is in charge. That's what my Mum does to my Dad and it works. ...When I had sex for the first time, I was curious and ready to do it. But I finally allowed my boyfriend to convince me. Does that make sense? (long laughter)" (Interview 11 - Female).

Furthermore, while female respondents' narratives affirm the role feminine stereotype about love and its influence on sexual risk taking, nearly all male respondents' narratives about love indicate *submissive masculinity*, which theoretically adhere to dominant masculine characteristics. For example, male narratives disclaim the role of love as influences on sexual risk taking:

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<sup>243</sup> Hegemonic masculinity is underlined by oppressive, abusive, violent and emotional detached males intent on exploiting the so-called passive females.

<sup>244</sup> These are hegemonic masculinity; complicit masculinity; submissive masculinity; and oppositional/protest masculinity.

... Love? I don't know whether the word love really exist. Because concerning my girlfriend, when I want to get something from her or just to please her at the moment, I can tell her I love her. Ehm... so the word love depends on circumstances or occasions. I don't know if it is real. But I know it works on women" (Interview 6 - Male).

Additionally interwoven in the collected narratives are accounts indicative of *complicit masculinity*, which allows young male beneficiaries of hegemonic masculinity to neither support nor condemn it. Connell refers to members of this masculine category as "slacker versions of hegemonic masculinity" (Connell, 1995, p.79). For example, a male respondent, contrary to hegemonic masculinity prescriptions, expresses post-coital regret:

"... what they (*males*) really want is just to have fun and thereafter tell the girl to go her way. But after such experience, there is always a sense of guilt and disappointment. They displace the girl; they don't see anything good in her etc ... to me there is always a drop of self esteem and integrity after (*premarital sex*)" (Interview 1 - Male; words in parenthesis mine).

Female respondents' narratives similarly challenge dominant feminine discourse about female asexuality, and paradoxically affirm hegemonic masculinity. For example, more males than female respondents agree that sex is always associated with pleasure for men. Nevertheless, a majority of female respondents' insist that the quest to experience sexual pleasure is part of the complex sexual risk taking influences on females. In their own words:

"... Like I said before, I think girls already do (*have sexual pleasure*). The thing is that our culture expects them to keep quite about it. For a girl or woman, it (*sex*) can be calming; shows affection, love, caring, sometimes fun and pleasure too. Nmmn... do I make sense?" (Interview 11 - Female; words in parenthesis mine).

"Well ... yes pleasure is important. We are human beings too. You can also do it to get someone to call your own, care for you and all that. Some people also believe it is what you must do if you are in a relationship or care about someone" (Interview 46 - Female)

Furthermore, young males indicated vestiges of *oppositional masculinity*, which negates the dominant mode of sexual opportunism and aggression. In response to the question, *under what condition will you abstain from sexual intercourse?* A male respondent is of the opinion that:

"...my friends always find this my ideology strange. But I believe that if I love a girl, I wont want to have sex with her" (Interview 16 - Male).

Alternatively that:

"there are certain things you are not supposed to do, that is supposed to be sacred, if you don't mind. Sex to me is sacred. That we indulge in it does not mean we are justified...all in the name of pressure and all that" (Interview 1 – Male).

Consequently, it is apparent, on critical analysis, that gendered socialisation produces a significant element of ambiguity, contradiction, variability and self-fulfilling prophecies in structuring young people's sexual expectations and practices (see Orgocka, 2004; Pluhar & Kuriloff, 2004; Walker, 2004; Cornwell & Welbourn, 2000). My study corroborates gender variability and hybridization in Nigeria, which is similar to Uchendu's conclusion that drawn from her study of masculinity and Nigerian youths. According to Uchendu, "the masculinities painted by the youths did not strongly replicate the dominant patriarchal model. They allowed room for the appreciation of women's abilities" (2007, p.293). Two critical feminine abilities are their ultimate capacities to select sexual partners from numerous *toasters* and control the occurrence/frequency of sexual intercourse with periodic social visits of their male sexual partners.

In essence, gendered socialisation and internalization does not proceed on linear paths, neither is it always effective. If it does, young females will actually avoid men/boys and not enjoy their sexuality. Neither will young males seek out girls who can *trap* them for marriage and domestic life. The (in) effectiveness of young people's gender socialization and sexualisation are competing products of young people's differential propensities to selectively internalize, reject and/or adapt gender prescriptions and cues. As one female respondent frame it, not all sexual risk influences, for example masculinity and femininity, are effective because:

"we resist the ones (*influences*) we don't like and embrace the ones we like. That's life!" (Interview 11- Female; word in italics is mine).

An alternative opinion is that:

I think its ... *a* ... mentality and personal decision not to engage in sex. I have another friend who does everything else but have physical sex and is still a virgin. I know some people too who use to have sex but now abstain because they are born again or can't find the right guy yet. People are different... Ehm... I also know some people who had sex before and stopped because they don't get pleasure from it (Interview 46 – Female; word in italics mine).

#### 7.4 Masculinity, femininity and emotion

Emotion,<sup>245</sup> in concert with other influences, is implicated in the functioning and legitimization of masculine hegemony (Hall, 2002, p.37) and heterosexuality. Connell refer to emotion attachments as cathexis<sup>246</sup>, which he asserts structure and regulate desire via exclusive acceptance of heterosexuality, and implied condemnation of homosexuality (Connell, 2002 and 1995; Donaldson, 1993, p.645). Emotion therefore, solidifies and essentializes young people's general dispositional/habitus<sup>247</sup> and conjuncturally specific position-practices in relation to dominant heterosexual practice, especially penetrative virginal sex. In relation to homosexuality, all respondents displayed varying degrees of hostility about same-sex relationships, suggesting that all sexual relationships should be heterosexual in nature. This sentiment probably influenced respondents' expressed shock when I asked if their sexual risk taking include or involves same-sex relationships. For example, female respondents strongly indicate sexual risk taking is:

...with boys ooo! This is Africa; we have not gotten there yet. I hear it is common abroad. Besides the bible says it is wrong, very wrong" (Interview 26 - Female).

Similarly, for young males question the purpose of:

"...the homosexual thing. I think it's strange that a guy will put his thing in the wrong place! Not to mention leave all these fine girls for a man (laughter). Do people really do these things? I hear they are very common in Europe" (Interview 6 Male).

Furthermore, emotion combines with other influences, such as membership of peer networks, to structure young people's felt-needs and gendered quest for positive social identities and self-esteem, which they link with heterosexual relationships and unprotected premarital sex. From this relational basis, with sexual partners and peer affirmation, young people sustain their widespread practical and emotional

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<sup>245</sup> See detail discussions in literature review.

<sup>246</sup> Cathexis approximates the deployment of significant emotional capital on any one person.

<sup>247</sup> Stones, suggests we conceptualize general dispositional/habitus "as encompassing transposable skills and dispositions, including generalized worldviews and cultural schemas, classifications, typifications of things, people and networks, principles of action, typified recipes of action, deep binary frameworks of signification, associative chains and connotations of discourse, habits of speech and gesture, and methodologies for adapting this generalized knowledge to a range of particular practices in particular locations in time and space" (Stones, 2005, p.88).

"Conjuncturally-specific and the positional refer to the notion of a role or position which has embedded within it various rules and normative expectations" (Stones, 2005, p.89).

endorsement of, and the practice of, heterosexual sexual risk taking in manners that paradoxically legitimize and sustains contextual gendered asymmetries.

Nevertheless, male and female respondents differ remarkable about the influential role of emotions on personal sexual risk taking. While young female respondents are convinced emotions like love, affection and romance significantly influence sexual risk taking, young males ambivalently insist it does not. Male accounts of emotion and sexual risk taking are in consonance with hegemonic masculine prescriptions. Conversely, female attitude towards the influence of emotions and sexual risk taking conform to feminine prescriptions. However, both narratives accounts are underlined by an existential paradox. For females' in-love, there are concurrent concerns for practical sexual safety, even in committed relationships. For example:

" ... I think being in-love creates the mood for anything goes. But it's a girls responsibility to make sure she loves the right person – not one that sleeps around. If you can't find such a boy yet, use a condom always or wait. There is a boy out there for every girl. I really believe that" (Interview 46 - Female).

For young males in turn, despite the hegemonic masculine imperative to secure female's sexual access and complicity in sexual risk taking:

"...along the line, they may fall in-love with the girl and then it grows into something, the next level. But most of the time, that's (*sex*) like 50% of the reason why guys go into relationships" (Interview 16 – Male; words in parenthesis mine).

More precisely, and contrary to hegemonic masculine prescription of male emotional<sup>248</sup> detachment from female sexual partners:

"... it is not that boys don't feel love and all that... Boys are human beings too (laughter). Just that, well..., we don't need to love someone to have sex with them (laughter)" (Interview 6 - Male).

Thus, while young females verbally affirm feminine stereotypes of care affection, love and sacrifice, they practically display rational egalitarian attitudes about partner selection and sexual risk reduction. Furthermore, to negotiate condom use, females creatively leverage the threat of unwanted pregnancies and associated

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<sup>248</sup> Another example of recombination of modes of typifications is young males increasing adoption and display of feminine traits such as care, love and sacrifice, which in gender terms affirm effeminacy and undermine hegemonic masculinity, to secure female sexual complicity. Thus, even though showing affection/care is stigmatized for hegemonic masculine characters, creativity, post-modern sexual attitudes and young females treasure, prescribe and reward these characteristics in sensitive males.

emotional/health outcomes. This is despite the so-called feminization of young females for unquestioning acquiescence to male sexual demands due to cathexis and other structural asymmetries. For example:

...if you are in-love, it can be difficult to ask your boyfriend to use condoms. It is like you are saying he is not faithful, which may be true. You can't trust boys! (laughter). But there are many ways of encouraging boys to use condoms. Just tell them you will get pregnant if you do it without condoms - they will run out fast to buy it! (laughter). It is that easy...they don't want to become fathers or marry you immediately (laughter) (Interview 2 - Female).

### **7.5 Masculinity, femininity and interpretation of sexual structures of signification**

In relation to structures of signification, I seek to deconstruct, from young people's sexual risk narratives, relevant signs and codes,<sup>249</sup> which they perceive, leverage, react to, challenge and adapt for sexual risk taking.<sup>250</sup> Specifically, I intend to unpack the communicative, relational and gendered meanings of *toasting*<sup>251</sup> (structures of legitimation) and *cash/gifts* (structures of domination), whose advancement normatively signifies young males' sexual interests and acceptance by female recipients of cash/gifts. All respondents, based on their accounts, indicate a propensity and agency to communicate sexual interest with signifiers like cash/gifts and toasting on one hand, and the ability to deconstruct the sexual meanings of these signifiers, on the other.

These communication and interpretive capacities draws from general dispositional gendered knowledge, conjuncturally specific sexual risk taking knowledge, position-practices and purposive agency "to make practical and normative judgments among alternative possible trajectories of action, in response to the emerging demands, dilemmas, and ambiguities of presently evolving situations" (Emirbayer and Mische 1998, p.971), which toasting and gifting represents. Thus, nearly all respondents agree

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<sup>249</sup> Giddens conceptualizes signs and codes as "the medium and outcome of communicative processes in interaction" which are recursively grounded in the transmission of purpose and meaning – to be "grasped in connection with domination and legitimation ...inherent in social association" (1984, p.30-31).

<sup>250</sup> The acquisition of toasting knowledge and its interpretation on one hand, and the cash/gift giving, acceptance and interpretation, on the other, are products of contextually acquired knowledge via gendered structural and self-socialization of young people.

<sup>251</sup> Toasting could take the form of sweet-talks, cash/gift giving, academic support/assistance, social visits and outright male request that a girl become his girlfriend. The language, style, content and demeanour of toasting is so complex it can constitute a subject of independent inquiry.

that the more gifts, money and favours, a girl receives, the more there will be unprotected sex if that is desired by the gift-giver. For example:

"Unfortunately yes, because the guy giving you all the gifts and cash will pressure you until you give-in or return his property. If you cannot return his gift and cash, what else can you do" (Interview 41 – Female).

Alternatively:

"I think so. But it is not like nice to think about it that way. Where is the love and all that? (Laughter), but the reality is that if you like a girl and you want to have sex with her, you give her gifts and money first to impress her. If she is impressed, she will let you have sex and pretend you pressured her. That is how the game is played..." (Interview 6 - Male).

In contrast with the above seeming agreement, young people also ambivalently disagree about the significance of cash/gifts in communicating heterosexual interests, on one hand, and granting sexual access, on the other. In the first instance, female respondents insist that cash/gifts are part of historic and modern heterosexual relations – leveraged by male suitors to communicate affection and care. Although majority of males agree with female assessment of cash/gift giving, they additionally insist cash/gifts, when accepted, signifies a female's theoretical acceptance of, and practically granting the suitor sexual access. Both male and female perspective of cash/gift giving/acceptance conforms to their gendered socialization as masculine (breadwinners) and feminine beings (non-bread-winning caregivers).

Their seeming disagreement confirms hegemonic masculinity<sup>252</sup> and passive feminine position-practices until one realises that the cash/gifts given and received by females do not assuage the female's daily basic needs, but are more social in nature, serving to affirm, validate and reinforce romance in heterosexual relationships. As one young female frame it, the cash gifts from males are used for:

"... Things like cosmetics, phone-cards, hair weaving costs etc. (sighs) It is very crazy around here, different kinds of things happen" (Interview 46 - Female).

Accordingly, young males are partly convinced that:

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<sup>252</sup> Apparently, only males give their female sexual partners cash gifts.



"...Guys give cash and gifts that will impress girls, eh... They think the more valuable the gift they get, the more you love them" (Interview 6 - Male).

Female respondents generally agree,<sup>253</sup> insisting that:

"... Gifts are part of relationship give and take. I give my boyfriend gifts too. But cash, no... I guess girls need these small gifts for reassurance that the relationship is still appreciated. Nothing very major. It's the thinking behind it that matters (Interview 46 - Female).

Furthermore, in answer to the question, *can one say that the more gifts and/or cash one gives and/or receives, the more the person will be willing to take sexual risk?* All male respondents gave variant of this answer:

"Absolutely...I agree, I agree. Because that is the only way you can compensate for those gifts you are getting. It's a give-and-take kind of thing. So I agree absolutely" (Interview 1 - Male).

In contrast, young females largely disagree. Instead, they insist that:

"... it doesn't follow. Someone can receive gifts and cash from you and still refuse to sleep with you. Lots of girls do it. After all you are the one giving the person the cash and gifts. She didn't ask for it. Although that is what most guys think that accepting a gift is a code for accepting their demand for sex. It's not always like that! ..."(Interview 21 - Female).

In consequence, toasting and cash/gift giving, although normatively scripted, are evolving situations because they do not have linear inevitable interpretations. For example, young females indicate they could refuse the cash/gifts, and reject males' toasting, accept the cash/gifts and what they signify or accept the cash/gifts and still reject the *male toaster* sexual advances. Furthermore, young people's responses to the inquiry - *when a girl says no, to a boy's toasting her, does it really always mean no.* They are merely playing hard-to-get contextually normatively scripted manners. Female respondents gave variants of this answer:

"Well, not all the time (Laughter). Saying no when you like him is a way of testing his love for you. If he comes, or keeps coming back after all the no, maybe he really likes you (laughter). That is the way it is" (Interview 41 - Female).

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<sup>253</sup> Emerging research supports young people's assigned purpose of cash/gifts. Leclerc-Madlala argues that the assumption that poverty drives unprotected premarital and intergenerational sex "misrepresent the character of relationships where implicit understandings link material expectation to sex and are not entirely separate from everyday life" (Leclerc-Madlala, 2004, p.2). In the context of everyday life, young females leverage material and cash gifts from males to acquire non-survival related accessories of modern life such as mobile phones, exotic hairstyles etc., for enhanced sexual self-presentations, self/peer esteem, and attractiveness, which facilitates further sexual risk taking (see Leclerc-Madlala, 2004, p.2; 2003; see also Swidler and Watkins, 2006).

All male respondents agree with their female counterparts that females' saying an initial no does not necessarily mean a rejection:

"Not really, that is the way they (*women*) are. They just want to test your resolve. If you persist, they will fall (Interview 16 – Male; word in italics is mine).

Therefore, the meaning of *toasting*, *cash/gift giving* and *acceptance* must be read as ambiguously context, issue and value laden. Nevertheless, these scripted behaviour are normative. I speculate that the largely middle-class background of my respondents may have influenced their social construction of cash/gifts giving as sexual relations affirming tools, rather than influenced by poverty. Female respondents may honestly believe their rationalisations of the meaning and consequences of cash/gifts. Perhaps their denials of the sexual risk taking implications of cash/gift giving are in furtherance of personal projects to construct themselves as traditionally *nice girls*, who are not influenced by materialism. Alternatively, their denials of the influence of cash/gifts on their sexual risk taking may be designed to assert their agency over structured sexual activities in post-modernity. Nevertheless, these latter female independent attitudes, prevalent in my study, can be harnessed for sexual health interventions.

In addition, one cannot ignore the fact that all female respondents nurture and prefer this status quo. As female respondents put it, "that is the way it should be" (Interview 41 - Female). Furthermore, cash/gift giving, as a signifiers of male sexual interests in females thrive because young males gain, (re)affirm honour, prestige and their assumed leadership roles in the sexual relations by sustaining this hegemonic masculine worldviews and practices (Connell 1995, p.82).

#### **7.6 Masculinity/femininity and sexual health seeking behaviour**

I took a position earlier that gendered construction of masculinity and femininity are rooted on everyday normative socialization, expectations and performance. One normative expectation associated with hegemonic masculinity is its antagonism to positive sexual health. For example, men are fabled to be unwillingness "to ask for help when they experience problems" with their sexuality (Addis & Mahalik, 2003, p.5). In contrast, femininity although cast as helpless before masculinity, is contradictorily more prone to positive sexual health and behaviour, which are

components of their gendered attribute for care (Lichenstein, 2004). The central message discernable from literature and lay opinion is that masculinity is dangerous for health<sup>254</sup>, especially feminine sexual health (Gough, 2006). Despite the above characterization, my study found that young male students are significantly inclined to protect their sexual health, and by extension, their female sexual partner's sexual health. As one male respondent frames it:

"nobody wants to die. People just want to have fun. It is just unfortunate that ehmn... this dreaded virus is happening in our time" (Interview 6 - Male).

In essence, male respondents' narratives, like females, unequivocally indicate they actively seek sexual health information and assistance, when needed, from peers and relevant institutions, such as hospitals, if STIs is suspected. For everyday *advice on personal matters, such as sexual health*, all respondents indicate they:

"Research, on the web...and I talk to friends too" (Interview 1 - Male).

"My boyfriend and my mother. After all, we do it together ... I mean my boyfriend. Sometimes I use the internet too to look for information. It's very useful because you don't have to say who you really are" (Interview 46 - Female).

This finding contradicts dominant literature that unifies masculinity – presenting it as oppositional to healthy sexual behaviour because men who "embrace ... traditional constructions of masculinity are more likely to engage in risky health practices" (Mahalik et al., 2007, p.2202). Perhaps, young people's significant awareness of the risk posed by HIV/AIDS may be contributing to the redirection of male *fabled* disinterest and inattention to their sexual health. It is more likely however, that femininity and sexuality scholars biased worldviews, methodologies and generalizations render all men' masculinities hegemonic and averse to seeking sexual health protection knowledge and commodities. The lesson here is that deductions should be made on a case-by-case basis, rather than sweeping generalizations about men and their sexual health seeking behaviour.

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<sup>254</sup> Young men acquire risk-prone worldviews and sexuality via structural and self-socialization, sexualisation, health beliefs/ and lifestyles or position-practices (Courtenay, 2000, p.1386), which translates into short life expectancies (see Doyal, 2001).

### **7.7 Masculinity, femininity, sexual pleasure and attitude to condom and contraceptive use**

Development studies, especially sexual health interventions have been underlined by a pleasure deficit approach to sexuality (see Jolly, 2007; Solomon, Chakraborty and Yephthomi, 2004; Gosine, 2004). Consequently, dominant sexuality research does not investigate the relationship and intersections between masculinity, femininity, sexual desire, pleasure and contraceptive use. Instead, sexuality studies excessively focus on young people's sensation seeking (Zuckerman, 1984), which is cast as a problem behaviour (Jessor and Jessor, 1977). Vance is of the opinion that this trend is driven by a lack of:

"better language to excavate and delineate these other sources of danger, everything is attributed to men, thereby inflating male power and impoverishing ourselves ... The truth is that the rich brew of our experience contains elements of pleasure and oppression, happiness and humiliation. Rather than regard this ambiguity as confusion or false consciousness, we should use it as a source book to examine how women experience sexual desire, fantasy and action (Vance 1989, p5-6).

Unlike dominant sexuality literature, male and female respondents in my study unequivocally acknowledge the importance of sexual pleasure and its influential role on sexual risk taking. According to them key influences on sexual risk taking include:

"... pleasure, love and affection and to please him. (Long pause) ... Sex also calms me down when I am worried or agitated" (Interview 11 - Female).

