

**GRAPPLING WITH EMERGING
ADULTHOODS:
YOUTH NARRATIVES OF COMING OF AGE
IN A FRONTIER TOWN, ZIMBABWE**

Rekopantswe Mate

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IN A FRONTIER TOWN, ZIMBABWE**

De worsteling met ontluikende volwassenheid: verhalen van jongeren
over opgroeien in een grensplaats in Zimbabwe

Thesis

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Erasmus University Rotterdam
by command of the
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Dedication

To my nieces and nephews

Lebohang and Buhle
Musa, Modisa and Kwanele
Reneiloe and Naledi
Mojalefa

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Acronyms

ARV	Anti-retroviral
BACOSSl	Basic Commodities Supply Side Intervention
CHH	Child Headed Household
LAMA	Legal Age of Majority Act
MOHCW	Ministry of Health and Child Welfare
ORO	Operation Restore Order (also known as Operation Murambatsvina)
PEP	Post Exposure Prophylaxis
SBSE	School Based Sexuality Education
USD	United States Dollars
ZAR	South African Rand

Exchange rates during fieldwork

1Euro = 10 ZAR

1USD = 7,4 ZAR.

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Zimre Park, Ruwa, Zimbabwe

September 2014

Abstract

This study is about subjectivities of young people and about coming of age in a frontier town, Beitbridge, in southern Zimbabwe. The study is motivated by the growing attention to African youth as a social-demographic group and a social phenomenon since the late 1990s in the context of unprecedented economic dislocation. The latter has seen young people resorting to livelihoods largely seen as illicit, immoral and anti-establishment such as activities in the grey economy and sex work. As young people take matters into their own hands, policy makers have tended to use essentialist arguments according to which young people's behaviour can be understood as a result of age and hormonal changes. This study uses a constructivist and interpretivist approach in which youth is socially created and the behaviour of young people is understood as embedded on its socio-economic, cultural and political context. These approaches are complementary and allow us to question what is taken for granted such as what is assumed about youth and also account for the dissonance between norms and deeds (Yanow 2006:19, Gergen 2000:50). By studying young people's subjectivities in growing up, the study sought to capture lived experiences of the young and how economic instability impinges on growing up.

The study took place in 2009-2010 during Zimbabwe's worst economic crisis. The crisis started in the 1990s, becoming acute in the 2000s. Such chronic economic instability has been observed to challenge and change ways of being and relations between young and old (Vigh 2008). In addition, young people are caught within the nexus of patriarchy, gerontocracy and globalisation (Diouf 2003). The resultant contradictions have been described as "crises" for instance by Giddens (1992) to point to scrambled normative ways of being and weakening social bonds leading to incongruence between social expectations and practicable options. The study uses the concept of "emerging adulthoods" following Arnett (2000, 2007), Arnett and Taber (1994), Flacks (2007), Hartmann and Swartz (2007) and Berzin and de Marco (2010) to highlight structural challenges due to neoliberal globalisation which have changed old traditions and customs (such as bridewealth) and idealised new means (such as schooling, credentials and wage work) by which adulthood is achieved, and point to the instability and transience visited on youth both in their social environments and in strategies open to young people (such as licit and illicit informal sector work). Zimbabwe's crisis saw a growing number of young people resorting to the informal sector to seek means to earn a living and to augment incomes. Their visibility in public, seemingly idle and flouting national laws and bye-laws, exasperated many officials

and adults (Kamete 2008, 2013). These emerging practices have in fact been a basis for stereotyping young people as lazy, lacking discipline and given to criminality. These reactions characterised by stereotyping, vilification and contradictions show gerontocratic and patriarchal interests in attempts to discipline youth. These interests not only influence young people's experiences of growing up, they are part of the fleeting role models and conflicting messages which add to the instability.

The thesis has eight chapters: three on background, context and conceptual and methodological issues, four on empirical findings and one on conclusions. Each of the four empirical chapters responds to one sub-research question. Titles of each chapter are based on recurring refrains, metaphors and statements hence narratives through which research respondents reacted to the issues under discussion in each question. Narratives are taken as shared meanings, explanations of individuals' worldviews, and means of deflecting reflected appraisals (Callero 2003, Ezzy 1998, Kaufman and Johnson 2004, Wiklund-Gustin 2010, Nencel 2005). Narratives are not politically neutral but are embedded in social relationships and the social environment in which they are uttered (Callero 2003, Ezzy 1998), thus a means to understanding subjectivities of young people. In this regard, chapter 4 explores multi-dimensional "restrictions" and its antithesis "running around" as experiences of being young. These restrictions are in the form of rules, social norms at home and school about what young persons can and cannot do as well as the socio-economic contexts and opportunities they offers or deny the young. It shows that due to economic decline some young people have become cynical about schooling, as they do not see its benefits in the wake of chronic unemployment and low wages in the civil service (the most accessible forms of wage work). Some have dropped out of school to fend for themselves and help struggling kin through creative employment in licit and illicit informal sector activities hence "running round". Those who remained at school did so in obedience to parents but still face limited prospects for employment. Those in the informal sector have become aware of its relatively low incomes, the challenges of living independently, paying for accommodation, transport, remittances to expectant kin and having to save for bridewealth. Their narratives reveal both their wishes to comply with normative narratives of achieving adulthoods and the intractable challenges they have to contend with on a day-to-day basis and strategically.

Chapter 5 discusses experiences of living in Beitbridge under the heading "impossible youth or an impossible situation" to address the contestation between adults' essentialist views of young people as innately determined versus young people's situational arguments. Citing living arrangements of respondents the chapter shows that many young people are socialised into a life of defying officials, cynicism and lying by what they observe in

the social environment but also as part of deflecting and managing reflected appraisals (Kaufman and Johnson 2004).

In chapter 6, the research addresses ideal sexuality versus realities that young people have to contend with hence “from not playing with boys, *kukech(w)a* and informal marriages”. Sexuality is understood as embedded in everyday sociality where deviations from propriety are likely to be taken as pointers to a propensity for immorality (Jackson and Scott 2010). Thus some forms of mobility, clothing and friendships with the opposite sex and older persons are seen as evidence of or inclinations towards illicit sexual practices. The chapter shows some challenges presented by socialisation such as the interdict that girls should not play with non-kin boys at home and at school, and how respondents do not heed these teachings. The quest for economically dominant males in an environment where employment opportunities have shrunk is also discussed. Given difficulties of paying bridewealth and the need to demonstrate trustworthiness, informal marriages become a halfway house to proper marriage but most fizzle out before formalisation leaving young women with children they cannot care for and pushing them into transactional sex and sex work. Thus these challenges lock some young people in relationships that do not allow them to be recognised as social adults through bridewealth marriages. In this vein, sexuality as subsumed in daily practices of youth leads to heightened anxiety on the part of adults as known surveillance and monitoring fail. Parents understand the need for mobility and in some cases sponsor it, but also know that mobility means reduced accountability of youth to adults. Further sexuality has changed as seen in the conflation of economic and emotional security needs making sexuality a survival strategy of the last resort, especially but not exclusively, for female youth (Chant and Evans 2010). This happens as normative narratives of achieving adulthood through bridewealth marriages in patrilineal cultures such as practiced in Zimbabwe are under strain as young men’s ability to save enough to pay bridewealth as well as to provide for independent households is challenged by endemic unemployment. Meanwhile the deferral of marriage on account of failure to meet the right partner leads to relationships characterised by different forms of “needs driven” dating (Nguyen 2007) also known as transactional sex. This study shows that young people have diverse needs due to real and relative poverty. For instance, in-school youth need “modern” school lunches and snacks while out-of-school youth have personal up-keep and kin obligations to fulfil. Needs driven dating reveals agentive strategies of young people even though these are non-transformative and understood as socially and physically degrading to their practitioners.

The study also finds that youth resort to faith and traditional healing and beliefs in spirits in the management of income generating activities and sexual practices, revealing as discussed in chapter 7. Not only do these practices point to an acute sense of vulnerability and powerlessness on the part of research participants, they also allow youth to attribute their circumstances to societal causes rather than personal failings as adults and prevailing neoliberal ideologies claim. Officials and other adults, driven by common beliefs that youth practices are socially disruptive, often overlook the societal origins and bases of these practices. Youth strategies in this instance show youth disaffection, alienation from society but also a need to come back into the fold of kin relations. This is because these beliefs and attendant consultation of traditional and faith healers reiterate the quest for good social relations as a source of well being and achievement of one's dreams. However the strategies show the limits of youth agency as alternative health practitioners insist on explanations and solutions that mystify the lived realities of young people by attributing them to supernatural issues.

In the conclusions, (chapter 8) the study shows that youth is socially created by socio-economic and cultural circumstances. The study concludes that despite the agency of youth, their actions have ambiguous outcomes as they are not transformative. This points to intractable structural challenges whose origins and dynamics are beyond the power of these young people to change.

Samenvatting

Dit onderzoek gaat over subjectieve ervaringen van jonge mensen en over volwassen worden in de grensplaats Beitbridge in het zuiden van Zimbabwe. De toegenomen aandacht voor de Afrikaanse jeugd als sociaal-demografische groep en sociaal fenomeen in verband met een niet eerder vertoonde economische dislocatie sinds eind jaren 90, vormden de aanleiding voor het onderzoek. Jonge mensen zijn de kost gaan verdienen met activiteiten die overwegend worden beschouwd als ongeoorloofd, immoreel en anti-establishment, zoals werk in de grijze sector van de economie en in de prostitutie. Jonge mensen nemen het heft in handen en beleidsmakers zijn geneigd om essentialistische argumenten te gebruiken die het gedrag van jongeren zien als het gevolg van hun leeftijd en hormonale veranderingen. Dit onderzoek gaat uit van een constructivistische en een interpretatieve benadering waarin de jeugd als een sociaal verschijnsel wordt gezien en het gedrag van jongeren wordt verklaard vanuit de sociaal-economische, culturele en politieke context. Deze benaderingen zijn complementair en maken het mogelijk om dingen die vanzelfsprekend geacht worden, zoals bepaalde aannamen over de jeugd, in twijfel te trekken, en ook om de dissonantie tussen normen en daden te verklaren (Yanow 2006:19, Gergen 2000:50). Door de subjectieve ervaringen van opgroeiende jongeren te bestuderen is geprobeerd om ervaringen van de jongeren in beeld te brengen en te laten zien wat economische instabiliteit doet met de opgroeiende jeugd.

Het onderzoek is uitgevoerd in 2009-2010 tijdens het hoogtepunt van de economische crisis in Zimbabwe. De crisis begon in de jaren 90 en werd nijpend vanaf 2000. Een dergelijke chronische economische instabiliteit kan het bestaan en de relaties tussen jong en oud onder druk zetten en veranderen (Vigh 2008). Bovendien zitten jongeren klem in het spanningsveld tussen patriarchaat, gerontocratie en globalisering (Diouf 2003). De tegenstrijdigheden die hiervan het gevolg zijn worden bijvoorbeeld door Giddens (1992) omschreven als 'crises'. Hiermee wordt bedoeld op verwarring op normatief gebied en een verzwakking van sociale verbanden, wat leidt tot incongruentie tussen sociale verwachtingen en praktische mogelijkheden. In het onderzoek wordt in navolging van Arnett (2000, 2007), Arnett en Taber (1994), Flacks (2007), Hartmann en Swartz (2007) en Berzin en De Marco (2010) het begrip *emerging adulthood* (ontluikende volwassenheid) gebruikt om te wijzen op structurele uitdagingen als gevolg van de neoliberale globalisering waardoor oude tradities en gebruiken (zoals de bruidsprijs) veranderd zijn en nieuwe manieren van volwassenwording (zoals scholing, kwalificaties en betaald werk) geïdealiseerd worden. Het

begrip ontluikende volwassenheid wijst ook op de onbestendigheid en veranderlijkheid van de sociale omgeving van jongeren en van hun mogelijkheden (zoals legaal en illegaal werk in de informele sector). Tijdens de crisis in Zimbabwe zijn steeds meer jongeren in de informele sector gaan werken om de kost te verdienen en hun inkomen te verhogen. In het openbaar lijken ze vaak werkloos rond te hangen en landelijke en lokale wetten aan hun laars te lappen, tot wanhoop van vele ambtenaren en andere volwassenen (Kamete 2008, 2013). Hierdoor worden jongeren gestereotyped als lui, ongedisciplineerd en crimineel. Deze stereotypering, belasting en tegenstrijdigheden verraden gerontocratische en patriarchale belangen in de pogingen om de jeugd te disciplineren. Deze belangen beïnvloeden niet alleen de ervaringen van opgroeiende jongeren, maar zijn ook onderdeel van de vluchtige rolmodellen en tegenstrijdige boodschappen die de situatie nog instabieler maken.

Het proefschrift bestaat uit acht hoofdstukken: drie over de achtergrond, context en conceptuele en methodologische aspecten, vier met de resultaten van het empirisch onderzoek en een slothoofdstuk waarin de conclusies beschreven worden. Elk van de vier empirische hoofdstukken behandelt één deelvraag van het onderzoek. De hoofdstuktitels zijn gebaseerd op terugkerende thema's, metaforen en uitspraken en daarmee op de verhalen waarmee de respondenten kwamen naar aanleiding van de discussiepunten bij elke onderzoeksvraag. Verhalen worden opgevat als gedeelde betekenissen, verklaringen van hoe individuen tegen de wereld aankijken, en manieren om *reflected appraisals* te ontwijken (Callero 2003, Ezzy 1998, Kaufman en Johnson 2004, Wiklund-Gustin 2010, Nencel 2005). Verhalen zijn niet politiek neutraal, maar zijn ingebed in sociale relaties en de sociale omgeving waarin ze verteld worden (Callero 2003, Ezzy 1998), en zijn daarom een middel om de subjectieve ervaringen van jongeren te begrijpen. In dit opzicht worden in hoofdstuk 4 multidimensionale 'restricties' en het tegendeel daarvan: 'je gang gaan', verkend als ervaringen die bij de jeugd horen. Deze restricties nemen de vorm aan van regels en sociale normen over wat jonge mensen wel en niet mogen die thuis en op school gelden, en betreffen ook de sociaal-economische context en kansen die jongeren wel of niet krijgen. Het blijkt dat sommige jongeren door de economische crisis cynisch zijn geworden over scholing, omdat ze er de voordelen niet van inzien gezien de chronische werkloosheid en lage lonen in de overheidsdienst (de meest toegankelijke vorm van betaald werk). Sommigen zijn zonder diploma van school gegaan om zich alleen te redden en familieleden die maar moeilijk rond kunnen komen te helpen. Deze jongeren zijn creatief in het vinden van werk in de legale en illegale informele sector, vandaar de term 'je gang gaan'. Degenen die de school afmaakten, deden dat om hun ouders te gehoorzamen, maar hebben desondanks geen goede vooruitzichten op de arbeidsmarkt. Jongeren die werkzaam zijn in de informele

sector zijn zich bewust van de relatief lage inkomens, de uitdagingen van het op zichzelf wonen met de kosten van woonruimte, transport, financiële bijdragen aan familie die dat verwacht en het moeten sparen voor de bruidsprijs. Uit hun verhalen blijkt enerzijds hun wens om te leven in overeenstemming met normatieve verhalen over volwassenwording en anderzijds dat ze dagelijks voor onmogelijke uitdagingen staan waarin ze hun weg moeten zien te vinden.

In hoofdstuk 5 worden de ervaringen met het leven in Beitbridge besproken onder de titel 'onmogelijke jeugd of een onmogelijke situatie' waarbij wordt ingegaan op de tegenstelling tussen de essentialistische kijk van volwassenen die gedrag van jongeren beschouwen als aangeboren en de situationele argumenten van de jongeren zelf. Uit de verhalen van respondenten over hun leven blijkt dat veel jonge mensen gesocialiseerd worden tot een leven van cynisme en leugens waarin ze ingaan tegen de gevestigde orde. Dit komt door wat ze in hun sociale omgeving observeren, maar is ook onderdeel van het ontwijken van en omgaan met *reflected appraisals* (gereflecteerde beoordelingen, Kaufman en Johnson 2004).

Hoofdstuk 6 behandelt idealen op het gebied van seksualiteit versus de realiteit waarmee jongeren te maken hebben: 'niet met jongens spelen, *kukech(w)a* en informele huwelijken'. Seksualiteit wordt opgevat als onderdeel van het alledaagse sociale verkeer waarin afwijkingen van wat fatsoenlijk wordt geacht vaak worden gezien als teken van een neiging tot immoreel gedrag (Jackson en Scott 2010). Dit betekent dat sommige vormen van mobiliteit, kleding en vriendschappen met leden van de andere sekse en met oudere mensen worden opgevat als bewijs van of neiging tot ongeoorloofde seksuele praktijken. In het hoofdstuk worden enkele uitdagingen waarmee jongeren in hun socialisatie geconfronteerd worden besproken, zoals het verbod voor meisjes om thuis of op school met jongens die geen familie zijn te spelen, en wordt uiteengezet dat de respondenten zich niets aantrekken van dit soort regels. Ook de vraag naar economisch dominante mannen in een omgeving waarin er steeds minder werk is wordt besproken. Gezien de problemen om de bruidsprijs te kunnen betalen en de noodzaak om zich een betrouwbare partner te tonen worden informele huwelijken een tussenstation op weg naar een echt huwelijk. De meeste informele huwelijken stranden echter voor ze geformaliseerd worden, waardoor jonge vrouwen achterblijven met kinderen voor wie ze niet kunnen zorgen en aangezet worden tot seks als ruilmiddel en prostitutie. Door deze uitdagingen zitten sommige jongeren gevangen in relaties waarin ze niet erkend worden als sociale volwassenen zoals bij een huwelijk op basis van een bruidsprijs. Op deze manier leidt seksualiteit als onderdeel van het dagelijks leven van jongeren tot toenemende ongerustheid bij volwassenen omdat ze onvoldoende

mogelijkheden hebben voor bewaking en toezicht. Ouders snappen de noodzaak van mobiliteit en maken die in sommige gevallen mogelijk, maar ze weten ook dat mobiliteit betekent dat jongeren minder verantwoording afleggen aan volwassenen. Verder is seksualiteit veranderd door de samensmelting van de economische en emotionele behoefte aan zekerheid waardoor seksualiteit een laatste redmiddel wordt om te kunnen overleven, vooral maar niet uitsluitend voor jonge vrouwen (Chant en Evans 2010). Dit speelt zich af terwijl normatieve verhalen over volwassenwording door middel van huwelijken op basis van een bruidsprijs in patrilineale samenlevingen zoals in Zimbabwe onder druk staan omdat jonge mannen door endemische werkloosheid minder goed in staat zijn om genoeg te sparen voor de bruidsprijs en om een onafhankelijk huishouden te voeren. Intussen leidt het uitstel van een huwelijk omdat men niet de juiste partner kan vinden tot verschillende vormen van ‘behoeftegestuurde’ relaties (Nguyen 2007) oftewel seks als ruilmiddel. Uit dit onderzoek blijkt dat jonge mensen uiteenlopende behoeften hebben door echte en relatieve armoede. Zo moet de schooljeugd bijvoorbeeld betalen voor ‘moderne’ school-lunches en tussendoortjes, en moeten jongeren die niet meer op school zitten in hun levensonderhoud voorzien en hebben ze verplichtingen tegenover hun familie. Behoeftegestuurde relaties zijn een uiting van agency van jongeren hoewel dit een niet-transformatieve strategie is die sociaal en fysiek vernederend wordt geacht voor degenen die hier hun toevlucht toe nemen.

Uit het onderzoek blijkt ook dat jongeren steun zoeken in het geloof, traditionele geneeswijzen en het geloof in geesten bij het ondernemen van activiteiten om geld te verdienen en bij seksuele praktijken, zoals wordt besproken in hoofdstuk 7. Dit wijst niet alleen op een sterk gevoel van kwetsbaarheid en machteloosheid bij de deelnemers aan het onderzoek, maar het stelt de jongeren ook in staat om hun omstandigheden aan maatschappelijke oorzaken toe te schrijven in plaats van aan persoonlijk falen, zoals volwassenen en heersende neoliberale ideologieën doen. Ambtenaren en andere volwassenen zien de maatschappelijke oorzaken en achtergronden van de keuzes die jongeren maken vaak over het hoofd vanuit de gebruikelijke opvatting dat het gedrag van jongeren sociaal ontwrichtend is. De strategieën die jongeren hanteren geven blijk van onvrede en vervreemding van de samenleving, maar ook van de behoefte om terug te keren in de schoot van de familiebanden. Hun geloofsovertuigingen en het daarmee gepaard gaande raadplegen van traditionele en gebedsgenezers benadrukken namelijk de zoektocht naar goede sociale relaties als bron van welbevinden en middel om je dromen te verwezenlijken. De strategieën tonen echter ook de grenzen van agency van jongeren, omdat alternatieve genezers vasthouden aan verklaringen en oplossingen die de realiteit

waarmee jonge mensen te maken hebben mystificeren door die aan bovennatuurlijke krachten toe te schrijven.

In de conclusies (hoofdstuk 8) wordt gesteld dat de jeugd een sociaal verschijnsel is dat gecreëerd wordt door sociaal-economische en culturele omstandigheden. De conclusie van het onderzoek is dat het gedrag van de jongeren, ondanks het feit dat ze agency tonen, geen eenduidige resultaten heeft omdat het niet transformatief is. Dit wijst op onmogelijke structurele uitdagingen met een oorsprong en verloop waaraan deze jongeren niets kunnen veranderen.

Chapter 1

Introduction: Youth and gendered sexuality as development issues

Introduction and background to the problem

This thesis is about youth experiences of being young and coming of age in a frontier town, Beitbridge, in southern Zimbabwe. Coming of age encompasses a lot of concurrent processes including relationships with adults, education, work life, health and sexual relationships. All of these are impacted by gender and sexuality. Sexuality, especially is increasingly an area of contestation, legal and moral surveillance (Kehily 2009). These contestations are different for boys and girls, and have local, national and global dimensions hence youth issues are “glocalised” (Robertson 1995) as discussed in chapters below. The thesis is motivated by the attention that male and female youth have received in the last two decades in Zimbabwe; this attention coincided with the plunge into economic and political crises with unprecedented impacts on social relations. This was also a period when youth sexuality received a lot of attention because of global public health campaigns. As technocrats and activists scrambled to respond to public health challenges, attention to youth was more about attempting to dictate what they can do, when and how, because of essentialist notions that they are given to risk-taking. I analyse young people’s lived experiences of coming of age, how they live and talk about their lives, including their sexual experiences, practices and meanings they attach to them. Rapid social change and economic crises scramble people’s aspirations and material circumstances forcing them to behave in new and unfamiliar ways but also to have ways of explaining their experiences so they are in line with social expectation (Curtis

2009, Vigh 2008, Giddens 1991); hence the significance of studying youth subjectivities for understanding Zimbabwe's socio-cultural and economic development.

This chapter introduces the study by outlining some of the social change brought by neoliberal globalisation and implications for how we understand young people's lives and struggles. It argues that because of globalisation conceptualisations of youth are increasingly universalised making us lose the glocal contextual issues that produce youth. When it comes to gender and sexuality, the local is seen as a hindrance to achieving the supposedly higher values of the global (Arnfred 2004). The chapter critiques some of these definitions within the context of Zimbabwe.