"Well, there is sometimes this intense pleasure, connection, freedom and you feel you are in control. You don't think about disease and death or your parents and society" (Interview 46 - Female).

In addition, young people's narratives reveal linkages between women's willingness to use condoms, on one hand, and consistent condom use, on the other, with the perception of enhanced or diminished pleasure and trust. Possession of condoms, and insistence on its use, are socially constructed as evidence of distrust of sexual partner, because condom/contraceptive possession and use imply promiscuity. Similarly mediating condom/contraceptive possession and use decisions are other variables such as young females' perception of love, trust, commitment and romance in their relationships. Previous positive or negative condom use experience - as enhancing or inhibiting sexual pleasure are contributory factors. In addition, peer and significant others opinions about condom/contraceptive use equally matter. Lastly, condom

availability, affordability and ease of purchase matter too. In relation to trust and promiscuity, respondents rhetorically ask:

"If partners trust each other and are committed, why do they need condoms? Maybe when it's unsafe for the girl to have sex. Maybe female contraceptives. Its complicated I guess. Somehow, condoms suggest sleeping around" (Interview 11 - Female).

Furthermore, like male respondents, female respondents maintain that condoms interfere with sexual pleasure:

"... (laughter)...I think so..., well, it (*condoms*) is not the same thing. But when you have to choose between pleasure and HIV, the difference is clear" (Interview 41 – Female; words in italics mine).

"Basically, it (*condoms*) interferes with the whole fun. It is not the same thing despite all the claim! Number two, it may not be available when you want it. Number three, the girl may not want it – they think it means you don't trust them or stuff like that. Number four, you can get carried away...sex is very powerful (laughter). Then I think some people don't know how to use them and remove them during the fun. Stuff like that..." (Interview 1 – Male; word in parenthesis is mine).

Findings, such as the above, challenge sexual intervention models primarily predicated upon the lack of access to contraceptives as the principal determinant of young people's condom/contraceptive decision-making. Trust, love, romance, commitment and pleasure seem equally significant influences on condom use for respondents, than its physical availability and professed willingness to use them. Consequently, the old stereotype, which associates sensation seeking, sexual control, knowledge and condom-use with masculinity and males' unenthusiastic concessions to safeguarding feminine sexual health is incorrect (Wilton 1997, p.34; see also Waldby, Kippax & Crawford 1991).

Both male and female respondents seem equally reluctant to use condoms in committed relationships. Similarly, respondents' did not validate males' sexual knowledge exclusivity thesis and its opposite; passivity and innocence, for females (see Foreman 1998, p.31). The responsibility for preventive (condoms/contraceptive use), and curative sexual practices (STI treatment and abortion) is shared by young male and female respondents. While unmarried female respondents do not desire to get pregnant, males loath, the loss of independence, social disruption and responsibility associated with childcare and perhaps, early marriage. Consequently, young people deploy multiple strategies such as careful partner selection, serial

monogamy, fidelity and periodic condom use to mitigate unwanted pregnancies and STIs:

"... personally, I think natural method is safer and better. If all fails, you have abortion as the last resort. STD and HIV/AIDS I am not worried about because I am in committed relationship and you are supposed to be faithful (laughter). Anyway, my boyfriend and I have done HIV screening a number of times and its always negative" (Interview 46 - Female).

For males,

"I try to monitor when she is unsafe. That is when we use condoms. When she is safe, we do it without condoms. But with bush-meat, you have to condomise all the time" (Interview 6 - Male).

That sexual risk mitigation strategies sometimes fail is due to the combined influences of unacknowledged conditions for action, limited/variable knowledge and emotion induced sexual risk taking. In essence, my findings contradict dominant conceptualization of pleasure by sexuality scholars and the reproductive health industry as masculine; devoid of purposive and active female participation (see Dixon-Mueller, 1993 for detail critique). My findings also validate an earlier assumption that sexual pleasure, in concert with other variables, significantly influences female predisposition to sexual risk taking and consequent exposure to STIs and unwanted pregnancies.

Rather than the prevalent female exploitation thesis, *pleasure deficit*<sup>255</sup> approach and excessive emphasis on STIs and unwanted pregnancies by society (Philpott, Knerr, & Maher, 2006), I find purposive and active agencies (male and female), which are driven by multiple variables, such as the quest for sexual pleasure, romance, commitment etc. I also find that STIs and HIV/AIDS are uncommon. These findings challenge the effectiveness of the earlier discussed "configuration of *practice(s)* within the system of gender relations" (Connell, 1995, p.84; emphasis and word in italics are mine). The gendered configurations of sexuality in Nigeria prescribe, nurture and rewards female avoidance of males, sexual risk taking and the containment of sexual desire. All female respondents acknowledge this socialization imperative, and that they actively and purposefully subvert it because:

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<sup>255</sup> I find only two studies that constitute an exception to the dominant pleasure deficit approach. They are Moore and Helzner, (1996) and Zeidenstein and Moore (1996).

"as long as you don't get pregnant or get STD, nobody will kill you. People already suspect you are doing it anyway, whether you are doing it or not" (Interview 2 - Female).

I suggest that the above realities are indicative of either (1) the ineffectiveness of female feminization, or more interestingly, (2) female respondents' purposive and active agency in pursuit of sexual pleasure among other contextually meaningful goals via sexual risk taking. This is why I have consistently argued that structural influences, experienced through young people's external/internal socialisation and sexualisation, combines with their general and more specific knowledge of sexual norms, taboos, sanctions, rewards and practices, their biology and variable agencies to nurture positive disposition towards, and actual practice of sexual risk taking. No singular variable, however emotive, such as gender asymmetries, can holistically account for young people's sexual risk taking. Neither can gender asymmetries "be transcend(ed) in some kind of putative society of the future<sup>256</sup>" (Giddens, 1984, p.32; parenthesis mine). Perhaps more significant for sexual health intervention planning and execution is the fact that young female respondents, like males, accept responsibilities for their risk-prone sexual practices:

"... Look, I know most girls may lie and blame their boyfriends about their sexual... what do you call it, risks. But every girl going to visit her boyfriend knows what will happen when she gets there. So to me, if you don't want to have sex, don't go" (Interview 46 - Female).

## **7.7 Conclusion**

Young people's sexual risk taking accounts evidence gender asymmetries. Their narratives are concurrent testaments of their adroitness in affirming, exploiting and subverting the dominant masculine and feminine hierarchies. Nevertheless, "the assumption of equality is dangerously easy in witnessing confident, voluble young women" (McRobbie, 2000, p.200). Therefore, I emphasize the issue specific and contextual nature of my findings. In essence, my analysis cannot be conceived as encompassing all manners of human praxis and relationships. My concern here is with only relational sexual risk taking, not rape, marriage, concubinage and commercial sex work. My findings may similarly not apply to young people who are out of school, illiterate and/or hard to reach.

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<sup>256</sup> Of course, the specificities of contextual gender asymmetries will change and evolve in time.

Regardless, it is persuasive that gendered asymmetries in Nigeria, like other structural influences discussed, offer young people relatively stable yet evolving frameworks for meaningful engagement in, interpretation of, and practice of their sexuality. This implies that young people's gendered cognitive frames are not “psychic prisons” from which they cannot deviate (Bolman and Deal 1991/2003). As their sexual risk narratives indicate, young people daily contest, affirm, adapt or (re)produce their gendered relationships in Nigeria, within "the framework of a dominant institutionalised *compulsory heterosexuality*” (Robinson, 1997, p.143; emphasis mine).

My study, for example, uncovers evidence that female respondents deploy purposive agencies in furtherance of their sexuality, which partly affirm, mimic and challenge hegemonic masculinity. By so doing, femininity co-joins with masculinity in maintaining the dominant gender asymmetries in young people's daily pursuit of individuated and collectively meaningful goals, related to heterosexual relationships. Thus, there are increasing tendency for young people to concurrently exhibit both masculine and feminine traits in their pursuits and maintenance of sexual relations. This condition is called androgyny (Bem, 1974). For example, young males to attract and keep their girlfriends often show:

"love and affection both emotionally and materially. If they are sick or worried, you have to there for them, help them and ask how they are doing and all that" (Interview 56 - Male).

These traits, just discussed, are ideally associated with femininity, but appropriated, exhibited and narrated by a young male student. Thus, the influence of gender “is never clear-cut (nor is it always clear where one ends and another begins)” (Kiesling, 2006 p.207). To this end, Schmitt (2003) demonstrates a weak influence of gender on romantic attachment with a sample of 17,804 (male and female) respondents in 62 countries. Moreover, despite mainstream claims that romantic love only matter to women, most males ambivalently indicate they will abandon condom use on confirmation that their girlfriend loves them:

"I will be willing to use a condom for a particular girl and in the period I have been using condom, I have to observe and see that she is sincere, you know, with that word love that she is saying. I could, you know, do away, you know, with condoms" (Interview 31 - Male).



In essence, like Sen, I am convinced that research and intellectual structures which create and partly maintain discrete masculine and feminine gender categories “savagely challenge our shared humanity” (2006, p.xiii), strength and follies to nurture discord. My perspective of gender is thus underlined by:

“... the doubled sense of ‘subject’ (subject/ed to and subject of action) ... which allows for an individual who is socially produced, and ‘multiply positioned’ – neither determined nor free, but both simultaneously (Jones, 1997, p. 263).

In addition, becoming a [wo]man:

“... is a matter of constructing oneself in and being constructed by the available ways of being male (or female) in a particular society. It is a matter of negotiating the various discourses of femininity and masculinity available in our culture, those powerful sets of meanings and practices which we must draw on to participate in our culture and to establish who we are” (Gilbert and Gilbert, 1998, p.46-47; letters in italics mine).

The significance of the foregoing discussion is that not all men enjoy hegemonic masculine dividends. Nor do all women equally experience socio-political and sexual relations marginalisation. The influence of structure, including gender in structuration terms, are enhanced or limited by multiple and interrelated variables such as ethnicity, tribe, social class, economic status, manifest sexuality, family and age. More precisely, majority of men, like women, are disempowered in relation to local and global elites, who are composed of both men and women. These elites hold and exercise power, and hence, social authority, legitimacy and dominance. Regardless of power asymmetries, all social actors are “often very adept at converting whatever resources they possess into some degree of control over the conditions of reproduction of the system” (Giddens, 1982, p.198-199; see Willis 1977 for similar assertion). Therefore, gender and other structural influences on young people's sexual risk taking in reality:

“depends on the continuing, conscious, concerned activity of different individuals to intend, produce and sustain it ... social structure does not exorable give rise to homogeneity, stability, consistency or communication. As a discursive idiom, a fiction, it is always subject to creative interpretation, to individual manipulation and re-rendering...” (Rapport, 1997, p.41-42).

## Chapter 8

### Conclusion and recommendations

#### 8.1 Introduction

In this chapter, the linkages between my research questions, sexual reproductive health literature, structuration theory, young people's sexual risk taking narrative accounts and their implications on Behaviour Change Communication (BCC) for young people's sexualities is discussed. The focus of subsequent discussions will be on the structuration of sexual risk taking, the interdependent linkages among identified structural and agential influences, such that none is hierarchically superior to others. An intervention and policy recommendation is also made based on my interpretation of findings.

However, by way of a brief summary, young people are influenced by the combined operations of their context (structural conditions) and conducts (knowledge, position-practices and agency), which influence each other and sexual risk taking. Both context and conducts are significant in Nigeria because they prescribe and preserve significantly sexualized standards for social life, which are gendered and heterosexual. Young people adopt and recreate the dominant heterosexual standards for sexual risk taking with routinized and sometimes creative sexual activities, which sometimes have unintended outcome. The adaptation and recreation of risk-prone sexualities is comparable to "some self-reproducing items in nature, *and* are recursive. That is to say, they are not brought into being by social actors but continually recreated by them via the very means whereby they express themselves as actors" (Giddens, 1984, p.2).

Despite the structural influences on young people's sexuality, which are largely unintended, society generates forbidding rules and normative standards that are supposed to constrain young people's sexualities. Currently in Nigeria, the dominant adult oriented culture prescribes abstinence-until-marriage only, while modern sexual management institutions prescribe both abstinence and limited condom/contraceptive use for young people. This creates a duality of the sexual system that is concurrently forbidding and seemingly enabling of risk-prone sexualities. Thus, a contradictory and conflict-prone sexual system obtains in Nigeria, which is largely a product of

incompatible sexual mores, a paradoxically sexualized and constraining social environment.

Contradictory and dual sexual systems in turn, necessitate a creative duality of action by young people. On one hand, young people concurrently give verbal observance of appropriate sexual norms against the practice of sexual risk taking, for example, all respondents say that premarital sex is immoral. On the other, they knowledgeably and actively subvert these prohibiting norms by taking sexual risks under conditions calculated to mitigate risks, such as careful partner selection and periodic condom use. Thus sexual risk taking is performed in oppositional and active subversion of concurrent sets of constraining and enabling structural sexuality rules in Nigeria.

Consequently, the moment of sexual risk taking is paradoxically, the moment of instantiating and reproducing "the conditions that make these activities possible" (Giddens, 1984, p.2). That is, sexual risk taking is influenced by, and reproduces societal structures. This is most likely why Layder offers the opinion that "as ciphers of structural demands, people are condemned to repeat and reinforce the very conditions that restrict their freedom in the first place" (1994, p.133). These conditions for sexual risk taking are composed of recursively influential knowledge, rules and resource sets, accessible from dominant social practices and institutions in Nigeria by knowledgeable, active and purposive agents.

Nevertheless, young people's agencies and conduct of sexual risk taking is bounded. Bounded agencies are products of differential socialization, sexualisation, unequal access to structural resources and knowledge of associated sexuality rules. They are also products of race, status, socio-economic status among other social classificatory and identity assignation systems. Partly due to these latter variables, and the unacknowledged conditions of action, young people's sexualities often manifest unintended outcomes. Unintended outcomes, when they become public, reaffirm young people's social construction as at risks and risk-prone. In addition, the (un)intended outcome of their premarital sexualities normatively generate discourse, which filters sexuality back into the social structure, re-ignites sexual risk taking influences anew. Therefore, it is plausible to conclude that young people's sexual risk taking:

"is carried on by knowledgeable agents who both construct the social world through their action, but yet whose action is also conditioned and constrained by the very world of their creation" (Giddens, 1981, p.54).

Subsequent discussions will proceed under explanatory sub-headings. Section 8.2 relates the research process, dominant conception of young people's sexualities and principal findings with each other; section 8.3 discusses the impact of the dominant conceptualisation of young people's sexualities on interventions; section 8.4 deals with the explanations, for hermeneutic understandings, of the context, meanings and conduct of sexual risk taking, with notes for sexual health programmers; section 8.5 presents implications of findings on BCC; section 8.6 reviews the potentials for behaviour change among young people; section 8.7 to 8.12 presents specific, but critical policy and empirical sexual health intervention options to manage young people's sexualities based on findings and a critical reading of literature; section 8.13 recommends further research that will test conclusions and further strengthen structuration theory for empirical research.

## **8.2 The research process, dominant conception of young people's sexualities and principal findings**

As a sensitising device, structuration theory postulates structural duality, that is, a mutually (re)constitutive interrelationship between action (e.g. unprotected premarital sex) and structural influences (e.g. political economy) (see Giddens, 1979, 1984 and Chapter 2 & 3). Structuration theory, rendered more empirically amenable to research by Stones (2005) governed my data collection, analysis and synthesis of findings. In relation to data collection, my research was advanced by McCracken's (1998) long interview method. Data was collected from young Nigerian university students about their perspectives of unprotected premarital sex. Two considerations inform my approach.

The first reason is that I verified that respondents are knowledgeable about, and are sexually active. Secondly, I verified that they are able and willing to reflect upon their sexuality and discursively identify influences on, the course, benefits and costs of unprotected premarital sex, their interrelationships, and contextual rationalizations. Since "there is no 'objective' scientific analysis of culture . . . [because] . . . all knowledge of cultural reality . . . is always knowledge from particular points of view"

(Weber, 1949, p.72-81), I used a structural-hermeneutic analytical framework to make meaning of collected narratives (see Stones, 2005 and Chapter 4).

A reading of literature and public discourse indicates young people's sexual risk taking is purposeless and always risk-prone. The same reading reveals that young people's sexualities pose significant moral, social and health challenges to themselves and the general population. These readings privilege adults, but have justifiable foundations. Among these are, (1) the unspoken ideal that sex is the privilege of adults, normatively prohibited for young people who are expected to be non-sexual, despite their sexualisation, biology and agency, (2) young people's sexualities sometimes manifest negative unintended outcomes such as STIs and unwanted pregnancies, which compromise their health.

Regardless of the preceding conceptualisation, I am convinced that young people take sexual risks because they are sexualised<sup>257</sup> by structural institutions to do so, for individuated benefits. Young people's sexualisation is furthered by an eroticised public space, which is enhanced by modern egalitarian life-styles, globalisation, access to contraception and abortion. These structural variables, essentially controlled and managed by adult society, combine with young people's agencies to render impotent, erstwhile local moral-religious and modern social framework that constrains young people's sexualities. For example, unwanted pregnancy used to tarnish the image of a young woman and her family, and in most parts of Nigeria previously resulted in forced marriages. Today, unwanted pregnancy is at best a temporal inconvenience, which is easily prevented with contraceptives or terminated with illegal abortions. All respondents affirm this claim:

"I think condoms and contraceptives are not bad. But yes they have increased sexual risk taking, because girls are not as scared of pregnancy today as they were before from the stories I have heard. They know what to do when they get pregnant" (Interview 26 - Female).

"Yes, girl's ability to take care of pregnancy contributes to sexual risk taking... because these days, they are no longer afraid of

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<sup>257</sup> That is, the unintentional or purposeful teaching, learning and internalisation of sexuality through institutional practices, role modelling and observation, which underline the claim that "we all learn to be sexual within a society in which "real sex" is defined as a quintessentially heterosexual act, vaginal intercourse, and in which sexual activity is thought of in terms of an active subject and passive object" (Jackson, 1996:23).

getting pregnant or getting caught pregnant. There are so many things they do to control it before or after like using condoms or abortion" (Interview 6 - Male).

Against this backdrop, sex in Nigeria is best described as plastic (Giddens, 1992), jettisoning previous masculine control, fear of illicit pregnancy and its lineage maintenance functions. Sexuality is now the property of the individuals, dispended at will. The dominant consensus by the Nigerian adult society is that young people's sexuality is always risky - producing only negative health outcomes. Based on this categorisation of young people and their sexuality, adult society, in concert with similarly oriented local non-governmental organisations (NGOs), such as NACA, foreign non-governmental organisations<sup>258</sup> (NGOs), such as Planned Parenthood Federation of Nigeria (PPFN), bilateral agencies such as DFID and USAID, multilateral organisations, such as United Nations and WHO, evolve and deploy top-down BCC initiatives to manage young people's sexualities and the taken for granted risk outcomes.

My principal finding is that structure and agency co-produces, and recursively sustains young people's sexual risk taking. This finding corroborates Giddens' structural duality tenet (Giddens, 1979; 1984). It is also evocative of Willis' conclusion that social agents do not bear ideology (e.g. sexualisation) passively, but actively incorporate ideology in the (re)production of existing structures with resistance, struggle and a partial infiltration of influential structures (Willis, 1977, p.175). In essence, I assumed, and affirmed the structuration of young people's sexual risk taking.

The collected sexual risk narratives challenge the dominant problem behaviour and risk-prone conceptualizations of young people's sexualities. In the first instance, findings and analysis confirm Giddens' proposition of structural duality, with emphasis on a web of recursive influences, which are structural and agential in character. Young people's narratives also indicate that influences, such as gender, sexualisation and dispositions, are historically, interrelated and mutually supporting in their manifestations. The relevant structural influences that young people assigned

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<sup>258</sup> These include NACA, DFID, USAID and WHO. See list of abbreviations on page ten.

significance are the mass media, peers, reduced parental/family supervision, sexual or social exchange, and political economy and plastic sexuality. Significantly, the role of material exchanges in young Nigerian university students' sexual relations fulfils socio-economic wants and comfort, and not needs.

The agential influences include young people's positive predispositions to unprotected premarital sex, emotions, self-sexualisation, their sexual practises and the pursuit of gendered-individuated benefits. Young people's narratives also indicate they are aware of the dominant rules/norms that constrain their sexualities, which they knowledgeably circumvent. Similarly, narratives indicate young people exploit the enabling properties of structural influences as sub-cultural sexual norms, material resources, as money, and nonmaterial resources as their physical beauty and handsomeness, with agency, for unprotected premarital sex.

In relation to rules governing sexuality, young people were knowledgeable about them. According to Giddens, rules (including norms, conventions etc) are "generalizable procedures applied in the enactment/reproduction of social life" (1984, p.21). Two types of rules were found, which govern young Nigerian university students' sexual conducts. These are rules of legitimation and signification (Giddens, 1979). Rules of legitimation provide normative guidance for sexual conduct (Giddens, 1979), habituating young people, as it were, to the idea that sexual risk taking is "correct and appropriate" (Turner, 1991, p.525). The active institutions that legitimise premarital sex include the mass media, sex and the fashion industry. The institutions propagate rules, norms and conventions that structures heterosexual dating, expectations and associated activities, and vice versa. The legitimacy of heterosexual relationships and unprotected premarital sex among respondents is significant, to the extent that all respondents agree dating and associated unprotected premarital sex is inevitable and normal for young people.

The rules of signification facilitate young people's comprehension and exploitation of symbolic interpretive communication scripts for sexually interactions (see Giddens, 1979). The rules of signification for sexual risk taking include, but are not limited to, language, sexual scripts, dressing styles, sexual self-presentations and so forth. The rules of signification especially facilitate the communication of sexual intentions and

(un)availability to peers. For example, girls who do not dress trendily, who proffer religious opinions are usually not approached for dating (toasted) by males. Their dress-style and overt religiosity communicate their sexual unavailability. Male respondents generally affirm this standard for toasting and dating;

"...bros, you don't just toast anybody. The way a girl dresses and behave allow you to know if and when to toast. That is why the born-again girls don't get happening boys on campus and do it secretly in church brothers. That's what they call themselves... brothers and sisters. The way the girls dress, talk and carry bible up and down drives boys away" (Interview 51 - Male).

Female respondents generally agree with males about the sexually significant properties of fashion:

"Ok, for example, the way you dress, you know. Most of the time, what I think is comfortable for me might be too revealing to you and may make you say hey, this girl is loose. Some girls have been raped because of that. But am I responsible for the way my dress style makes you feel? I think some boys will love how you are dressed and others won't... anyway, girls dress to be attractive – I don't know (laughter)...Well, I think to some extent you are responsible for the way you behave. In another way, you are not because of your environment. For example, on campus, that is the way most happening girls dress, I mean they wear body hugging and other revealing clothes. That is the standard (Interview 46 - Female).

Respondents also utilise resources, defined by Giddens as “the media whereby transformative capacity is employed as power in the routine course of social interaction” (Giddens, 1979, p.92). That is, the ownership of resources endows the owner with relatively more power to control a social interaction such as unprotected premarital sex - than the partner who lacks the mutually valued resource. Young people acknowledge the value of resources in structuring the asymmetries of gendered power. Their narratives validate the existence of allocative and authoritative resources (see Giddens, 1979, 1984), or material and non-material resources (Sewell, 1992, p.9). Examples of allocative resources deployed for sexual interactions include money and gifts. Young male respondents deploy more of this material “capabilities which generate command over” young women (Giddens, 1979, p.100) for unprotected premarital sex.

The second class of resources are authoritative, which facilitate young people's command over peers for unprotected premarital sex. Female respondents are naturally endowed with, and are more likely to deploy authoritative “capabilities which



generate command over" males (Giddens, 1979, p.100). Authoritative resources deployed by respondents in sexual risk taking covers fields as diverse as beauty, handsomeness, charisma, sporting prowess, gregariousness, knowledge, emotions and sex. It is crucial to underline that all respondents admit they possess varying degrees of both allocative and authoritative resources, which are imperative for securing and maintaining sexual relationships. Because of the preceding point, all respondents acknowledge they "could, at any phase in a given sequence of sexual conduct, have acted differently" (Giddens, 1994:9, word in italics mine). For example, despite the potentials of abstinence and associated sanctions of social ridicule by peers, Female respondents indicate:

"you can always say no and face the consequences of saying no to your boyfriend such as quarrels or losing him to some other girl... If partners trust each other and are committed, why do they need condoms? Maybe when it's unsafe for the girl to have sex. Maybe female contraceptives. It's complicated I guess. Somehow, condoms suggest sleeping around. It is not that easy or simple. It depends on the boy and girl and the age of the relationship. In new relationships, people usually use condoms more ... I think. But the more serious and stable the relationship, people use condoms less. I think it's all about trust. Yes – trust. If you trust your partner, what do you need a condom for? (Interview 11 - Female).

For male respondents, consistent condom use or abstinence is not a realistic option because it:

"is not easy to do. It's like one of these fine girls, you have seen them now, is willing to have sex and me, I should say no (laughter). No way! ... Well, it's fun. It's pleasurable and your guys respect you. Even some girls want to date you to try you (laughter)... one can't just abstain totally. It is not an easy thing to do. When you tell some girls, I don't have condoms, wait and let me go and buy from the chemist around the corner. By the time you come back they are gone or no longer in the mood "(Interview 6 - Male).

In sum, young people's narrative accounts dialectically render diverse and competing influences on their sexuality. These include individuated benefits, emotions, social pressures from peers, the legality of unprotected premarital sex, and its normative status as legitimate social pursuit in modern society. Indeed, in response to my observation, from what you have said so far, it seems it will be impossible for a young people in this environment to avoid sexual risk taking, respondents typically observe:

"Yes I agree. Look around here, can you see how beautiful they all are...you know (laughter), and well set. So it is very difficult to just say, I will abstain.  
(Interview 31 - Male).

"It's all around ... Look around you and what you mostly see is sex, sex, sex... in different forms. Add friends, poverty and the mass media to it too and you will see why abstinence is not realistic (Interview 21 - Female).

My findings also challenge the popular representation of women as passive, exploited, disinterested in sex, and vulnerable to male sexual adventurism. Young female Nigerian university students admit they engage in dating and associated sexual activities by mostly by choice (see narrative samples below). They are thus, co-actors in initiating and sustaining scripted heterosexual dating and premarital sex rituals, for varied and often individuated reasons. For example, in response to my observation during the interview that, some people believe everyone is responsible for his or her actions ...That is, people who take sexual risks know what they are doing and can avoid it, if they so wish. What do you think? Female respondents' answers typically indicate that:

"... involving yourself in sexual activity is a personal thing. Even when friends encourage you or tend to influence you one way or another. Or you even have parents that are not there for you, to give you advise and things like that, I think it still depends on you" (Interview 41 - Female).

"... you can always say no to these things – if you really want to. But it's often difficult. Your mood and circumstances can affect your willpower, you know" (Interview 11 - Female).

Females' active role in unprotected premarital sex does not nullify claims that males dominate social life. Instead, female active roles invite a consideration that male "hegemony does not mean total cultural dominance, the obliteration of alternatives, but rather ascendancy achieved within a balance of forces, that is, a state of play" (Connell, 1987, p.184). As a result, young female Nigerian university students' narratives validate Jamieson's assertion that women have "...reflexive awareness of the malleability of the world and themselves to creating a framework of rules. The dialogue that they engage in, reworking what is fair and what is not, is a practical as well as political, sociological and philosophical piece of personal engagement" (Jamieson,1999, p.486).

In sum, my findings and analysis indicate unequivocal facts concerning young Nigerian university students' sexualities. (1) Young people are not ignorant; they know the influences on, benefits and costs of unprotected premarital sex. (2)

Unprotected premarital sex is more common than sexual abstinence and consistent condom use. (3) Unprotected premarital sex begins early, and serves varied ends. (4) Multiple and interrelated variables influence unprotected premarital sex in a gendered manner. (5) Young people will not abstain from unprotected premarital sex because it is normative within their peer groups, and they are favourably predisposed to it. (5) Poverty matters, but does not influence every young person to unprotected premarital sex. (6) Peer influence is significant, indirect, but dependent on young people's sexual predispositions. (7) The mass media is indirectly influential by normalising unprotected premarital sex. (8) The risk outcomes (STIs and unwanted pregnancies) are not common, and are easily managed with careful partner selection and medical interventions (except HIV/AIDS). (9) As a result of the preceding point, young people have low personal sexual risk perception. (10) Respondents are sexually emancipated; this influences sexual self-presentations, dating unprotected premarital sex.

Other significant findings indicate that (11) Romantic love matters – and influences female unprotected premarital sex more than males. (12) Virginity has lost its previous preferred and normative status. (13) Serial monogamy and not sexual networking is emerging as the dominant heterosexual relationship form and influences unprotected premarital sex. (14) Respondents demonstrate significant, but variable agencies in unprotected premarital sex. (15) Sexual risk taking agency is also oppositional practice. (16) Respondents will not use condom consistently because it is associated with promiscuity. (17) Condom quality in Nigeria is often suspect and contributes to young people's sexual risk exposure. (18) Unprotected premarital sex persists because it is simultaneously influenced, challenged and validated by the dominant social institutions, and because sexuality promotes continuity of social life (see Chapters 5 and 6, for detailed discussions).

Most relevant to my structuration of young people's sexual risk taking presumption is that respondents did not affirm the hierarchical superiority of any influence or a collection of influences. Respondents' narratives indicate sexual risk influences are varied, boundless, their operations interrelated, their significance variable, context and actor dependent. Respondents were knowledgeable about the interrelationships among sexual risk influences. For example, in relation to peer influence and agency, respondents affirm that:

"...no matter what they tell me, if I don't really want to do what they suggest, they can't force me" (Interview 16 - Male).

"...Look, I know most girls may lie and blame their boyfriends about their sexual... what do you call it, risks. But every girl going to visit her boyfriend knows what will happen when she gets there. So to me, if you don't want to have sex, don't go (Interview 46 - Female).

Furthermore, young people's narrative accounts inform my deductions about the existence of a sexual risk taking sub-culture, different from, but interrelated with, the dominant premarital sex constraining sexual culture in Nigeria. A sexual risks sub-culture refers to institutionalised and regularised patterns of young people's heterosexual relationships and practises traceable to symbolic structures. These structures are simultaneously enabling and constraining of the unprotected premarital sex, endowing it with subjective meaning and value. Berger and Luckmann's hypothetical depiction of the habituation and institutionalisation of interactions between two agents from different social worlds is illustrative. According to Berger and Luckmann, even though social agents' interactions are externally influenced, the sum of their interaction produces a:

"collection of reciprocally typified actions..., habitualized for each in roles, some of which will be performed separately and some in common" (Berger and Luckmann, 1966, p.74).

These collections of reciprocally typified sexual practices become institutionalised when peers and other actors internalise, adopt, adapt and transmit them through practise, instruction and discourse. From here, structural institutions, such as the mass media, legitimise the sexual practices when it is adapted for programming. Mass media programmes, the fashion and sex industry further legitimises premarital sex for young people, already positively predisposed to it. The Nigerian sexual risk sub-culture thrives because young people historically and differentially circumvent the dominant constraining sexual norms, while exploiting structural resources in a consistently similar manner (scripts) over time.

Young people's sexual interactions also occur in mutually reinforcing and influential social settings identifiable as "locales" of day-to-day practice (Giddens 1984, p.xxv). Locales influence action. For example, universities have become significant sites of

heterosexual relations and sexual risk taking for young Nigerian students because they offer increased personal freedom and scope for sexualities due to minimal family supervision, intensive peer and the mass media influences, and so forth. Their sexuality is, nonetheless, characterized by conflicting values and contradictory attitude/practices (see Smith, 2004a, b&c also). This is because young Nigerian university students daily confront the dialectical push-pull of opposing, yet non-exclusive, premarital sex promoting sub-cultural norms and the dominant premarital sex constraining norms.

Adult controlled structural institutions paradoxically propagate both sets of norms. For example, the mass media industrial marketing complexes exploit young people's sexualities to propagate and maintain modern consumerist culture. At the same time, similar sets of dominant adult institutions assume leadership of, and are outlets for communicating abstinence-until-marriage initiatives in Nigeria. There are also sexual risk supporting frameworks in folklores, idioms, modelling, instruction, discourse and interpersonal communications still prevalent in Nigeria.

All respondents acknowledge the widespread practice of unprotected premarital sex, partly because it is not illegal. It is because of this contradictory sexualisation that respondents ambivalently declare all premarital sex morally wrong, even though they admit to sexual risk taking. In addition, probably because of the preceding contradiction, young people's practice of unprotected premarital sex is often secret, outside the purview of dominant socialisation agents, such as parents, excepting peers. My interpretation of young people's contradictory narratives about the (im)morality of premarital sex adopts Berger and Luckmann's caveat that "...the sociology of knowledge must concern itself with whatever passes for 'knowledge' in a society, regardless of the ultimate validity or invalidity (by whatever criteria) of such knowledge" (Berger and Luckmann, 1966, p.15).

Young people's unprotected premarital sex also has unintended consequences in the form of STIs and unwanted pregnancies. These unintended outcomes incite negative public discourse, with inevitable calls for public health interventions. The attendant discourse and interventions attempt to promote safer sexual practices, and recently in Nigeria, mostly abstinence-until-marriage. Social discourse about young people's

sexualities and public health interventions paradoxically has the unintended effect of propagating and reinforcing old and emergent sexualities to all young people. This is why every social institution and member of society, regardless of their position on young people's sexualities, contributes to the (re)production of sexual status quo, through positions and habits that are sustained with:

“...the support of envioning conditions, a society or some specific group of fellow-men, is always accessory before and after the fact...Others approve, disapprove, protest, encourage, share and resist. Even letting a man alone is a definite response...Neutrality is non-existent” (Dewey, 1922, p.16-17).

Based on the foregoing, I argue that young Nigerian university students are neither ignorant nor social dupes. They knowledgeablely take sexual risks “...under circumstances not chosen by themselves, but ... directly encountered, given and transmitted from the past...” (Marx, 1963, p.15), which they discriminatorily internalise and navigate with intentionality based on their circumstances, for individuated and sometimes collective ends that are more positive than negative to their health and social development. Thus, the plurality of influences underline my conclusion that that sexual risk taking validate my thesis about the concurrent influence of "...meaningful actions of individual agents and the structural features of social contexts" (Held and Thompson, 1989, p.3).

### **8.3 The impact of the dominant conceptualisation of young people's sexualities on interventions**

It is obvious that current BCC interventions in Nigeria neglect the structural<sup>259</sup> sources of young people's sexualities, focussing instead, on agency-oriented interventions. That is, interventions practically focus on orchestrating sexual behaviour change among young people. This is despite the wealth of research findings on young people's sexualities in Nigeria that almost exclusively point to their structural influences. Linear conceptualisations and interventions can be excused by referencing Thompson's observation that structural institutions, which manifests as “regularised practices which are ‘deeply layered’ in time and space, both pre-exist and post-date the lives of the individuals who reproduce them, and thus may be resistant to manipulation or change by any particular agent” (Thompson. 1989, p.72-73).

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<sup>259</sup> See Izugbara, 2004; Izugbara, and McGill, 2003; Zuckerman, 1983 a&b; Caldwell, Caldwell, and Orubuloye, 1992; Caldwell, Caldwell, and Quiggin, 1989; Wood, Maforah, and Jewkes, 1998; Ankomah, 1998.

The dominant risk-prone and problem behaviour conceptualisation of young people's sexualities is not unequivocal. Young people's sexualities do not always produce negative outcomes, nor are they entirely the product of problem behaviour. This is the often under-mentioned fact of young people's sexualities. More often than not, young people's sexualities are governed by contextual external influences, internal rationalities/emotions, purposively positive personal experiences, and collaborative efforts to mitigate STIs/unwanted pregnancies. Thus, young people's sexualities produce individuated benefits<sup>260</sup> such as sexual pleasure, which is invested with negative moral value by dominant adult society for young people. In their own words, respondents essentially claim their sexuality bestows a:

“... sense of fulfilment...this ego ... when guys talk, you know, it's like, I slept with this and that girl ... they will be like ...hailing you. Correct man! Correct man! So you want to be at the apex within your friends. So you tend to go after more girls to get more stories to tell your guys” (Interview 36 - Male).

“...when you live with these people that is all they discuss everyday in hostels. I ate<sup>261</sup> this man, I ate that man and did not even sleep with him. You feel the pressure, even though you know they are lying about not sleeping with the men. If you are not discipline and greedy, you will succumb” (Interview 56 - Female).

The outcomes of young people's sexualities are nevertheless, neither always intended nor desirable. Unintended outcomes, such as STIs and unwanted pregnancies, excite negative public discourse, which necessitates top-down interventions. This process explains why unprotected premarital sex paradoxically (re)affirms and (re)produces the dominant adult construction of young people as deviants with subordinate statuses within the Nigerian socio-political and economic order. Sexual risk taking, hereafter referred to as unprotected premarital sex, therefore approximates young people's contradictory expression, (re)production and subversion of the dominant Nigerian adult privileging sexual order, which paradoxically sexualises them, but seek to instil abstinence-until-marriage norms. My principal finding is that young people navigate this contradictory sexualised environment, their subordinate statuses and unrealistic adult expectations of their sexualities with discriminatory knowledge, resource exploitation and agency.

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<sup>260</sup> In addition, young people derive benefits such as material rewards, emotional security, identity, and peer acceptance etc from their engagement in unprotected premarital sex (see chapter 5 & 6).

<sup>261</sup> Materially exploited.

Linear conceptualisations and interventions are also underscored by the presumed, but false, dichotomy between structural and agential influences (see also Chapter 2 & 3; Wendt, 1987; Giddens, 1979; 1984). Linear conceptualisations similarly re-echo Duesenberry's (1960, p.233) controversial assertion that sociology is *simply about people and why they lack choices*. Assertions, such as the preceding embodies the fallacy of mono-causality and reductionism. Linear paradigms offer little conceptual and methodological support towards isolating, describing, and explaining influences on young people's manifest sexualities, especially interrelationship between social action and influential structures.

Invariably, structural influences, such as the mass media,<sup>262</sup> or sometimes, individuated dispositions/benefits, as sensation seeking, are assigned blame for unprotected premarital sex. These deterministic and objectifying perspectives<sup>263</sup> of unprotected premarital sex suggest that social action is parallel to "the meanings it might have for human subjects, or of how it figures in their experience" (Taylor 1989, p.31). Linear perspectives similarly neglect the mutually (re)constitutive properties of structural institutions, which sexualises young people to risks, and young people's sexual agencies, which (re)constitutes structural properties. Giddens' (1979, 1984) calls this relationship between agency and structure, a duality.

#### **8.4 The context, meanings and conduct of sexual risk taking: notes for sexual health programmers**

With this study, I principally sought to uncover influences on young people's sexual risk taking. A secondary question, which is often marginalized by sexuality studies, is "what benefits young people perceive to be associated with" sexual risk taking (Denscombe, 2001, p.159). Young people's responses indicate pride and general satisfaction with the content of their sexual relations, especially their capacities to enter, manage associated issues and exit heterosexual relationships. Nevertheless, young people also indicate that heterosexuality thrives in an environment of old and emergent risks, which are simultaneously social and medical, individually and

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<sup>262</sup> Chandra, et al (2008, p.1052) find that "frequent exposure to sexual content on television predicts early pregnancy, even after accounting for the influence of a variety of other known correlates of each." Unwanted pregnancies are examples of the negative outcome of young people's sexual risk taking. They are often terminated with even riskier medical procedures.

<sup>263</sup> Scholarly neglect to specify the interrelationships and interdependencies of society and action in sexual reproductive health literature, such as Caldwell et al (1989; 1992) that principally influenced my researching the topic.



collectively experienced. They include STIs, contraceptives failures, unwanted pregnancies, abortion, emotional turmoil, tarnished reputations and interrupted transition into productive adults.

These risks have homeostatic loops (Giddens, 1984) and thrive despite a plethora of sexual health advice, knowledge, safety practices and commodities available in post-modernity. Concurrently, the individuated and collective benefits that young people derive from sexual risk taking are varied and numerous. Among these are sexual pleasure, peer reverence/approval and securing potential future marriage partners. Significantly, young people narrate interrelated tales about the enduring relationships between their sexual risk taking, self and peer identities. Apparently, sexual risk taking is an important component of modern social pursuits, associated with personal identity construction *projects* in a risk infused post-modernist world (Nielsen & Rudberg, 1994; see also Giddens, 1991; Beck, 1992).

Nevertheless, personal identity construction projects, including heterosexual relationships, are executed within the opportunities and constraints presented by societal structures, which are "shifting sands on which to build a personal identity" (Macionis & Plummer, 2002, p.168). All personal identity projects have variable sources, meanings and impacts, which are linkable to structural rules and resources, such as norms, conventions, trends, class, religion political economy etc. Interestingly, young people are "more adept at and more willing than adults, to experiment with their identities, no matter what boundaries... of identity may appear to constrain them" (Miles et al., 1998, p.83). The issue of sexual identity merits further illumination. Weeks is of the opinion that:

"identity is about belonging, about what you have in common with some people and what differentiates you from others. At its most basic, it gives you a sense of personal location, the stable core to your individuality. But it is also about your social relationships, your complex involvement with others" (Weeks, 1991, p.88).

Normatively condemned heterosexual relationships, with significant sexual risk taking content, are trendy and important identities that young people treasure and pursue. According to respondents:

"I know my family will prefer I abstain...but my friends...they will hail me! (laughter)" (Interview 1 - Male).