Framing the issue: youth, sexuality, gender and neoliberal globalisation

Since the 1940s sociologists and social anthropologists have argued that attention to youth, invariably referring to young men, is a panicked reaction to the impact of social change, especially when young people are caught between several ways of being (Simon 1996, Bucholtz 2002, Durham 2000, Masquelier 2010, G. Jones 2009, Mizen 2004). The visibility of apparently leisured young men leads to blame-the-victim narratives such as youth being "slackers" and lazy (Heiman 2001) because of fear that these young men are work averse. In some instances concerns about idleness, the likely slide into criminality and a bleak future are seen as pointing to "societal failure" (growing unemployment and survival strategies therein, declining academic performance), "moral decline" (crime, teen pregnancy) or "resistance" to some forms of domination (Maira and Soep 2004: pxvii, Mizen 2004: 3). Whatever the accent, exasperated adults blame young people for social problems such as unmet obligations and expectations of leisured elderhood as were possible in the past.

Neoliberal globalisation¹ first manifested itself in Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) as structural adjustment programs (SAPs) in the late 1970s through the 1990s for latecomers like Zimbabwe.² SAPs entailed similar package of policies sponsored by the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and supported by major donors with an argument to revamp African economies and make them more competitive in the global market. The spread of neoliberalism is described by Ferguson (2006:13) as "...meant to bring African states and economies *into line with the standard global model*". (added emphasis). In reality, Ferguson observes that the effects of neoliberalism made Africa "more different" than the rest of the world as a result of growing inequality, poverty, hunger, wars, high disease burden and a general reversal of development indicators such as life expectancy, infant

mortality in the midst of unprecedented institutional incapacitation. The SAPs regimen of austerity targeted social spending with the result that most African economies were similarly plunged into deeper poverty, hence SAPs are described as “the globalisation of poverty” (Chossudovsky 1997) or initiating the “rush to the bottom” (Ferguson 1999).

Across the sub-region, SAPs led to reversal of post-independence socio-economic developmental gains such as access to education and health, and shrank employment through reduction of public sectors and factory closures; food insecurity grew because of impacts on small-scale (subsistence) agriculture, the region’s mainstay (see Onimode (ed.) 1989, Gibbon et al (eds.) 1993, Harvey (ed.) 1996, Engberg-Pedersen et al (eds) 1996, Sparr (ed.) 1994). (Zimbabwe specific experiences are discussed in chapter 3). Costs of living invariably soared on the back of intertwined effects of currency devaluations and removal of subsidies on basic commodities such as food, agricultural inputs and fuel. In order to reduce government spending, governments were forced to adopt cost recovery in health and education forcing many households to withdraw their children from school or to choose some children over others with the effect that girls lost out more than boys. Many people avoided using health care centres simply on account of costs but also because services degenerated because of governments’ inability to provide supplies, pay workers decently and maintain and replace equipment. Many countries experienced social instability while others were plunged into civil wars in which young people, increasingly excluded from promises of independence, took up arms in rebel armies in a vain bid to redress social inequality and exclusion (Peters and Richards 1998, Ibrahim 2005, Simonse 2005). The impact of job losses pushed more women into the informal sector to make ends meet and/or to augment their household incomes. The burden of care and domestic work on women intensified, and was later made worse by the impact of AIDS (Urdang 2006). Communitarian notions of sharing (work, food, and helping others in times of need) based on kinship norms of generalised reciprocity across and within generations which historically were sustained by gift and people exchanges buckled too as exchanges became unbalanced (there were more needy people than could be provided for) and remittances dried up while caring for persons became burdensome (see for instance de Boeck 2005, Urdang 2006). Meanwhile SAPs came with a new ideology of neoliberalism that sought to undo these interdependences as costly and inefficient by encouraging individualism (see Sparr 1994). This affected the most vulnerable populations such as children and youth whose dependence albeit exchanged for labour contribution and obedience to adults (Durham 2000, Nyamnjoh 2002, Burke 2002), became too heavy for ubiquitously out-of-work adults who had no social protection under these circumstances. With the advent and increase in

deaths from HIV and AIDS, the situation of these vulnerable populations became especially precarious (see van Dijk 2008, Francis-Chizororo 2008) of which more below. Suffice to say, it is widely accepted that it was because of the deleterious effects of SAPs that across sub-Saharan Africa the number of homeless children and youth living by their wits grew across sub-Saharan Africa (see Marguerat 2005, Nieuwenhuys 1999, Honwana and de Boeck (eds.) 2005).

The rapid change and deleterious impacts of SAPs gave new accents to structural violence and counter-violence pitting generations and genders and against each other. Young people's agency accentuated by their responses to impacts of SAPs (especially its negative aspects such as unemployment, conflicts and civil unrest), saw growing demonization of young people. This negative attention, unlike attention on women and children, makes youth the only socio-demographic group looked at as a problem for development as seen in laments such as "lost generations" (O'Brien 1996) or "sacrificed generations" (Sharp 2002).³ Popular versions of these arguments do not immediately acknowledge impacts of structural challenges in the economy but point to innate qualities of the young or neglect on the part of adults. Neither is true. Rather, the fact that this growing attention to youth is happening in an historical moment denoted by neoliberal globalisation begs an analysis of dynamics wrought by the latter. Not all youth are seen as problem bearing. The poor, disenfranchised and marginalised produce youth whose visibility is associated with these negative and alarmist narratives. The increase in the number of disenfranchised youth has come to typify neoliberal globalisation challenging prevailing social norms, narratives and expectations of growing up (Mizen 2004, Cole and Durham 2007). It is not surprising that most SSA countries invariably developed youth policies following the deleterious effects of neoliberal development approaches. How youth are defined in these policies is more or less the same; often essentialised as driven by hormones and decrying moral decline wrought by youth practices and never grappling with intractable structural causes (for instance see Momoh 2000, Ya'u 2000, Simone 2005, Durham 2007). In this vein, this study argues that studying youth has to be about understanding social change and how change comes to denote the young as socially and sexually deviant. It seeks to give voice to young people by analysing narratives of their experiences.

The second aspect of globalisation is seen in the globalisation of social policy, such as seen in the work of the United Nations (UN) and its agencies (O'Manique 2004, Pigg 2005) and well other multilateral organisations. The resultant rapid flows of information on different ways of being worsen tensions between familiar and emergent ways of being, often resulting in uncertainty, insecurity and crises (Cole and Durham 2007, Vigh 2008, Cote

and Allahar 1994, Giddens 1991). How the globalisation of social policy impinges on youth experiences in SSA is discussed in subsections below. The interaction between global social policies with familiar ways of being is increasingly theorised. For instance, Giddens (1991: 184) observes that

A ‘crisis’ exists whenever activities concerned with important goals in the life of an individual or a collectivity suddenly appear inadequate. Crises in this sense become a ‘normal’ part of life, but by definition they cannot be routinised.

Research shows that social change and its crises simultaneously empower (by enabling certain actions) and disempower (by rendering some actions impossible) as individuals of all ages lose certainties of past institutions due to transformation of interpersonal and intragroup relations and weakening bonds thereof (Giddens 1991). Individuals are left to their own devices; open to negotiate needs with friends and kin in relationships underlined by voluntarism and (in)ability to pay for services rather than obtaining them through mutual obligation as in the past. This is often seen as enhancing the exercise of choice but plays down the limited options available to actors. Further, voluntarism means wilful opting in and out of relations hence accentuation of insecurity (Bauman 1997, 2003). The task of making choices comes with consummate introspection or reflexivity as individuals weigh their options in conditions where there is no guidance and examples to learn from (Cole and Durham 2007, Giddens 1991). This reflexivity makes for the production of stereotypical neoliberal subjects; supposedly agentive, rational, calculating beings despite conditions of instability (Makhulu et al 2010, Vigh 2008). Reflexivity is ordinarily celebrated as modernity as people take charge of their lives and make choices in the face of multiple possibilities, where self-identity is challenged by constantly changing social relations and socio-economic contexts (Giddens 1991: 184). These conditions are key to glocalisations and emerging subjectivities as people manipulate norms to get what they want and need, as they try to minimise constraints and look like they are conforming to norms.

In SSA people have responded to these crises through what Lockhart (2008: 114) describes as “the culture of pragmatism”. Harry Blatterer (2010) uses the term “situational living” to describe ways of life based on opportunism, constant negotiation, trial and error, risk-taking, flexibility, improvisation and mobility and therefore transience (see also S. Jackson 2010). It is observed that these ways of life are seen as “fatalistic” (Lockhart 2008) because people do not dwell on the pain, losses and dangers of the moment (Makhulu et al 2010:9). Rather, individuals focus on likely gains even if far-fetched hence growing beliefs and practices related to the supernatural among them Pentecostalism, side-by-side with

black magic.⁴ Thus social change has come with risk-taking as means to restore challenged identities and aspirations. For this research, cultures of pragmatism under conditions of insecurity as used by youth in their coming of age and the attendant need to restore identities in the face of multiple challenges are at issue.

Neoliberal crises have implications for coming of age processes because of changes visited on social relations of gender, generation and social reproduction. Changing living arrangements, forms of work, demands and expectations as well as availability of social services, have been upset gender and intergenerational systems of obligations and bargains (Cole and Durham 2007, Connell 1995). Sylvia Chant talks about a “crisis of masculinity” referring to the denuded material foundations on which men used to fashion their control and authority over women and children as employment opportunities recede and wages decline (Chant 2000). This challenges possibilities for men to comply with expectations to muster resources to found and provide for heteronormative families (Barker and Ricardo 2005, Cohen and Reid 1999, Jeffrey 2007, Hansen 2005). Men are forced to refashion ways of being men; in the process many resort to brute force and violence against women and children to assert their statuses if their own experiments do not yield desired results. For young people these are times characterised by conflicting messages and fleeting role models (Cole and Durham 2007, Cote and Allahar 1994) as well as unprecedented tension between the individual and society. Thus, whereas previously in patrilineal societies the means to being a man depended on approved sexuality seen in bridewealth marriages, conditions discussed in the foregoing make this impossible for poor young men. Consequently, there is an obvious question about how to become a respectable adult man without the wherewithal to do so? How does one become a subordinated woman when men have no means to effect subordination? Such contradictions mean that affected individuals are constantly looking for frames of explaining reality to themselves and others. Hence the importance of doing research on sexual subjectivities (Giddens 1991, Callero 2003:122-3, Buggenhagen 2004), on which bases narratives of moral decline are made. These contradictions imply analyses of the narratives that individuals use to make sense of their lives and of their social circumstances (Ezzy 1998). I elaborate on these issues in chapter 2.

Development and the glocalisation of youth, gender and sexuality

With the UN’s work described as “the global bureaucratisation of social action...” (O’Manique 2004: 48) or “international templates” (Pigg 2005: 46) which increasingly define the contours of development interventions across the world, it follows that much talk about youth straddles both local and global needs and interests. These templates

accommodate amenable local preferences while slowly chipping away at those that are seen as “obstacles” to development (Arnfred 2004). Individuals also manipulate global and local issues for their own ends producing new ways of being. Robertsons (1996) devised the term “glocalisation” to show that there are multi-directional flows of practices; the structure-agency interactions between powerful global influences interacting with local forces and reverberating in individuals. Thus globalisation is not a uni-directional process of change. It is modified by and/or incorporates the local forces it encounters in different parts of the world to create new formations hence a multiplicity of “glocalisations”. Youth and sexuality are areas where glocalisations are in evidence. Some of the global aspects of these glocalisations are most evident through the UN 1990s conferences and their commitments and definitions and assumptions of who or what youth are.

Following the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) in Cairo (1994) and the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing (1995), international debates on sexuality changed their tone to be more human rights oriented, activism increased and treaties were tabled to recognise sexual diversity, sexual health and new accents to sexuality such as the importance of sexual pleasure emerged (Saiz 2004, Correa and Parker 2004, UN 2001, Oriel 2005, Cook and Dickens 2009, Shaw 2009). Convergence and divergence between the local and global abound about meanings of these concepts; to whom and under what circumstances they apply between men and women, young and old.

An example of a much-debated issue is the notion of sexual pleasure as a human right regardless of status of relationships. It has left religious and conservative interests on the one hand and liberal interests on the other at loggerheads because the former prefer that sexual pleasure is pursued in heterosexual and marital relations, likely sanctioned by custom and religion. Sometimes there is agreement albeit with negative effects. For instance when it comes to rights to information on sexuality and access to contraceptive technologies, many adults around the world prefer to think of youth as pre-sexual. Adults would rather that youth are not given detailed information apparently to prevent experimentation (Kehily 2009, Kantor et al 2008, Bay-Cheng 2003). Despite the reality of teenage sexual activity seen in pregnancies and sexually transmitted infections (STIs), different parts of the world are lumbered with abstinence-only school based sex education (SBSE) because of the fear that giving detailed information aids the apparently insurgent sex drive of unmarried youth (Kantor et al 2008; Bay-Cheng 2003, Kehily 2009).

Globally, meanings of and attitudes towards sex are changing because of what Feona Attwood describes as the “sexualisation of culture” (Attwood 2006). This is a multidimensional process evident in the wide availability of sexually explicit materials

and erotic media images of people and commodities in advertising and entertainment (music and films), which some describe as “pornification” (Miller-Young 2007). Modern communication technologies allow sex explicit language and commonplace discussion of sex and sexuality in the media to narrow definitions of obscenity (Attwood 2006, van Roosmalen 2000:204, Kehily 2009). This is seen in “bawdy” fashion (Attwood 2006) or as part of “the rise of raunch culture” (Levy 2006) which leave the definition of decency to personal choice. Meanwhile growing access to international media has awakened desires for commodities, lifestyles and ways of being that were previously seen as alien and inaccessible (Curtis 2009:70-80; Nyamnjoh 2005). Sex has changed in its practice as it is decoupled from reproduction, kinship, tradition and religion to being recreational and an individual pursuit mediated by the market and technology (Attwood 2006, Bauman 2004). The point here is that the allure of commodities is so powerful that a lot of energy is exerted on means to get hold of them and/or to associate with individuals who have them. Thus there is a consumer logic brought into relationships as individuals are valued for their ability to confer and/or allow access to status conferring commodities. This underlines the uncertainty and fragility of “liquid love”, easily formed and dissolved relationships typical of these rapid changes (Bauman 2003, 2004). Zygmunt Bauman (2004:131) observes that

...[C]onsumables embody an ultimate non-finality and revocability of choices and ultimate disposability of the objects chosen.

Not only does this point to the short-lived nature of relationships, it blurs the difference between people and commodities as both are treated with the same logic denoted by brevity as new products or persons and personae promise better statuses and experiences (see also Curtis 2009, Chant and Evans 2010, Bauman 2003). Bauman (2003:7) observes that “desire is the wish to consume” where the objects of desire could be persons or commodities embodied as one, both eroticised. This does not do away with the fetishisation of what Anthony Giddens describes as the “pure relationship” characterised by equality of partners, democratic decision-making and mutual contentment (Giddens 1992). Pursued for the sake of satisfaction to partners, such relationships end when their benefits end. They are much harder to sustain as they are based on personal preferences and commitments which are prone to change especially when challenged by other commitments such as career pursuits and bombarded by ubiquitous media on new trends on ways of being. These issues are particularly important for youth practices, because young people all over the world are incited to consumerism yet many lack the means to be active in the market. Youth popular cultures are about new forms of consumption, both the use of commodities and sexuality.

Thus Deborah Posel talks about the intertwined effects of use of commodities that make people more attractive thereby enhancing statuses as consumers. This in turn enhances attractiveness (Posel 2005).

Another example of glocalisation is seen in scientific propositions about sexual practices and public health risks leading to their elevation to scientific facts (Slaymaker 2004). For instance premarital sex, age of sexual debut, sex with a non-cohabiting partner are seen as pointing to increased risk for infection with STIs and HIV and increasingly used in Demographic Health Surveys (DHS) to measure effectiveness of interventions. These propositions are incorporated into sex education as “scientific facts” and also deployed to bolster local cultural interests and therefore not as neutral as they seem (Pigg 2005:45-6). Pigg and Adam remind us that sexuality is part of developmentalist quests for modernisation, hence not politically neutral. Where local interests stand in the way of developmentalist quests, they are labelled as obstacles to be removed (Pigg and Adam 2005:18). Consequently many governments are selectively combining different strands of complex scripts to appeal to the global, unproven hypotheses (such as abstinence-only teachings) and to comply with local preferences, thereby creating complicated hybridised local strategies. The question then is what do young people make of all these issues?

With the growth of public health in globalised development, youth are targeted as social actors and consumers of sexual and reproductive health information and technologies presumably to empower them to make decisions that enhance wellbeing (Pigg 2005: 41-3). However in non-western cultures, sexuality is deemed not controlled by the individual but practised in the interests of the whole family, kin group or community, hence often constrained by gerontocratic and patriarchal norms and interests. Here youth are ideally social actors for the reproduction of local cultural norms and should do so by bucking some of the global trends and being sexually active only through adults-approved marriages. The disconcerting reality of youth sexual activity seen in public health indicators such as teen pregnancies, HIV and STI prevalence rates is often attributed to moral decline whose anti-dote is seen as invigorating traditional controls and reasserting cultural norms. In this regard, an abstinence-only school based sexuality education (SBSE), which does not allow talking about, demonstrating or distributing condoms in school premises, is official policy in Zimbabwe (Marindo et al 2003, Betts et al 2003). Thus adults and policy makers deliberately choose non-disclosure about sexuality as a way of preserving the innocence of youth contrary to rights to information, which international commitments require (Kantor et al 2008, Marindo et al 2003, Betts et al 2003, Bay-Cheng 2003, Kehily 2009).

Glocalised conceptualisations of youth

The term youth is increasingly universal and stripped of its gender, class and race/ethnic connotations of its history as if to “sign post” similar, predictable experiences across time and the world (Bucholtz 2002, Tyyska 2005:3). On a practical level, the latter is impossible. Thus this universalised concept includes some experiences and excludes others; focuses attention on some aspects of change and not others as is discussed below. Its one-size-fits-all pretensions may be due to human rights treaties such as the Convention on the Right of the Child (CRC), which seeks to universalise the innocence of childhood and child protection. It may also be due to the fact that because of neoliberal globalisation young people encounter the same intractable challenges. However this does not tell us how young people are dealing with these challenges in different cultural spaces. In this vein, the discussion below focuses on different definitions of youth while critiquing their usability for this study.

Age definitions and the universal politicisation of age

Glocalisation of youth is evident in widely used United Nations (UN) agencies’ definitions of youth as persons aged between 15 and 24 years (Dowsett et al 1998, Poulin 2007). Influences and assumptions of theories of child development correlating age to sexual and physical maturation are evident. Precisely, the assumption that hormonal changes lead to the so-called “storm-and-stress” syndrome seen in mood swings and anti-social behaviour assumed typical of adolescence and youth is a case in point (Tyyska 2005, La Hausse 1990, Cote and Allahar 1994). These assumptions have long been critiqued as biological determinism because socio-cultural, economic and political circumstances mediate biology to vary behaviour (see Cote and Allahar 1994, Griffin 1997 among others). Across history and cultures, mood swings and anti-social behaviour are not markers of adolescence. Rather, the storm-and-stress syndrome is typical of social changes that leave adolescents “roleless”, such as industrialisation and prevailing forms of modernisation (see Cote and Allahar 1994, La Hausse 1990, Tyyska 2005, Arnett 2000).⁵

There can be no denying the utility of age definitions in a globalising world where standardisation and universalisation of assumptions about behaviour, services and rights are increasingly important (Mizen 2004: 12). Age definitions appeal to discourses of equality and non-discrimination but do not take into consideration people’s lived realities, where gender and other differences texture reality and scupper ideals of equality. In rich countries, age definitions create a handy tool for controlling different population groups’ needs such as schooling, vocational training, access to housing, retirement homes and so on

(Mizen 2004). In resource short countries, service provision is sorely lacking making such definitions limiting if not pointless. Worldwide age definitions of youth seem to serve as an invitation to global citizenship for people with different resources to embrace it.

In Zimbabwe, as elsewhere, age definitions are used to incrementally define citizenship and to legally protect minors. The latter sometimes complies with, and sometimes challenges customary preferences or arguments for recognition of full adulthood. Unlike the UN definition which says youth are aged between 15-24 years, Zimbabwe's age-based definition of youth is 10-30 years according to the National Youth Policy (GoZ 2000). This is because according to the policy, "problems" (sic) associated with the category "youth" start around 10 years of age. This is an indirect reference to the onset of adolescence and essentialist arguments about its association with anti-social behaviour and innate biological changes in individuals rather than societal factors.

Furthermore age definitions have a political angle to them as seen in the age of sexual consent, which is sixteen years in Zimbabwe. By default sixteen years is also the minimum age of marriage; it is the age to get a driver's license, a national identity card and to join the workforce (if there is available work). But, in everyday practice it would be considered odd for an employer to openly hire a 16 year old ahead of an older *man* given high unemployment. This is because 16 year olds, regardless of circumstances are not seen as in need of income as older persons especially men who are assumed to have dependent children. This argument is at work in Beitbridge's local authority's rationalisation of allocation of market stalls and the nationwide crackdown on youth and informal sector workers (of which more in Chapter 5).

The legal age of sexual consent renders all persons below sixteen out of bounds as objects of sexual desire and nullifies their sexual agency. The law is used to criminalise sex with especially girls, below sixteen including their marriage, when guardians and other adults do not approve. Although touted as a tool for child protection, the age of sexual consent has become a legal instrument for controlling and disciplining the sexuality of girls (not so much boys) when social controls at home and in the community fail. This is because girls are assumed to be more vulnerable to sexual predation because of assumed emotional and psychological immaturity to make decisions and deal with consequences. Despite the law, there are customary loopholes that allow men accused of having sex with under-age girls to evade prosecution if they invoke customary practices such as seduction payments called "damage". Damage is a customary penalty/admission of guilt fine for seducing someone's daughter, sister or wife. It is paid to the family of the woman/girl to restore family honour and forestall likely losses in marriage payments on account of tarnished

reputation emanating from the publicity of rape or seduction. Its payment alters the offense to an indiscretion one which could also be taken as a prelude to marriage in the case of unmarried girls. Thus damage is paid for a range of publicised sexual indiscretions such as when a woman falls pregnant out of wedlock, for seduction and rape. If parents of the complainant agree to receive damage payments or accept marriage legal proceedings are dropped. The marriage could subsequently dissolve after a few years with no possibility to prosecute the male offender for the rape or seduction. Because sex with persons below sixteen is statutory rape, when parents/caregivers of girls insist on the legal route, the offending males are arrested while the girl is rehabilitated. Prosecution also means parents of the complainant are open to having their daughter tested for HIV because sex offenders are tested. If the accused is shown to have infected the minor, a stiffer prison term is likely. If parents and the community are happy with the marriage, whether or not the man is HIV positive and the minor is infected, it is hard, though not impossible to report the union as illegal. Thus what we see here are preferences of adults rather than girls themselves. Girls' preferences are ordinarily not considered as girls are seen as too immature to decide. Consequently age *per se* does not determine what happens to girls. Rather adults' actions and calculations about what they stand to lose or gain in the situation are at issue.