Similarly, a female respondent insist:

"Oh, yes. My family will disapprove because it means I am sexually active and not a good girl anymore. But my friends will not" (Interview 11 - Female).

The foregoing summation is of significance to my study and holds up to both external<sup>264</sup> and internal<sup>265</sup> social science critique, which neither privileges structure nor agency. Among its implications, in structurationist terms, are (1) that societal structures concurrently present young people with constraints and opportunities for sexual identity formation and performance. (2) That variable agencies and purposive action are additionally influential. With variable agencies and purposive action<sup>266</sup>, young people strive daily to construct complex identities, including their sexual identities. Young people's sexual identities are in conflict with another important identity they pursue. Despite their sexual activities, they wish to be perceived by adults as good, obedient and responsible.

Their sexual risk narratives are designed to assert oppositional sexual independence, yet characterize themselves as proper or desirable beings (Goffman, 1975; 1959). This latter category of young people's sexual risk taking accounts contradict the dominant positivist and epidemiologically problematized accounts<sup>267</sup> of young people as purposeless risk takers and hedonists. This dominant societal posture is a definite barrier to young people's sexual behaviour change. It renders premarital sex as a dominantly oppositional activity, often practiced in secret – away from adult knowledge. Unfortunately, Nigerian adults ascribe obedience and responsibility to young people who ideally abstain from premarital sex, or in reality, manage to keep it secret.

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<sup>264</sup> "Critique of lay agents' beliefs and practices, derived from the theories and findings of the social science" (Giddens, 1984, p.374).

<sup>265</sup> "The critical apparatus of social science, whereby theories and findings are subjected to evaluation in the light of logical argument and the provision of evidence" (Giddens, 1984, p.375).

<sup>266</sup> Purposive and active agency "concerns events of which an individual is the perpetrator, in the sense that the individual could, at any phase in a given sequence of conduct, have acted differently" (Giddens, 1994,p.9). It is unequivocal that young people can act differently and not take sexual risks by practicing abstinence or safer sex with condoms and contraceptives.

<sup>267</sup> Carter observes that adult societal problematisation of young people's sexualities begs the question of whether sexual risk taking ceases immediately we become adults (1993).

Concurrently, young people wish to be perceived by their peers as trendy. The mass media collude with peers to create dynamic, yet entrenched standards for being trendy. One important feature of being trendy practically requires heterosexual relationships and sexual activity. In addition, young people as social and biological beings have felt needs, which as situated and purposive agents, they strive to meet with sexual risk taking. The preceding are some of the complex considerations that influence sexual risk taking, which are not necessarily compatible with dominant abstinence-until-marriage norms in Nigeria. In consequence, young people take sexual risks mostly away from home, parents, significant adults and religious leaders' purview. This has implications for their sexual health status, social wellbeing, emotions and constructed identities as sexual risk takers.

Young people's sexual risk taking accounts also illuminate the related matter of safe sexualities, which is often associated with consistent condom use. Safe sex, for my respondents, does not equate consistent condom use. Instead, safe sex is intricately interwoven with imperfect knowledge<sup>268</sup> of fertility control, lust, self/partners sexual histories and felt needs like pleasure or social esteem. For my respondents, safe sexual practices are mediated by commitment, trust and love, dominant and oppositional conventions on heterosexual practice. Thus, the more urgent risks associated with unprotected premarital sex for respondents lies more with the:

"proximal risk of sullied reputation, which may be exacerbated through the process of obtaining condoms and, by association, planning for sex" (Hillier, et al., 1998, p.16), rather than consistent condom use.

The neglect of these variables is the most logical explanation for the pervasive KAP-gap in Nigeria. It may also account for young people's creative elevation of trust, commitment and fidelity as protective factors against STIs. Trust, according to young people:

"is the only way you can protect yourselves from disease in a relationship" (Interview 21 - Female).

"well... its about trust. You cannot plan a future with someone you don't trust. And when you trust a girl and you are already having

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<sup>268</sup>This is principally due to the twin variables of unacknowledged conditions of action, inadequate information and evolving contexts. Knowledge approximates "everything which actors know (believe) about the circumstances of their action and that of others, drawn upon in the production and reproduction of that action, including tacit as well as discursively available knowledge" (Giddens, 1984, p.375).

sex, what is the need of a condom. Except when she is not safe of course!" (Interview 36 - Male).

Furthermore, respondents indicate that sexual relationships are predominantly heterosexual. In addition, they maintain that their sexual relationships are important components of self-actualisation and social life (being in the world), which are normatively value laden, challenging, risk-prone, individual and collectively enacted, rewarding, demanding, wholesome and sometimes fragmentary. Sexual influences, according to young people, are varied and ubiquitous. These are composed of complex, interrelated contextual and conduct cues. Among these are the mass media, peers, political economy, and socialization among other influences. These influences are embedded in, and are contradictorily communicated by the significant constituents of the Nigerian structure, such as the mass media,<sup>269</sup> family socialization and peers to both young males and females. Accordingly, young people are convinced (position-practices) that sexual risk taking is inevitable because sex is:

"everywhere. It is something that is everywhere. I don't know. Youths, they just get so ...into things and they just want to experiment and start. And once they do it once, ha! Its difficult to stop" (Interview 21 - Female).

"... most people have this feeling that, for example, I am going out with a girl and I am telling the girl I will like to abstain from sex as long as the relationship will go. Maybe the girl will think that I don't trust her, (2) ...I don't love her, (3) maybe I have biological dysfunctions - my manhood is not functioning properly - impotence and all that, maybe I am not bold to express my masculinity and all those stuff" (Interview 1 - Male).

Thus, young people in Nigeria daily confront opportunities and constraints for sexual risk taking. Among these influences are gender asymmetries, which are concurrently part of the structural constraints and opportunities. The influence of gender and other influences are however, mediated by young people's general dispositional cognitive frames and conjuncturely specific knowledge of contextual heterosexuality. These variables in turn, combine with young people's differential felt-needs and agencies to sustain normative heterosexuality, and paradoxically, the dominant gender structures. One contextually meaningful goal and imperative, worthy of note by sexual

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<sup>269</sup>"Sexuality generates pleasure, and pleasure, or at least the promise of it, provides an irresistible leverage for marketing goods and services in a capitalist society. Sexual imagery appears almost everywhere in the marketplace as a sort of gigantic selling ploy; the commodifying of sex, it might be argued, is a means of diverting the mass of the population from their true needs, whatever these are thought to be" (Giddens, 1992, p.176). In addition, commodified and ubiquitous sexuality also furthers hedonic consumer socialization, the creation/exploitation of markets, people, capital and environment.

interventionists, is that the conduct of sexual risk taking is perceived by young people as preparatory enactment of future marriage roles. According to respondents:

"... especially for girls like me in final year. The same family that wanted you to avoid boys will suddenly start asking you if you have somebody to marry. Arranged marriages are dead. Where will you get that somebody if you haven't been dating boys?" (Interview 46 - Female).

Young people's sentiment is confirmed by related literature, which indicates that:

"A mature, but unmarried (wo)man is viewed with suspicion and often precluded from occupying certain social positions. He is also viewed as irresponsible and perhaps even a 'homosexual.' ... In the Eastern zone the consequences of not marrying are very serious for a man. He is forbidden to hold certain titles and in the event of his death, he cannot be buried like a married man" (SSRHRN, 2001, p.102; word in parenthesis mine).

The collected narratives also indicate young people's skill at resisting, adopting, adapting and sustaining gendered structures. Curiously, young female respondents seem to progressively adopt erstwhile hegemonic male sexual attitudes in pursuit of pleasure, and give creatively qualified accounts of sexual responsibility. For example, in response to the question, *is fair to say that you are responsible for all your sexual practices*, answers suggest young females are responsible:

"yes - because you can always say no and face the consequences of saying no to your boyfriend such as quarrels or losing him to some other girl. (Interview 11 - Female).

On the other hand, the same respondent reinforces this point elsewhere during the interview that:

"well, only a foolish girl will think a boy is toasting her for laughs. Sex is part of it and most girls know this... Except for rape" (Interview 11 - Female).

I argue that young females exploit the prevalent hegemonic exploitative masculinity discourse to acknowledge responsibility, ambiguously, for sexual risk taking. In relation to males and hegemonic masculinity, I expected they will take sole responsibility for sexual risk taking as signs of leadership and control of heterosexuality, and by extension young females. In contrast, males unequivocally, perhaps democratically, assert that responsibility for sexual risk taking is shared. The reasons for male seeming democratic opinions can be speculated upon. These may range from a need to partially divest responsibility for, and/or an actual conviction that young females actually share responsibilities for sexual risk taking. This latter

motive sound more logical, for males sharing responsibilities for risk-prone sexualities, based on my recollection of their demeanour. Thus:

"... in terms of pregnancy and disease, I think both parties are responsible...because what affects one affects the other" (Interview 36 - Male).

In consonance with male respondents' *democratic* opinions, the same male respondent elaborates his earlier point elsewhere:

"... every youth is responsible for the sexual risks they take... if you want to get bad or if you want to be corrupted, you get corrupted. That's my opinion. So you wont say this person pushed me...the person didn't actually tie your hand. You thought about it and you did it. Unless you were drugged or drunk, then you can say, okay, I was drugged so I was not in my right senses. But if you are in your conscious sense and you did it, you can't say anybody pushed you. You should be responsible for what you did" (Interview 36 - Male).

Based on respondents reasoning, I argue that respondents take responsibility for their unprotected premarital sex and do not cast themselves as reckless risk takers or victims. Instead, they employ reflexive constructions of the self to interpret their risk-prone sexualities as inevitable, based on the prevalent global and local sexuality influences, personal projects, themes and plots (Barbieri, 1998, p.371). It is important to stress that young people's sexual risk biographies are narrated in knowledgeable<sup>270</sup> *clustered framework of frames*, which affirm their deep awareness of contextual structures that "help constitute and regulate activities, defining them as activities of a certain sort and as subject to a given range of sanctions" (Giddens, 1984, p.87). Sexual risk taking or premarital sex is one such activity. Although the dominant Nigerian culture defines young people's sexual activity as immoral, risk-prone and evolves a wide range of social sanctions<sup>271</sup> to mitigate it, its practice is normative in Nigeria because it is influenced young people's context, conducts and moderated by multiple needs. Thus, unprotected premarital sex is conducted:

"for so many reasons. Spur of the moment thing, affection, love, to please my boyfriend, when I have the urge etc. It depends. It's like some factors may be important today and others tomorrow" (Interview 46 - Female).

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<sup>270</sup> "Everything which actors know (believe) about the circumstances of their action and that of others, drawn upon in the production of that action, including tacit as well as discursively available knowledge" (Giddens, 1984, p.375).

<sup>271</sup> These include forced marriage, limited freedom, verbal condemnation, tarnished reputations, social stigma and discrimination.

Furthermore, contrary to hegemonic masculine dictates, young males ambivalently present themselves in stereotypically female fashion of care, support and collaboration. Varied global/local sexual tales and plots probably influence these posturing (see Gergen & Gergen, 1988). More importantly, young females especially reward (with more intercourse) male care, support and collaboration more than male emotional detachment. Thus, sexually successful males (*happening guys*) increasingly adopt repertoires of these so-called feminine performative tales and plots in pursuit of females. By so doing, young males concurrently challenge, reaffirm and (re)interpret hegemonic sexualities. They do this by creatively picking and choosing "from what is experientially available ... the storytelling process is both actively constructive and locally constrained" (Holstein & Gubrium, 2000, p.103). In essence, young people sexual risk taking requires the "taking up of the tools where they lie, where the very 'taking up' is enabled by the tool lying there" (Butler, 1999: p.145).

Consequently, my thesis is about young people's attempt to identify and explain their taking up of sexual risk performance tools from where they lie in society. Their explanations are for our understanding of the structuration of sexual risk taking and the importance of the latter to felt needs and situated *identities* (Frank, 2000). By so doing, they concurrently validate and challenge the dominant adult construction and perception of them as at-risk or risk-prone by employing multiple, and often-inconsistent gendered accounts of sexual risk taking (see Tuffin, et al., 2002).

Nevertheless, embedded in female narratives are suggestions of powerlessness to contain both masculine and feminine sexualities. I argue that this tendency is a product of knowledgeable and creative feminine exploitation of dominant social discourse about female powerlessness and hegemonic masculinity. Concurrently, the same narratives ambivalently point to increasingly empowered and proud individuals, who are responsibility, have secured oppositional autonomy from parents, and have capacities for individual/collective action with boyfriends, in pursuit of contextually and socially desirable ends. In this regard, young people consider their sexual relationships appropriate and beneficial because:

" we often meet our future partners in school. Other than that, there is the feeling of being loved, affection, emotional, comfort and sometimes financial support that you get from a boyfriend. I told

you sex is calming for me. I guess it's like rehearsing for your future roles" (Interview 11 - Female).

"Beneficial will be in terms of the pleasure they derive from it for the males. The feelings for the females. For girls, beneficial will be in terms of having somebody who cares and loves them. Some of these relationships actually end in marriage that will be beneficial too" (Interview 16 - Male).

Young people also indicate the impossibility of conforming to the dominant adult society expectations and prescriptions for sexual abstinence. Young people depict adult construction of their sexual relationships as lacking in understanding, laden with unrealistic sexual abstinence expectations, instructions, yet minimal parental supervision. Nevertheless, all respondents agree with dominant adult prescription that sexual abstinence is the best way to avoid STIs, unwanted pregnancies and emotional turmoil associated with heterosexual relationships. Concurrently, respondents indicate that sexual abstinence is not a realistic option for them because of its ubiquitous influences and varied benefits. Consequently, they take sexual risks. Critically, young people insist that their oppositional sexualities<sup>272</sup> do not mean they have a death wish, and are disobedient, immoral or irresponsible. For example:

"your parents keep saying don't do it, you are like, what is even so wrong with it - if everybody is doing it? Of course, you won't tell them you are doing it or when you are in trouble" (Interview 46 - Female).

"I don't believe that *something must kill a man thing* that you read in books. Nobody wants to die. People just want to have fun. It is just unfortunate that ehmn... this dreaded virus is happening in our time" (Interview 6 - Male).

Essentially, my study uncovers a number of instructive features of young people's sexualities. The first is that young people's narratives did not corroborate the pervasive assertion that "cultural practices ... gave men the exclusive right to decide when, how and why to have sex with women in or out of marriage" (Dowuna, 2005, online). The second is that gender properties, such as femininity and masculinity, are

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<sup>272</sup> To the dominant Nigerian culture prescribed abstinence-until-marriage.



mutually interdependent constituents of societal structures, combining<sup>273</sup> with other constituents of the structure, such as the mass media, peer influence and so on, to recursively generate contextually meaningful sexuality rules (norms), sanctions/challenges, resources, behaviour and rewards. Young people variably<sup>274</sup> penetrate these structures with knowledge, motive and opportunity in manners that emphasize their concurrently constraining and enabling nature.

Simultaneously, young people are acutely aware of the risks associated with their sexualities, especially its immediate, long-term consequences and management options. Sexual partners, more often than not, manage unintended outcomes of sexual risk taking, such as STIs and unwanted pregnancies. Mostly, males provide the resources to manage these unintended outcomes, such as illegal abortion medically. Young people also indicate that unintended outcomes, such as STIs and unwanted pregnancies, are major sources of heterosexual relationship break-ups – including associated emotional turmoil. Thus, it is not in their interests to contract STIs or for their partner to get pregnant. They consequently deploy varied tactics and strategies, such as careful partner selection and periodic condom use, to reduce sexual risk occurrence. This particular point negates the popular construction of young people as feeling invulnerable.

Although female respondents worry<sup>275</sup> more about unwanted pregnancies and males about STIs, sexual partners mutually manage these unintended outcomes of sexual risk taking. A key resource in managing these unintended outcomes is the proliferation in society of STI and pregnancy mitigation technologies and products – including illegal abortion. In this regard, all respondents insist that plastic sexuality (Giddens, 1992), or:

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<sup>273</sup> I find several influences imperative to this development. I categorize these after Stones, (2005) as external (mass media), internal (predispositions e.g. sexy dressing/behaviour), purposive agency (toasting/acceptance) and discursive/experiential outcomes of sexual risk taking (e.g. sexual pleasure; see chapter six and seven for detailed discussions). These combine to recursively influence and sustain young people's risk-prone sexualities. For example, significant early physical, and sexual, maturity of young people, reduced age of menarche, fashion, music and increasing ineffectuality of parents and society to contain premarital sex, changing parenting styles and the dictates of modern political economy differentially combine to influence risk-prone sexualities.

<sup>274</sup> "The nature of the constraints to which individuals are subject, the uses, to which they put the capacities they have and the forms of knowledgeability they display are all themselves historically variable" (Giddens, 1984, p.219).

<sup>275</sup> Female respondents worry about unwanted pregnancies, more than males because unwanted pregnancies are visible unequivocal evidence of sexual risk taking, which they bear alone. Males, in turn, worry more about STIs, such as gonorrhoea, because it manifests earlier in males than females.

"the ability to take care of pregnancy contributes to sexual risk taking... because these days, they are no longer afraid of getting pregnant or getting caught pregnant. There are so many things they do to control before or after like using condoms or abortion" (Interview 6 - Male).

"you have condoms, contraceptives, pills etc personally; I think natural method is safer and better. If all fails, you have abortion as the last resort" (Interview 46 - Female).

Gendered, but cooperative roles in the management of STIs, unwanted pregnancies and even the threat of break-up conforms with Douglas' observation that "no one takes a decision that involves costs without consulting neighbours, family, work, friends" (1992, p.12) and sexual partners. It also supports young people's argument that sexual partners are mutually responsible for sexual risk taking. Thus, young people's management of unintended outcomes of sexual risk taking is governed by the assumption of, and the practice of mutual, albeit gendered accountability, for unintended outcomes. In essence young people's exercise of sexual autonomy is variable and is bounded the fear of STIs, unwanted pregnancies, emotional turmoil/heartbreaks and social condemnation by adults. Thus, even though respondents ambivalently invoke a sense of relative safety in committed relationships, they are aware that premarital sex is risky and associated with:

" Unwanted pregnancies, disease etc. Some future prospects may be ruined if you are not careful" (Interview 11 - Female).

"...detrimental in many ways, basically the STI. And you have some youths who are forced to give-up their dreams when children come along, because there are some girls who strictly stand against abortion. They rather keep the child themselves and cut you out of the picture rather than abort the pregnancy" (Interview 16 - Male).

Concurrently, respondents realise that sexual abstinence:

"... is important because that way you will avoid all sexual health risks and pregnancy... Yes, it's better but not easy to abstain" (Interview 46 - Female).

Others suggest matrimony may be a panacea:

"Ehmn... unless you are married, all unprotected sex is risky... you cannot really know the other person well. So having sex without protection could be risky. But you know they say if you have anybody, maybe a girlfriend, you people should go for HIV/AIDS screening regularly and all that. But you see that most people don't like going for the screening and all that and just say I trust the girl. But we all know that it is risk you are taking when you have sex with her without using your condoms" (Interview 6 - Male).

The similarities between male and female sexual risk taking narrative accounts are significant. The correlations are significant enough to warrant an inference that is a

sexual risk taking subculture, common to successive generations of young people in Nigeria (time-space distancing<sup>276</sup>). However, this subculture has variable individual manifestations. Yet, respondents interviewed are aware of this sexual risk taking subculture, how it is defined, and how it defines young people. For example, responding to the question, *are any of your peers in a non-sexual relationship?* Young people's answers typically indicate:

"I don't know any who is. Wait, I hope you do not believe all these abstinence thing that people talk about everyday. That is just talk" (Interview 11 - Female).

"None sexual relationship? (Long laughter). That is grammar. Even your girlfriend will think your thing is not working! Unless you are a *slacker* or can't toast...even ugly girls have boyfriends" (Interview 3 - Male).

Nevertheless, respondents' concurrent performance, practical attempts to mitigate sexual risks, and their rationalization of it is variously gendered, egalitarian, transformational and postmodernist in nature. These position-practices are influences of young people's external/internal socialization/sexualisation, which builds their positive general and conjuncturally specific dispositions towards sexual risk taking. In turn, young people take sexual risks with purposive and active agency - in pursuit of contextual, personal and collectively meaningful outcomes. More importantly, young people's sexual practices are increasing marked by a flexible ascription, adoption, rejection, adaptation and construction of gendered sexual identities. The active and purposive agency component of sexual risk taking renders sexuality transformational, "very public" (Connell, 1987, p.185) and compelling (Bamberg, 2004; Bucholtz, 1999; Kiesling, 2006) in Nigeria.