The 2005-2006 Zimbabwe Demographic Health Survey (ZDHS) showed that there are differences in age of sexual debut in rural and low-income areas compared to urban areas. In the former, the average age of sexual debut is earlier – by the age of fifteen (CSO and Macro International 2007). Since the majority of Zimbabweans live in rural areas, these findings imply a high incidence of (legally) under-age sex. Few of these girls' partners are prosecuted for under age sex perhaps because the relationships are kept away from adults' purview. Significantly, parents' knowledge, understanding of the law, resilience in pursuing offenders and own interest are important. One can draw the conclusion that socio-economic differences structure teen sexual practices and not age *per se*. The protective effect of statutory rape alone is not a deterrent. Age definitions are important for their assumptions and possibilities to sue sex offenders. They enhance parents and adults control over their daughters and female wards but do not tell us much about how girls feel about these experiences. Under customary practices, sex predation could be condoned through marriage payments without much consideration for the girl's opinion.

Another example of the problems of age-based definitions of youth is that of the legal age of majority.

According to Legal Age of Majority Act (LAMA) 1982, at eighteen. At eighteen Zimbabweans of sound mental state are legally permitted to make independent decisions

such as enter or end contracts, sue or be sued, to stand for public office and to vote regardless of gender, race, religion and ethnicity. They can marry without paternal authority as expected under customary norms. Since its passage in 1982, several cohorts of parents of teenagers have been critical of the LAMA's threat to parental, and especially paternal authority arguing that LAMA gives license to upper teens to defy their parents and/or that it makes it hard for parents to exercise authority over them (Ansell 2001, Kesby et al 2006:190). These arguments belie the fact that customary laws are protected in the Zimbabwe constitution (see Knobelsdorf 2006:751, Brigge and von Briesen 2000).

If on a day-to-day basis upper teens defy their parents, they still support paternal authority in marriage as symbolised by bridewealth payments and attendant norms. Zimbabwean in-school youth defend bridewealth, arguing that it is "our culture" and an essential rite in marriage (Ansell 2001). Male youth wish to pay it while females think ideal partners should pay it to their parents. Both genders believe that its payment shows responsibility, appreciation of one's partner and good social standing in society. Given dominant beliefs that refusal to pay bridewealth (even implicit refusal such as inability to pay) stokes ancestral wrath, which unleashes misfortune in the form of marital discord, infertility, poor health and "bad luck", passing laws which permit skipping it is evidently pointless.⁶ Men who have the misfortune of offending their in-laws through non-payment of bridewealth are seen as cursed and irresponsible as they leave their children to bear the brunt of ancestral wrath. Pentecostal church teachings also bolster the continuation of marriage payments arguing that bridewealth was practiced in Biblical times so it is important (Mate 2002: 562). These teachings also perpetuate the notion of ancestral anger as holding back adherents who do not commit fully to prescribed ways of life.

In addition, in Zimbabwe, many young and older women who are able to enter contracts do so with either their fathers' or husbands' consent, and the men can prevent initiation of contracts. Access to documents such as the national identity card, a means to claim the legal majority status, is not automatic but through application and with paternal or husbands' authority if using husbands' surname.

From these examples, it can be seen that age definitions do not work on their own but are embedded in prevailing cultural practices and meanings. They neither show social structures at work, constraints visited on individuals nor allow us to see agency of young people.

Youth as “being” and/or a modernist lifestyle?

This approach to youth has two discernible strands. Firstly, youth-as-being reminds us that youth is increasingly a quality associated with life of “carefree indulgence” in conditions where adult roles and responsibilities are poorly defined (Simon 1996) or challenged by social change as the foregoing discussion shows. It is underlined by self-indulgence, hedonism and consumerism, which apparently denote vitality (Featherstone 1991: 173). Alternatively, youth is increasingly a coveted quality worth preserving or pursuing as a modernist preoccupation denoting vitality, potency and the opposite of ageing hence cosmetics, exercise, fashion and health education and other lifestyle industries (Featherstone 1991, also Bucholtz 2002). Youth here is a discourse of lifestyle, which exudes freedom from strenuous family and kin obligations; it is the ability to concentrate on personal pursuits and beauty. It transcends age. It is about the disavowal of permanence but also combining living for the moment with due thought for the future (Blatterer 2010:69). This means how adults live their lives has changed too with many holding onto ways of life that denote vitality and youth. In this vein, Blatterer observes that “...youth as a value is replacing adulthood as a social goal...” (Blatterer 2010:74). This makes youth-as-being a quality of popular culture and global consumerism spread around the world through the media and other avenues of globalisation. Thus being a discerning consumer and choosing specific lifestyles is at issue but it requires resources.

In Sub Saharan Africa self-indulgence is not associated with ill-defined roles as in the foregoing, but a need to conceal relative and abject poverty both increasingly experienced as shameful and emasculating. Self-indulgence is a form of escapism. In this regard self-indulgence seen in music and film preferences, and fashion consciousness however miniscule compared with possibilities in global centres of consumption are a means to earning and preserving social respect among peers (Chant and Evans 2010: 364, Gondola 1999, Scheld 2007, Hansen 1999, Cole 2007, Posel 2005). The issue here is not only how youth become discerning consumers when they do not have resources, but rather the goals they seek to achieve by trying to be discerning consumers. Poor looking individuals are not desirable, they imply a life of hardship, which many seek to dissociate if not escape from.

Secondly there are gender aspects to youth as being, especially a gendered engagement with global consumerism. Young girls are a special category of consumer. They are lured to use commodities to showcase preferred femininities. Described as a period of “gender intensification” (Tolman 1994) or affirming “gender commitments” (Simon 1996), youth is a period when males and females grapple with contradictory scripts of masculinities and femininities purveyed by peers, different sets of adults, schools, religious institutions and

norms and the media. Girls learn to become passive vis-à-vis males and to submit their bodies to surveillance through deportment and commodities (Holland and Ramanozoglu 1994: 255, Bay-Cheng 2003); they learn to appeal to boys and muster coded silences which while conforming to passivity leave girls open to abuse because they perpetuate the stereotype that women/girls are ambiguous (van Roosmalen 2000: 212-5). Boys learn to become dominant, “to go after girls” or at least show an interest in girls as part of idealised heterosexual masculinity (Lorway 2008), to seek to have penetrative sex to assuage sexual performance anxieties (Izugbara 2005, MacPhail and Campbell 2001); and to be persistent and persuasive where girls resist their advances (Wood et al 2007). Boys learn that dominance also means conquering girls. That is, when persuasion fails, insistence, deceit, sweet-talking, coercion and/or violence are seen as legitimate options to achieve one’s ends (see Wood et al 2007, Varga 1997, van Roosmalen 2000). The latter means that compliant girls are not only objects of desire, but are also easily violated or taken advantage of. Those who are not compliant must appeal to a different set of norms and ways of being. Thus it is important to investigate the many possible ways of being and how they impinge on youth subjectivities.

Youth as embedded in social relations of power

Youth as a relational category points to interactional, intersubjective and interpersonal dynamics which make sense within socio-cultural norms of their settings (Bucholtz 2002, Durham 2000). It is also about economic status. To understand who or what youth are and should be one has to understand the socio-cultural settings of youth and the objectives they seek to achieve with their economic undertakings. Furthermore, in these interactional contexts, the term youth is a “shifter”; that is, literally and metaphorically shifts power relations between the speaker and the person referred to as “youth” (Durham 2000). Thus the term “youth” is a social and discursive construct, which denotes relative powerlessness, lack, a lower station in life, being junior and inexperienced (Berliner 2005, Burke 2000, Nyamnjoh 2002, Durham 2000). Furthermore it means being accessible and a possible client. Young persons who have mustered economic resources are celebrated as providers for their ability to look after kin well as peers.

In Sub Saharan Africa the possibility for patronage of youth is seen in that often children and youth are socialised to relate meaningfully with adults through working for and/or economic contribution to relatives and the community (Durham 2007, Nyamnjoh 2002). Thus here youth are seen as “potential to be cultivated” for the benefit of kin bound to kinship norms of reciprocity and for national development (Nyamnjoh 2002, Durham

2000, Burke 2002). Tensions between youth and adults abound because of unfulfilled promises, denied or shifting obligations within the family and at the national level. For instance, parents' inability "...to pay for school, clothes and food, [makes them] lose their authority" where youth desire to be in school (Scheld 2007: 235). This also creates "competences" in youth and children as they learn to make-do without adult provisions (Nieuwenhuys 1999). Without material resources to support their authority, adults fall back on norms of gerontocracy and patriarchy to demand respect from juniors. This creates tensions. Thus even without the support of adults, juniors have no leeway to be "selfish" even when incomes are meagre. The selfishness of successful young people sharpens tension and conflict increasing the likelihood of accusations of ill will, witchcraft and moral panics (see Harnischfeger 2006, Nyamnjoh 2002, Smith 2001, Walsh 2003, Comaroff and Comaroff 1999, de Boeck 2005). Across Sub Saharan Africa, contradictions of neoliberalism have fanned these accusations and tensions between generations over unmet expectations and obligations. Thus young people's subjectivities are formed under conditions where a lot is expected from them regardless of structural challenges of their upbringing. Furthermore, those who excel by whatever means risk suspicion of courting evil forces to succeed in sea of failure.

Youth as transition to adulthood

The idea that youth are in transition to adulthood is one of the oldest and most popular with policy makers including multilateral organisations. There are two versions of this argument so I start with what I will refer to as the "traditional" version and explain the newer one the "emerging adulthoods" perspective later.

The traditional version suggests that youth are incomplete adults: a work in progress (Blatterer 2007, 2010); a way station (a stop on a journey); a pit-stop (for refuelling for the journey); or a liminal state between two states – childhood and adulthood – characterised by poor definition of roles and responsibilities (Stambach 2000, Durham 2000). This definition is ideologically powerful. Its commonsensicality belies the power in youth-society relations with youth as inexperienced, apprentices, novices and clients of more experienced adults. It imposes responsibilities on adults to train and invest in youth to make them successful as implied in discussion of youth as embedded in social relations of power. These assumptions need to be unpacked. For instance, under conditions of rapid change as discussed above can adults still be seen as experienced patrons of relatively inexperienced youth? Do they have resource to train youth?

Firstly, when extended to the global South, this thesis is ethnocentric as it is based on a nostalgic view of life in “the golden years” – three decades of post-World War Two prosperity in Western Europe and the US (Mizen 2004). Even in the global North, the economic growth of the golden years is hard to replicate making ideal transitions impossible. In the global South life similar to the golden years in the West is perennially elusive. During “the golden years” responsibility for ideal transitions such as school to work were in the hands of the state, an impossible feat today given the contradictions of neoliberal development such as incapacitation of the state and low investment in social services (Maira and Soep 2004, Mizen 2004). Thus those in the global south who subscribe to this thesis put themselves in a bind because they cannot live up to its expectation while still following neoliberal globalisation nor can they escape the latter. Despite these intractable contradictions, the traditional transitions thesis creeps into public debate by way of global social action where among other things education is a right as is meaningful work. Post-school expectation of meaningful employment is a moot point. The academically gifted are presented with a treadmill in the form of credentialism which keeps young persons fenced off in the education system in protracted preparations for entry level jobs which are not available, leaving many frustrated (Cote and Allahar 1994: 36-44, Jeffrey and McDowell 2004:132-4, Mains 2007). Many will never get the aspired for employment. Thus whereas in the golden years in Europe, a secondary education was enough for secure, life-long employment with a living wage and terminal benefits (though even then never for all youth), the same qualification is no longer adequate even for a part-time job flipping burgers. Critiques of credentialism abound. Some functionalists maintain that an increasingly information-based economy requires these long stays in the education system. They will have us believe that to qualify for employment one needs more training, more experience and skills (Mizen 2004). Yet most information technology entrepreneurs seem able to forego credentialism altogether. The picture is definitely skewed or our lenses are ill focused as this means a continuing attempt to “fix” young people to make them ready for unavailable employment. Some blame the education system for not being responsive to the needs of the labour market. These arguments allow proponents to shift the blame to parents and young people for choosing the wrong type of training instead of critiquing the state of development in the global south and the depths of despair to which young people are pushed. For states in the global south not at the cutting edge of innovation, there is no way of divining vocational training trends, much less mobilising technical expertise to deliver them. Nonetheless many in the global south have bought into universal education, academic education of disparate quality, as an investment to a better life. Many young people are on their credentialism treadmills

hoping to be successful regardless. Credentialism presents the quintessential neoliberal life of “hard work” and perseverance with ambiguous results because of uncertainty (Makhulu et al 2010: 6-9).

Secondly, there is the question of adulthood itself as a destination. Again here the commonsensical notion that “adulthood” is somehow the end of growing up is illusory as people continue to grow up to senility and each stage presents its own challenges which some handle well and others not. Thus rather than thinking of adulthood as known and the norm against which other age groups are exoticised, we should question it too (Blatterer 2007, 2010). Adulthood is still seen as different from youth and denoted by the stability of income/livelihoods, relationships (marriage or long-term co-residentiality, founding own family/household) and community/neighbourhood roles as signs of responsibility as opposed to the transience and instability of youth, although these views of adulthood are baseless (Blatterer 2007, 2010). By contrast, youth is seen as a state defined by non-committed relationships, unemployment, living with parents and not having dependent children. The latter increasingly apply to adults as they do to young people making this normative conceptualization misleading (Mizen 2004: 8-9, Blatterer 2007). Many adults have to contend with job losses, homelessness, divorce and remarriage among other instabilities. Thus adulthood is not synonymous with stability and certainty under neoliberalism. The view that adulthood is about stability is a construct of the global north where adulthood came to mean autonomy, self-determination supported by economic prosperity and deepening democracy (Blatterer 2007:775). This type of adulthood has been hard to reproduce across the globe although highly aspired for in the global South. Furthermore the stability associated with adulthood is not always coveted. It may mean being stuck in “motionless progress” which typifies chronic instability in Sub-Saharan Africa (Vigh 2008, Jackson 2010). In the global North the transience of instability has come to denote lifestyles where stability, patience (to wait for a promotion for instance), and commitment to one employer do not hold the same value as they did for previous generations (Bauman 2004: 108-9). Thus the stability of adulthood is a myth given unstable socio-economic environments (see Makhulu et al 2010, Bauman 2004). We also have to contend with the fact that there are multiple adulthoods, some are recognised and validated while others are reviled and denigrated. Increasingly young people look at their parents as “anti-heroes” (Bauman 2004: 108) while highlighting their own fighting spirit as successful against the odds buoyed by neoliberal discourses of agency. Thus social change does not support emulating older generations.

In this vein, Sub-Saharan African young people aspire for adulthoods which are not in their immediate environments but based on global consumerism and sometimes requiring emigration abroad by any means possible (Gondola 1999:30, Mains 2007, Nyamnjoh and Page 2002). Many have come to understand poverty, both real and relative, as embarrassing and humiliating hence their efforts at fighting it (Mitszal 2001, Nyamnjoh and Page 2002, Chant and Evans 2010, Scheld 2007). It may well be the case that youth is a critique of adulthood because of changing circumstances and not a transition to adulthood *per se*. If this is the case, transitions are open-ended and unpredictable unless we try to appreciate what youth praxis critiques. In this sense youth transition is also a metaphor for idealised development. In this moment in development history, youth as deferral of idealised adulthoods may also symbolize deferred dreams as a result of contradictions of the neoliberal environment.

Ironically, the globalisation of youth as transition also means appreciating the universalisation of transitions to “nowhere” (Jeffrey 2005). This is a formulation used by Craig Jeffrey when he studied unemployed but degreed young men in Northern India. The young men were frustrated by an inability to acquire economic capital to be adults on account of lack of work, thus deferring marriage and remaining dependent on parents. “Nowhereness” is an uncharted space characterised by frustration, anxiety and uncertainty because of unfulfilled promises of credentialism and shifty bargains of neoliberal globalisation where technological innovations mean constant retraining to stay relevant or ahead of the pack. In reality technological innovations also devalue skills of past eras. “Nowhereness” may yield to innovation but it also contributes to transience and creativity which typify neoliberalism as people take advantage of real and imagined opportunities (Bauman 2004). In Sub Saharan Africa, Hansen (2005) talks of young persons feeling “stuck” in their parents’ homes because they have no means to set up independent households. “Nowhereness” and “being stuck” are also states of cognitive dissonance, where social beliefs and expectations are defied by social reality: being educated and of age but still dependent on parents because of unemployment where the opposite is expected. Honwana (2012:4) refers to this phenomenon as “waithood” – an involuntary and contradictory situation in which some young people have adulthood foisted on them but lack the wherewithal to have aspired for adulthoods while others endure indefinite deferral of adulthoods because of chronic unemployment, political instability and internal displacements. For Honwana “waithood” is a source of political activism as young people call on their leaders to account. This has not yet happened in Zimbabwe. “Nowhereness” and “being stuck” are sources of

guilt, shame and a sense of ill being whose resolution underlies some of the forms of agency which this thesis explores in the case of Zimbabwe.

Thirdly, the transition thesis not only assumes a supportive, well-resourced state (government), it also assumes the presence of parents (and other adults) to give material and moral guidance in a protracted life of dependence because of long schooling careers typical of middle-class families in the West. Unavailability of ideal material and non-material resources renders youth transitions vulnerable to deviance, while family and individual youth are blamed for failure to make ideal strategic plans (Kelly 2001). The reality of a considerable number of young people in many countries in Southern Africa, including Zimbabwe, is that these assumptions are challenged by instances of orphanhood made worse in the last two decades by AIDS (see for instance van Dijk 2008, Francis-Chizororo 2008). Faced with poverty and caregivers' deaths, some young people's transitions are hastened and/or thrown into uncertainty (Jeffrey and McDowell 2004: 136). These young people become adults by means we have not fully studied. Thus the traditional transitions thesis might work in conditions of relative wealth and socio-economic stability while stigmatising low resourced transitions.

Emerging adulthoods: accounting for transience

A more recent version of the transitions thesis was propounded by Arnett (2000, 2007) and Arnett and Taber (1994) called the "emerging adulthoods" thesis which is more appropriate for prevailing conditions of instability, unpredictability, lack of clear markers of accomplished transitions, generic transience and open-endedness of transitions as seen in media references such as "boomerang kids", "adultescents", "kidults" (Blatterer 2007: 777, Arnett 2007: 70, Flacks 2007). The notion of "emerging adulthoods" underlines the fluidity of growing up in conditions where opportunities to muster the material and psychological wherewithal for independent living are fleeting because of fast-paced changes in the global economy (Arnett 2000, Arnett and Taber 1994: 531-2). This leads to young people living under conditions which some may see as "rejection of socialization" or "ambivalence to adulthood" because they go against normative expectations (Arnett 2000: 470). It refers to an unstructured and self-focused process of growing up fraught with anxiety vis-à-vis compliance with social expectations such as work and family life (Arnett 2007: 69). According to Ross Macmillan, in this perspective adulthood is constructed and understood as multi-dimensional and "self-sufficiency" (2007: 22-23). These conditions are no longer unique to the global north but worldwide, resulting in a growing global phenomenon in which there is no specific age and clear markers of growing up, leaving individuals to

decide depending on personal circumstances (Arnett and Taber 1994). This tallies with Jeffrey's observations of transitions to "nowhereness" among unemployed North Indian male graduates or "being stuck" in the compound among Zambian youth (Hansen 2005).

The qualities of emerging adulthoods discussed in the foregoing show how young people try to create and establish commitments to who they are and in keeping with local expectations but negotiated with prevailing structural and ideological restrictions (Flacks 2007:79). The notion of "emerging adulthoods" captures the creativity that is often resorted to in conditions where resources for growing up are not available. Because some of the experiences are new, they lead to outcries of deviance. It has been observed that while families with resources can afford supporting their young through life's challenges, young people from poor families often make do without support and may be prejudiced by lack of resources leading to less favourable outcomes (Berzin and de Marco 2010: 291-3). Researchers using this perspective argue that the emerging adulthoods perspective seeks to understand subjective experiences because social markers are scrambled. Thus this perspective prefers looking at young people as reflexive, agentic though disembedded from culture but subordinate to structure (Macmillan 2007:7-8). Clearly, dislocation because of SAPs speaks to this situation. Thus by referring to "grappling with emerging adulthoods", this study seeks to show struggles between youth practices and adults as patriarchs and gerontocrats. Youth are striving to fashion adulthoods by means less approved by adults while adults try to make sense of these practices in conditions of rapid change where uncertainty about the future is projected on the young. Thus following Mamadou Diouf (2003) youth are caught in the triumvirate of globalisation, gerontocracy and patriarchy.

In Zimbabwe as elsewhere, gerontocracy and patriarchy are upheld through customary laws which are controversial. Customary laws are protected by the constitution but remain ill-defined, not fully documented, dependent on witness accounts, are often androcentric and run counter to global standards and trends by appealing to local idiosyncrasies (Knobelsdorf 2006, Brigge and von Briesen 2000, Nhlapo 1991, Bennett 1985). Poverty makes it hard for young men to commit to paying bridewealth and makes their marriages unstable as they are expected to be breadwinners in an environment where consumerism is on the increase. Delayed marriages, the search for resources to marry properly and the need to preserve respectability while waiting, lead to new ways of life which challenge cultural ideals (Chant and Evans 2010). This has created gerontocrats and patriarchs who are impatient with young people and blaming social change as not only challenging their authority but corrupting young people as well. Patriarchs/gerontocrats prefer young people who are obedient. Young people on the other hand, would like to achieve social adulthood

but have devised creative ways of achieving it. In some instances, youth resist partners chosen or recommended by elders because they have own resources to pay for marriage prestations and fund lavish weddings or because youth prefer to pursue “romantic love” with partners of their choice (Buggenhagen 2004). Youth resistance, creativity and strategies to accommodate tradition create evolving neo-traditions.

Gender, sexuality, sexual and reproductive health (and rights) and implications for emerging adulthoods

Under globalisation, gender and sexualities are produced simultaneously at the global and local level in multi-directional ways as information, meanings, norms and understandings flow back and forth. In this section, I try to show how some global aspects of these concepts as well as the ascendancy of sexual and reproductive health (and rights therein) articulate with local processes to impinge on how emerging adulthoods are fashioned.

Sexualized production of masculinities and femininities under neoliberal globalisation

Sexuality is a multidimensional area of development studies lately dominated by public health because of the spread of HIV and AIDS. More recently, sexuality was dominated by population and development with gender and development as a critique (Pigg and Adam 2005, Jackson and Scott 2010). The dominance of public health has had the effect that sexuality is talked about in biomedical/scientific terms in an effort to universalise it as part of the human experience and to counter cultural narratives which fence off some experiences as unique and off limits. Sexuality is indeed experienced differently in different settings and over time (Pigg and Adam 2005, Kehily 2009, Brickell 2006, von Roosmalen 2000). However, tensions as well as blurred lines of demarcation between science and modernity remain. Hence sexuality is described as defining a new frontier in the fight against the subjugation and discrimination of different groups and interests (for instance Saiz 2004, Kehily 2009, Attwood 2006). In development studies sexuality straddles multiple disciplines and is therefore fraught with tensions borne out not only of differences in approach and outcomes sought by each perspective/discipline; there are also differences between global and local interests as well as different notions of “best practices” (Arnfred 2004, Correa and Parker 2004, Posel 2005, Saiz 2004, van Eerdewijk 2001).

Like a lot of human needs, sexuality is connected to biology but not determined by it (such as food and eating habits are to hunger; care practices and beliefs are to illness and pain; forms of shelter and clothing are to protection from the elements etc.). The satisfaction

of these biological needs ultimately requires social and power relations, institutions, norms and beliefs (Durham 2001:165, Talle 1995). Social relations and norms governing sexuality are part of the moral and social order structured by power relations; they are based on notions of propriety of relations between people of different ages, gender and social groups, through practices which perpetuate heteronormativity, gerontocracy and race relations (Epprecht 1998, 2006, Altman 1995, Edwards 1997, Gagnon and Parker 1995, Varga 1997).

Sexualities exist in a hierarchy where married, heterosexual and procreative sexualities are at the apex and seen as normal and ideal. The rest are seen as transgressive, illicit if not immoral or abnormal (Evans 1993). Sexuality is fraught with contestations of what is appropriate behaviour for people of particular age, gender and circumstance (van Roosmalen 2000: 204). These contestations evince change in sexual mores seen in the decoupling of sex from its traditional moorings such as marriage, kinship, and religious and cultural rites. Zygmunt Bauman observes that these changes have rendered relations very fragile, what he describes as “liquid love”, seen in easily formed and ended relationships leading to serial multiple partnerships, and avoidance of long-term commitment (Bauman 2003). Anthony Giddens (1992) refers to this phenomenon as “changing intimacy”. Although relationships are increasingly short-lived, many people idealise “the pure relationship” based on equality between partners, mutual satisfaction of emotional needs, decoupled from traditional considerations freely entered into and ended when it no longer serves either party’s needs. Evaluation of individuals’ sexual practices also differs by age, gender and sexual orientation. For instance, multi-partner sex is seen as immoral for women, dangerous for gay men but a sign of virility for heterosexual men (Schwartz and Rutter 1998). For young people, depending on their age sex is criminalised or illicit. Not only do concerns with danger, risk, shame, stigma and illicitness of non-conforming sexualities often tower over pleasure and benefits to individuals but they also point to social inequalities inherent in social institutions which control sexuality (Parikh 2005, Posel 2005, Kaler 1998). This is compounded by complexities imposed by the global economy.

This study uses a constructivist approach to sexuality explained in greater detail in Chapter 2. Thus sexuality is understood as subsumed in everyday forms of sociality, in which meanings of social norms are continuously (re)interpreted and (re)created (Jackson and Scott 2010: 816, Posel 2005, Simon 1996, Curtis 2009). It is also (re)created by what researchers observe, hear, interpret and publicise as findings that reify cultures of specific groups (Curtis 2009, Tamale 2006). As part of everyday sociality, sexual norms are not always applicable to all situations individuals encounter, hence it is important to think of sexuality as produced through the reflexivity of individuals; how they understand, interpret,

apply and justify their own action vis-à-vis social norms and situations they encounter (Longmore 1998:45-7, Callero 2003:119-120). This means no single action is sexual outside of the context it occurs in and its meanings are attached to the action and context. For instance, there are longstanding debates in Sub-Saharan Africa about respectability in urban spaces where women's behaviour and fashion is under stricter scrutiny because of concerns about undomesticated female agency (Campbell 1998, Ogden 1996). Thus a dress and how it is worn can symbolise being sexual as could mobility per se. This is especially important for young people whose relations with adults are sometimes strained simply because of clothes and mobility within the community (discussed in chapter 6). Defining sexuality as embedded in everyday sociality helps us understand on-going contestations between subordinated and dominant groups (see for instance Davis 2000).

As mediated by socio-cultural norms sexuality has multiple motivations including conforming to social norms, the pursuit of own pleasure, to please others, as a means of belonging to groups with similar preferences (identity issues), sustaining relationships, cultivating networks, procreation, as statements of self-liberation, for self-esteem, for control/to punish others, adventure, or survival among others (see Bolton 1995, Caplan 1987, Edwards 1997, Evans 1993, Schwartz and Rutter 1998, Talle 1995, Vance 1982, Utas 2005). The expression and satisfaction of sexual pursuits is therefore negotiated between the individual and society (see Jarviluoma et al 2003). It is in this negotiation that the "vice grip" of gerontocracy, patriarchy and globalisation (Diouf 2005: 232) on youth manifests itself. Methodologically, this means one has to understand the process of negotiation and what is being negotiated with in order to grasp what sexualities are. The negotiations are gendered, that is constituted through specific meanings and practices of femininities and masculinities as well as through gendered norms of heterosexuality.

There are multiple femininities and masculinities that are not necessarily complementary but fraught with contradictions especially in heterosexual contexts that idealise female passivity and coded silences in interaction with active masculinities (Skeggs 1994, Shefer and Foster 2001). Heterosexuality creates masculinities based on the conflation of heterosexual desire, male economic, social and political dominance and active sexuality as denoting "manliness" (Lindisfarne 1994, Holland et al 1996). This makes heterosexuality an ally of patriarchy through "the ethic of female service to males" (S. Jackson 1996:30) and acceptance of the heterosexual male (Holland et al 1996). Men and women are socialised in the preservation of this difference and its magnetism when it comes to sexual desire. Individuals who deviate from these ideals risk ostracism. Because heterosexuality is socially created, these statements need not give an impression of essentialisation of male-

female relations because contestation, mutual distrust and gender antagonism are part of heterosexualities too (see Shefer and Foster 2001, Wood et al 2007).

Masculinities are increasingly challenged by changing employment patterns that limit access to resources to underwrite dominance (see Chant 2000). Male dominance persists both through brute force (a by-product of economic misfortunes) and more subtly as seen in the notion of “the male in the head” to refer to internalised norms about appealing to male interests or seeking male approval which forces women to pre-empt men’s demands (Brook 1999, Holland et al 1996:240; also Vance 1982, Wood et al. 2007). This way, the real and imagined male gaze “disciplines” women regardless of men’s tacit actions (see Brook 1999:23, van Roosmalen 2000). For instance there is the stereotype that heterosexual sex is a male goal that expresses both men and women’s normalcy. Men on the other hand have to comply to be real men.

Gender relations and ideal heterosexualities have not been spared by rapid change. They have been rendered “unstable” as seen in increasing divorce and remarriage; changes in men’s and women’s roles and sexual rights that challenge heterosexuality as the norm (Duncombe and Marsden 1996, Attwood 2006, Bauman 2003, 2004, Giddens 1991 among others). This instability has unleashed heated debates about sexual propriety (see Posel 2005, Lorway 2008, Epprecht 1998, 1999). Weaker parties in binaries of heterosexuality are blamed for the change often because their positions make them more sensitive to disadvantages inherent in those arrangements and quick on the uptake of opportunities presented by change.

Modernisation of gender relations as framed by Gender and Development (GAD) perspectives by which feminism influences development, has identified its problems with universalised patriarchy, coded as “tradition” and “culture” and detrimental to women’s empowerment and gender equality, in much the same way that modernisation theory identified culture as an obstacle for development (Arnfred 2004:11-14). Thus tradition and culture are seen as an impediment in sexuality too especially for women and youth. Sexuality as part of this modernist project seeks to do away with “traditions” insofar as they stand in the way of sexual rights. Breaking away from traditional norms is seen as a means to liberation and personal autonomy. In the area of sexuality, liberation and freedom means voluntarily entered and ended relations, equality between men and women, recognition of same sex partnerships, romantic love and so on, hereafter referred to as ‘modern sexualities’. This incitement overlooks the reality of market influences, consumerism and commodity erotics which reinscribe male dominance on women and less fortunate men in conditions

denoted by “choice”, necessity and despair (see Chant and Evans 2010). Freedom and liberation remain a pipe dream.

Global social action: sexual and reproductive health (and rights) (SRH[R])

My concern here is more with sexual and reproductive health and hence the parenthesis on “rights”. By sexual and reproductive health I am referring to disease and pregnancy prevention (Shaw 2009:131) indices also used as development indices. When we add “rights” to the term, it becomes a normative reference associated with international development policies and practices such as the 1990s UN conference outcomes including Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and global feminist activism in which people are seen as social actors capable of controlling and making decisions on both their reproduction and sexuality and of enjoying sexual relations in which reproduction is a desirable and positive outcome (van Eerdewijk 2001: 421-2). The extent to which individuals are social actors capable of deciding on these issues is debatable intellectually as well as in lived realities (see Undie and Izugbara 2011, van Eerdewijk 2001 among others). As Anouka van Eerdewijk (2001:424) explains, SRHR are about the “highest” attainment and recognition of rights based on human rights ethos. They privilege individual autonomy, discretion and choice over reproduction, sex, access to information, safety etc., as a means to social wellbeing. I am concerned with the former because the latter remains controversial across Sub Saharan Africa despite the MDGs to which most governments are signatory and committed and also because the human rights ethos still battles to be indigenised in many cases. Religious and cultural interests do not support individual discretion especially when underlined by the pursuit of pleasure and fulfilment (Correa and Parker 2004, Posel 2005, Saiz 2004). Religious and cultural interests would rather sexuality is practiced in compliance with religious and cultural expectations and norms where the patriarchal family’s (and religious) interests take precedence (Kaler 1998). Thus there are conceptual and cultural contestations and tensions over individual orientation of human rights versus community/group orientation of indigenous cultures and traditions (see Undie and Izugbara 2011). Due to limitations of space and scope I will not get into these issues here. There is also the problem of limited services due to cultural taboos regarding youth sexuality (Shaw 2009).

With regards to young people, there is a longstanding dilemma and contestation between whether or not to use technical biomedical approaches (Pigg 2005) that are deemed inappropriate when they sideline traditional knowledge (van Eeuwijk and Mlangwa 1997). In some cases, pressure for local solutions has inadvertently led to retooling gerontocratic and patriarchal interests seen in the rush to “return” to traditions through gender biased

chastity rites such as virginity testing in Southern Africa in the wake of the HIV and AIDS pandemic (Scorgie 2002, Vincent 2006). The latter make public health a female responsibility while perpetuating gender inequality.

The idea of sexual pleasure as a right, to which all are entitled, has multiple origins and meanings and is assumed to ensure individual autonomy and well-being (Attwood 2006, C. Jackson and Tinkler 2007, Levy 2005, Posel 2005). Its narrow focus on personal choice and consent belies processes of subjectification evinced by claims of desirability of these discursive constructs. It straddles consumerism, emancipatory quests of different identity movements, public health and human rights, which makes it difficult to operationalise. Suffice it to say, in the global south, sex for pleasure is seen as frivolous and irresponsible especially when pursued by single women and youth. This is not only because of on-going public health concerns (HIV and AIDS) but also deep-seated cultural reasons. It challenges the sanctity of marriage (Arnfred 2004, Schoepf 1995) and is considered inappropriate for youth (Shaw 2009, Kantor et al 2008). Talk about sexual dangers drowns out the pleasure argument, of which more below. These contestations represent gender, religious, and gerontocratic interests which are yet to be resolved.⁷ In heterosexual contexts when sexual pleasure is translated to mean condomless sex, it reinscribes power imbalances between men and women and accentuates women's vulnerability as women are generally at higher risk of negative outcomes of condomless sex (Oriol 2005, Shaw 2009). Thus while there is an incitement to pleasure, its pursuit is not culturally and structurally open to all. The reality is that given inequitable access to services, information, functional illiteracy, poverty and gender inequality, women and girls bear the brunt of negative outcomes of reproductive and sexual health (see Shaw 2009).

Public health messages and evolving meanings of sexual risks

In the wake of the globalisation of HIV as a largely sexually transmitted virus leading to an incurable disease, there has been an accentuation of moral panics and the politicisation of sexuality with sexual risks towering over other issues (for instance Posel 2005, UNICEF 2003, McPhail and Campbell 2001). Sexual dangers take many forms including non-consensual sex and other forms of violence (Vance 1982, Wood et al 2007), unplanned pregnancy and childbirth; as well as social dangers such as loss of respect and/or a bad reputation (Brook 1999: 23, Caplan 1987), sexually transmitted infections including HIV, and secondary infertility (Chapman 2009). However Vance (1982) argues that sexual "danger" – its fear and reality – is part of the toolkit of patriarchal mechanisms of restricting, exploiting, silencing and keeping women out of public spaces. Sexual dangers are within society's control and

could be alleviated if there was willpower to undo the power hierarchies and imbalances between genders and generations in which these dangers are embedded.

In the context of the foregoing, health education messages vis-à-vis HIV do not exist in a social vacuum but dovetail into and bolster existing age old anxieties about sex and morality in different parts of the world.⁸ There is “otherisation” and concerns about race, geopolitics, gender and intergenerational propriety seen in the halo effects of notions of “an African AIDS” and the “feminisation of HIV” (Ahlberg 1994, Robbins 2004, Caldwell et al 1997, Schoepf 1991, 1995). Thus when epidemiological data are interpreted from a socio-cultural viewpoints, especially the fact that women and particularly young women dominate the ranks of the infected or sick with AIDS, commonsensical arguments that AIDS is a disease of impropriety, afflicting “improper women” are the result (see Dover 2002, Ingstad 1990, Chapman 2006 and Klaitz 2005). According to the latter, dangers of sex come from pollution in the form of contact with women’s reproductive fluid especially after delivery, after a miscarriage/abortion and menstrual fluids. The pollution is believed to affect men and sometimes, subsequent partners causing ill-health and disrupting reproduction. Consequently not only are risks gendered, women are blamed for failure to exercise restraint and observe abstinence during changes in their menstrual cycles and reproductive processes. The negative outcomes of lack of restraint impinge on women’s social standing. These beliefs hold sway even when there are contraceptive technologies to mitigate contact with so-called polluting agents, discounting the effectiveness of modern contraceptives (Dover 2002, MacPhail and Campbell 2001).

Global consumer culture, consumerist sexualities and commodity erotics

Global consumerism incites all to partake in discerning consumerist pursuits also seen as exercising choice, self-indulgence, trying new things and talk about these experiences with no inhibitions and regrets as part of global citizenship (Sassatelli 2006:219-222, Bauman 2004: 116). Given neoliberal globalisation, the satisfaction of many desires such as sex, food and drink is increasingly mediated by the market and technology (see for instance Bauman 2003, 2004, Posel 2005, Nyamnjoh 2005, Attwood 2006, Fitzpatrick 2008). Consumerism has rendered sexualities more recreational than reproductive. Such sexualities are about self-indulgent consumerism including fashion and making oneself a spectacle (Attwood 2006:83-87). These sexualities have turned out to be about subjectification as women willingly cooperate with the objectification and sexualisation of their bodies to appease the “male gaze” (Brook 1999:66, Weeks 1985:23). Not only do these changes celebrate sex as

the big media story (Attwood 2006), they blur the line between propriety and spectacle or scandal, decency and obscenity.

In Sub-Saharan Africa, it is this blurring that is one of the greatest sources of contestation. For instance, Francis Nyamnjoh talks of Dakarais fashionably dressed young women locally called *disquettes* as "...adorned in such outrageous fashions as...[to be] simultaneously attractive and repulsive" (Nyamnjoh 2005). These displays of self are seen as simultaneously shameful, disrespectful and immoral. Clearly, the sexual is embedded in everyday interactions (Jackson and Scott 2010). A growing number of researchers are questioning acts of emancipation through consumer goods, comportment and bodies modelled on the porn industry (C. Jackson and Tinkler 2007, Levy 2005, Miller-Young 2007, Fitzpatrick 2008, also Johnsdotter and Essen 2010, Braun 2005).⁹ Consequently, consumption is part of moralities as people make decisions about what commodities to spend on and are judged by what and how they consume the commodities. Here youth sexualities are especially prone to condemnation.

Increasingly desiring commodities which supposedly fill personal yearnings renders commodities erotic (see Longfield 2004, Nyamnjoh 2005, Posel 2005, Curtis 2009). Not only does possession of commodities such as money or (fast) cars symbolise power and prestige and hence are deemed erotic, it makes individuals attractive and increases or reduces their sexual capital. Therefore it is fallacious to separate economic needs and security from emotional needs and security as is often the case when people think of romantic love as pure, superior and untainted by economic aspirations (Chant and Evans 2010, Curtis 2009). Men who are relatively well off, in wage work or otherwise strategically located vis-à-vis access to goods and services, are a magnet for females in need of economic resources and opportunities. Likewise men are under pressure to comply with dominant notions of being male, virile and sexually and financially potent which derive from their relative wealth (Mane and Aggleton 2001). These contradictions have come to justify pervasive transactional sex which takes different forms in different parts of Africa (and the world) depending on available opportunities. For instance, V.K. Nguyen discusses the emergence of "economic bisexuality" in Abidjan (Cote d'Ivoire) a means by which young men earn start-up capital for personal businesses or college fees (V. K. Nguyen 2005) while some Gambian young men have sex with white female tourists to access gifts they use for family upkeep (Chant and Evans 2010, Nyanzi et al 2005). Homeless male youth who trade man-to-man sexual favours in order to be protected against rival gangs in a Tanzanian city (Lockhart 2008); Ivorian young women in Longfield's study categorised their partners as "rich fools" or "spare tyres" their utility gauged by gifts they give or can be wrung out of

them (Longfield 2004). For both young men and women, transactional sex is stigmatised but persists because those who practice it are disenfranchised or see it as the only way to cultivate support networks as well as to get by, on a day-to-day basis.

Thus, sexuality is a livelihood asset for those in despair. However when combined with global consumer cultures, the despair is obscured while conformity with global trends of hedonism, choice, personal gratification is highlighted. Through these patterns of consumption gender and age relations are reproduced through a heterosex economy which predates consumerism.

From the foregoing it can be seen that consumerist sexualities are individualistic, purportedly modern and claim to be emancipatory. However they challenge prevailing moralities and norms such as kinship and religious beliefs on sex and marriage, hence they are resisted. In poor regions these sexualities are not about emancipation but rather survival which reinscribes prevailing forms of subordination (Nyanzi et al 2005, V.K. Nguyen 2005, Chant and Evans 2010, Nyamnjoh 2005, Lockhart 2008). Although these survival strategies seem freely chosen, the despair of individuals who resort to them is palpable. Sex has become a survival strategy by which some access goods and services in ways which sometimes violate weaker parties. These sexualities increasingly define youth sexuality.

Implications for understanding emerging adulthoods

The foregoing implies that emerging adulthoods are fashioned in the midst of intertwined contradictions of the neoliberal dispensation (consumerism, SRH, public health messages) as well as double standards of gerontocracy and heterosexuality.

In terms of heterosexuality, women and girls learn to compete against each other in appealing to the male gaze, through a combination of “being available” and “attractive” balanced with showing restraint to maintain one’s status as valued and sought after (van Roosmalen 2000:215). Thus in an evolving heterosex economy successful female players know what is sought after, what is excessive, what leads to marriage and worthy relationships (Brook 1999, Miller-Young 2007) but risks of bad reputation await bad gambles (Holland and Ramanozoglu 1998). This market is not coherent as women are expected to be “gatekeepers” of own sexuality as well as being available to ideal males, leading to senses of inadequacy and helplessness when one miscalculates risks and gains (van Roosmalen 2000, Brook 1999). Helplessness results from stereotypes of male needs and still having to comply with ideals of passivity (Brook 1999:66). Femininity as being attractive to men is also about managing male attention by not actively responding to it, it is about passivity as well as

participating in strategically selected activities. The balance is tricky. Van Roosmalen (2000: 204) observes that

A young woman's sexual identity develops in social contexts characterised by gendered power relations, peer group identity, sexual hierarchy, male dominance, negative attitudes and labels of deviance.

Thus emerging femininities are not only tied to heterosexuality and hence sensitive to men's preferences and prevailing norms of male-female relations; they are also tied to consumer culture.

In terms of consumerism, playing this market is part of emerging and evolving popular cultures and "economies of desire" (Miller-Young 2007) as sexual relations are decoupled from tradition and reproduction. For instance Posel (2005:131) citing Selikow et al 2002, notes that

Sex is also the object of consumption, in a genre of popular culture which eroticises possession and accumulation as icons of sexual prowess and libido. For *young men with aspirations to macho status, an expensive car, flashy designer clothing have become signifiers of sexual bravado* as men 'in control', with the power to command multiple sexual partners. For *young women intent on establishing their social standing by "driving on the left side" of these hip young men...* dress and accessories have become a statement of sexual capital as much as social style. (Added emphasis).

In terms of gerontocracy, despite arguments that sexuality is embedded in everyday sociality, youth are normatively seen as pre-sexual as if youth live outside everyday sociality which reproduces adults' sexualities. The only sexuality preferred for youth is abstinence (Varga 1997, van Eeuwijk and Mlangwa 1997, Kehily 2009). Thus youth and children are out-of-bounds as objects of desire nor can they be subjects of desire. Youth should wait until they are ready but it is not clear what "readiness" entails especially given contexts where marriage is deferred because of resource scarcity (Ashcraft 2006, Hansen 2005, Jeffrey 2005). This leaves youth confused as they are compelled by peer pressure to prove specific femininity or masculinity by relating with the opposite sex in ways that conform to heterosexuality but also saddled with guilt from accusations of wrong doing afterwards (Ashcraft 2006, Bay-Cheng 2003, van Roosmalen 2000). Young women who prefer partners likely to give money and status-conferring commodities have to contend with outcries of moral decadence. Furthermore the display of eroticism through fashion is often taken as "violation" of culture and/or recklessness in the middle of an epidemic (Pattman 2005, Nyamnjoh 2005). The

blurring of economic and emotional needs is alarming for some adults and part of the condemnation (Nguyen 2007, Chant and Evans 2010, Nyamnjoh 2005). Thus young people partaking in global consumer culture are judged as deviant regardless of their real sexual practices; fashion itself supposedly signifies illicit preferences.

In terms of public health, adults' norms and prescriptions about how to deal with bodily sensations, and the needs and pressures of being in a relationship are not made explicit to young people. Abstinence is not well defined, especially what it is that young people should abstain from; is it from dating or from some sexual activity? Given the multiplicity of sexual activity and changing forms of sex, which activity should young people abstain from? Often abstinence is defined as abstaining from penile-vaginal, sex but oral and anal sex might be seen by young people as a viable option, yet without protection these also have their risks (Kantor et al 2008). Abstinence is notoriously unsustainable not least because of deferral of marriage; it works only for young people not in relationships (Cohen and Reid 1999, Marindo et al 2003, also Kantor et al 2008). Essentialist arguments and untested hypotheses that habits learnt in the teens last a lifetime are part of the hysteria surrounding youth sexuality (for instance De Waal 2002:175, Shaw 2009:133 citing WHO).¹⁰ It is not clear if habits learnt in teens are indelible due to hormones or to sociological factors. This flies in the face of constructivist theories and arguments of sexuality as socially shaped by opportunities, circumstances and cultural settings.