This deduction raises important caveat about the fashionable calls to address masculinity in the quest for solutions for STIs, unwanted pregnancies and other feminine vulnerabilities via empowerment and enhanced contraceptive use (see Adewuyi, et al., 2005; Adeyefa et al., 2004; Isiugo-Abanihe, 2003; United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), 2001b; SSRHN, 1999; Feyisetan, Oyediran, & Ishola, 1998). Such calls, among other things, exaggerate women's internalization of

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<sup>276</sup> The stretching of social systems across times-space, on the basis of social and system integration (Giddens, 1984, p.377). Social systems, to reiterate an earlier point, "regularised patterns of interaction involving individuals and groups; they are not structures in themselves, but ...'have' structures, in the sense that they are structured by rules and resources" employed by social agents for action (Thompson, 1989, p.60, original italics).

normative feminine socialization (see Miller, 2001<sup>277</sup>) and the enduring control that hegemonic masculinity exercises on sexual risk taking.

It also ignores the "theory of action which recognizes human beings as knowledgeable agents, reflexively monitoring the flow of interaction with one another" (Giddens, 1984, p.30). Although the logic of masculine recruitment for change remains appealing, the sad reality is that beneficiaries of structural gender asymmetries do not voluntarily<sup>278</sup> relinquish their privilege, regardless of any persuasion method adopted. Change, wherever it occurs, is either catastrophic or incremental. I favour the incremental change, which is more sustainable and flows from bottom-up subversive challenge to gender and other structural asymmetries (see Butler, 2005; 1997). Incremental subversive change is possible despite the fact that:

"the distribution of power in a relationship may be asymmetrical, ... an agent always maintains some control in the relationship and may avoid complete subjugation" (Dear & Moos, 1994, p.9).

One example of subversive change is young females' covert use of female condoms, if it is readily available and they are willing to use them. Female respondents' maintain that most males will not "notice the use of female condoms, because they get carried away a lot (laughter)" (Interview 2 - Female). More realistically, even though the ambitious goal of reducing STIs and unwanted pregnancy should not rest on one gender alone, the safe sexual practices of one partner alone, even though secret, can mitigate STIs and unwanted pregnancies in this era of HIV/AIDS. As a result, rather than fighting the gender wars<sup>279</sup> while HIV/AIDS rages, I feel emphasis should be placed on empowering more of the *so-called subordinated* females with condoms, contraceptives and sexual negotiation skills.

Three reasons inform my approach. (1) Young females inordinately bear the burden of STIs and unwanted pregnancies than young males. (2) Young females interviewed seem excessively beholden to their male sexual partners for fertility and STI control. (3) Young females also hold incorrect notions about contraceptives such as "... I

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<sup>277</sup> Miller's work is related to gender and crime.

<sup>278</sup> Sibley emphasised this opinion that "practitioners who have more of it (power and privilege) have the capacity to marginalize or exclude the work of dissenters" (Sibley, 1995, p.115; words in parenthesis mine).

<sup>279</sup> The gender war will be with us for a while.

don't use modern contraceptives. They can affect your reproductive system negatively... I mean, they stop you from becoming pregnant when you finally want to" (Interview 46 - Female). Having shown that sexual risk taking, like gender, is rooted on performativity (Butler, 1997a&b), sexual health interventions should enhance the capacities of 'oppressed individuals' in their daily acts, to incrementally erode the so-called hegemonic gendered power and maximise optimal sexual health (see Butler, 2005, p.1997).

However, a substantive path towards sexual health safety is to promote parallel safer sexualities to young males and females. None should depend exclusively on the other for their sexual health. The effectiveness of interventions however, will depend on the hermeneutic considerations of the discussed contingencies of young people's context, conducts and heterosexual relationship needs. It will also depend on the recognition and incorporation of lessons discernable from the preceding discussions into sexual intervention planning, execution and monitoring. Although young people will not be spoken down to in paternalism, they recognise the benefits of interventions, such as the social marketing of condoms, contraceptives and associated communications. For example, social marketing-led awareness campaigns seem to be:

"... working, because people are trying to run some programmes for people to know their HIV status at the same time, how the ...diseases are contracted. So people now think and watch ... before jumping into ...relationship. So it's having a good effect on the general public" (Interview 31 - Male).

Young people are also willing and able to seek out sexual health and advice from varied sources, including the mass media, peers and the internet. The detail programming implications of these findings, and by extension my recommendations, is too complex to be dealt with herein. It is complex enough to be the subject of another study. Nevertheless, eight key points are worthy of note by sexual health interventions:

1. There are multiple sexualities, and they are all practiced in within the paradox of freedom and repression, pleasure and danger.
2. Young people derive a sense of autonomy, responsibility and take pride in their sexual relationships. They are hardly ashamed of it.

3. There are multiple and diverse influences on manifest sexualities among which is societal structures such as the mass media and young people's purposive, active and variable agencies.
4. Young people are significantly knowledgeable about the both the negative outcome of their sexual activity, such as STIs, and positive benefits, such as sexual pleasure.
5. Young people are not fatalistic – they currently deploy multiple strategies, albeit imperfectly, to mitigate sexual risks.
6. There is an opening for the promotion of female condoms and general contraceptive usage, which is very low among respondents.
7. Emotions, such love, matter in sexual risk taking. They should be considered important variables when planning interventions.
8. There is also an opening for promoting condom use to males as signs of leadership, love and responsibility in relationships.

These critical findings ought to inform dialogic interventions and communications<sup>280</sup> devoid of top-down models, which are synonymous with current sexual health interventions in Nigeria. Dialogic interventions and communications are underlined by a lack of teaching, lecturing, moralizing and sermonizing approaches to sexual reproductive health management. Both young people and programme managers must periodically switch roles listening, questioning, telling stories, learning, evolving and executing agreed strategies and tactics. The outlined considerations ought to be borne in mind when reading the subsequent public policy and programme prescriptions, which I will make. This inevitably includes social marketing, adjudged by respondents as a relatively useful sexual information and commodities source.

### **8.5 Implications of discussions on Behaviour Change Communication (BCC)**

Since my PhD is in Development Studies, it will be negligent to overlook making practical policy, programme and interventions recommendations, which are informed by my findings. However, my recommendations will be cursory. This is because, (1) the core focus of my thesis is the collection and analysis of 'young people's perspectives' of sexual risk taking influences using a complex, but rewarding, structuration theory as a sensitizing guide, (2) space limitations imposed by external standards for thesis examination.

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<sup>280</sup> Detailed dialogic approaches are complex and warrant independent study.

Sub-culturally speaking, it is normal, not promiscuous, for young people to engage in unprotected premarital sex. In other words, “young people have always had sex ... It does not matter what adults think. They will always have sex” (Interview 11-Female). The reasons for this state of affairs are varied, contextual and personality dependent. Young people’s practice of sexual risk taking and associated discourse are historically constituted by their different circumstances, agencies, and structural institutional rules/resources from fields as diverse as family, mass media religion, law, marketing/advertising, medicine, and academic research (see Hawkes, 1996 for discussions).

Five implications of my conceptualisation of young people's sexualities are discernable. The first is that stakeholders of young people's sexualities, especially the adult controlled and oriented society, must accept partial responsibility for maintaining a sexualised environment and nurturing young people in it. The second is that reducing or mitigating the negative consequences of young people's sexualities will not be enough, it will also be necessary to address their individual/sub-cultural meanings and structural influences because they are all interrelated. The third is that mitigating sexual risk taking, in the long run, will require the (re)activation and (re)imposition of reactionary moral-religious-legal frameworks that are incompatible with modern human rights projects. The fourth is that alternative frameworks will be needed to synergise divergent young people's sexual health stakeholder values and interests. The fifth is that stakeholders must also accept that long-term mitigation of sexual risks will require more global action than local, because young people everywhere seem united by similar influences and practices courtesy of the global media.

As a result, despite current BCC initiatives, there remain a need for realistically applicable sexual health interventions, which reflect young people’s conception and practise of premarital sex. I further propose that BCC initiatives take cognisance of the structural and agential sources of young people’s sexualities. Sexual healthcare delivery systems must also assume the dynamic and mobile character of its young beneficiaries. It should be readily available, confidential, and preferably initiated, managed and tracked electronically, for anonymity, in addition to fixed-site services. Furthermore, young Nigerian university students’ sexual risk taking accounts indicate

an emerging shift towards serial monogamy.<sup>281</sup> This is a relatively healthier option than sexual networking, although still risk-prone. Serial monogamy also indicates that young people have a propensity to adopt healthier sexual behaviours, but exclude sexual abstinence as an option. Serial monogamy is principally driven by young people's fear of contracting HIV/AIDS, and is governed by sexual partners' egalitarian practice of mutual fidelity, periodic condom and abstinence, all imperative for positive sexual health.

Premarital sex, within a serial monogamy<sup>282</sup> (Rubin, 1991) is more appealing to young people and fit their prevalent sexual practice more than abstinence-until-marriage prescriptions currently dominating BCC in Nigeria. Adaptation of positive and prevailing sexual practices for BCC is probably what Dowsett, (1999) meant by varied and safe sexual culture. The promotion of varied and safe sexual culture is particularly important in an era of rapid urbanisation, population growth and diversity, where linear perspectives, as problem behaviour and the interventions they inform, will be of limited utility to manage the negative unintended outcomes of young people's sexualities.

### **8.6 The potentials for behaviour change by young people**

The finding that young people take, and will continue to take sexual risks, does not suppose young people are incapable of behaviour change, or that sexual health interventions are futile. Caldwell et al., (1992b), optimistically stipulate three conditions that will facilitate strategic mitigation of HIV/AIDS and its impact on sub-Saharan Africa. The conditions are still relevant today and include, (1) innovative advancement, including need-related pricing and widespread distribution of biomedical/vaccines, (2) extensive behaviour change and, (3) HIV/AIDS burnout.<sup>283</sup> None of these conditions have been realised by 2008, sixteen years later, in sub-Saharan Africa. Option (1) and (3) are not realistically viable for Africa for four

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<sup>281</sup> See Rubin, (1991) "Erotic Wars" for discussions of term based on her study of the sexual meanings and lives of Americans.

<sup>282</sup> Serial monogamy approximates maintaining one sexual relations at a time. See Rubin, (1991), *Erotic wars: what happened to the sexual revolution?* 1<sup>st</sup> Harper Perennial ed, for detail discussions.

<sup>283</sup> That is, HIV/AIDS has not reached its prevalence peak, after which it declines.



interrelated reasons.<sup>284</sup> In relation to option (3), it is not likely that HIV/AIDS will burnout soon because it is yet to peak in Nigeria.

Regardless of the preceding, Caldwell and colleagues (1992b) proposition of a possibility of extensive behaviour change, currently evolving in Nigeria, seems the most promising and cost-effective option. Significantly, the possibility of extensive behaviour change underlines the agency component of all sexual behaviours, which in concert with structural institutions account for young people's sexual risk taking. Agency components of sexual risk taking are emphasized probably because structural institutions are intractable to change (see Thompson. 1989, p.72-73), not easily amenable to change, on the short term. This limits the effectiveness of multisectoral strategies.<sup>285</sup> For example, it is not currently conceivable that the mass media, industrial stakeholders and gatekeepers may be persuaded to exclude sexual content from programmes and advertisements. This is because sex and sexuality is the major driver of modern consumerist economies.

### **8.7 Engaging business in BCC via social marketing**

In Nigeria recent research indicates “that the understanding and practise of CSR in Nigeria is still largely philanthropic and altruistic...This finding is in many ways at variance with the current understanding and practice of CSR in Western economies, where CSR is argued to have ‘advanced’ beyond philanthropy” (Amaeshi, et al., 2006, p.31). Thus, the dominant conceptions of CSR in Nigeria cast it as incidental to the business mission of sustainable profits. This perspective is gradually undergoing revision with an articulation of a dialectically variable conception of CSR (Moon 2002). In line with the dialectically variable conception, CSR need not be incidental to corporate missions. CSR should be an integral part of enlightened business interest

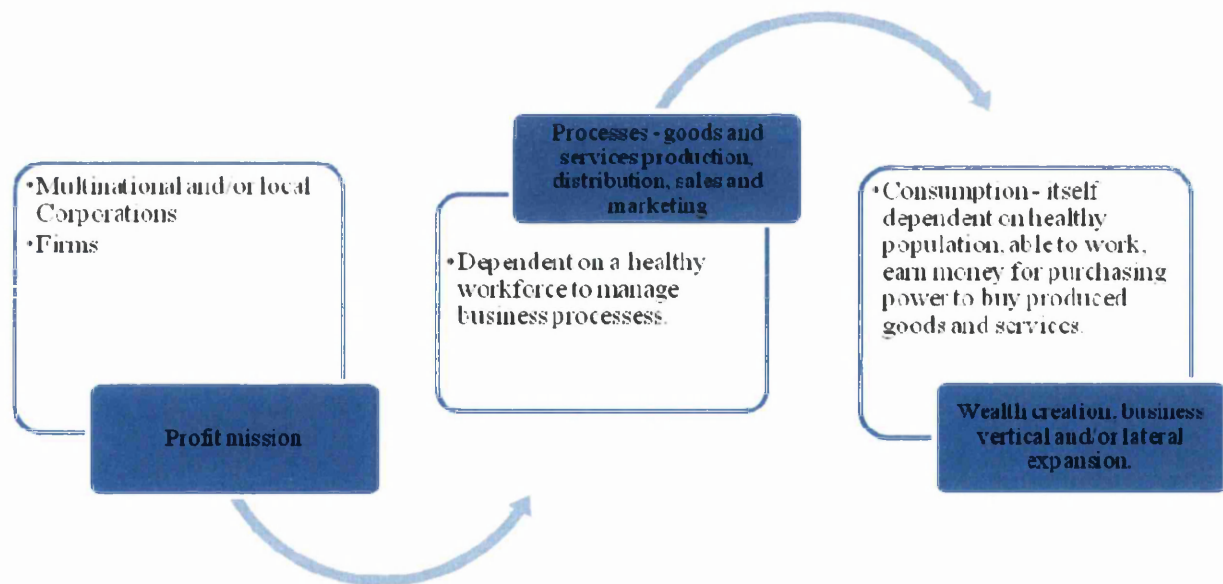
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<sup>284</sup> Firstly, Nigeria has poor primary and secondary healthcare infrastructure to sustainably manage STIs infections with complicated case-reporting systems, monitoring and anti-retroviral therapies. For example, Nigerian Federal Office of Statistics (1992) report very low rates of health care personnel per 100,000 of population, such as 18.5 physicians, 66.1 nurses, 52.4 midwives, 2.6 dentists in 1992 and no data on pharmacists. Secondly, sub-Saharan Africa, and indeed Nigeria is not a key player in the pharmaceutical field. Thirdly, the dominant pharmaceutical players are not motivated by the needs of the disempowered. Their actions are governed by the divisive north-south politics and vested socio-economic interests, into which we are all socialised. Fourthly, Nigeria lacks the necessary health infrastructure and accountable human resources to manage extensive and successful vaccine interventions, even when they are available.

<sup>285</sup> Such as HIV/AIDS enhancing breakthroughs (e.g. ART vaccines), marketing (dis)incentives for risk taking (e.g. social marketing), politics/policies (e.g. legislations/guidelines), and comprehensive health education systems, economic (dis)incentives realised via social marketing for behaviour change is the most viable (Kotler, et al 2002: 17-19).

in local contexts. Business involvement in the maintenance of the health status of local consumers and labour force, as preventing HIV/AIDS from escalation, is one important social responsibility.

Put another way, it is strategic, if not tactical, that corporations take interest in the public health status of the labour force and markets. For example, tomorrow’s workforce and consumers will come from today’s sexually risk-prone young people. Keeping them alive is good for the business bottom-line. This conception of CSR is reminiscent of an expanded enlightened model (see Williams and Conley, 2005 for detail). It differs from the reported recessed “philanthropic and altruistic understanding” of CSR in Nigeria” where “85% of study respondents claim awareness of CSR is not backed by corresponding action (Amaeshi, et al., 2006, p.26). Chevron Nigeria, a multinational oil corporation is a notable exception. Chevron engages in the enlightened model of CSR by providing Nigerian Niger Delta villages, where they draw the bulk of their field staff, with condoms and improved health services (Feleyimu, 1999, cited by Caldwell, 1999b).



**Diagram 4, Key to CSR Enlightened business interest model.**

- White box – Enlightened mission.
- Blue box – Core mission

Another pre-existing platform that may be leveraged for BBC is Public-Private-Partnerships (PPP), which has attracted increasing neoliberal support. PPP is involved

in “global infectious disease partnerships, which have improved access of populations to a range of products and services, albeit while raising several ethical and methodological challenges” (Nishtar, 2008, p.16). These challenges range from the different ethics, visions, missions, process/culture of partner organisation (see Nishtar, 2008, p.18, citing Buse, 2004). Nonetheless, PPPs will minimise these challenges by leveraging existing CSR platforms with incremental acculturation of corporations toward a fuller and more productive partnerships. PPPs will improve health finance and improved service delivery:

“... in terms of the lessons learned from persuasion, and large group processes such as those employed by advertising agencies and social marketing approaches” (Nishtar, 2008, p.17).

Social marketing as currently practised fits PPP philosophies. The renewed emphasis, for social marketing, however, should be on reaching both urban and inaccessible rural populations. In Nigeria, some fast-moving-consumer-goods (FMCG) corporations and marketers as Indomie Noodles, Ajinomoto and Cowbell, to mention a few, have consistently achieved this feat<sup>286</sup>. Their pre-existing marketing strategies may be creatively leveraged for BCC, condom/contraceptive logistics and user-behaviour research.

### **8.8 Reasons for social marketing advocacy**

The need to provide young people with factual sexuality information is obvious. What is less obvious is that sexuality education in Nigeria is at best fragmentary or non-existent in many settings, for example, Northern Nigeria (see Adebusoye, 1992; Agyei and Epema, 1992; Gage-Brandon and Meekers, 1993). Based on my findings and from informal correspondence with sexual health programme managers in Nigeria, the fragmentary nature of sexuality education and minimal institutional support for realistic sex education is unlikely to change soon. In addition, there is no evidence that sexuality education deployed via multisectoral initiatives delays sexual debut, increases contraceptive use or inculcates sexual abstinence values. Current BCC initiatives, as imperative as they are, cannot be of immediate utility in Nigeria for several reasons. Among these are:

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<sup>286</sup> I know this from marketing consultancy/brand management experience, consumer experience anecdotal evidence and communication with erstwhile colleagues.

1. That even though sexual behaviour change ought to proceed via structural and agential interventions, short-term changes from institutional structures of sexual risk taking, such as the mass media, is not realistic because of entrenched interests and values. Consequently, society must depend on sustainable short-term agential behaviour/value changes, which will influence longer-term structural changes. For example, because the family and religious institutions fear that sexuality education will increase their wards' sexual activities (Grunseit and Kippax, 1993), they (c)overly restrict accurate<sup>287</sup> sexuality information available to young people, insisting on abstinence-until-marriage only (Orji and Esimai, 2003). For example, an evaluation of SFH Nigerian multisectoral BCC activities deployed to increase self-efficacy, condom use and safer sex practices, increased STI awareness and condom sales, but reportedly “showed no improvement over the campaign period” in targets sexual self-efficacies (Meekers, Van Rossem, Zellner, & Berg, 2004, p.24). Apparently, the social marketing component was more effective than the overall goal of behaviour change.
2. Other key institutional players, as teachers, have been reportedly unprepared to discuss sexuality with their students (Hawkins and Ojaka, 1992; Meekers et al., 1995). Marketers do not have such misgivings, as long as the profit motive is paramount.
3. Current programmes targeting schools, colleges are metropolitan in orientation, and does not reach vulnerable and inaccessible young people. Majority of young people in Nigeria are out of school and are bypassed by most school based and mass media oriented sex education initiatives. Commercial brand marketers have the resources and logistic network to reach the vulnerable groups, as long as profit is to be made.
4. Finally, my positive bias towards marketing is probably influenced by my previous professional marketing/advertising background.

As a result, it is my informed opinion that individual/collective behaviour change is the most easily applied and sustainable route to positive young people's sexual health in Nigeria, in the short run at least. Based on my study, there is evidence for limited sexual behaviour change among young people. The evidence of success is embodied in the significantly high awareness of young people about the negative health costs of unprotected premarital sex (see Smith 2004; Arowojolu, et al., 2002; Caldwell et al., 1992a; Caldwell, 1999a&b; 1989). In addition, young people's narratives indicate they are scared of contracting HIV/AIDS, based on available information about the pandemic, which is traceable to social marketing initiatives. For example, all respondents believe current BCC campaigns are effective:

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<sup>287</sup> The availability of accurate and expanded sexual health information is touted as a key for any intervention success (see Brindis, 2002). This preceding variable strengthens the lack of political will and bureaucratisation of interventions targeted at young people's sexualities in Nigeria.

"Yes, it's working, because people are trying to run some programmes for people to know their HIV status at the same time with related diseases that are contracted. So people now think and watch well before I can get into any serious relationship. So it's having a good effect on the general public" (Interview 31 - Male).

"Yes, they work. But you can't just tell people to stop doing it. I think it should start in secondary school in Nigeria. Maybe we should have a day when they talk and show them the disadvantages of premarital sex. Because that is actually when they become sexually active. Maybe like an interesting conference... no, a festival. Like a festival, with music, drama etc to make the message more interesting for them. Let them have fun while learning (Interview 26 - Female).

Due to the above challenges, I am constrained to recommend either a politically correct sexual reproductive health strategy, such as multisectoral BCC interventions that will be of limited effectiveness, or recommend a proven strategy, which has recorded some effectiveness, which is social marketing. Social marketing interventions leveraged through PPP, despite previously discussed challenges, has the capacity to sustainably navigate the politics and resource constraints of young people's sexualities in Nigeria. Social marketing harnesses the synergies of the organised private sector incentives for sustainable profits and public health agenda of governments, NGOs, bi/multilateral organisations (see Kotler, et al., 2002, p.17-19; Andreasen,1995 also).

Social marketing allows the condom manufacturers and NGOs to communicate positive sexual behaviours, sell consumer health protection/maintenance products, while making *reasonable* profits. The 'reasonable profit motives' are reconcilable with bilateral and multilateral institutional needs to keep condom/contraceptive qualities high, and prices low enough to insure user uptake and sustainable behaviour change. These needs in turn, are more easily reconciled with parents and religious institutions concerns about change agents' unintentional sexualisation<sup>288</sup> of young people, because they are attributable to less easily defined business interests.<sup>289</sup> The preceding private-public interests are compatible with government's public health ambitions, because it

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<sup>288</sup> Applied after Bourdieu's conceptualization of human agency as "habitus" or young people's sexualisation, which is a process of "structuring and structured structure" emanating from "historical work of succeeding generations" (Bourdieu p.139).

<sup>289</sup> Lay society have become socialised to business exploitation of sexuality to market every good and service. In contrast, there are more organised public outcry against NGOs and governments involvement in selling similar sexual products and services.

demands little capital and human resource investments from sitting governments, who will take credit for programme success.

It is also unequivocal that safe sex initiatives deployed through social marketing does increase sexual risk awareness and condom sales (Meekers, Van Rossem, Zellner, & Berg, 2004, p.24). This claim is also supported by my research findings. The reasons for social marketing success is that it simultaneously communicates healthy skills/behaviours, in addition to providing consumer products that will facilitate the adoption and maintenance of the communicated healthy behaviours in one seamless process. In addition, social marketing has more potential than the much vaunted multisectoral initiatives, to realistically confront and address young people's manifest sexualities by leveraging best practices across the world. Multisectoral initiatives are hampered<sup>290</sup> by disparate and often irreconcilable values and interests of young people's sexual health stakeholders, as parents, NGOs and religious institutions.

Effective social marketing interventions, however, ought to be underlined by the realisation that sexual abstinence is not a realistic option for all young people. In addition, a realistic mitigation of sexual risk taking will require renewed and creative engagement with structural institutions, such as the organised private sector and socialisation agents in Nigeria. This is beginning to occur, and is based on Public-Private-Partnerships (PPP<sup>291</sup>), which exploits pre-existing business platforms, as Corporate Social Responsibility<sup>292</sup> (CSR) to enhance public good. The modalities for engaging stakeholders are discussed below.

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<sup>290</sup> In the final analysis, sexual health interventions in Nigeria are at best, initiatives that accommodate divergent stakeholders rather than pragmatic affairs calculated to realistically and effectively address young people's sexual health challenges.

<sup>291</sup> United Nations General Assembly Special Session (UNIGASS) estimates that only "thirty-four of sixty-four (53%) large companies involved in the Presidential Private sector initiative, have HIV/AIDS work place policy (UNIGASS).

<sup>292</sup> The European Union Green paper suggests CSR is "a concept whereby companies integrate social and environmental concerns in their business operations and in their interaction with their stakeholders on a voluntary basis" (Commission of the European Communities, 2002, p.3). In contrast, CSR is also defined as define it as "... actions that appear to further some social good, beyond the interests of the firm and that which is required by law" (McWilliams and Siegel, 2001, p.117).

### **8.9 Engaging legislation and persuasion**

Evolving enforceable legal frameworks to manage sexualities remain the most underutilised and politicised option to mitigate young people's sexual risk taking. Enforceable legal frameworks and policies for sexuality are needed in such diverse areas as cross-generational sex, commercial sex work (CSW), contraceptive availability, and the relaxing of policy on elective abortion, to render it safer. Legislation and policies will render sexual outcomes healthier and safer. For example, a policy/legal framework is needed to enforce condom use in commercial sex establishments. In addition, and perhaps contentious, there is an urgent need to evolve rules and associated sanctions governing mandatory counselling and testing (MCT), anti retroviral therapies (ART) administration and case reporting for enhanced public health.

Critical lessons from elsewhere, suggest the reason for recorded behaviour change success is the alignment of intervention with various coercive apparatuses of states, such as health officials and the police, who are vested with power to enforce, for example, the Thai 100% Condom Use Programs<sup>293</sup> (100% CUP; see Singhal and Rogers, 2003, p.98-99). The use of state force, however, has negative consequences also. Observers claim combining persuasion and state force has the unintended effect of driving sexual practise underground in Thailand. This produced what is described as “invisible brothels”, in bars and restaurants, where “condom use is more difficult” to monitor and implement (Im-Em, 1999, p.168).

CSW also argue that enforcement of 100% CUP elevates their exposures to client violence, sexual abuse and HIV/AIDS (Loff, et al., 2003). Thus, despite the World Bank assertion that Thailand's “100% Condom Program” success is because of the combined influence of “mass media campaigns, education and skills building in workplaces and schools, and peer education” (World Bank, 1999:159); success was more because “in the early days of the programme, enforcement actions were taken against establishments in at least some provinces to obtain the owners' cooperation”

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<sup>293</sup> In Thailand, the police and health officials often went undercover posing as clientele of Commercial Sex Workers (CWS), to identify non-conforming parties with the 100% condom use. who are often fined and/or their establishments closed (see Singhal and Rogers, 2003, p.98-99).

(UNAIDS<sup>294</sup>, 2000, p.24). Similarly, in Uganda, the reasons for success were given as behaviour change exemplified by faithfulness or partner reduction, condom use and *zero grazing* (UNAIDS, 1994). Nevertheless, MCT and ART policies in Nigeria will be challenged by real and perceived dysfunctions in governance systems and state monopoly of the apparatus of violence (see Goodyear, 2008 for an instructive report on China). Nonetheless, legislation deserves some consideration

I am convinced that the lack of coercive and enforceable policies accounts for “reversal<sup>295</sup> of Uganda’s prevention success ... rising rate of new infections with HIV incidence ranging from 0.2-2.0% in different regions” (UAC, 2007, p.vii). Similarly, the recent reversals of “the overall achievements in reversing the HIV epidemic in Thailand” (UNAIDS, 2007:25, citing WHO, 2007) could be due to similar de-emphasis of the use of coercive enforcement apparatuses of state, due to human rights projects. The point is that the use of coercive state apparatus to enforce MCT and ART is likely to be indispensable for BCC success in Nigeria, even though this option will remain contentious, due to global human rights ideals.

### **8.10 Engaging young people in BCC**

Young people’s narratives unequivocally demonstrate the Nigerian context offers three sexual behaviour conduct options. (1) The dominant Nigerian culture promoted constraining abstinence-until-marriage option. (2) Modernity and NGOs’ promoted safer-sex with contraceptives. (3) Collective/individuated preferences for unprotected premarital sex, periodic abstinence and contraceptive use. Among these, respondents mostly practise option (3), which is a hybridization of option (1) and (2). Thus, young Nigerian university students’ sexual behaviour demonstrates the co-influence of structure and agency. In essence, sexual risk taking is neither inevitable, nor

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<sup>294</sup> Subsequently, UNAIDS became more politically vague about Thailand’s success. In 2004, a UNAIDS report suggests that Thailand’s success was due to its multi-sectoral character, “rooted in strong political commitment and support at all levels, including that of government officials, local health workers, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), the media, brothel owners, and the public in general” (UNAIDS, 2004, p.9), omitting the role of the coercive apparatus of the state.

<sup>295</sup> Data from the USA, Canada, Europe and Australia also indicate renewed increases in prevalence of STIs, including HIV/AIDS in gay community’s and the general population attributable to *AIDS communication fatigue* and erroneous conclusions that emerging vaccines enhance and will indefinitely improve life quality among PLWA. (see Kellogg et al., 1999; Chen et al., 2002; Martindale et al., 2001; Dukers et al., 2000; Van De Ven, 1998 and Dowsatt, 1999 for discussions). The lesson from various success stories emphasize Caldwell and colleagues speculation that the earlier success of gay communities in reducing HIV/AIDS transmission via self-education produced a discursive emphasis on *community* and *agency* in managing public health (Caldwell, 1999b, p.249).



abstinence realistic. In addition, once in a sexually charged situation, young people confirm their inability to control their sexual passion, as national campaigns, such as *zip-up* would have us believe.

Based on the preceding analysis, there are four effective paths towards enthroning safer sexual practices. (1) Change agents should emphasise young people's avoidance of sexually charged context and associations, instead of *zipping-up*, which is not realistic. (2) Change agents should promote safer sex practices for young people, already sexually active, or those who may become sexually active. (3) Prior to the commencement of relationships, young people should be encouraged to elicit their partner's sexual history and motives with dialogue to minimise the ineffectiveness of young people's current practise of selecting sexual partners based on social and demographic observation and acquaintance as clean and healthy.

Furthermore, all young people, especially young females will benefit from informal training in assertiveness and heterosexual negotiations. In addition, young female Nigerian university students ought to be trained to acknowledge and utilise female contraceptives and condoms in a manner that challenges their current negative dispositions towards contraceptive use. BCC initiatives should communicate the relative safety of contraceptive use over all unprotected sex. In other words, young females should be encouraged to use personal contraceptives, regardless of male use to reduce pregnancy and STIs. BCC initiatives should sustain the communication of sexual risk taking costs versus safer sexual behaviour.

Young females should be trained to recognise and encouraged to manage any attendant sexual conflicts in the context of serial monogamous relations, with forthright dialogue instead of resorting to sexual intercourse. In addition, young females should be reminded they can ill-afford to take male pre-coital promises and action at face value. These empowerment processes, should commence from home, through school/colleges, religious institutions, government and civil society. Because engaging the family and religious institutions remain an unlikely prospect due to cultural and religious dogma, social development stakeholders, including the organised private sector, will be saddled with promoting safer sexual practises in Nigeria, in the near future.

To achieve these objectives, programme managers ought to utilise pre-existing sexual knowledge networks familiar to young people. These include peers, older relatives, the internet, folklore and mass media programming. Prior to any intervention, change agents must identify the specificities of young people's social networks and opinion leaders within them. The identification of opinion leaders is critical because they can be persuaded to adopt and propagate healthier sexual lifestyles. Care must be taken, however, to avoid selecting peers who are sexually inactive on moral or religious grounds. One underutilised resource in Nigeria is the internet.

To date, little effort has been made to creatively utilise the internet to encourage safer sexual behaviour (Chamberlain, 1996). Peer-to-peer websites, such as Face book, My space, Twitter and so forth, readily come to mind. The neglect of the internet needs to be urgently addressed because the internet, according to my respondents, significantly influences young people's sexualisation. Apparently, lure of the internet among young people is driven by its information currency, global research, instant access and transactional information - feedback channel, which surpasses other mass media channels. The persuasive influence of the internet lies in its transactional give-and-take character, a participatory feature necessary for change agents and young people to interact and exchange knowledge in a bottom-up manner (see Smith, 1982, Simons, 1971 & 1976; O'Keefe, 1990, for treatise on conditions for persuasive communication). According to Smith:

“with each exchange of messages, the participants grow and change . . . thus, from a transactional point of view, the process of persuasion is characterized by a spiral of changing feelings and beliefs on the part of each communicator” (Smith (1982, p.5).

Thus, change agents should not persuade young people with adult society privileging sexualities, but provide behaviour-relevant sexual health information and practises, congruent with amenable to existing young people's attitudes and sexual needs, with which “they can persuade themselves” (Simons, 1971, p.232). Young people in Nigeria access the internet on a daily basis on a pay-as-you-use basis from cyber-cafes, which operate all over the country, excluding very rural areas. It is logical therefore, that the internet should be leveraged for large-scale BCC interventions and evaluation research. To realise the full potentials of the internet, there need to be

research into users' demographics, usage purposes, patterns and preferred sites, which can be leveraged to encourage young people to pursue healthier sexual behaviours.

### 8.11 Condoms in BCC

Despite my findings that young people use condoms inconsistently<sup>296</sup>, it remains imperative to promote condom use. This is because premarital sex will remain “domains of restriction, repression and danger as well as a domain of exploration, pleasure and agency” (Vance, 1984, p.1). There is an urgent need for strategic promotion of consistent condom/contraceptive use as an indication of responsibility, affection, respect for sexual partners, and to counter the prevailing view among my study sample that insisting on condom use somehow connotes distrust and promiscuity. Creative negotiation and condom use off-take can be modelled after the multisectoral Thailand's model, which was launched with CSW, and combines BCC, product availability and use enforcement. UNAIDS suggests the reason for Thai success lies:

“with strong support from the national government and both the governors and police were actively engaged from the start, these groups could provide the necessary authority to ensure that owners and managers cooperated. But, while the authority clearly existed to close down sex establishments, by the time of this study that power was not being used very frequently” (UNAIDS, 2000b, p.20).

Among the general population however, condom promotion should be governed by the realisation that consistent condom use is not feasible for a number of reasons (see Chapters 5 & 6 and, Albarracin, Kumkale, and Johnson, 2004). Crimp, writing on the subject of the unlikelihood of consistent condom use observes that:

“the assumption that using a condom every time you have intercourse – every time, no exceptions – as just plain good sense disregards all the powerful drives and emotions that can get in the way of “good sense” during sex: the need to express feelings of trust and intimacy, the desire to live in the moment, to overcome shame, to break the rules” (Crimp, 2002, p.296).

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<sup>296</sup> The reasons for inconsistent condom use are twofold. In the first instance, a partner's insistence on condom use arouses suspicion and distrust (Gavin, 2002). In Nigeria, UNGASS finds widespread unwillingness to purchase condoms because it is associated with promiscuity and loose morals (Nigeria, UNGASS, 2005). In the second, unprotected sex without condoms is considered more natural and preferred by young Nigerian university students. For example, respondents in general, assert that “condoms are artificial barriers...and it is not the same thing using them compared to not using them..., it does not matter what anybody says... it is the spread of disease that is making their (*condom*) use popular” (Interview 21 – Female, words in italics mine). Also, see Chapters 5 & 6 for detail.

The preceding variables will limit the effectiveness of BCC initiatives as condom promotion and abstinence-until-marriage initiatives. BCC are also challenged by the significant and ongoing “shift from a relational to a recreational model of sexual behaviour, a reconfiguration of erotic life in which the pursuit of sexual intimacy is not hindered but facilitated by its location in the marketplace” (Bernstein, 2001, p.397). In Nigeria, particular emphasis ought to be placed on the launch and promotion of female condoms. The ready availability of female condoms, on a similar scale as male condoms, will strengthen all BCC initiatives. This is because young females can discreetly wear the condoms with or without their male partner’s knowledge and consent.

Female condoms availability empowers women to take control of their sexual health. Furthermore, affordable birth control pills and contraceptives can be promoted as a safer alternative, for sexually active females, than periodic abstinence, withdrawal method and abortion. Peers information networks can be evolved to interact with and educate girls about the usage, benefits and disadvantages of contraceptives. This process will demystify current female perception of contraceptives as dangerous to use, in relation to future prospects for conception.

#### **8.12 Engaging parents, religion, schools and colleges in BCC**

The major factor preventing parents, religious groups, schools and colleges from embracing BCC is entrenched cultural, moral and religious conviction that young people must abstain from premarital sex. In addition, there is a widespread belief that BCC initiatives invariably encourage young people to take sexual risks. These categories of stakeholders either fail or refuse to appreciate that almost all their wards are already knowledgeable about their sexuality and are sexually active. As a result, the promise of BCC communications to increase safer sex via associated up-take in condom/contraceptive use will still elicit passionate normative condemnation or outright opposition from parents, religious groups, schools and colleges in Nigeria.

I speculate, nonetheless, that creative presentations of sexuality trends and outcomes with local/global data will engage the attention of socialisation agents via traditional discursive routes as religious summits, Parents Teachers Association (PTA) and so forth. The initial goal will be to minimise public opposition and denunciations of BCC

strategies and tactics. This approach is not new. According to UNAIDS, the popularity of the ABC<sup>297</sup> approach is because of the convergence of civil society and government officials' religious beliefs (UNAIDS, 2006), even though the programmes end-up emphasising abstinence-until-marriage, and associates condom use with lack of moral restraint. Creative engagement with socialisation agents and morality custodians was successful in Morocco with the Islamic Affairs Ministry and associated Imams (ICASO, 2007 citing Morocco, UNGASS). There is a semblance of this trend emerging in Nigeria, where new curricula for sex education have been evolved in conjunction with religious leaders and civil society (Nigeria, UNGASS, 2005).

Optimistically, I have made clear that structure does not only enable, but constrains young people's sexualities. In addition, my discussions so far, demonstrate that structural forces are liable to strategic change, while agency is more amenable to tactical and immediate change. For example, my proposals for engaging with, and leveraging business resources via PPP will initiate, perhaps sustain a redirection of structural institutional sexualisation influences towards safer sexualities. The point being made is that both the agential and structural influences on young people's sexualities are not static. Instead, agential and structural influences could be manipulated for short and long-term behaviour change. This is because “structural properties of social systems exist only in so far as forms of social conduct are reproduced chronically across time and space” (Giddens, 1984, p.xxi).

### **8.13 Conclusion and scope for further research**

My thesis explores, describes and raises alternative questions about the complexities of young people's sexual risk taking. A number of themes reported in Chapters 5 and discussed in Chapter 6, will require further investigation, with conceptual approaches that treat structure and agency as a duality, not dualism. For example, the role of emotions in sexual risk taking may be deepened to illuminate similarities and differences in gender socialisation and dating behaviour. Research data on the nature and nurture of serial monogamy between young people will also be useful for sexual health interventions. It is also anticipated that a more diverse variety of case studies would yield generalizable conclusions that will facilitate educated and practical sexual

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<sup>297</sup> Abstinence, Be Faithful, and Consistent Condom use.

health programmes. This will make it easier, for example, for change agents to uncover the meanings, practise and direction of young people's sexualities, and evolve BCC strategies that will realistically address them.

I hope that future research methodologies adopt more holistic paradigms, such as Giddens' structuration theory towards understanding sexual risk taking. Further applications of structuration theory will benefit from the dismissive criticisms from writers like Margaret Archer, (1995), critical engagement from writers such as Cohen, (1989, 2000) and rescue attempts from writers such as Stones (2005), which creates more substantive theoretical abstraction rendered in empirical methodological terms. The goal, as always, is to gain a deeper understanding of the mutually transformative characteristics of action and structure, which furthers social science goals of understanding social (dis)order across time and space.

Finally, my isolation of sexually influential units of analysis, as the adult entertainment institutions and young people's predispositions to sexual risk taking, will also benefit from further research scrutiny, tilted towards the illumination and explanation of their interrelationships and interdependences. This research approach will provide perspectives on why unprotected premarital sex has become institutionalised and patterned for everyday life. In addition, new research will test my deduction that young people's sexual risk taking is to be "viewed as the product of negotiation freely entered into as the result of decisions, feelings and wants" (Alexander, 1988, p.14).

Further research will also illuminate my deduction that young people's "*decisions, feelings and wants*" are (re)constituted by structural institutions of social life. Combined, my deductions are informed by respondents' narratives, which demonstrate a critical understanding of their environment, (structure); dispositions (sexual attitudes), agency (action), and (un)intended outcomes of unprotected premarital sex. My respondents accept responsibilities for their variable agencies, and suggest an inevitability of structural influences on their sexualities, which they are unable to alter.

In essence, my thesis illuminates the reciprocal interrelationships and insidious influences of the properties of structure and agents, which ought to be referenced for a realistic understanding of young Nigerian university students' sexual risk taking. My findings exclude polarities between agents and structures of sexual risk taking. Findings also indicate that young people's decision to take sexual risks is in pursuit of sexual, social and material interests, which are neither completely rational, nor predetermined by their institutional/self sexualisation. Structures (social institutions and agency) do not cause young people to take sexual risks, but simultaneously constrains and present them with opportunities to do so. Young people's knowledgeable sexual activities in turn, help create and maintain their sexualised structures "through contingent acts of freedom" (Alexander, 1998, p.270). In sum, young people's contexts (structure) and conducts (agency) concurrently influence their sexual risk taking.