The foregoing shows some of the multi-dimensional contradictions in youth sexuality in an environment with competing messages and ways of being (van Eeuwijk and Mlangwa 1997). The lack of coherence is sharpened under economic decline when adult control over youth is waning, meaning that adults have no way of enforcing their preferences. It is for this reason that this research uses Mamadou Diouf's observation that youth are locked "in the vice grip" of globalisation, gerontocracy and patriarchy (Diouf 2003). These contradictions force ways of being which contradict preferred norms. I use the word "force" to suggest being compelled by circumstances, including manipulation of social norms making some options more palatable or viable for short or long-term purposes. Both adults and youth are struggling to come to terms with emerging forms of adulthoods given uncertainty in the socio-economic environment. The present argument is that youth are committed to being socially adult, but do so through experimental or situational living (Blatterer 2007, 2010) of which more in chapter 2. Adults and some peers are shocked at these emerging strategies but some concede that some of the strategies are due to prevailing conditions. Clearly emerging adulthoods are fashioned in negotiation between ideologies and structures. In Zimbabwe as elsewhere there is preference for abstinence-only SBSE (Kehily 2009, Marindo

et al 2003, Betts et al 2003, Bay-Cheng 2003). Adults and officials do not acknowledge so-called “hidden” curricula (Kehily 2009) that work peer-to-peer and sometimes involve adults on the margins of society against official curricula. The dissonance between the official and hidden curricula renders youth sexuality invisible or distorts what is known about it because youth are afraid of being judged (Bay-Cheng 2003, Kehily 2009). Being sexually active has social meanings to young people too as a way of expressing autonomy from adults, experimentation, self-discovery and romantic love, a way to cope with difficult family and school environments or a means of survival, a form of and a means to consumerism.

Conclusion

This introductory chapter shows how economic dislocation due to neoliberal reforms impinges on gender, sexuality and generational relations with young people blamed for failure to comply with social expectations. The chapter critiques the traditional thesis of transitions arguing that contradictions and uncertainties of neoliberal reforms render it redundant. Hence, this research makes a case for emerging adulthoods recognised as increasingly open-ended, without objective markers, and situationally determined, even when individually selected. These conditions clearly give the impression of deviance from the point of view of conservative elders and patriarchal interests. Youth and adults are struggling to come to terms with prevailing change in their environment, sometimes struggling against each other to claim and counter meanings of coming of age. Some of these struggles are dismissed as deviant.

These contradictions are the reason why this research prefers the concept of emerging adulthoods as a way of understanding youth. The study uses the word “grappling”, to show that young people and adults alike are trying to come to terms with this change. Their struggles are about what the future holds or how it will be and its implications on the tenor of social relations. Faced with uncertainty and contradictions, youth are producing gendered and sexualised identities and practices based on their circumstances. This study does not aim at looking into what the future holds, but simply to document contradictions of the moment as seen and experienced in Beitbridge in 2009-2010 and Zimbabwe as a whole. It shows the agency of young people in struggling with circumstances in their socio-economic environment, dealing with pressing current problems and fashioning aspired for

adulthoods albeit not all of them normative. These struggles are not visible when standard definitions of youth are used.

Notes

1. Globalisation as interconnection and interpenetration of cultures is much older including pre-colonial trade, slave trade and colonization.
2. South Africa and Botswana are the only Sub-Saharan countries to escape the full package of SAPs but they use neoliberal policies.
3. For women concern is with empowerment and equality; children concern is with protection and development.
4. According to the notion of the “Gospel of Prosperity” according to which individuals must give a tenth of their income to God [that is, to church entrepreneurs] in order to multiply their wealth (see Mate 2002). Across Sub-Saharan Africa Pentecostalism is growing, side-by-side with reports of ritual killings, internet scams based on duping the unwary into believing that they can earn a lot of money if they cooperate with the scamsters (see Smith 2001, also Burke 2000). In these examples people earn money through unconventional means.
5. The “roleless” role is a term attributed to Talcott Parsons in the 1950s (Arnett 2000).
6. When a woman dies before bridewealth is paid in full, her relatives can refuse to participate in the funeral until all payments are made. Although illegal, delaying burial to extract outstanding payment is common.
7. For instance, debates on the use of injectable contraceptives in Zimbabwe immediately after independence pitted white, colonial administrators against black post-independence politicians who accused the former of promoting contraception to reduce population growth among blacks and of using black women as guinea pigs for newly invented injectable contraceptives (Kaler 1998). The injectables were subsequently banned. Underlying the ban was male anxiety about women controlling fertility in ways that men could not remedy until the effect of the injectable had expired. Male quests for control of their wives’ fertility were part of restoration of African masculinities at independence and part of nascent, increasingly bold masculinist notions of nationalism.
8. A case in point is the homophobic references to HIV as a “gay men’s disease” when HIV was first discovered (for instance Nguyen 2005)
9. In the US, UK, New Zealand and similar countries voluntary genital cosmetic surgery to neaten genitalia including surgically tightening vaginas (revirginification) apparently to increase sexual pleasure is on the increase. The efficacy of these operations remains controversial as are their politics (see Johnsdotter and Essen 2010, Braun 2005, and Fitzpatrick 2008) available at www.time.com/time/printout/0,8816,1859937,00.html (accessed 23 January 2009).
10. This is a puzzling and inexplicable argument meant to maintain the hierarchy inherent in gerontocracy. Growing up is about changing behavior and preferences as life circumstances change.

Chapter 2

Emerging adulthoods, situational living and subjectivities: a conceptual framework and methodology

Introduction

Chapter 1 has outlined how contradictions of neoliberal globalisation impinge on inter-gender, sexuality and intergenerational expectations and obligations (Cole and Durham 2007). It argued that new ways of being are at variance with idealised and normative ways of being as access to material and non-material resources to comply with the latter recedes (Vigh 2008, Giddens 1991, Simone 2005, Bauman 1997, 2003, 2004). This leads to “identificatory decay” (Vigh 2008), “crisis” (Giddens 1991), and “crisis in gender relations” (Connell 1995) while many others refer to uncertainty and insecurity in the context of scrambled norms and practices. This crisis of being leads to people creating facades of normalcy many times removed from reality (S. Jackson 2010, Vigh 2008, Simone 2005, Mistral 2001). Lockhart (2008) describes this as “cultures of pragmatism” where people do not dwell on the pain and losses of the moment but are locked in pursuit of future gains however improbable, leading to risk-taking (Makhulu et al 2010). It is clear from this body of literature that emerging adulthoods are fashioned in conditions defined by fleeting role models, scrambled norms and ways of being and therefore locked in a constant search for new ways of making sense of life because traditional expectations are impossible to comply with. Harry Blatterer refers to these facades of normalcy as *situational living* (Blatterer 2010:67). Situational living means flexibility, openness to suggestion, to make-do as a way of getting by and earning money by any means available and is increasingly recognised

across Sub Saharan Africa (S. Jackson 2010, Simone 2005, de Boeck 2005, Ismail 2009, Vigh 2008, Scheld 2007, Waage 2006). The transience of situational living is also related to global economic restructuring where flexibility is about adaptability and “the faster the better”, a quality that is sought after in people and businesses (Blatterer 2010: 67-72). Adaptability and being flexible challenge existing moralities that demand standing on principles. Young people who seek to embrace change by being adaptable and flexible risk stigmatisation.

Studying youth in Zimbabwe: standpoints of this research

This study takes an interpretivist and constructivist approach to emerging adulthoods and gendered sexual subjectivities in as far as it seeks understandings of meanings of events in young people’s day-to-day lives as linked to their socio-economic circumstances (Yanow 2006:11). Constructivism invites a challenge to what we take for granted (Gallagher 2009, Gergen 2000: 50). In a context where youth are seen as blameworthy, to accept the obvious would be to accept the status quo that youth are deficient and problem bearing instead of seeing young people as created by prevailing socio-economic and cultural contexts. By seeking an understanding of their lived experiences and asking for their accounts of what is meaningful as they come of age the study takes the view that research participants’ experiences are valid and real, regardless of whether or not they are perceived by society as “deviant”, “problematic” or “improper”. Literature reviewed in the preceding chapter shows that there are deep-seated assumptions about what constitutes youth and also competing perspectives of sexuality because of rapid social change. Young people have to contend with these competing messages. The choices and interpretations they make of the context do not exist in a social vacuum but are textured by the social context too.

Interpretive approaches are useful where norms and deeds are at variance (Yanow 2006:19) as the foregoing discussion shows. Dissonance leads to creativity as people try to resolve guilt, shame and other forms of discomfort the resulting from disapproval by others (Prus 1996:174). To manage, individuals remake themselves either in social practice and/or in narrative (Ezzy 1998, Vigh 2008). Through explanations and meanings attributed to events people construct their subjectivities through narratives (Callero 2003:119). In explaining the theoretical perspectives of this study, I focus on symbolic interactionism in broad strokes and specifically at situational living and emerging adulthoods and methodological implications.

Tenets of symbolic interactionism and relevance for this study

Symbolic interactionism is premised on the notion that reality is socially constructed by reflexive individuals who think and weigh options against circumstances and social situations they are in before embarking on action (Prus 1996, Mitzal 2001). Reflexivity of individuals means that individuals internalise social norms but also understand that there are competing perspectives resolved through their decision and choice making. Reflexivity is present in a) how people define their situations or contexts and how they behave, b) the choices they make and outcomes they desire and c) adjustments they make to their behaviour following outcomes (Prus 1996: 10, also Jackson and Scott 2010: 821, Longmore 1998:46). Furthermore interactions themselves are “meanings laden” (Brickell 2006:416); this means that sociality is based on intersubjectivity, or interpersonal and intragroup connections, shared meanings and dynamics (Prus 1996). Meanings are negotiated and recreated in compromises that people make. It is the influence of others which points to shared meanings as other people’s (dis)approval impinges on choices individuals make, hence the importance of “reflected appraisal” (Kaufman and Johnson 2004: 807-8) to refer to (dis)approvals, gossip and ostracism as a result of choices one makes. Not all reflected appraisal matters as some of it is filtered out, deflected and explained away and rejected while some may become a festering source of distress (Kaufman and Johnson 2004). Thus youth experiences discussed in the following chapters are shaped by longstanding official and adults’ attitudes to growing youth visibility in urban areas in Zimbabwe going back to the 1990s (Kamete 2008, Bourdillon (ed.) (2000). How individuals manage choices vis-à-vis reflected appraisal gives unique accents to subjectivities. Callero (2003: 121) observes that,

...[A] full understanding of self-meanings, self-images and self-concepts requires a broad conceptualisation of contexts, one that extends beyond the immediate definition of the situation to include the historical and cultural settings where unarticulated assumption about the nature of the persons have their origin.

Thus shared meanings of artefacts and actions have historical and socio-economic contexts as discussed in Chapter 3. Clearly youth as a social phenomenon in Zimbabwe was produced in interaction with adults, and in reaction to structural challenges visited on the economy in the last two decades albeit the latter not discernible in public outcries about youth. Under neoliberalism individuals are responsible for choices they make. As cogently explained by Peter Kelly, the individual is seen as a do-it-yourself (DIY) project (Kelly 2001:25-9) even in spaces such as Zimbabwe where materials for this DIY work are scarce; and where neo-traditions still value rural sociality and reciprocity with kin. Often, youth make do and still

run up against a barrage of disapproval and accusations of impropriety for overdoing the DIY. These reflected appraisals are a source of youth subjectivities as individuals deal with scrutiny, criticism and seek to be successful. For instance, regardless of being victims of circumstance such as when youth live in booking houses which points to an association with or being in sex work, many try to deflect this negative appraisal by excelling in remitting huge parcels to expectant relatives. Thus through the public performance of responsibility youth negotiate with the negativity associated with their livelihoods. As will be shown in chapter 7 some youth deflected reflected appraisal by turning to supernatural beliefs and practices. Consequently, the reality of individuals is context specific in terms of temporal, spatial and social circumstances (Callero 2003: 119-121, Longmore 1998:50-51, Brickell 2006: 418). Symbolic interactionism is therefore about the individual in society and how s/he is made by and in turn makes society, by affirming and challenging societal norms. Contradictions in expectations, reality and attributions are an active area of production of identities through social practices including discursive work.

People in difficult circumstances constantly create new practices as meanings of prevailing practices are challenged (Vigh 2008:15, Brickell 2006:416). Some of these new meanings are created through manipulating social norms to make them amenable for conditions of volatility (Jackson 2010, Simone 2005). The manipulation of social norms is further supported by the fact that stability and rigidity are challenged by global structural/economic changes. In the workplace for instance, casualisation, fluidity of lifestyles and transience denote adaptability (Blatterer 2007:783). Consequently, symbolic interactionism does not judge people as wrong or right but understands them as pragmatic, agentic and adaptable no matter what the situation is (Vigh 2008) while morality is socially contingent (Longmore 1998:55).

Symbolic interactionism has been criticised for being pro-status quo by not critiquing power relations, defining who and how people discern the situation, who can act on prevailing definitions, what actions are available for which individuals and for failing to link locations in structure to ability to discern power (Longmore 1998: 55). I think that in a study of youth, it is impossible to overlook power relations especially when one argues that as youth fashion emerging adulthoods they struggle against gerontocracy, patriarchy and globalisation (Diouf 2003). This triad implies intertwined structures of power whose workings and impacts on emerging adulthoods were discussed in chapter 1. The ability of youth to discern a situation is ideally in conformity with norms and achieving ideal and normative personal success. However under conditions of volatility, conformity does not

allow youth to realise socially ascribed expectations either. How youth resolve these issues shows how they challenge, reproduce and manage power relations and social structures. Furthermore, the question of who and how different individuals react to prevailing information about the context is gendered in that for male and female youth options are different, as are consequences and moral judgments embedded in reflected appraisal. I think that these criticisms are not inherent in the theory but rather in how people use it. In this study, socio-cultural norms which define gender and age structure options for male and female youth have been discussed in chapter 1. How available options are acted on and rationalised will be discussed in the subsequent chapters.

Situational living: pragmatism or recklessness?

In chapter 1, I analysed controversy evinced by pragmatics of situational living such as “culture of pragmatism” (Lockhart 2008) also seen as fatalistic because people underplay real and likely losses (Makhulu et al 2010). In Zimbabwe and in Beitbridge situational living is evident in emergent livelihood strategies and attendant everyday speech. A case in point are tell-tale statements such as “*Kuona yekutamba*” which literally means, “to decide which card to play once the game is on”, “*hapana yekutamba*” “there are no alternative moves” to express despair or to rationalise a questionable course of action. There is also “*kutamba irikurira*” which means “dancing to the tune/song currently on air/responding to prevailing circumstances”, that is going with the flow. These expressions underline despair visited on speakers and acceptance that flexibility and improvisation are the way to get by. They gained currency as a labour-intensive, opportunistic informal and grey sector, locally called *kukiya-kiya* became pervasive in the 2000s (Jones 2010). Another term is “*kujingirisa*” which literally means making the impossible happen, by tricking others, faking it, through supernatural interventions, theft or some undefined illicit means. The term *kujingirisa* is used when people cannot give details of what they do or where the end is deemed to justify the means (J. Jones 2010). Often, once someone says so-and-so is engaged in *kujingirisa*, this is considered enough detail, as requests for more information will likely draw a blank, real or feigned ignorance of what the individual does. Pragmatics of situational living have come to typify instabilities and uncertainties evinced by neoliberal globalisation. For young people this means that they are individually charting new and different courses in fashioning their emergent adulthoods, often with heavy criticism from adults and establishment who see these ways as rejection of tradition and accepted ways of being (see Hartmann and Swartz 2007). These statements denote changing morality too, a situation where personal responsibility and abiding by the law are negotiated as affected individuals respond to

reflected appraisals. The latter shows the intersubjectivity of situational living as individuals formulate how they live and what they say about it in response to what others (dis)approve of and always trying to either associate themselves with the positive side of the argument or minimise personal responsibility by highlighting situational causes. Clearly there are risks to this pragmatism. Spaces of situational living are fraught with social risks (such as exploitation, infection with STIs and HIV, pregnancy and theft among others) for some actors (Mane and Aggleton 2001, Barnett and Whiteside 2002, Waage 2006) as respondents' analyses show in chapter 7.

In Beitbridge situational living is embedded in the commonest refrain of “working at the border” with no specific details given about the type of work. When I first got to Beitbridge I thought it meant working at the official border only to learn that “the border” in this statement means any part of the Limpopo River which is also the physical demarcation between South Africa and Zimbabwe (as shown on Map 1 in chapter 3). This suggests illicit or quasi-criminal activity such as people and goods smuggling, theft from undocumented travellers and scams among others, but remains vague enough to be talked about openly. People also often talk about “looking for money” (*kutsvaga mari* in Shona) rather than working to earn it. This begs the question where does one look for money in a place where there are limited employment opportunities? In this vein, an inability to partake in consumerism because of lack of money is inexcusable, since anyone can look for money without detailing how and where. Debra Curtis also noted narratives of “looking for money” among teens in a Caribbean Island as its economy changed and consumerism and international tourism took root (Curtis 2009:55). Such statements in the Caribbeans and in Beitbridge (and Zimbabwe as a whole) and the attitudes and lifestyles they imply point to deep contradictions: the growing importance of money, markets and status conferring commodities in the face of intractable economic challenges, endemic unemployment and social inequality.

Across Sub-Saharan Africa, the notion of situational living is increasingly a feature of research. For instance, Stephen Jackson (2010:52) observes that resourcefulness, improvisation, negotiation, flexibility and mobility are part of postcolonial lifestyles in the face of uncertainty and indeterminacy of on-going social change. This speaks to the growth of transience, opportunism and impatience with rules/laws which lead to further exclusion of the poor. This is because chronic instability “...corrodes the constructions of meanings by which different spheres of our existences are interwoven...” (Vigh 2008:15). However because under neoliberalism there is an incitement to “cope” hence the currency of coping strategies but where in fact conditions are too grim for the impression conjured up by

“coping strategies” (Rugalema 2000), people manage as best as they can. Others observe that there is pressure to try “to look normal” when nothing is normal (De Waal 2006). This is seen in the French phrase “*Je me débrouille*” which means “I am coping” or “I am managing” a common refrain among young people in Francophone Africa when asked about how they are keeping, as noted by Scheld (2007: 236) in Dakar (Senegal) and Waage (2006) in Ngaoundere (Cameroon). Young people are aware that some of this coping means making do on marginalised forms of existence but what matters is being independent and keeping one’s head high. Trying “to look normal” is part of the power of reflected appraisals that underline some of this coping and managing, hence Mitszal (2001: 314-5) observes that

Normal appearances assure people that nothing is out of the ordinary and life is predictable, so in the absence of anything unusual, they can continue their routines... By preserving the routine of daily life, they reinforce in themselves and in others, the feeling of normality, which conceals the unpredictability of the reality...

This needs not be taken to mean denialism, but rather that there is stigma in admitting challenges. Besides what is the point of admitting to challenges that cannot be remedied such as intractable structural changes visited on the region? Indeed Africanist researchers note that there is growing shame of admitting poverty, which some young men say is emasculating as it is tantamount to admitting failure (Scheld 2007, Chant and Evans 2010). Improvisations come in handy here, hence wearing second hand-clothes and/or using fake designer labels saying “I am not that poor/a failure in life”. However these improvisations are fraught with exploitation too (Waage 2006:82).

Consequently situational living should also not be seen as triumph of survival by any means possible. Rather, it points at paradoxes of certain forms of agency that do not lead to change as structural conditions deteriorate (Vigh 2008, also Makhulu et al 2010). Whether one thinks of this agency in terms of what Mats Utas (2005) terms “victimcy” or AbdouMaliq Simone (2005) “piracy” the results are sadly ambiguous (Makhulu et al 2010). Victimcy (calibrated from terms “victim” and “agency”) means victims of any abuse or structural violence have ability to survive their circumstances, by daily, tactically navigating immediate obstacles using whatever means at their disposal, including their bodies, to sexually endear themselves to individuals who could otherwise harm them. Such tactical triumphs do not challenge the abuse they endure or the structures that perpetuate it. “Piracy” refers to informal sector activities which entail creative use of places and multiple facades to a given space to hide what goes on in it. Piracy speaks to multiple uses many

times removed from original intentions and livelihoods bordering on criminality, but whose criminality can be doubted because of the many facades there are to a situation or a space. It allows people to hide poverty, their activities and sources of money and maintain a façade of coping. There are risks to opportunism and openness to suggestion as the gullible and desperate are abused, often without recourse to any system of redress.

Sexual subjectivities and situational living

Situational living demonstrates some of the pressing constraints and contradictions individuals encounter when navigating without compasses and creatively getting by. Thus through situational living, "...wider constraints are reflected in individual conduct" (Brickell 2001:419). The discussion in chapter 1 already elaborated on changing meanings of what is sexual and growing tolerance of the obscene as sexually explicit materials become more commonplace (Attwood 2006). Sexuality is defined as embedded in everyday sociality (Jackson and Scott 2010). Thus people learn what is sexual and what is not while keeping focus on how to retain respectability (Longmore 1998:47-51). For instance, in urban areas (as will be discussed in chapter 3), being a single woman, living alone, wearing fashionable clothes, drinking alcohol, smoking and going to a *bhawa* (a beer hall also seen as men's recreational space) symbolise impropriety in general, and being in sex work, being loose (Pattman 2005, Benson and Chadya 2005, Jackson 1999). Brickell (2006: 429) observes that

One becomes a sexual subject not by expressing an always already sexualised inner impulse or by adopting cultural codes wholesale, but by assembling sexual meaning during one's interactions with other members of society.

The sexual is therefore discerned in interaction with others and how others read one's behaviour. The sexual is interactional, intersubjective and contextual. There are tensions in terms of how young people's comportment is translated by adults compared to its reading by young people themselves. These differences are because of perspectives drawn from different worldviews. There is a desire among female and male youth to show independence and to be respected, but many also have to contend with lack of resources, which calls for creativity to compensate (Scheld 2007, Chant and Evans 2010).

Resource austerities of neoliberalism highlight gendered sexualities as a widely available "livelihood asset", mobilised and used differently by male and female youth in poverty (Chant and Evans 2010:366). It intersects with the pursuit of money and commodities in ways which blur the line between the money and commodities on one side and love on the other (Curtis 2009, Cornwall 2002:971), and the line between people and sought after

commodities. Commodities render people attractive (Curtis 2009). Many young people are driven to what has been described as “needs based relations” which go beyond patronage as they are maintained through sexual intimacy (P.A. Nguyen 2007: 308-310, also Longfield 2004). This entails opportunistic circulation among friends, acquaintances and partners for resources (Nyamnjoh 2005). In situations where there are women of means, desperate young men also receive money and other gifts for having sex, such as with female tourists (Chant and Evans 2010). Sex here becomes a tool for self-fashioning and self-production (V. K. Nguyen 2005:255). It is a widely available resource for mandatory Do It Yourself work under neoliberalism. Sexuality becomes a “tactic” for expressing desire, expressing beauty and material security (V.K Nguyen 2005:265).

Consequently livelihoods based on gendered sexualities are as much about both material gain, respect increasingly based on material considerations as well as emotional attachment (Chant and Evans 2010:366). Sexuality as a livelihood asset male and female youth to get by, to deal with difficulties they encounter amid protests of deviance and immorality, where there are no alternatives to fall back on. The opportunism entailed in these sexualities challenges prevailing moralities but are also part of evolving local popular cultures (Nyamnjoh 2005, Cornwall 2002, Posel 2005). The agency that these strategies have evinced in women has led to denigration of women as deviant and greedy.