**Annex 1. Tables.**<sup>298</sup>

**Table 1, evaluate kissing**

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	somehow risky	5	8.9
	not risky	51	91.1
	Total	56	100.0

**Table 2, evaluate oral sex**

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	risky	38	67.9
	not risky	18	32.1
	Total	56	100.0

**Table 3, is your current relationship(s) non-sexual?**

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	yes	2	3.6
	no	54	96.4
	Total	56	100.0

**Table 4, do you use condoms regularly?**

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	yes	15	26.8
	no	41	73.2
	Total	56	100.0

<sup>298</sup> Only statistically significant answer categories are shown in tables generated with SPSS 13 software.



**Table 5, rate the influence of TV on young people's sexual risk taking.**

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	influential	20	35.7
	strongly influential	28	50.0
	most influential	8	14.3
	Total	56	100.0

**Table 6, rate the influence of the internet on young people's sexual risk taking.**

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	strongly influential	11	19.6
	most influential	45	80.4
	Total	56	100.0

**Table 7, rate the influence of magazines on young people's sexual risk taking.**

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	weakly influential	3	5.4
	influential	29	51.8
	strongly influential	15	26.8
	most influential	9	16.1
	Total	56	100.0

**Table 8, rate the Influence of radio on young people's sexual risk taking.**

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	weak	37	66.1
	weakly influential	19	33.9
	Total	56	100.0

**Table 9, rate the influence of mobile phones on young people's sexual risk taking.**

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	weak	4	7.1
	weakly influential	41	73.2
	influential	9	16.1
	strongly influential	2	3.6
	Total	56	100.0

**Table 10, rate the influence of cinema on young people's sexual risk taking.**

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	weak	26	46.4
	weakly influential	18	32.1
	influential	10	17.9
	strongly influential	1	1.8
	most influential	1	1.8
	Total	56	100.0

**Table 11, rate the influence of advertisements on young people's sexual risk taking.**

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	weak	16	28.6
	weakly influential	26	46.4
	influential	12	21.4
	strongly influential	2	3.6
	Total	56	100.0

**Table 12, do you think any of your friends abstain from sexual intercourse?**

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	yes	7	12.5
	no	49	87.5
	Total	56	100.0

**Table 13, do you think poverty has influence on young people's sexual risk taking?**

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	yes	33	58.9
	somehow	23	41.1
	Total	56	100.0

**Table 14, do you think curiosity has influence on young people's sexual risk taking?**

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Yes	29	51.8
	Somehow	27	48.2
	Total	56	100.0

**Table 15, do you have a boyfriend or girlfriend?**

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	yes	55	98.2
	no	1	1.8
	Total	56	100.0

**Table 16, do you think having a boy/girlfriend means you must take sexual risks?**

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	yes	27	48.2
	no	26	46.4
	somehow	3	5.4
	Total	56	100.0

**Table 17, are you confident you can refuse your boy/girlfriend's sexual advances?**

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	yes	2	3.6
	no	26	46.4
	somehow	28	50.0
	Total	56	100.0

**Table 18, is it possible to have a non sexual relationship among young people?**

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	yes	11	19.6
	no	45	80.4
	Total	56	100.0

**Table 19, are you confident you can abstain from sex?**

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	yes	11	19.6
	no	26	46.4
	somehow	19	33.9
	Total	56	100.0

**Table 20, are you confident you can avoid sex before marriage?**

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	no	55	98.2
	somehow	1	1.8
	Total	56	100.0

**Table 21, rate the influence of sexy modes of dressing on young people's sexual risk taking?**

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	weakly influential	23	41.1
	influential	24	42.9
	strongly influential	6	10.7
	most influential	3	5.4
	Total	56	100.0

**Table 22, who is responsible for the sexual risks taken in a relationship?**

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	the male	4	7.1
	both the male and female	52	92.9
	Total	56	100.0

**Table 23, do you use condoms regularly?**

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	yes	15	26.8
	no	41	73.2
	Total	56	100.0

**Table 24, are you sexually active?**

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	yes	54	96.4
	no	2	3.6
	Total	56	100.0

**Table 25, which risky behaviour do you indulge in most?**

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	sex without condoms	19	33.9
	sex without condoms and contraceptives <sup>299</sup>	37	66.1
	Total	56	100.0

**Table 26, do you use condoms regularly?**

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	yes	15	26.8
	no	41	73.2
	Total	56	100.0

**Table 27, when are you most likely to use condoms?**

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	with someone I don't completely trust	43	76.8
	with my girlfriend, boyfriend and someone I don't completely trust	13	23.2
	Total	56	100.0

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<sup>299</sup> For dual protection against STIs and unwanted pregnancy.

**Table 28, what are your reasons for using condoms?**

		What are your reasons for using condoms				
		prevent pregnancy	prevent pregnancy, STI and HIV	prevent STI and HIV	Total	
Participant's Gender	Female	Count	19	1	6	26
		% within Participant's Gender	73.1%	3.8%	23.1%	100.0%
		% within What are your reasons for using condoms	100.0%	3.6%	66.7%	46.4%
		% of Total	33.9%	1.8%	10.7%	46.4%
Male		Count	0	27	3	30
		% within Participant's Gender	.0%	90.0%	10.0%	100.0%
		% within What are your reasons for using condoms	.0%	96.4%	33.3%	53.6%
		% of Total	.0%	48.2%	5.4%	53.6%
Total		Count	19	28	9	56
		% within Participant's Gender	33.9%	50.0%	16.1%	100.0%
		% within What are your reasons for using condoms	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
		% of Total	33.9%	50.0%	16.1%	100.0%

**Annex 2.**

**Research consent form.**



University of Wales Swansea.  
Singleton Park. Swansea.  
SA2 8PP  
United Kingdom



**Centre for  
Development Studies  
Swansea**

**PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM**

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**Project Title: Agency or Structure? Nigerian University Students' Perspectives on Sexual Risk Taking.**

You are invited to participate in above study, conducted by me, Amaechi D. Okonkwo, a PhD Research Student at the Centre for Development Studies at Swansea, University in the United Kingdom.

As a graduate student, I am required to conduct research as part of the requirements for a PhD Research degree in International Health and Development. The research is being conducted under the supervision of Dr Neil Price. You may contact me and/or my supervisor at the address below if you have further questions relating **ONLY** to this research:

Prof. Neil Price  
Director of the Centre for Development Studies  
Swansea University  
Margam Building  
Singleton Park  
Swansea SA2 8PP  
email: [n.l.price@swansea.ac.uk](mailto:n.l.price@swansea.ac.uk)  
web: [www.swansea.ac.uk/cds](http://www.swansea.ac.uk/cds)

**Purpose and Objectives**

The purpose of this research project is to:

1. collect narrative data on young people's perspective of influences on their sexual risk taking.
2. identify and explore the gendered dimensions of influences,



3. identify and discuss how some of the structural and agential variables that influence young people sexual risk taking function to produce and reproduce one another.
4. develop an alternative theoretical framework with which to understand young people's sexual risk taking, and,

### **Importance of this Research**

Research of this type is important because:

1. highlight the variables that drive young people sexual risk taking and the modalities to manage them.
2. present an alternative and more viable conceptual framework to account for and manage young people's sexual risk taking.
3. accumulate and utilize the experiences and narratives of young people.
4. advance the present state of knowledge by questioning old and lineal orthodoxies

### **Basis for Participants Selection**

You are being asked to participate in this study because you are a male or female young people, aged between the ages of 18 and 30 years. You are also selected because it is assumed by the researcher that you are sexually active, competent and willing to discuss the subject. Please decline to participate if you feel you do not meet the above conditions.

### **What is involved?**

If you agree to voluntarily participate in this research, you will be asked a series of questions about the subject - *sexual risk taking* - in as private an environment as possible, unless you choose otherwise. The interview, with your permission, will also be recorded for the researcher's and his supervisor's listening and use ONLY. The interview will typically last for about 3-4hrs in a venue of your choice. Periodic breaks will be taken when you need them and refreshment provided. You may choose to attend with a friend/relative.

### **Inconvenience**

Participation in this study may cause some inconvenience to you, especially in terms of time outlay. It may also expose you to sexual topics, terms and practices that may be considered sensitive. Please decline/cease participating anytime you feel uncomfortable.

### **Risks**

Other than delicate individual sensitivities, there are no known or anticipated risks to you by participating in this research. Please let the researcher know if you become uncomfortable with anything said and implied at any point in during the interview.

### **Benefits**

The potential benefits of your participation in this research include:

1. contributing your valuable and unique perspective to the topic discussed.
2. your assistance in identifying and discussing some of the existing explanatory frameworks for young people's sexual risk taking to highlight their relative utility in understanding and managing young people's sexual risk taking,

3. identifying gendered dimensions to sexual risk taking experience and understanding,
4. your assistance in identifying and discussing how the factors that influence young people sexual risk taking function to produce and reproduce one another
5. your assistance in identifying and discussing the factors that influence young people sexual risk taking and the means to manage them.

### **Compensation**

As a way to compensate you for any inconvenience related to your participation, you will be given some honorarium to deflect the cost of transportation<sup>300</sup> from home to the interview venue of your choice. If you agree to participate in this study, this compensation to you must not be deemed coercive. It is unethical to provide undue compensation or inducements to research participants.

### **Voluntary Participation and On-going Consent**

Your participation in this research must be completely voluntary. If you decide to participate, you may withdraw at any time without the need to provide any explanation, and without any consequences to you. If you withdraw from the study, your data will be removed from the database unless you elect, formally, to leave your data therein. You will get a token gift of N50<sup>301</sup> for the inconvenience. To make sure that you continue to consent to participate in this research, we will go over the consent issues in this form after each break.

### **Researcher's Relationship with Participants**

None.

### **Anonymity**

In terms of protecting your anonymity, I will not record and/or use your name, exact age or other biographical data during the interviews, the report and/or my thesis. In addition, you will not be contacted by me over this topic again.

### **Confidentiality**

Your confidentiality and the confidentiality of the data will be protected by careful storage and transcription of interview data by the researcher. The original tapes will be destroyed two years from the completion of the thesis. During this time, only the researcher and his Supervisor may hear and discuss the original tapes.

### **Dissemination of Results**

It is anticipated that the results of this study will primarily be employed in writing the researcher's PhD thesis. Salient points may also be cited in journal articles, scholarly meetings and presentations. Please tell the researcher if you would like to receive a copy of your interview transcript.

### **Commercial Use of Results**

This research has no commercial value.

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<sup>300</sup> In the light of the recent petrol scarcity and price increase in Nigeria.

<sup>301</sup> N50.00 Nigerian Naira

**Disposal of Data**

Data from this study will be disposed of one year after the successful completion of the researchers PhD thesis. The original tapes will be incinerated.

**Contacts**

Individuals who may be contacted regarding this study include;

1. The researcher – Amaechi D Okonkwo;
2. and his Supervisor, Dr Neil Price at the address above.

In addition, you may verify the ethical approval of this study, or raise any concerns you might have, by contacting the Postgraduate Director, School of the Environment and Society, Swansea University.

Your signature below indicates that you understand the above conditions of participation in this study and that you have had the opportunity to have your questions answered by the researcher.

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*Name of Participant*

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*Signature*

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*Date*

***A copy of this consent will be left with you, and a copy will be taken by the researcher.***

### **Annex 3.**

#### **Semi-structured questionnaire interview guide.**

Before we start, I would request that you allow me to record this conversation. The aim is to capture all the important things that you will be discuss.

Explain ethical issues and ask for Consent.

I assure you that the tapes will be kept as confidential information and will be used by me for the research. Do you agree?

#### **Respondent data (record all answers)**

- Record time at the beginning of the interview.
- Observe Sex of respondent. Male /Female
- Inquire about Age – in ranges e.g. 18 – 22; 23 – 27 and 28 and above
- What is the highest qualification you have?
- Are you currently in school?

#### **Perceptions of Self in relation to others**

- What/how do you think about yourself – independent; interdependent; don't know?
- What does it mean to be dependent, independent or interdependent?
- What do you want your life to be like in the next five years? (education or career)
- What could be the greatest obstacle to your aspiration in life?
- How do you think you can overcome the obstacle(s)?
- What things do you hold most dear in life?
- Who do you most want to be like? What things make you want to be like this person?
- What are the things in your life that you feel happy about?
- How do you think your peers think about you? Your family? Other people in your community? Does it matter? How does it matter?
- Whose opinion of you matters most to you?
- Do the ways peers, family and others think about you influence your behaviour? How?
- When you are concerned or worried about a personal matter, do you talk about it with someone?
- When you seek advice on personal matters such as sexual health, with whom do you talk?
- With whom would you say you feel closest?
  1. Who cheers you up when you're sad?
  2. With whom you can talk about very personal problems?
  3. Who makes you feel loved and wanted?
  4. Who encourages you to try out new experiences or things?
  5. To whom can you tell things that you've never told anyone else?
  6. To whom you can show your worst side and know they'll still like you?
  7. Who can comfort you when you cry?
  8. With who would keep your most important secret?
  9. With whom can you easily talk about your important beliefs?
  10. To whom you can confide something you're ashamed of?
  11. Who will try to help you out of a serious problem, even if it meant a sacrifice on their part?

12. About whom would you use the word "love" to describe your feelings?
13. Who has seen the worst side of you, and still cares?
14. With whom you can argue with and still remain close?
15. Who respects you as much as you respect them?
16. Whose personal problems would you really take to heart?
17. From whom don't you mind hearing advice, even when you haven't asked for it?
18. With whom can you talk about sex and related issues?

**Sexual risk taking activities.**

1. What is your opinion about young people having sex? Why do you think that?
2. What practices constitute sexual risk taking? (probe on having sexual intercourse without a condom; having more than one sexual partner)
3. Why do you think these practices are risky?
4. What do you think may happen to someone who does these kinds of things? Mention examples.
5. What kinds of sexual behaviour are not risky? Why do you think these are not risky?
6. Are young people born with sexual risk taking skills or do they learn it?
7. From where (what sources) do they learn sexual risk taking? Why and how?
8. Have you ever had sex? Why?
9. Is sex always associated with pleasure? What other reasons are there for having sex?
10. Have you ever taken sexual risks? What are these? Why did you take such risk?
11. How recently would you say you took such risks?
12. What form or repercussion did the risk produce?
13. Were there any negative consequences such that you mentioned?
14. How did you manage the consequences?

**Explanatory framework testing**

**Young people's agency, sexual risk taking.**

- Is sex important to any relationship? Why? Pls give examples.
- What are its functions?
- As a boy/girl, must you have a girlfriend/boyfriend? Why?
- Do you have a boyfriend/girlfriend?
- What are the kinds of things you care about or need from a relationship that only a girl/boyfriend can provide?
- Does your current relationship marriage satisfy these needs?
- As a boy/girl, what reasons are there for having sex?
- Do you think sex is a way for young people to exercise freedom and independence? Why do you think so?
- Have you ever had sex? Why?
- What will happen if you do or don't have sex?
- How old were you when you first had sex?
- Were you willing to have sex at the time or were you forced to?

- As a boy/girl, have you ever had unprotected sex? Why?
- Were you worried after the episode?
- What were you most worried about? Probe - pregnancy or STI and/or HIV/AIDS disease? Why?
- As a boy/girl, what will you do if your partner says no to your sexual advances? Why? Explain.
- Among men and women, who do you think want sex more? Why?
- Among men and women who has the most sexual partners? How can you tell?
- As a boy/girl, should you refuse the opportunity to have several sexual partners? Why?
- Is it wrong to have multiple sexual partners? Why?
- Are you or your partner currently doing something or using any method to delay or avoid getting pregnant, HIV and/or STI?
- What are you using/doing?
- When last did you have sex?
- When you last had sex, did you or your partner use anything to guard against pregnancy? Why?
- What did you use?
- When you last had sex, did you or your partner use anything to guard against diseases? What did you use<sup>302</sup>?
- When you had sex the last time, did you or your partner use anything to protect yourself against HIV/AIDS? What did you use?
- Where or from whom did you hear/obtain what you use?
- Before you started to use your current method, did you discuss with your partner? Why?
- Does your partner encourage or discourage the current method you are use?
- Do you think any of your relatives/friends will approve or disapprove of your using condoms/contraceptives to avoid HIV/AIDS and STIs?
- In the past year, with whom have you talked about sexual health and risk practices?
- How important is this person's opinion to you with regard to family sexual health and risk practices issues?
- Do you think that this person would approve or disapprove of your using a family planning/child spacing method?
- Which relative will approve or disapprove most?
- What methods can a couple use to prevent pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases?
- How likely is it that you will use a modern contraceptive method during the next 12 months?
- How easily can you obtain a family sexual health services when you need one?
- Have you ever used a condom and/or contraceptives?
- Why did you use condoms and contraceptives? What were you worried about?

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<sup>302</sup> Pill, Iud, Injections, Implants, Foam/Jelly, Condom, Female Sterilization, Male Sterilization, Periodic Abstinence, Withdrawal, Herbs, waist band, belts, other.

- During the past 12 months how regularly did you use a condom with a non-spousal sex partner?
- During the past 12 months how regularly did you use a condom with your regular sexual partner?
- If you wanted to use a condom/contraceptives today (male or female), could you obtain one?
- If you had condom/contraceptives today, do you think you would know how to use it?
- If you had condom/contraceptives today, do you think you would be willing to use it?
- Have you ever been forced or pressured to have sex?
- Have you ever forced someone to have sex with you?
- With whom did you last have sex? List?
- Was it consensual?
- Is it fair to say that you are responsible for all your sexual practices and/or sexual risk taking? Why?
- Are there other factors that are at play? What are these?
- Some suggest that young people engage in sexual risks because they are young and reckless? What do you think? Why do you think so?
- Some others suggest that sexual relations are almost inevitable because it is a basic constituent of human biology? What do you think? Why?
- Yet others insist that the hope that the couple may marry influence sexual risk taking – how accurate is this claim?
- Do you think you are at risk of contracting HIV? Why or why not?
- Do you think you may have HIV? How do you know?
- Have you ever been tested for HIV? Why or why not?
- Do you know a place where you could go to be tested for HIV/AIDS?
- Would you like to be tested for HIV/AIDS? Why or why not?
- As a boy/girl, how important is it to remain a virgin? Why do you think so?
- Do you think partners should remain virgins until marriage? Why?
- Do you think virginity is as common as it used to be? Why?
- How important is it to abstain from sexual intercourse?
- Should everybody abstain from sex until marriage? Why?
- Do you abstain from sexual activity? Why?
- Are you a virgin?
- Why do you have a sexual relationship? List reasons – for pleasure, marriage etc.
- In your opinion, who is responsible for sexual risk taking in relationships? Why?
- Would you say you are wholly or partly responsible for the occurrence of the sexual risk taking practices? Why?
- If young people are responsible for taking sexual risks, can you list/describe how the process works?
- If young people are not responsible for sexual risk taking, can you list/describe what does?

In a relationship where the following occurs, who do you think is responsible for them?

1. Sex with strangers or people you don't know very well
2. Sex with multiple partners
3. One-night stands
4. Sex without condoms and contraceptives
5. Sex to test/proof fertility – i.e. fatherhood and/or motherhood capabilities
6. Rape
7. Dry sex,
8. Oral sex and/or
9. Anal sex?
10. Rigorous and sustained sex to induce abortion
11. Unsafe sex to demonstrate love, affection, belonging and with someone you love and/or hope to marry etc
12. Sex for money, gifts, good grades, promotion at work etc
13. Rape or forced sex.
14. CSW
15. Oral

Do you take any of the listed sexual risk practices? Are there others?

Where and from what source(s) do young people learn their sexual practices from?

List

Lack of Contraceptive<sup>303</sup> use because they are;

1. unreliable – quality (slippage, breakage, holes and smell) and competence of use
2. reduces pleasure,
3. immoral,
4. access issues.

Young people's sexual risk taking and social exchange theory (SET) – principle of least interest in sex!

This framework is useful for understanding ... (see Sprecher, 1998, p.32) sexual risk taking.

- Among male and females, which partner do you think has the least interest in sex? Why?
- Which partner has more influence on what sexual activities they do together"
- Is sex a resource? Why do you think so?
- Some say sexual risk taking could be due to exchange of favours or a reward for other resources given by one party such as money, gifts, favours etc – do you agree?
- Is there usually a discussion of the quality and quantity of gifts, money and sexual favours exchanged?
- Can one view sexual intercourse then as a trade?
- What are the functions of gifts – does it matter when they are given?
- Does it follow then that the more gifts, money and favours, the more there will be unprotected sex if that is preferred by the gift-giver?
- When are the gifts presented? Before, during and after sex?
- What happens when gifts are not given in such relationships?

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<sup>303</sup> Pill, Iud, Injections, Implants, Foam/Jelly, Condom, Female Sterilization, Male Sterilization, Periodic Abstinence, Withdrawal, Herbs, waist band, belts, other.



- What happens when sex is not put out?
- Is it fair then to conclude that sexual risk taking will increase/decrease depending on the quality and quantity of favours given and returned?
- Will a boy/girl be more or less willing to take sexual risks when he/she has given/received a satisfactory gift from a dependable source?