Implications for emerging adulthoods: the problem of misrecognition

The concept of “emerging adulthoods” denotes strategies young people use to commit themselves to adulthoods they aspire for, in conditions where there is no institutional support for challenges these individuals encounter (because of social changes, uncertainty and volatility discussed in chapter 1) and where the outcome of strategies adopted is not guaranteed or predictable (Flacks 2007:66; Arnett 2000, 2007, Arnett and Taber 1994). In other words, choices young people make are themselves fraught with uncertainty in conditions of volatility. Often their struggles are invisible to adult members of the public given conditions where people see youth as deficit, lazy or the source of social problems because of strategies that do not yield preferred and ideal results of marriage following rural moralities. Differences between youth and their observers speak to the notion of “misrecognition” which Blatterer (2007, 2010) mentions as a challenge for researchers, public policy institutions, the media and the public talking about youth. It is also a source of tension, accusations and counter-accusations (Weiss 2004).

Misrecognition is multi-dimensional. There is misrecognition of change, because of time lag between structural changes, individual reactions/coping strategies and realignment

of social norms (see Mizen 2004, Blatterer 2007, 2010). For instance, the discussion in Chapter 1 shows that the dominance of ideas about “traditional” transition to adulthood thesis implies that the state should invest in education to ensure adulthoods characterised by stable wage work/ careers when this is not feasible under prevailing neoliberal conditions (Mizen 2004). Misrecognition may also be because of the power of some norms where vested interests in known identities render, new pragmatic ways of life or “experimental living” to borrow Blatterer’s words, unacceptable. In this sense, pragmatism of the marginalized is also seen as irrational or even a form of “fatalism” – not valuing one’s own life – when it is the product of structural violence (Lockhart 2008, Makhulu et al 2010).

Furthermore, misrecognition may be embedded in honour cultures of Southern Africa, particularly the notion of “respectability” (Ogden 1996, Campbell 1998, Wojcicki 2002). Here misrecognition is a deliberate strategy not to flaunt that which is considered shameful, embarrassing or disrespectful to oneself and significant others such as sexual identities. Respectability is gendered and gerontocratic. Women are expected to be publicly and sexually passive, and defer to men and their elders by not flaunting their sexuality. Studies cited above were done in low-income neighbourhoods of Johannesburg, South Africa (Campbell 1998, Wojcicki 2002) and Kampala, Uganda (Ogden 1996) on women whose livelihood strategies entailed transactional sex and yet the women were expected not to publicise this aspect of their lives in conditions of overcrowding, thus antithetical to discreetness. Consequently, in practical terms respectability means non-disclosure of sex work or transactional sex as a source of money, hiding such activities from neighbours, children and co-residential partners or risking beatings which locals rationalize as befitting such indiscretion and flagrant lack of respect for oneself and significant others. Respectability demands a lot of effort. From studies cited above, respectability implies widespread understanding of prevalent existential challenges but a hesitation to confront them to preserve the dignity of all concerned. In this vein, men whose partners were in transactional sex preferred not to be told about it, or expected that men wanting paid sex with their partners showed them some respect by not coming to the women’s homes (Campbell 1998, Wojcicki 2002). These ways of life persecute those whose telling of life stories exposes the prevalence of deviance as the telling challenges authority structures of gerontocracy and patriarchy. Hence “Practices may be at once structurally rewarded and discursively misrecognised...” (Blatterer 2007: 786). While misrecognition in this sense is a double-edged aspect of pragmatism of survival, it gags discussion of social reality but also points to what is valued in the cultural system. In this vein, misrecognition may be resistance to prevailing circumstances in preference to older ones. It also speaks to attempts at looking “normal” (Mitszal 2001).

Thus if adulthood is denoted by “autonomy”, “choosing” and “self-determining” (Blatterer 2007:779) certain forms of autonomy, choice and self-determination are validated more than others. Living alone for young women is suspect, especially away from parents or husbands. These issues are especially pertinent for this study where young women’s reputations are at stake simply because they do not live with adults or are not accountable to men. Likewise, self-determination, which does not lead to socially accepted outcomes, is problematic. Through shared norms, such as systems of honour, those who are criticised or ostracised can also seek recognition through managing the negative appraisal by deflecting it, excelling in some areas as discussed above (Kaufman and Johnson 2004:813). In this sense, youth try to remit conspicuous parcels home, change their identity when they get home, or not disclose how they earn their money.

Research questions, motivation and objectives

This study comes out of growing interest in youth seen in policies and public debates in Zimbabwe and other parts of Sub Saharan Africa. Debates and policies have progressed in such a way that youth are assumed to be *known*, their problems understood and attributed to essentialist arguments such as age, changing hormones or blamed on stigmatised upbringing thereby blaming individuals and their families (Argenti 2002, Maira and Soep 2004). The societal changes are never factored into the debate. There is very little voice given to youth by policy makers. Across Africa young people are either seen as a source of the future and therefore needing investment (Argenti 2002:124, Berliner 2005) or if disenfranchised they are feared as a source of violence, crime and uncontrollable change (see Ismail 2009, Ya’u 2000, de Boeck 2005, Vigh 2008, Ibrahim 2005). The latter is an increasingly common picture because of pervasive economic dislocation and disenfranchisement of young in Sub Saharan Africa. The preceding discussion shows that definitions used in public debates do not capture lived realities and take on board structural changes in the global, national or local economy. Furthermore, there is a dearth of knowledge about how youth experience change and how they respond to it in their locales. Recently the prominence of propositions of biomedical sciences about youth and sexuality – for instance age of sexual debut number of life partners and premarital sex as indicators of risky behaviour – have been elevated to statements of truth about youth at risk (Slaymaker 2004) thus threatening social continuity (Kelly 2001). This study seeks to give youth a voice and to elaborate on their perspectives in what it means to be young, gendered and sexual being especially as they come of age under unprecedented economic challenges.

The study has three basic objectives. Namely, to document, describe and analyse male and female youth's experiences of being young and sexual in present day Zimbabwe (specifically in one selected town) given its socio-economic circumstances; to contribute to critical analysis of emerging adulthoods of young people in Zimbabwe as there are few such studies at the moment and to contribute to a growing body of knowledge on youth, gender and sexuality in SSA and worldwide.

Following the foregoing discussion, the study's main research questions are: **How do young people experience being young and coming of age under conditions characterised by chronic instability? How do they respond to the instability and how does the instability shape their responses? Finally how do they narrate those experiences and responses?**

The main questions have been split into the following four sub-research questions:

1. How do male and female youth speak about and explain their experience being youth? What are their aspirations for the future?
2. In what ways do the socio-economic setting shape young people's survival strategies, attitudes and relations with authority figures? How are young people viewed by authority figures and how do young people deal with attitudes of authorities?
3. How do young people in different circumstances talk about their sexuality? How does the prevailing socio-economic context shape sexual practices and meanings they attach to them?
4. How do cultural norms and beliefs shape young people's approaches to personal health (including reproductive and sexual health) and wellbeing? How do these norms and practices impinge on options young people have in fulfilling their aspirations?

Research methodology and field strategy

The study uses qualitative research methods because of the need to understand contextual issues pertaining to youth sexual subjectivities. Qualitative research relies on an iterative process of observation, interview, critical analysis, crosschecking and back to observation (Becker 1998, Silverman 2007, Yanow 2006). These methods imply small sample studies where multi-factor observations are made of comparatively few respondents. Qualitative methods are effective for understanding socio-cultural norms, practices and meanings as well as relations of different groups of people (Mason 2002: 15, Silverman 2007). In addition, qualitative methods are ideal for research on excluded, marginalised groups whose experiences are ordinarily invisible, such as youth sexual practices. Fieldwork lasted 11 months from May 2009 to April 2010.

Given a study that appreciates constructivist and interpretivist approaches to youth and sexuality, research methods in use had to capture youth's experiences of growing up and sexuality. Consequently, Focus Group Discussions (FGDs), key informant interviews, individual interviews and review of secondary literature were preferred as they allow individuals to relate their subjective experiences, understanding of phenomena as well as shared norms. Interactional dynamics are important in interpreting meanings of what is observed and recorded in interviews/discussions. Furthermore these dynamics allow for the development of narratives conveyed through verbal and non-verbal communication such as hesitations about whether or not to say something, stares, exchanged glances, giggles as well narratives of officials as presented in the media or interviews.

The sequencing of methods was planned as follows: key informant interviews, FGDs and then individual interviews. Each method was supposed to sharpen issues for the next. Before fieldwork, I thought that the FGDs would reveal diversity of practices and enable me to choose willing individuals for in-depth interviews. The sequencing did not work as anticipated. Key informants were not all available at the start of the study as planned and some were not available even after appointments were confirmed FGDs too were convened throughout the fieldwork period and in-depth interviews had to be sub-contracted to research assistants as it was difficult for me to create rapport with targeted respondents for reasons explained below.

Research methods in detail

Key informant interviews and conversations

Key Informant interviews were meant to be conducted at the start of the study, alongside reconnaissance and seeking permission to do the study. Key informants were adults and youth who are strategically located in Beitbridge and knowledgeable about youth activities such as booking house owners, local authority officials, employees of NGOs, faith leaders, youth and residents. These interviews helped me to establish myself in the field and to get general information about youth activities and the research setting. In total 12 key informants were interviewed. Many others contributed through casual conversations.

Focus group discussions (FGDs)

18 FGDs were organised with youth and one with adult women (see Table 2.1 below). Discussions were held in local vernacular languages,¹¹ most were electronically recorded using a non-intrusive recorder (in later parts of the research the recorder developed a

technical fault so I resorted to handwritten notes). The discussions were transcribed verbatim.

Table 2.1 | Description of FGD participants

Occupational activity	Number of groups	Description of participants
In-school youth	7	Participants were drawn from 2 secondary schools; 1 group was mixed girls and boys; 3 were of boys alone and 3 of girls alone
Youth vendors	2	1 group with male vendors and another with female vendors
Self-identified youth sex workers	3	Participants came from 2 booking houses
Youth dance groups	2	2 groups of female dancers, one from an all- girls group and another from a mixed group
Youth affiliated to churches	3	The youth were from 2 churches; two single sex groups from a Pentecostal and a girls' group from a mainstream church.
Youth affiliated to a youth corner	1	Only boys attended.
Adults	1	Older women with teenaged children
	19	

FGDs enable hearing diverse views, allow for debate on sensitive issues and concepts where such issues would not be discussed otherwise, thus creating platforms for critical collective reflections and insights. These debates, reflections and insights are useful for a constructivist and interpretivist study like this one (Wellings et al 2000:258, Kitzinger 1994).

While in the field, disapproval of explicit and “crude” language by some research participants was of concern to some research participants. Some research participants saw me privately to explain things and to distance themselves from “objectionable” language because they feared that I would judge them as rude. Statements about paying for sex, which in some FGDs drew laughter, also drew considerable disapproval or qualification as due to despair rather than the norm. These arguments point to sensitivities and contestations among youth and shared albeit contested meanings of these practices. In FGDs some individuals are silenced either because they are divulging local secrets or censor themselves because they think the information/experiences they have are questionable (Kitzinger 1994). Sometimes individuals are quiet because they feel judged for having experiences

outside the norm. In this regard, FGDs need triangulation with other methods which allow for privacy such as individual interviews.

In-depth individual interviews

I had planned to identify respondents for in-depth interviews on the basis of diversities of practices uncovered in FGDs and from key informant interviews. The in-depth interviews were meant to document personal experiences and meanings attached to choices individuals made and to triangulate FGDs. I had not anticipated difficulties in creating rapport with research participants or in conducting in-depth interviews. As will be explained in chapter 3 on the setting, the Beitbridge as a border town is considered a security zone with “zero tolerance for crime” with a police crackdown during fieldwork. With livelihoods bordering on criminality, locals were wary of letting outsiders into their confidences for their own security. There was a widely held view that people who talk too much such as researchers, journalists and police, and who ask questions about local goings-on facilitate the easy flow of information and increase the vulnerability of persons involved. The deep distrust of outsiders by people involved in the grey economy was also observed in Douala, Cameroon (Simone 2005). Conversely activities of outsiders are monitored and reported on through the grapevine.

Given my problem in entering the orbit of local youth’s day-to-day activities, I resorted to hiring research assistants; three secondary school teachers and a nurse, to help with in-depth interviews. I chose these individuals on the assumption that since they work with youth and live in the town they would be seen as more trustworthy than I was, as an outsider who drew suspicion from the locals. I discussed with them my expectations and what I was looking for. They each got a checklist of issues and stationery. I tasked each person to interview 10 individuals aged between 15-30 years, chosen on the basis of willingness to participate in the study. I knew in advance that I would not be able to use all 40 cases, but I was trying to cast my net wide to get a good catch. The feedback I got was mixed in quality and detail. These interviews are the source of some of personal stories presented in this study. I was able to conduct a number of interview with personally (see Appendix 1 for brief description of respondents whose personal reflections and stories are used in the thesis).

Observation

Observations were done during FGDs and individual interviews, venues such as churches, booking houses, and schools; and the town’s day-to-day activities. These observations were recorded in writing using Microsoft OneNote as diary entries. The notes helped to

give context and meaning to events and discussions I held with research participants. Observations helped to make sense of the context through asking locals and research participants about what I saw and heard.

Secondary literature

Beyond academic literature, I also reviewed media coverage of Beitbridge using the cut-and-paste newspaper archives run by ZimPapers at Herald House in Harare. Some of the newspaper stories are referred to herein.

Data analysis: narratives and questions of reliability and validity

It has been noted by many researchers that no claim to knowledge is final or complete, all are provisional (Gergen 2000). Because this study seeks to understand meanings and experiences of being young, the question may be asked how one discerns meanings and experiences? A simple answer is that they are discerned through spoken words, concepts and metaphors used by research participants in response to issues under discussion. Words have meanings-in-context as they “describe”, “explain” and “theorise” patterned relations. Because people’s perceptions are culturally constituted, words they use help to access cultural understandings (Gergen 2000:35-6, 103-6). Furthermore modes of description position speakers in relationships with social phenomena or other persons (Gergen 2000:47). This means that people do not discuss social phenomena without taking a position; and their perceptions and positions point to situatedness. As shown in chapter 3, there are issues that are publicly debated about youth which research participants react to as part of their lived experiences. No explanation is neutral. In this vein, validity cannot be equated with mechanical criteria for confirmability, reliability, credibility, coherence and significance of the study, but more in terms of what Koro-Ljunberg (2010: 606) describes as how researchers arrive at trustworthy conclusions and where the latter

... are the result of well-executed and completed analysis that ‘captures’, identifies, or locates participants’ positions and perspectives.

In as much as validity is concerned with the extent to which claims to knowledge reflect reality, interactions between the researcher and researched, repeated visits, recurring observations and respondents’ sentiments together with the researcher’s reflexivity texture validity in qualitative research (Cho 2006:321-2). However the extent to which validity is achieved in qualitative research also depends on academic peer reviews and how research peers engage with a topic and area of study (Cho 2006). In this sense, validity is interpretive depending on how readers interact with the written material in as much as it depends on

how the researcher interacts with the researched and deals with their sentiments. As far as validity is about the research process, the extent to which a researcher is transparent about decision-making and the extent to which explanations and analytic interpretations are deemed adequate, validity is achieved (Long and Johnson 2000). In addition, sensitivity to respondents' circumstances is also a measure of validity. In this vein, I tried to the best of my ability to be transparent about why I did what I did in the field as well as why and how I came to interview the people I interviewed. I have also tried, as much as possible, to use respondents' concepts and understandings of their worlds. In qualitative research reliability is closely related to validity, where validity is satisfied, reliability is there too (Long and Johnson 2000). Thus, by being transparent, sensitive to research respondents, answering research questions I believe both these standards have been met in this research.

Narratives, in the sense of "research narratives", are meanings a researcher makes of a research situation (Wiklund-Gustin 2010). The latter refers to themes and metaphors which make sense to researchers. In this study "research narratives" are prominent themes/concerns and/or metaphors used by research participants (Ezzy 1998: 174). These narratives were produced from analysis of transcribed interviews, field notes and discussions. In this study, recurring metaphors and refrains in response to research questions have inspired titles of chapters with explanations of the metaphors/refrains as the body of the chapter. These metaphors are understood as expressing much of the common worldviews of young people. For instance, many research participants referred to "the situation" they were in as part of the reason for doing what they do. "The situation" here means the socio-economic environment in 2009/10 (and before) which evinced the living conditions observed in Beitbridge. Because of the recurrence of this refrain, it became an issue for discussion and a chapter in the thesis. Through arguments, metaphors, explanations people use, reality is not only reordered but there are hidden meanings which are exposed only through further prodding.

Under conditions of chronic instability people's notions of themselves and their aspirations are challenged too leading to ways of speaking which seek to play down the chaos (Vigh 2008, Giddens 1991). Thus research narratives used in this study are forms of self-explanation which point to reflexivity and individuals' understandings of their world (Wiklund-Gustin 2010). Narratives give order and predictability where none exist they also allow people to make sense of events (Ezzy 1998:173, Wiklund-Gustin 2010:35) and to imagine the future (Vigh 2008). Narratives are not only bridges between "experience and interpretation", they are also means to shared meanings. Often people tell stories, use arguments, explanations and "plots" that others are likely to accept as true. Thus narratives

are not value neutral but embedded in social relationships (Callero 2003: 123-4, Yanow 2006:11, Ezzy 1998: 278). Douglas Ezzy observes that narratives are also products of local culture and serve the purpose of "...interweaving of the events of lived experience, personal narratives, pre-existing shared cultural discourses, decisions to act in particular ways, and anticipated futures" (Ezzy 1998:177). As elaborated by Nencel (2005: 354) research participants sometimes use "grand narratives", hence believable stories which they repeat either to correct misconceptions about their lives or to give a desirable version of their circumstances. Thus research participants' narratives may be strategies of managing information and deflection some reflected appraisals.

In this study the utility of narratives is in accessing research participants' worldviews rather than the narratives' truthfulness. Structural changes, as explained in chapter 1, challenge normative narratives leading to change in action or explanation and rationalisation of events thus narratives are also not politically neutral (Callero 2003, Ezzy 1998). As noted in the previous chapter, this is described as "identificatory decay" by Vigh (2008) or "crisis" by Giddens (1991) and demands new ways of describing and inscribing the self in the events/situation. In this sense many people in the study talked about "the situation" in Zimbabwe as demanding a suspension of known norms in order to respond to volatility.

Interpretivist and constructivist approaches are often criticised on grounds of validity, reliability and generalizability because they seem subjective and context specific. Critics worry that that findings based on such studies are not falsifiable or generalisable. Sometimes this comes out of the "deeds versus words" tensions which have dogged interpretivist-constructivist approaches (Yanow 2006: 19), and where deeds are seen as speaking more strongly than words. That is, rather having a study based on how people talk about a boxing match, it is believed better to have observe the match and report it first hand or to observe what the spectators did at the match rather than listening to what they say they did. However, either way one does not run away from both the construction of reality and its interpretation by the researcher and/or the researched. Thus subjectivity is always present. For an interpretivist study such as this one, the assumption is that narratives that are both respondents' lived experiences and arguments that they deem as socially acceptable (Nencel 2005: 354, Yanow 2006:10, Ezzy 1998, Wiklund-Gustin 2010:35). It is the social acceptability of these explanations which gives them validity and reliability and allows us to understand society as occupied by the researched thus being sensitive to respondents' circumstances (Long and Johnson 2000). Consequently the repetition of modes of explanation, of metaphors and sentiments – which are used as chapter titles in this study – gives them reliability and validity in real life.

Research limitations and ethical considerations

Conceptual challenges: meanings of sexuality in the context

There were conceptual challenges especially pertaining to meanings of sexuality. These challenges are not unique to this study but seem typical given changing meanings of sexuality and that these changes are not embraced equally across the world. One of these challenges was talking about “sexual pleasure” as an aspect of youth sexuality and motivation for engaging in premarital sex. Sexual pleasure is gaining currency as a human right. When juxtaposed with global consumer culture, it may be seen as hedonistic and a consumerist pursuit which speaks to individual emancipation; it is also seen as an abstract and emotional aspect of “pure relationships” (Giddens 1992). Two limitations are worth mentioning with regards to sexual pleasure’s invisibility in this study. The first is language and its nuances, where sexual pleasure is not discussed explicitly but assumed to be behind all consensual sex. Men link sex with women to manliness, see the access to women as the prize, and sexual pleasure as embedded in it as natural. With pleasure assumed, as natural and obvious enquiring about it was rather difficult. I personally do not know if it is obvious. For women active need and interest in consumerist and hedonistic sex is often seen by society as deviant. For instance, Shefer and Foster (2001) show that in South Africa female naiveté makes women more desirable while assertiveness makes them look deviant. Conversely, Wood et al (2007) show that male assertiveness and sense of entitlement to sex with intimate partners blurs the line between consensual and non-consensual sex in what their respondents described as “showing roughness in beautiful ways”. This brings me to the second issue which other researchers have mentioned. Sex “for nothing”, for sex’s sake is in the socio-economic and cultural context of this study seen as a waste of oneself (see also Chant and Evans 2010). Sex for something such as transactional or marital sex is seen as more purposeful. The latter is preceded by kin-controlled gift exchange while the former is presumably individually controlled. With women still seen as gatekeepers of sexuality and morality, across Sub Saharan Africa (young) women who choose transactional over marital sex are (and were historically) denigrated by patriarchs and gerontocrats (see Benson and Chadya 2005, Barnes 1992, de Boeck 2005, Cornwall 2002, Nelson 1987, Buggenhagen 2004 for example). Many young women understand this too and hence, as shown in chapters 6 and 7, many eventually look forward to a socially recognised and respectable marriage. In this vein, this study’s silence on sexual pleasure is because of language restrictions as well as the dominance among research respondents and published research of “needs based” interactions where the need for commodities is a dominant motive for having sex (P.A. Nguyen 2007). Not only does this speak to social changes which have prompted

people to highlight purposive sex rather than personal pleasure, it also shows that local understandings of what is decent hold sway albeit challenged by pragmatics of the moment.

Informed consent: its paradoxes in gerontocratic settings

Informed consent is often called for to ensure that participants voluntarily enlist in studies on the bases of full disclosure of uses to which the information gathered will be put. Informed consent should help researchers build rapport with research participants as the latter willingly cooperate with the research undertaking. It is assumed that they can make decisions about the value of the study. In this study I was confronted with hierarchical relations in which young people are embedded. Adults controlled access to all young people because of absence of youth-centric public spaces where I could meet young people on neutral grounds. I had to deal with adult gatekeepers. Once adult gatekeepers had given permission young people did not seem to have much room to disagree lest they challenged adult authority. Thus although consent was given, sometimes in lengthy bureaucratised processes (such as in ministries of health and education) cascading from central to local government, the extent to which this represents the genuine wish of youth to participate in the research is open to doubt. It is possible to think of youth participation as compelled by rules and expectations of obedience to authority within these institutions. For the record, most research participants were keen. My doubts come out of the fact that school authorities at two schools I visited were adamant that if I met the students after school hours, few would attend an “optional” school-based activity. I feared such a scenario too lest my study collapsed so I acquiesced to meetings in school during school hours. These were the most well attended discussions too.

In qualitative research, informed consent is not only nuanced, continuously negotiated in interaction, it can also reproduce power relations even when the research seeks to question the status quo (Burgess 2007). This reproduction of power relations became apparent in that focus group discussions followed the grain of official policies. In schools where abstinence-only SBSE is official policy disclosure of sexual activity would be incriminating, with individuals risking stigmatisation, being reported to parents and punished. It is also worth mentioning here that when I was seeking authority to access schools, a female official in the ministry of education took issue with discussions of sexuality with students. She said it exposes them, leaves them open to predation, ridicule by peers and shame and leaving ministry officials to deal with the fallout. She assumed that by sexuality I meant penetrative penile-vaginal sex. Thus active sexuality could not be discussed as practiced by students. Likewise, in churches with an explicit abstinence-only stance, no deviations from this norm

could be discussed although silences, giggles and exchanged looks meant that there was some shared knowledge which could not be disclosed to me in those spaces (Wellings et al 2000).

Challenged privacy: adult surveillance of and intrusion into youth activities

Adults' overbearing control of young people in their care meant that discussions were subject to surveillance too. This diminished privacy as owners of the venue could pop in and linger for a while in the middle of a discussion. I was uncomfortable but could not do much to prevent that. As a researcher I was a visitor and bound by norms of hospitality where a guest does not tell off her hosts. To challenge the presence of hosting adults would have been tantamount to challenging their authority and hospitality thereby raising questions about my real purpose if not leading to my expulsion from the space. I was not sure how some of the young people would react if I explicitly asked the adults to leave and if it would not endanger their relations with these adults. Below are three examples characterised by adult mediated access to youth.

In one booking house, the pre-teen daughter of the couple who own the place spent a long time, within earshot, watering plants whose signs of water stress indicated that they were not usually watered. She lingered while playfully supervising two small boys frolicking in a tub she filled with water from a garden hose. When my visit was lengthened by a subsequent interview with a female youth I call here Rita, the girl occupied herself washing a single pair of socks for the forty minutes duration of the recorded discussion. On subsequent occasions when I visited Rita, even though I met her outside the booking house and in the "privacy" of a taxi (without the driver), the woman of the booking house followed and peered to see where the Rita had gone to. Rita subsequently explained that she was in no danger as long as she paid her rent.

In another booking house, which I visited at the invitation of three lodgers in sex work aged between 19-21 years, the owner interrupted our conversation by asking if I "paid rent for use of the mattress" I was sitting on? She was smiling, so I did not feel threatened. I explained that I was talking to her lodgers who had invited me inside. After she left another young woman joined us. She was carrying a notebook and a pen. She diligently took notes as I asked questions. I did not mind her presence as I thought I had nothing to hide. I do not know to what use the owner put the notes. I do not know if the object of observation were the lodgers or myself. Spying by owners of booking houses is apparently part of life to prevent being lied to, to guard against lodgers absconding without paying rent and generally to stay informed of lodgers' activities.

Finally, in School A one teacher attempted to sit through one FGD leading to a difficult environment for the discussion. Teachers see themselves as gatekeepers who protect students while at school (Gallagher 2009: 60). In Gallagher's study in the UK, he had to contend with impromptu discussion of his research and deal with misconceptions of his intentions. Van Reeuwijk (2009) had to contend with teachers interfering with her school-based study in Tanzania as well. In my case, the teacher left of her own accord, much to my relief. After she left, the boys became lively again. At the same school, there were two discussions which took place indoors, whereupon on both occasions two teachers came to make routine announcements. When the teachers walked in, the students fell silent and looked at them attentively. Sitting still in the presence of a teacher is a sign of respect to his/her authority if not his/her person. The adult is unquestionably in charge, or is expected to be.

These examples point to structural relations which cast youth as junior and who are not given the privacy that research ethicists see as possible and important. Significantly, this also points to local cultural norms where privacy is seen as having something to hide. Thus, if young people are innocent they would have no need for privacy, all the more so when talking to a stranger. Young people are ordinarily subject to stringent monitoring.

Consequently even the pursuit of ethical research standards could have undermined local interests and practices. If I had doggedly sought to ensure privacy of conversations my study would have been in doubt. Youth research participants were sensitive to the fact that adults with authority over them facilitated my presence in these spaces. Because in some of these examples I had been introduced by these figures I got the impression I was seen as representing the same authority. This shows that formalities such as permission to do a study reproduce the status quo and the powerlessness of young people. By seeking permission from adults to study youth, I reproduced gerontocracy. This was not my intention, but I could not think of viable alternatives means to access the young people away from their places of residence or school. This alignment with the establishment and inability to penetrate local livelihood networks made it difficult to access youth who work in the underground, yet their social networks include a wide range of young people including schoolgirls and sex workers.

Confidentiality: a double-edged sword

Confidentiality is supposed to preserve the privacy and dignity of research participants. For my part, respondents are given pseudonyms and are described in ways that do not expose them. But I doubt whether researchers have sole responsibility in this area as research

participants also actively ensured its realisation in spaces where people were wary of me as a stranger asking questions about personal issues and general concerns about security. The latter at certain points threatened to undermine my research efforts.

Due to the frequency of security crackdowns, respondents declined recording both electronically and in writing on several occasions, such as two female booking house owners in October and November 2009. One booking house owner refused recording after trying to cancel the interview when I turned up for an appointment. She had claimed that she was about to go to see her doctor because of a nagging headache. She relented on the interview after I insisted, using a combination of pleading and rehashing the purpose of my research. She flatly refused recording. She said I could write whatever I needed to write later, after leaving her property. The same replayed itself with the second booking house owner yet I had not told either of the women that they were key informants. I do not know if they knew this, and whether or not they liaised to have a similar position on the matter. It is important to note that after a man was stabbed to death in another booking house in September 2009, most booking house owners seemed to be more cautious about people who wanted information about local goings on.

On two occasions I was tempted to record secretly. In one case it was a conversation with a key informant, I had my recorder in my handbag so I switched it on without declaring my action. He had voluntarily come to talk to me on issues he wished to clarify. In another it was with an informant who had expressly declined to be recorded once before. On this occasion I recorded regardless. However my field supervisor asked me to seriously rethink secret recording, saying it was unethical, sneaky, and would hurt my relationship with informants if they found out. Secret recording made my research look like a covert mission, a threatening exercise given the ubiquitous crackdowns. This presented a moral dilemma. On one hand I wanted to methodically record all interviews and on the other to comply with the wish of respondents. Subsequently when my recorder developed a technical fault, my dilemma was resolved somewhat. I could not record with or without participants consent. I had to make do with less detailed notes based on recall or when permitted, jottings I expanded later.

These security considerations also determined which public events I could openly record electronically. For instance, once I tried to take a photograph of a scene at the bus terminus at night. The object of my photo was how buses headed to major cities overload with household appliances such as fridges, chest freezers, vacuum cleaners and stoves which are loaded on top of the bus. The point was to have an image to reflect on consumerism in Zimbabwe. The flash of the camera in the unlit terminus attracted a riotous mob around me.

They demanded to know who I was. Why was I taking pictures? Where did I come from? There were some who were excited at the prospect of being on television or in a newspaper assuming that I was a journalist. Many looked displeased. My immediate reaction was to be transparent and show the digital image. The shot was not very clear neither showing people nor the busload in detail. That quelled the crowd. I was not hurt physically but shaken. If I had had any doubt about how sensitive people are about privacy of local activities this event alerted me to be careful about electronic recording even of public events.

Giving back to the research participants' community

In my efforts to give something back, I thought gender antagonism between schoolboys and girls was worthy of reporting to school authorities in one school. Boys used my presence to openly express their resentment at being ostracised by girls and girls complained about what they described as “abuse” and being “used” by boys in the manner of unsolicited and unreciprocated touching, name calling and harassment. In the second school boys complained that girls “resent” boys. When girls are prefects, they make a point of getting boys punished for no good reason. Some of the boys claimed that when a girl prefect likes a boy, she makes a point of getting him into trouble until he makes an effort to be nicer or does her bidding; then the allegations stop. This generates conflict which is taken out of school premises and resolved through fights or beatings, with older siblings and friends recruited for reinforcements. Out of school fights are outside the school authorities' jurisdiction.

I thought it wise to alert some teachers about these observations. The teachers were generally impatient with the students and seemed not persuaded by my informal reports, often countering that students are prone to lying, exaggerating issues, manipulation and other attention seeking practices which the teachers managed by ignoring them and punishing students whose antics were persistent and disruptive. When I asked one senior teacher about girls' complaints about harassment while having their menstruation it seemed to create a public relations situation which the school wanted to clarify. I was told that soon the students would learn about menstruation and what it means in a bid to change boys' attitudes to female peers. I got the impression that the school felt judged by me, as somehow not doing their work as human reproduction is a topic in biology and presumably in SBSE. This created some tension I did not need.

Elsewhere inability to give something of value back to adults who gave access to youth also worked against me. Booking house owners for instance, are used to NGOs-commissioned surveys, which target them and give them condoms and T-shirts for their cooperation. NGO funded surveys are associated with some kind of development intervention to benefit

the community. No such claim could be made about my study. In addition, the association with major NGOs whose cars park outside their homes gives booking houses status and recognition in the community. I had none of these paraphernalia. One booking house owner asked me who had sent me to the town? Who needed the information and why? Why did I not have a marked car so that people would know my affiliations? These questions force researchers to embed in NGOs, to have better access to communities too exposed to “development cargo” (van der Ploeg and Long 1998), such as resources and services of NGOs, and thus see interventions with no material gain as a waste of time. Had I known this beforehand, I would have arranged to embed myself or brought appropriate gifts.¹²

The researcher’s suspicious presence

Researchers are generally cast as powerful vis-à-vis research participants and therefore compelled by professional guidelines to be transparent in their interactions with the latter to avoid exploitation and abuse of power (Miller and Boulton 2007). My experience in Beitbridge left me feeling helpless as a perpetual outsider and potential threat to local livelihoods because of on-going crackdowns. Thus rather than doing no harm to others I had to be careful not to be harmed myself in the event that my prying eyes were misconstrued for those of an undercover detective. An encounter with three muscular young men at the bus terminus one day in October 2009 who enquired into my business is a case in point. They said I looked like someone from “an office” because what they described as “files” referring to a ring bound notebook I was holding. I was stunned by the line of questioning and left to monosyllabic responses. They specifically asked if I was an undercover police detail, in intelligence or immigration as if to tell me that they too can tell a new face or that this was their territory. They registered the fact that I was being watched, and that holding a notebook is unusual in this space. The line of questioning also suggested that they knew teachers in the community as this option did not come up or perhaps that teachers were not of interest to their line of business. This encounter and the generic tensions of drawn out crackdowns had an impact on my appointments as discussed below.

There were several meetings that were aborted because my intentions were not clear, were considered suspicious or a risk. One of my contacts in the informal public transport sector¹³ whose crews are dominated by young men ranging from teens to 30s, failed to convene meetings after several attempts. He made a point of looking surprised but remained polite whenever he saw me. He had complicated tales of challenges he encountered which made it difficult for him to return my calls and to convene meetings.

In another case, Biggerz – a 26 year old young man, was supposed to arrange a meeting with some of his female co-travellers with whom he was duped and dumped in Beitbridge; about whom he said with laughter, they subsequently got into “informal marriages” to get by. His laughter suggested something sinister or cynical in the marriages. I wanted to talk to the young women because several key informants and youth research participants mentioned informal marriages as a way to get by and also as a corruption of cultural norms and a health risk. Biggerz had excuses about his inability to convene the meeting.

Another contact was supposed to convene a meeting with young men who sleep in car wrecks some of whom also work as couriers in goods smuggling. He too failed me on several occasions. I recall him asking me “What *really* do you want from these boys”? In Ndebele, “*Kanti vele ufunani kibo abafana laba?*”. My explanation of wanting information for information’s sake did not seem to make sense for this context. In Beitbridge people do not doggedly pursue others for no monetary returns. Academic profits such as a doctoral degree are too abstract and invisible in a context where people are after money to get ahead in life or for momentary pleasure and social capital such as buying beer and cigarettes to share with mates, sex to affirm masculinity, cellphones and other such pleasures to enhance statuses locally.

I did not have locally acceptable reasons to access these young men. There were no women my age at school or devoting time to asking ordinary people about their lives and events in the town. For someone going against the grain of reality, I looked like I was hiding something by saying it was all part of schoolwork. I could not be trusted because my behaviour did not fit into what it is known and expected. Whereas NGO activities are highly visible through the usual paraphernalia, the chauffeur-driven clearly marked 4x4s, the branded t-shirts and so on - I had none. Mitszal (2001: 316) notes that “acting normally” affirms collective images of what is normal. My behaviour did not conform to the local images. There is something odd about a relatively older woman insisting on meeting young, unemployed men for no tangible reason as far as local logic is concerned. If for instance I wanted goods ferried across the river, the practice is to snowball one’s way to an agreeable courier, sometimes without meeting the individual in person and at risk of losing the goods. These ethical challenges created limitations which made it difficult to ask certain questions and access some groups of individuals.

Organisation of the thesis

This thesis has 8 chapters. It begins with three background chapters. Chapter 1 introduces global and local development debates and concepts showing contradictions in which youth

as a concept, a socio-demographic group and an experience are embedded. Chapter 2 explains the theoretical framework, methodological issues and challenges in the field. The theoretical framework explains how chronic insecurity and uncertainty of contradictions wrought by conditions described in chapter 1 force improvisations characterised by situational pragmatism and transience give young people's subjectivities unique accents. Chapter 3 discusses socio-economic, historical, cultural and political changes and contradictions shaping youth-society relations and youth existences in Zimbabwe in the 2000s. Chapter 3 ends with a presentation of Beitbridge as the research site, together with a justification of its selection. Chapters 4 to 7 are devoted to analysis of empirical data. Each chapter responds to each of the four research sub-questions and has a title based on prominent metaphors respondents used in reflecting their lives. Consequently, chapter 4 analyses experiences of being young, described by research participants as characterised by multidimensional "restrictions". Chapter 5, under the title "impossible situation or impossible youth" reflects the fact that youth livelihoods are seen by some adults as making the young impossible, while the young people counter saying that the situation itself is impossible. Chapter 6 looks at experiences of embracing and managing emergent sexuality hence "not playing with boys to *kukech(w)a*" describes parents' teachings which are later challenged by need to earn money (for young women) and to have sex while deferring marriage (for boys) through casual paid sex. Chapter 7 analyses responses to challenges of (reproductive) health and wellbeing which young respondents attributed to witchcraft, and malevolent and benevolent spirits. Conclusions of the thesis are in chapter 8.

Conclusion

The theoretical framework of this research, discussed in this chapter appreciates reflexivity of individuals as they make sense of their context and decide on courses of action. My discussion shows that individuals are embedded in their socio-economic context; the context textures their reflexivity and social action and in turn they create the socio-economic context. The chapter argues that instabilities and uncertainties of neoliberal globalisation produce situational pragmatism by which young people survive their circumstances through flexibility and improvisation. Individuals have to contend with reflected appraisals of others as they confront and make do with challenges. It has been argued that symbolic interactionism is useful for an exposition of subjectivities of the marginalised in a socio-economic and cultural context fraught with contradictions among social roles and power

relations, expectations and reality. These contradictions have a bearing on coming of age experiences of young people. Through the frame of symbolic interactionism the chapter has tried to show that there are multiple perspectives confronting individuals and that choices are guided not only by personal circumstance but also reflected appraisals. Among these perspectives is the real danger that challenges faced by young people are not immediately obvious to policy makers and adults; hence misrecognition. Misrecognition is also the reason why reactions to the situational pragmatism foment problems faced by youth instead of making them better.

The chapter discussed methodological implications of the theoretical framework arguing that narratives analysis is a suitable approach for such study. Narratives not only help us to understand individuals' experiences, they are a means by which people create order in an environment where there is disorder. Clearly this points to qualitative research methods. The chapter discusses ethical challenges of research on young people seen as wayward in gerontocratic settings at the research site. These challenges texture the findings and conclusions drawn in subsequent chapters.

Notes

1. I have native speaker proficiency in Zimbabwe's two official vernacular languages, Shona and Ndebele.
2. With out-of-school youth I was able to give simple refreshments such as drinks and biscuits or bread. It was not feasible to do this in schools simply because refreshments could have biased students to participate in the study and I could have ended up with more people than I could provide for.
3. The minibuses are predominantly imported second-hand from Japan and retrofitted with seats in the informal sector for passenger use.

Chapter 3

Gender, sexuality and youth in Zimbabwe

Introduction

This chapter discusses socio-economic and cultural changes and how they impinge on young people's coming of age in Zimbabwe. It has been shown in chapter 1 that the prevailing rapid socio-economic changes lead to crises in ways of being and that these crises are linked to situational living discussed in chapter 2. Chapter 3 now elaborates on contextual issues in Zimbabwe and at the research site. I show that at the time of doing research, in 2009-10, economic dislocation was chronic and that young people devised livelihood strategies widely seen as "transgressive" (Kamete 2008), thus contrary to gerontocratic and patriarchal quests for conformity and neoliberal concerns with law and order (Comaroff and Comaroff 2007). Whereas adults and officials prefer obedience and compliance with rules and regulations, youth see obedience as cumbersome and costly. Comaroff and Comaroff (2007) and Simone (2005) described the latter as typical of African postcolonies where authority is fetishized but remains ineffective. In on-going contestations of youth-society relations, new norms and practices emerge fomenting mutual suspicion between adults and especially poor youth.

Basic information about Zimbabwe

Zimbabwe gained Independence in April 1980 following an armed struggle. Previously it was known as Rhodesia, at some point in its history it was called Southern Rhodesia (with present-day Zambia as Northern Rhodesia). Independence marked a watershed from a settler-colony concerned with settler interest to an economy catering for the whole population. The transition has not been without challenges. Promises of independence shaped aspirations of generations of young people (more below). Based on the 2002 census, Zimbabwe has a population of 12 million; about 45% are below the age of 15 and an estimated 65% of the population live in rural areas (CSO 2004). About 40% of households in Zimbabwe are female headed (FHH) and vulnerable to economic volatility because of male biased access to wage work and resources such as arable land and agricultural implements (Grant 2003, Horrell and Krishman 2006). An unknown number of households are child headed (CHH) and later become youth headed (Francis-Chizororo 2008) largely due to joint effects of the AIDS, cultural practices and poverty. Precisely, the CHHs are especially poor because of gerontocratic dominance in access to services and economic resources and biased dissolution of estates as is discussed below. Zimbabwe's economy is dominated by primary industries namely, agriculture and mining with tourism as the leading service industry albeit struggling out of recent challenges. In order to show historical changes, below is a decade-by-decade description of socio-economic changes, starting in the 1980s and ending in 2009/2010.

The 1980s: expanded access to social services

Driven by socialist leanings, the post-independence government expanded access to social services such as education and health care. There was free primary health care supported by community health workers who taught people in their communities about basic hygiene and environmental health. Improvements in primary healthcare saw infant mortality rates decline to 49 per 1000 births and child mortality rates for children below five year declined to 71 per 1000 children. Child immunisation coverage rose to around 80% (ZimStat-ICF International 2012: 99). Uptake of contraception also increased albeit described as “child spacing” and mostly available to married women. This saw declines in fertility from the 1980s (ZimStat-ICF International 2012: 60).

In education the government built more schools and enrolled more students (CSO 2001). There was free and compulsory primary education, one of the first in Sub Saharan Africa leading to gender parity in primary school by the end of the 1980s.¹ Compulsory education until the age of 16 increased the number of students going to secondary school

and in turn the number of school leavers with five O Levels by the late 1980s. This policy increased the number of young people who spent a lot of their time at school away from past generations' activities such as fulltime subsistence farming and thus increased the number of people with expectations for lifelong wage work. In secondary schools there were nominal fees and girls dropped out for cultural reasons such as early pregnancy, marriage and expectations to help with household chores. Eventually, a policy was passed to allow pregnant girls to remain in school; however the extent to which schools and parents complied is open to speculation.

In agriculture credit and markets and extension were extended to small-scale farmers who soon became the pillar stone of food security producing the bulk of grains (maize) and edible oils (Moyo 1995, 2011, Gibbon 1996).

There were numerous legal changes to ensure gender equality such as the Legal Age of Majority Act (LAMA) passed in 1982, as well as others on equal pay for similar work, paid three months maternity leave for three pregnancies with one employer, minimum wages, workers' rights to ensure security of employment. In addition, the government established a Women in Development (WID) women's affairs unit (to which all shortcomings of WID apply). At the time, these changes were progressive.

Traditional leaders and ascribed office were not recognised in the first decade of independence. Traditional leaders were seen as collaborators or instruments of colonial administration hence the government preferred elected officials. This changed late in the 1990s as the impact of economic changes first bit. Unemployment was 10,8% in 1982 but grew in the 1990s and 2000s (Nherera 2010, Sachikonye 1999). In addition to these changes, urban migration hitherto controlled by colonial "influx laws" was no longer controlled albeit accompanied by crackdowns against groups deemed wayward such as women (Rupiya 2005, Ranchod-Nilsson 2006). The 1990s saw more changes and a movement towards conservatism.

The 1990s: challenges of SAPs, drought and HIV and AIDS

The 1990s marked a turning point for Zimbabwe's economic fortunes. Zimbabwe embarked on an Economic Structural Adjustment Programme (ESAP hereafter SAP) between 1991 and 1995 following a lot of debate and hesitation on the part of the Government (Bond 1998). The reason for the launch of SAPs was to speed up economic growth projected to grow the rate of 5% per annum (Mhone 1995). However the typical package of SAPs such as currency devaluation, removal of subsidies and cost recovery on previously subsidised services, privatisation and deregulation had the opposite effects leading to a decline in

quality of life as services became inaccessible and households divested their savings on the back of soaring cost of living (Urdang 2006, Kanji and Jazdowska 1993). The SAPs were directed at core sectors of the economy, especially reorganising agriculture and reducing spending on social sectors (education, health and others). Given an economy reliant on rain-fed agriculture, the unforeseen once-in-a-lifetime drought in 1991/2 followed by a couple of seasons of below-normal rain, challenged the promises of SAPs and further dented the economy. The resulting economic slowdown was blamed on high government spending due to 1980s social policies discussed above as well as half-hearted compliance with SAP reform (Bond 1998). To show the extent of developmental reversals, I discuss some sectoral impacts below.

In agriculture, the World Bank had said that the 1980s pro-small-scale farmer agrarian policies supported inefficient producers (the small rural farmers), were biased towards food security instead of supporting exports and therefore earning foreign exchange, and were not profitable (in money terms) though socially profitable as they allowed small-scale farmers subsidised access to markets, credit, and inputs. For the World Bank this made the agrarian policy costly because of government interventions in commodity marketing of grains and edible oils as well subsidies in credit and inputs. In a bid to ensure continued production of basic food crops (maize and edible oils such as groundnuts, sunflower, cotton), the government bought maize at prices that were 12% higher than world market prices and sold to consumers at subsidised prices so that end-products would remain affordable especially to urban populations and rural poor (Gibbon 1996, Jayne et al 1992). This allowed the government to juggle appeasing rural farmers with high prices of commodities and urban residents with affordable food. Subsidies were given to food processing companies to defray their costs (Gibbon 1996). The World Bank recommended that markets should decide (Gibbon 1996, Jayne et al 1992).