**(Plastic sexuality – pleasure based (Giddens' 1990, p.33) Sexuality freed from the needs of reproduction.**

- Is right to say that sexual risk taking among young people is influenced by pleasure?
- Are there other factors that are at play? What are these?
- What role has the spread of condoms/contraceptives and varied capacity to prevent/terminate pregnancies influenced sexual risk taking? How?
- Does access to 'morning after pills' and all forms of abortion influence sexual risk taking? How?
- What is sexual pleasure?
- Does the quest for sexual pleasure promote sexual risk taking among young people?
- As a boy/girl do you expect to give and receive and sexual pleasure in relationships?
- As a boy/girl, is ones need for sexual pleasure natural?
- Who do you think has the most pleasure in sexual relationships – the man or woman – why?
- Who influences the most risky sexual practices in a relationship – the man or woman? Why?
- Does the increasing ability of young people to reduce/control pregnancy influence sexual risk taking? Why? How?
- Some say young people's sexual risk taking is influenced by increasing freedom enjoyed by young people from parents, religion, schools, the media and society? What do you think?
- Does the increasing availability of condoms, contraceptives and abortion influence sexual risk taking? Why? How?
- Some people believe that young people engage in sexual risk taking primarily because they seek pleasure from it. What do you think? Why?
- Will sexual risk taking among young people cease if they can't derive pleasure from it?
- If pleasure influences young people's sexual risk taking, can you describe how the process works?
- If pleasure does not influence young people's sexual risk taking, can you list what does?

**Love and Emotion, romance, relationships, trust, connection and commitment (define concept)**

- As a boy/girl, what is love?
- What is commitment in a relationship?
- As a boy/girl, does love and commitment matter in a relationship?
- When in love, is sex and sexual risk taking more acceptable? Why?
- Who do you think feels and expresses the more love in a relationship – the boy or girl?

- How important is trust in a relationship? Why?
- Under what condition should a boy/girl trust their partner – list conditions?
- Does using a condom constitute trust? Why?
- As a boy/girl, how do you know your partner loves you?
- As a boy/girl how do you express and/or demonstrate love in a relationship? Pls list. Is it different between a boy and girl?
- Is sexual intercourse more likely to occur in a love based relationship
- Is sexual intercourse likely to occur more frequently in such relationships than others?
- Are you likely to use condoms/contraceptives in a love-based relationship than others?
- As a boy/girl, should you have unprotected sex if your partner says he/she loves you and is committed to the relationship?
- As a boy/girl, should you have unprotected sex if you feel your partner loves you and is committed to the relationship?
- Should emotion, love and commitment be a basis to have sex? Why?
- Should you use condom/contraceptives in such relationships?
- As a boy/girl do you always plan to have sex with your loved one every time sex occurs? Why/
- What range of sexual activities is permissible in such relationships? What are not?
- Does romantic love influence the potential for couples to have sex? Why?
- Would you say it increases the risk of sexual risk taking? How?
- Does romantic love influence sexual risk taking more for boys than girls?
- Is it accurate to say that love and emotion is the main influencer of young people's sexual risk taking? Why?
- Will sexual risk taking among young people's cease if they stop falling in love?
- If love influences young people's sexual risk taking, can you describe how the process works?
- If love does not influence young people's sexual risk taking, can you list what does?

**Developmentally appropriate (define and explain concept)**

- In your opinion, would you say that having sexual relationships is appropriate for young people? Why?
- In what way is having sexual relations detrimental/beneficial to young people's development? What are the advantages and disadvantages?
- Is it more beneficial or harmful to boys than girls? Why do you say that?
- Based on your opinion about the (in)appropriateness of young people sexual risk taking, would you allow you younger relatives - boy or girl - to engage in sexual relations if it is within your power? Why not?
- Is it accurate to say that sexual relations are good for young people's growth and development? Why?
- If young people's sexual risk taking is not beneficial, can you explain why they engage in it?
- If young people's sexual risk taking is beneficial, what are the benefits?

## **Poverty.**

- In your opinion, what is poverty?
- Does poverty influence sexual risk taking among young people?
- Does it promote sexual risk taking more among boys than girls?
- In what way? How?
- How do you know your partner is poor?
- Does your partner have to ask for money/gifts before you give it?
- Will it be accurate to say young people's sexual risk taking is due to poverty? Why do you think that?
- Have you ever received money or gifts from your partner before or after sexual intercourse?
- Are you poor? Why?
- Who gives most money/gifts in a relationship – the boy or girl? Why?
- How often?
- Who receives most money/gifts in a relationship – the boy or girl? Why?
- How often?
- Why would you give money/gifts to your sexual partners?
- Do you give/accept money/gifts to partners because they are poor?
- Do you give/accept money/gifts to partners because it is expected in every sexual relationship?
- Have you ever given money or gifts to your sexual partner?
- Have you ever received money or gifts from your sexual partners?
- Did you make the gift because your partner was poor?
- Did you receive the gift because you are poor?
- What role does gifts/money play in a sexual relationship?
- Must you give/receive money/gifts in a relationship? Why?
- What will happen if you do not give/receive gifts/money in a relationship?
- How much money and what kinds of gifts appeals most to females today?
- How much money and what kinds of gifts appeals most to males today?
- Will sexual risk taking among young people cease if poverty is reduced?
- If poverty influences what you do, can you describe how the process works?
- If poverty does not influence what you do, can you describe what does?

Based on your attitude to sexual risk taking and poverty, how does poverty influence the following sexual risk practices?

## **The mass media and FMCGs (explain concept)**

- Some say the mass media influence young people's sexual risk taking – what is the mass media?
- Can you list elements of the mass media that you enjoy? For example TV etc
- How influential are these media in relation to sexual risk taking;
  1. Books
  2. Magazines
  3. Internet
  4. TV
  5. Radio
  6. Mobile phones
  7. Movies

8. Cinema
9. Pornography
10. Mode of dressing
11. Advertising<sup>304</sup>.

- Do you have access to these media?
- How often?
- What kind programme do you enjoy on these media? List programmes.
- How would you describe the mass media programmes that you are exposed to – good or bad? Half good and half bad? Why?
- Is it fair to say that some mass media programmes influence your sexual attitude and practices? Why?
- How do the mass media programmes influence your sexual attitude and practices? Can you describe the process?
- Can one accurately conclude that the mass media influences young people's sexual risk taking?
- If the mass media influences what you do, can you describe how the process works?
- If mass media does not influence what you do, can you describe what does?
- Will sexual risk taking among young people cease if the mass media programmes could be changed?

#### **Alcohol (explain concept)**

- Some say that young people's sexual risk taking is driven by alcohol consumption – what is your view on this?
- In your opinion, is taking alcohol good or bad for young people? Why?
- Do you drink alcohol?
- Does it increase or decrease your sexual drive?
- Does it increase the variety/amount of sexual risk you take?
- Should girls/women drink alcohol?
- What is the ideal age for a boy/girl to have alcohol for the first time?
- Should boys/girls have alcohol?
- How much alcohol should a boy/girl have? Why?
- Does alcohol affect sexual desire? How can you tell?
- Is it different for men and women?
- If alcohol influences what you do, can you describe how the process works?
- If alcohol does not influence what you do, can you describe what does?
- Do you think a man/woman will be more likely to take sexual risk when drunk or sober?
- Does alcohol enhance or limit a man/woman sexual desire and performance?
- When is a man/woman likely to have unprotected sexual intercourse – when he is drunk or sober?
- Is it fair to say that alcohol is the main influencer of young people's sexual risk taking? Why?

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<sup>304</sup> Sexuality generates pleasure; and pleasure, or at least the promise of it, provides a leverage for marketing goods in a capitalist society. Sexual imagery appears almost everywhere in the marketplace as a sort of gigantic selling ploy; the commodifying of sex, it might be argued, is a means of diverting the mass of the population from their true needs, whatever these are thought to be. Giddens TI p176. For us, its purpose is the furthering of hedonic consumer socialization of an already sexually pre-occupied society.

- Will sexual risk taking among young people cease if they stop consuming alcohol?

### **Peer influence**

- Do you have friends?
- How often do you see your friends?
- How important are the opinion/practices of your friends to you?
- Do you adhere to peer advice all the time or sometime?
- Name a likely subject that you will (dis)agree about?
- Would you say your friends tell you what to do?
- Would you say they influence some of what you do? Explain pls.
- If your friends influence what you do, can you describe how the process works?
- If your friends do not influence what you do, can you describe what does?
- What types of activities do you engage in with your friends?
- What time of the day/week do you spend time most with your friends?
- How much time do you think you spend with your friends?
- Where do you meet – pls list e.g. internet café; online etc
- During the past three months have you or any of your friends had any discussion about boys, girls, sex or sexual health?
- Will your friends insult you or laugh at you if you have never had sex.
- Is it fair to say that your friends are the strongest influence on your sexual habits? Why?
- Are all your friends already having sex? How do you know?
- In your opinion, have most single people of your age have already had sexual intercourse at least once.
- In your opinion have most of your friends have already had sexual intercourse at least once?
- If your peers influence sexual risk taking, can you describe how the process works?
- If your peers do not influence young people's sexual risk taking, can you list/describe what does?
- Can you think of a time when talking with your friends changed your attitude about any issue?
- When you have problems/challenges on your mind, how often do you talk about it with friends?
- Among these topics, which are you most likely to discuss with your friends?
  - (a) hopes/problems in the marriage
  - (b) how to talk to [girl/boyfriend] about something
  - (c) your sex life
  - (d) contraceptive options
  - (e) problems with your school work
  - (f) feelings of unhappiness
  - (g) your future dreams and ambitions
  - (h) feelings that family, school etc makes too many demands on you
  - (i) financial difficulties
  - (j) problems with other friends
  - (k) feelings of anger
  - (l) feelings about love

- (m) your girl/friend's job or work
- (n) opinions about the news or politics
- (p) feelings of self-doubt
- (q) moral or religious beliefs

### **Sexual scripts (define concept)**

- In your opinion, what is the ideal age for a boy/girl to have sex for the first time?
- In your opinion, what is the ideal age for a boy/girl to marry? Why?
- Do you think boys/girls can stay without penetrative sex to avoid getting a disease? Why?
- Do you think boys/girls should abstain from penetrative sex to avoid getting a girl pregnant?
- Do you think boys/girls should abstain from penetrative sex to avoid getting disease? Why?
- In your opinion, is it possible to have a non-sexual relationship?
- Is your current relationship non-sexual?
- Are any of your peers in a non-sexual relation?
- What happens to relationship without sexual intercourse?
- It is said that boys should do the 'chasing and seducing' of a girl. Do you agree?
- Why should a girl not do same?
- It is said that girls should always refuse the 'chasing and seducing' of a boy. Do you agree?
- Why should a boy not do same?
- Should a sexually active boy/girl carry a condom? Why?
- Should a sexually active boy/girl insist on using a condom for all sexual acts? Why or why not?
- Some say it is not good for a sexually active boy/girl to boast about his/her sexual exploits? Do you agree? Why?
- Do you admire or despise a boy/girl with several sexual partners? Why?
- A girl/boy should remain a virgin until they are married? Do you agree? Why?
- Males and females should have equal sexual rights to pleasure?
- A girl/boy who loves her boy/girlfriend will allow him to have sex with her.
- As a boy/girl, when your partner says no to your sexual advances, do you believe they really mean no or yes?
- As a boy/girl, when you say no to sexual advances, do you always mean no?
- What range of sexual activities do you expect to engage in with your partner?
- Is it okay to have sex before marriage?
- How many sexual partners have you had so far?
- How many sexual partners did you have in the last 3 months?
- When was the last time you had sex?
- What is your relationship with the person with whom you last had intercourse?
- As a boy/girl, what are the things you expect to do with a girl/woman you are in a relation with?
- As a boy/girl, should you ask a boy/girl you are in a relationship with for sex? Why?
- In a relationship, who should ask/demand sex?

- Should the other partner comply? Why?
- What if your partner says no – what will you do?
- If the prevailing expectations of partners in a relationship influences sexual risk taking can you describe how the process works?
- If the prevailing expectation of partners in a relationship does not influence young people's sexual risk taking, can you list/describe what does?

### **Socialization/sexualisation**

- As a boy/girl, describe your ideal partner.
- As a boy/girl, describe your concept of a loose girl/boy?
- A boy/girl is more popular the more sexual partners he has – do you agree? How?
- A boy/girl is more popular the more sexual partners he is able to resist – do you agree? How?
- Some people believe that young people take sexual risks because they are influenced by society, school, friends and family – what do you think? Why?
- What is the role of a girl/boy in society?
- Parents should encourage their daughters to aspire to professional position in life
- Boys should help with housework the way girls do.
- Within the couple, both the male and the female should have equal say in important decisions.
- A male child is preferable to a female child.
- Girls/boys are supposed to please their girl/boyfriends under any circumstance – do you agree? Why?
- Boys and girls can engage in multiple sexual encounters – do you agree? Why?
- What are the duties of a boy/girl in a sexual relationship? Please list.
- Do you please your girl/boyfriend all the time? Why?
- What do you disagree about most?
- How do you resolve this disagreement – some say sex/gifts and money are the best ways for boys and girls respectively; do you agree? Why?
- Some say girls/boys must submit to the sexual demands of their partners at all times – do you agree?
- When resources are scarce only boys should be sent to school?
- When resources are scarce only girls should be sent to school?
- It's okay for a man to beat his girlfriend/wife as a sign of discipline if she does something wrong.
- A woman should not question the authority of a man on any subject.
- Women should have the same opportunities as men to hold leadership positions in the country.
- Women should make important sexual health decisions e.g. when to have sex and/or having children
- Men should make important sexual health decision on behalf of their women/girlfriends.
- Both men and women should make such health decision
- Women should leave such decisions on important matters to their men
- Women and girls are as smart as boys.

- Women and girls are not as smart as boys/men? Pls Explain?
- A woman should expect her husband to have other girlfriends outside the matrimony/relationships.
- A man should expect his wife to have other men-friends outside matrimony/relationships.
- Is it accurate to blame your upbringing and socialization for your sexual practices – including sexual risk taking? Why?
- If the way we were raised influences young people's sexual risk taking, can you describe how the process works?
- If the way we were raised does not influence young people's sexual risk taking, can you list/describe what does?

### **Alienation (define concept)**

Does loneliness, hopelessness, rejection etc from school, parents, society etc have anything to do with the following sexual risk practices?

Is it fair to say that young people's alienation is the main influencer of young people's sexual risk taking? Why?

- If alienation does influence sexual risk taking, can you describe how the process works?
- If alienation does not influence young people's sexual risk taking, can you list/describe what does?

### **Health seeking awareness**

- What is sexual health information?
- Do you seek sexual health information?
- From what sources can you obtain sexual health information?
- From what sources do you obtain sexual health information?
- Of the sources you mentioned in the preceding question, which one do you consider the most important?
- Have you ever heard of the illness called HIV/AIDS?
- Have ever heard of Sexually Transmitted Infections? List examples.
- Do you know anyone who have had or have STI?
- Do you know anyone who had or have HIV/AIDS?
- Is there anything a person can do to avoid getting HIV – the virus that causes AIDS?
- Some say AIDS is a myth, do you agree? Why?
- List what a person can do to avoid getting STIs? Pls list answers.
- If a person limits him/herself to having sex with only one faithful partner, does this person have an equal chance, greater chance or a lesser chance of getting HIV/AIDS and STIs? Why do you think so?
- If a person uses a condom whenever he/she engages in sexual intercourse, does this person have an equal chance, greater chance or a lesser chance of getting AIDS? Why do you think so?
- Is it possible for a healthy-looking person to be infected with the HIV/AIDS virus?
- Do you know someone personally who has aids or the virus that causes aids or someone who died from AIDS?
- Can HIV/AIDS be transmitted from a mother to a child?



- Have you ever talked about HIV/AIDS with your sexual partner?
  - Do you think people can get HIV/AIDS the first time they have sex.
  - Do you think people can get HIV/AIDS and STIs from the following sexual practices; (refer to page 1)
  - Is there a cure HIV/AIDS?
  - Can traditional healers cure HIV/AIDS?
  - Does having sex with a virgin cure HIV/AIDS?
  - Can you tell, by looking, if an acquaintance has HIV/AIDS and/or STI? Why not? How?
  - Some say HIV/AIDS does not exist – what do you think? Why?
  - Which of these behaviour can protect you from STIs and unwanted pregnancies?
1. Abstain From Sex
  2. Use condoms
  3. Use condoms with high-risk partners
  4. Limit sex to one partner/stay faithful to one part
  5. Limit number of sexual partners
  6. Avoid sex with CSW
  7. Avoid sex with homosexuals
  8. Avoid blood transfusion
  9. Avoid injections/tattoos with unsterilized instruments
  10. Avoid kissing
  11. Avoid mosquito bites
  12. Seek protection from
  13. Traditional healer
  14. Don't know

#### **Annex 4.**

##### **Structured questions - component of interview guide.**

1. Participant's gender
2. Participant's age
3. Evaluate sex with strangers
4. Evaluate sex with multiple partners
5. Evaluate sex with commercial sex workers
6. Evaluate sex to test your fertility status
7. Evaluate rape
8. Evaluate dry sex
9. Evaluate oral sex
10. Evaluate anal sex
11. Evaluate smooching
12. Evaluate kissing
13. Evaluate withdrawal method
14. Rate the influence of books on young people's sexual risk taking
15. Rate the influence of magazines on young people's sexual risk taking
16. Rate the influence of the internet on young people's sexual risk taking
17. Rate the influence of TV on young people's sexual risk taking
18. Rate the influence of radio on young people's sexual risk taking
19. Rate the influence of mobile phones on young people's sexual risk taking
20. Rate the influence of movies on young people's sexual risk taking
21. Rate the influence of cinema on young people's sexual risk taking
22. Rate the influence of pornography on young people's sexual risk taking
23. Rate the influence of sexy modes of dressing on young people's sexual risk taking
24. Rate the influence of advertisements on young people's sexual risk taking
25. Do you seek positive sexual health information and products
26. Do you know where to find positive sexual health information and products
27. Ever had STIs
28. Do you have HIV
29. Do you have STI now
30. Do you know someone who has HIV
31. Do you know someone who has STI
32. Are you willing to use Condoms every time you have sex
33. Have you ever used condoms
34. Do you use condoms regularly
35. Do you know how to correctly use condoms
36. Do you think you will use condoms every time you have sex in future
37. What are your reasons for using condoms
38. Do you think every young person must have a boyfriend or girlfriend
39. Do you think having a boyfriend means you must take sexual risks
40. Do you think giving cash and gifts means buying sexual access
41. Do you think receiving cash and gifts means granting sexual access
42. Do you have a boyfriend or girlfriend
43. Have you ever had sex before
44. Do you take sexual risks
45. Are you sexually active
46. Do you think it is important to abstain from sex

47. Do you abstain from sex
48. How old were you when you first had sex
49. Are you confident you can abstain from sex
50. Are you confident you can have one sexual partner at a time
51. Are you confident you can refuse your boy/girlfriend's sexual advances
52. Are you confident you can refuse a stranger's sexual advances
53. Are you confident you can avoid sex until you marry
54. Have you ever been pressured to have sex
55. Have you pressured anyone to have sex
56. What do you worry most about after taking sexual risks
57. Has the increased availability and young people access to contraceptives/abortion contributed to young people's sexual risk taking
58. Do you think peers have influence on young people's sexual risk taking
59. Do you think commitment, love and emotion have influence on young people's sexual risk taking
60. Do you think curiosity has influence on young people's sexual risk taking
61. Do you think the mass media has influence on young people's sexual risk taking
62. Do you think poverty has influence on young people's sexual risk taking
63. Do you think the desire/pressure to marry has influence on young people's sexual risk taking
64. Do you think pleasure has influence on young people's sexual risk taking?

How confident are you that you would be able to;

- Abstain from sex until you get married?
- Use a condom every time you had sexual intercourse?
- Avoid sex anytime you don't want it?
- Use contraceptives consistently if you do not desire to get disease and/or pregnant.
- Have a sexual relationship with only one person for any length of time if there are other immediate opportunities to have sex?
- If you did not want to have sex, how confident are you that you would be able to refuse sexual intercourse:
  - With a person you have known for a few days?
  - With a person you have known for more than 3 months?
  - With a person who offers you gifts?
  - With a person who you care about deeply?
  - With someone who has power over you like a teacher or employer?
  - With a person you have been dating?
  - With a person you have been having sex with previously?
  - With a person you plan/hope to marry?

**Answer categories**

Yes

No

Somehow

I don't know

Confident

Not confident  
Somehow confident.  
I don't know

Risky  
Not risky  
Somehow risky  
I don't know

STI and HIV  
Preg, STI and HIV  
I don't know

Prevent pregnancy  
Prevent STI/HIV  
Prevent pregnancy, STI/HIV.  
I don't know

Very important  
Important  
Somewhat important  
I don't know

Regularly  
Irregularly  
Somewhat regularly  
I don't know

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