Reforms saw the closure of grain buying sub-depots and collection points in rural areas and the shrinkage of credit facilities to rural farmers. This dealt a blow to the production and marketing of maize, groundnut and cotton in which small-scale farmers contributed up to 75-80% of the national output (Moyo 1995). The marketing of cotton was subsequently privatised (Bond and Manyanya 2002). Small-scale farmers were already reeling from the drought and in debt after benefiting from expanded post-independence credit schemes (Bond 1998). During the same period large-scale farmers heeded World Bank recommendations by embracing capital-intensive farming (flower and vegetable production) for overseas markets. On the ground World Bank policies looked like they were forsaking small-scale in favour of large-scale commercial farmers (of European descent)

on grounds of “efficiency”, “productivity” and strategic economic growth. Given the role of small-scale farmers in food security, these conditions created food insecurity at a time when the real value of household incomes was declining. Food poverty grew from 16,7% in 1990/1 to 35,7% in 1995/7 (CSO 1998: 36). Further the Central Statistical Office (CSO) observed that not only did the number of poor people grow, the severity of poverty grew too. I will return to responses to poverty below. Demands for land redistribution intensified around the 1995 elections, with some small-scale farmers arguing that they could be as productive as large-scale commercial farmers with similar government support and better land. These issues were fiercely debated locally with no resolution, culminating in the crises of the 2000s (see Worby 2001).

At independence, the Lancaster House Agreement which ushered in independence and created a new constitution had clauses which stipulated that the constitution could not be changed in the first decade (the 1980s) and that the land question could only be dealt with on a willing-buyer and willing-seller basis. These policies had run their course and not resolved calls for land redistribution which intensified as the austerity of SAPs bit (Worby 2001, Moyo 2011: 496). Lack of resolution of the land question sowed seeds of bitterness and discontent in some sections of Zimbabwe. For example, as the pressure for land reform mounted two land conferences were held in Harare and London in 1998 to no avail, as Thatcherite promises to compensate farm owners for developments could no longer be funded under Labour governments. Meanwhile land acquisitions by government and occupations of farms by community leaders and landless persons had also started. During this period, land redistribution stalled on the back of litigation as farm owners challenged land acquisitions in the courts (Worby 2001; Moyo 2000; 2011; Moyo, Rutherford and Amanor-Wilks 2000).

Due to deregulation, whole industries were obliterated under the onslaught of competition from foreign companies. For instance, textile and metal working (smelting and refining) industries experienced challenges leading to closure of major firms and loss of employment for concerned employees (Sachikonye 1999). In textiles, despite Zimbabwe being a cotton producing country and having several cotton processing and textile manufacturing companies, these institutions could not compete with clandestine imports of cheaper second-hand clothes and clothing from Asia. In mining, tin, chrome, gold and nickel mines closed on the back of low world market prices, uncompetitive production and inability to attract new investments and to upgrade equipment. The closure of these industries set adrift thousands of workers who had access to company housing and

amenities such as health care and schools for their children on mine compounds. Mining compounds became ghost towns after the companies folded up.

In the public sector, employment stagnated as appointments were frozen, and some activities were out-sourced (cleaning, catering, transport and others). Several government agencies commercialised and privatised leading to higher costs of services and job losses such as the dairy and cotton marketing boards which became private companies.

During SAPs labour laws were amended in 1992, changing them from pro-worker post independence stance to a market-driven regimen making it easier for employers to hire and fire apparently to comply with neoliberal quests for higher productivity and competitiveness. The government was no longer allowed to intervene in labour relations to allow “market forces” to determine wages and labour relations. Employment security declined as employers retrenched workers in a vain attempt to restructure to achieve competitiveness and due to other aspects of deindustrialisation discussed above.

In education, the World Bank complained that teachers were “overpaid” and recommended the use of less qualified teachers to reduce the government’s wage bill (Bond 1998). As the economic crisis deepened, the real value of teachers’ wages tumbled anyway. The education sector was negatively affected in many ways. Newly qualified teachers had to contend with declining wages and deteriorating working conditions due to budget cuts (Bond 1998:379-421). Not only did qualified teachers leave teaching completely, those who stayed did so in a protracted and largely unacknowledged work-to-rule mode with negative effects on quality. Teaching as a profession declined in status too and became a vocation of despair. Teacher-pupil ratios in primary and secondary schools deteriorated (CSO 2001:25). Enrolments were also affected as the number of primary school dropouts grew from 22 500 in 1990 to 123 655 in 1999. Until 1993 more girls dropped out than boys. After 1993 more boys dropped out (CSO 2001: 26). Again there are no reasons given for the gender difference except that poverty was to blame. If we accept that initial withdrawal of girls was due to parents preferring to keep boys at school in the hope that they would be future heads of households, we can deduce that perhaps the withdrawal of boys points to deepening poverty, their search of employment, despair on the part of parents and lack of alternative sources for nominal fees which schools demanded in the absence of government subsidies. Despite these observations, female literacy rates remained relatively lower at 84% compared to 91% for males in 1999. At secondary school level, girls were noticeably fewer (45%) compared to boys because parents had to choose between girls and boys. At A Level female students constituted about 30% of enrolment (CSO 2001). Girls dropped out to take care of sick parents and to do domestic chores. However it is also clear that deep-seated

cultural beliefs had an impact: that boys are seen as carrying family names and are therefore better to invest in as they are expected to care for the family, unlike girls whose marriages into other families. In tertiary education, male students dominated university enrolment at 65% (CSO 2005) while females dominated in lowly paid trades and vocations.²

That the education sector was in crisis is seen in the fact a Presidential Commission of Inquiry into Education was established in 1998 to investigate a range of challenges (including quality of education). Due to limitations of space its findings are not discussed here. Suffice it to say that the establishment of the commission of inquiry shows that crisis was acknowledged at all levels of society. Some researchers observed that Zimbabwe's education system was "out-dated", "Eurocentric", "largely irrelevant" and not responsive to a changing environment (Grant 2003: 417). Zimbabweans continued to be wary of a two-track education system; one for academic subjects and another for practical subjects to impart entrepreneurial skills (Nherera 2010). However arguments about inappropriate curricula increasingly typify responses to contradictions of neoliberalism where, rather than accept neoliberalism's effect, blame is allotted elsewhere to non-responsive governments, parents or apparently deficient youth. The same was said in the UK in the 1980s during a time of growing youth unemployment and job exports to Asia (Mizen 2004). Thus these debates point to a deeply felt crisis.

At the start of economic reform in 1990, manifestations of the education crisis in the form of youth unemployment were already apparent because of economic stagnation (Bennell and Ncube 1994). A growing number of school leavers could not get wage work. A secondary education *per se* no longer guaranteed access to wage work. Unemployment rose to 22% in 1992 (Nherera 2010: 343). By the late 1980s the economy created between 20 000 and 30 000 new jobs annually compared to between 200 000 and 300 000 job seekers (Bennell and Ncube 1994, Sachikonye 1990, Mhone 1995). Tertiary institutions could not accommodate all qualified school leavers either. Female youth were more likely to be out of work than their male counterparts, while males in wage work were mostly in semi-skilled and unskilled work. By the mid -1990s four more universities (two of them private) were established to meet some of the unmet demand for further education. However access to higher education became more expensive too after 1997. Although the government continued to offer support to all students enrolled in public universities, vocational and technical colleges, funding levels were changed from 75% loan and 25% grant both given by the government to a 50% loan given by government with parents expected to pay the other 50% upfront (CSO 2001:7). The loan should be paid back after graduation. Effects on young people from poor backgrounds can be deduced to have been negative. The increase

in the number of universities did not solve the unemployment problem for those lucky to get tertiary education. A growing number of diploma holders could not get paid work in fields they trained in. Paradoxically employers could not locally recruit the technical expertise they needed especially in engineering, biomedical sciences and information technology (Nherera 2010, Sachikonye 1990). In addition, there was a festering challenge of an unfavourable economic environment, which meant that it was difficult to retain skilled workers. Consequently, unemployment co-existed with unfilled positions and deflation of academic qualifications. Thus 5 O level passes were no longer sufficient for an entry-level job. Applicants needed A level and better. This left many O level certificate holders in the cold. These conditions point to intractable structural challenges in the economy, hence the link to broken narratives for the affected young people and their families as discussed in previous chapters.

In healthcare, cost recovery eroded post independence gains such as access to antenatal care with considerable impacts on child and maternal health. Demographic and Health Survey (DHS) data of 2010-11 show that infant mortality had increased to 53/1000 in 1994, and 65/1000 in 1999 and child mortality was 77/1000 and 102/1000 respectively (ZimStat-ICF International 2012:99). The spread of HIV and AIDS complicated things further reducing life expectancy at birth to 37 years especially because in those early days antiretroviral drugs were not as easily available as they are today. Primary health care was also eroded. The first cholera outbreak was reported in the late 1990s in Harare (Bond and Manyanya 2002) indicating a decline in primary health care and deteriorating access to urban social services, especially sanitation.

The removal of subsidies resulted in food prices soaring. Urban households responded by reducing the number of meals per day and reducing bread consumption (Kanji and Jazdowska 1993, Gibbon 1996). Thus food insecurity increased. By 1994, poverty was a major concern because of inadequacy of safety nets which came with SAPs (Mhone 1995) as well the fact that the number of needy persons grew above projections on the back of the growing toll of HIV and AIDS (of which more below), the drought, deindustrialisation and inflation. Rural areas, which in the colonial era were a repository for spent labour, were under a lot of strain because of urban unemployment as well declining agricultural investments. Inflation did not spare farm labourers leading them to being labelled as among the poorest and most vulnerable (Moyo, Rutherford and Amanor-Wilks 2000:183).

The shrinkage of the economy and growing poverty were according to the World Bank transitory, the result of initial shocks from an adjusting economy and would end once the economy rejuvenated after five years, especially given the projected growth of five per cent

annually (Mhone 1995, CSO 1998). By 1995 when SAPs officially ended, it was clear that the projected growth would not happen. Sponsors of SAPs blamed failure of economic growth on what they described as half-hearted reform on the part of government, not on fallacious ideological and theoretical underpinnings of SAPs. The government reportedly said that regardless of speed of reform, the reforms would lead to social unrest and were politically costly (Bond 1998). In popular parlance, the reforms became known as the Eternal Suffering of African People (ESAP) instead of Economic Structural Adjustment Program (Bond 1998: 379-421). Implied in the former is a sense that SAPs were ethnocentric as they decimated fragile post independence gains.

With limited employment prospects, wheeling and dealing, ambulant trade and other informal sector activities became the only livelihoods open to ordinary people. The informalisation of the economy and life in general challenged technocrats' visions and aspirations for "orderly" development especially in urban areas (Kamete 2013). Tensions between ordinary people and administrators of urban local authorities ran high. Poor people wanted colonial laws scrapped to allow more informal trade in cities. By contrast well off people wanted cities managed in accordance to land-use plans and zoning so that informal trade would take place in designated areas, away from storefronts, pavements and malls where the rich spent their money. The rich did not want public begging and especially the growing problem of people living on the street arguing that it challenged personal security. Many street dwellers had to contend with sporadic deportations and conscription as farm labourers amid outcries of injustice side-by-side with calls for more round-ups by those who wanted better-organized cities. This has been described as an "urban governance problem" which fomented urban dissent (see Kamete 2003).

In an attempt to check the economic decline the government opted for a "home-grown" sequel to SAPs, between 1996 and 2000, called Zimbabwe Programme for Economic and Social Transformation (ZimPREST). Official emphasis that this policy was "home-grown" sought to differentiate it from its predecessor ESAP that was largely donor-driven. ZimPREST however fizzled out before its term because of lack of funding (donors shunned it). It was further challenged by the 1997 budgetary crisis, precipitated by the war in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)³ and unbudgeted war veterans' pensions (Bond 1998). Relations with donors were already shaky at this point. These economic challenges and implications for social relations outlined below saw a growing clamour for a "return" to traditions and comprehensive land redistribution. This was especially encapsulated in debates to reinstate the authority of traditional leaders to ensure "stability". Legislation to

that effect was passed in 2000. As custodians of traditions and local cultures, traditional leaders controversially rely on customary laws, of which more below.

The 2000s: aid and donor withdrawals, poor international relations, deepening economic and political crises

The year 2000 saw the Zimbabwean economy unravelling on the back of contentious domestic policies and deteriorating international relations leading to deepening informalisation of the economy, deepening individualism and changing values thus more tensions and strains on communitarianism. Unemployment was estimated at 60% in 2000 (Nherera 2010), 66% of urban households were food insecure in 2003 (Potts 2011:590) and by 2004 real incomes had plunged by 98% of 1990 values (Kamete 2008:1725). By 2010 the total consumption poverty line (TCPL) was USD453 but many people's incomes fell below it (CSO 2010). Before dollarization in February 2009, hyperinflation meant that livelihoods were scrambled in unprecedented ways.

Politically, longstanding arguments about governance including executive powers, land reforms, human rights and managing competing internal interests⁴ led to nationwide consultations for the creation of a new constitution (Hatchard 1998, 2001: 211). In the draft constitution, contentious clauses about land reform and questions about executive powers led to the draft constitution being rejected in a referendum in February 2000. Thereafter, land reforms proceeded through compulsory farm acquisitions in what is now popularly known as “fast track land reform program” (FTLRP) (see Worby 2001, Moyo 2011). Initially, this saw agriculture production, the backbone of the economy, declining significantly scuppering many livelihoods (Laakso 2002, Jenkins 1997) but the sector rebounded in the end of the first decade of the 2000s (Moyo 2011).

Reacting to domestic policies (especially the war effort in the DRC, the war veterans' pensions and the FTLRP) major donors including the European Union (EU), Nordic countries *en bloc*, the United Kingdom and the United States withdrew development aid between 1998 and 2000 save for humanitarian emergency and democracy and governance related aid (Laakso 2002). Furthermore “targeted” or “smart sanctions” against 203 individuals and select businesses affiliated to the then ruling party Zimbabwe African National Union-Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF) were implemented from 2002 to the present (Grebe 2010:5-11). Domestic contestations between ZANU-PF and the opposition party, the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) formed in 1999, were punctuated by political violence. This saw youth constructed as “pawns” of politicians, “dupes” for political agendas of political parties and as instruments of election violence (Solidarity Peace Trust 2003,

Ranger 2004). This extended the now shrill cry about Zimbabwean youth especially “born frees” (those born after independence) who were seen as given to criticising the ruling party and not appreciating nationalist history. Some politicians called for their re-education through a controversial national youth service to make youth more patriotic (Ranger 2004).

In 2005, when with little notice the government launched a blitz to destroy unauthorized residential and business buildings and sites, international condemnation was heard. The blitz was called Operation Restore Order (ORO) or Operation *Murambatsvina*. The latter means, “rejecting filth” (Bratton and Masunungure 2006, Fontein 2009, Musoni 2010). Its target – informal buildings and activities – entailed an assault on livelihood activities cultivated by unemployed people following the 1990s contraction of the economy. ORO was launched on the heels of 2005 elections in which the opposition won in urban areas, and raised questions about real intentions of the ruling party (see Fontein 2009, Bratton and Masunungure 2006, Musoni 2010). It started in mid-May and ended in July 2005 covering the whole country including Beitbridge. An estimated 700 000 individuals were affected within a short space of time. The livelihood crisis in which these people were plunged was palpable. The UN subsequently set up a commission of inquiry to find out what happened and why, amid accusations that the blitz was punishment to urban residents for voting for the opposition. (There have been numerous other blitzes to curb black market activities in which people who were found at road check points with a lot of money lost it to police seizures on suspicion that they were economic saboteurs or involved in illegal activities). Implications of ORO and other crackdowns on youth-society relations are discussed below.

In the 2008 elections, disputed results, reruns, mutual suspicion between the ZANU-PF and opposition led to the country going for eleven months without a government. Some hospitals were eventually closed as doctors and nurses protested deplorable working conditions and lack of supplies. The health care system had endured a paralysing brain drain of qualified doctors, nurses and other professionals heading to the global north and neighbouring strong economies. The impasse ended with the formation of a government of national unity (GNU) in February 2009 and introduction of multiple currencies – USD and ZAR – thus banning use of the severely weakened Zimbabwe dollar. At the end of 2008 and the depth of the crisis there was a cholera outbreak in Harare and Beitbridge with an unprecedented death toll. The latter pointed to convergence of negative effects of the multidimensional crisis on poor people, as discussed below.

Effects of economic crisis on social relations

Until the end of 2009 the lack of donor funds including humanitarian assistance (especially in the form of food) and limited foreign currency inflows in the face of mounting demands, the lives of ordinary people moved from bad to hitherto unimagined states of despair. Institutional capacity within the health care system, education and other institutions deteriorated to unprecedented depths. Basic commodities such as food, detergents, fuel were in short supply. Meanwhile in the 2000s runaway inflation threaten the social fabric. Inflation soared to a record eleven million two hundred thousand per cent according to a CNN report of 18 August 2008 citing official sources in Zimbabwe and further two hundred and thirty one million per cent in early October 2008 (see www.irinnews.org/report accessed 4 November 2008).⁵ Prices were quoted in unreadable figures with more than ten zeroes leading to an August 2008 slashing of ten zeroes from the currency to make it manageable for accounting purposes. Meanwhile there was a liquidity crunch in which banks did not have enough Zimbabwe Dollars to meet the economy's demands. Many people relied on relatives in the diaspora for basic supplies delivered in Zimbabwe through a range of formal and informal courier services (Bracking and Sachikonye 2006).⁶ A lot of Zimbabweans travelled within the southern African region on shoestring budgets to sell crafts and handmade textiles, then shop for food in bulk on return (Muzvidziwa 2001, also see www.irinnews.org/report accessed 4 November 2008).⁷ These conditions perpetuated a culture of blame, accusations and counter-accusations about what should/should not be done, could have been done and was not done. These conditions are part of what is today described as the "political crisis". The government's inability to improve the situation was implicated. Individuals were left to their devices in a context where wheeling and dealing, black marketeering and opportunism were the norm, locally described as *kukiya-kiya* (see J. Jones 2010).

Aid withdrawals and targeted sanctions were meant to exert pressure to ensure political change in Zimbabwe. While major achievements of these international policies are yet to be audited, one of their impacts was to incapacitate the state's delivery of social services especially health care and education. Low foreign currency reserves impeded adequate fuel imports. Both lack of fuel and forex had a knock-on effect on the availability of other basic commodities. Despite the shortage of foreign currency, this period was characterised by deepening consumerism thus money and consumer commodities were more sought after in conditions of austerity. It led to increased visibility of young people in urban areas a testament to "broken narratives" (Giddens 1991) or "identificatory decay" (Vigh 2008) as explained in chapters 1 and 2. That is, for many young people staying at home and being

dependent on parents was no longer feasible, many had to fend for themselves or even look after ailing and out-of-work parents. As will be detailed below, alarm about social decay and disorder at growing youth visibility attests to the newness of this reality (Kamete 2006:76, Maira and Soep 2004). Most of these issues are still unresolved. Despite the adoption of multiple currencies, challenges remain not least that of unemployment. Clearly these conditions and reactions textured youth subjectivities. I return to some of these issues below.

Cultural issues: patriarchy and gerontocracy and implications for coming of age

Zimbabwean culture is patriarchal, largely patrilineal with virilocal marital residence as the norm. (There are matrilineal ethnic minorities but they are not discussed in this study because they were not part of the study). Both patriarchy and patriliney are bolstered by masculinist rhetoric of nationhood, a long history of male biased economic change (Kaler 1998, Schmidt 1992, Barnes 1992, Ranchod-Nilsson 2006, Christiansen 2009, Epprecht 2006) as well as neo-patrilineal legal and political administration. As with the rest of Southern Africa, in Zimbabwe “traditions” and “culture” are controversial for three reasons. Firstly, they are thought of as referring to pre-colonial culture, that is, before 1890 (Christiansen 2009, Nhlapo 1991, Ranchod-Nilsson 2006). Living customs are seen as a corruption or dilution of superior pre-colonial traditions because they exhibit contact with and adaptation to western ways of life. In reality, pre-colonial customs are not sustainable in current living arrangements characterised by monetisation, migration, urbanisation and increasingly nuclearising families. Secondly, “culture” and “traditions” are synonymous with “customary laws” which remain ill-defined but understood as parallel to and different from western norms and modernity, whatever the constitution of the latter (Brigge and von Briesen 2000: 290, Christiansen 2009: 177). African customs and western norms are seen as water and oil, they should not mix. The truth is more complex, traditions and customs are not static nor are they insular. Furthermore, many customary laws are a colonial creation originally intended as a political tool to prevent rebellion in rural areas straining under colonial conquest and penetration (Barnes 1992, Schmidt 1992). Consequently, the question of why customary laws are retained as embodiments of culture in times of crisis as part of the politics of crises, as discussed in chapter 1. Below, I elaborate on some of these issues.

Customary laws: past and contemporary consolidations of patriarchy and gerontocracy

“Customary laws” are not documented (Nhlapo 1991, Bennett 1985). They depend on past court judgements and expert witness testimonies leading to even more disagreements as experiences and interpretations differ. Expert witnesses are often older persons, predominantly men who are seen as cultural gurus. In the colonial era customary laws gave patriarchs and gerontocrats in rural areas a modicum of self-administration in personal and family matters if the self-administration did not subvert the colonial state systems. Through customary laws, rural areas, patriarchs and gerontocrats were incorporated into colonial administration (Bennett 1985: 57-62, Nhlapo 1991, Barnes 1992). After being bullied to send young men into wage work to earn money to pay a range of taxes (Smith 2007, Schmidt 1992), patriarchs and gerontocrats dug in when it came to women and children’s migration. The mobility of women was the last straw in weakening elders’ control of the rural economy or the “lineage mode of production” as anthropologists called it. By presiding over lineages, elders controlled four facets of lineage resources namely women (as workers of the land and reproducers of children), marriage markets (in which women were exchanged for cattle and other valuable goods allowing lineages to expand through childbirth), access to land and knowledge related to all three. Their clients were junior males who patronised the elders for local knowledges and histories of the lineage, for access to wives and resources for bridewealth, as well as access to land mandatory for setting up an independent household (Smith 2007, Schmidt 1992, Barnes 1992). This mode of production had to contend with urban demands for junior men’s labour thus compromising rural productivity and relations of dependence, patronage and authority. Without able-bodied men’s labour, rural production activities fell solely on women and children including tasks previously reserved for men such as land clearing, tillage and tending large livestock. Besides, junior males’ migration gave the young men independence from elders’ authority as it gave them access to independent resources in the form of wages. The young men could marry without elders’ capital goods in the form of cattle because of money they earned. Indeed, eventually male migration and wage work became rites of passage to male adulthood, a sign of responsibility and readiness to marry and to establish an independent household. These changes are seen in the fact that in the past (some sixty or so years back), poor men could pay bridewealth through labour service, a kind of time-bound bonded labour that a prospective son-in-law gave to his fiancée’s family (Schmidt 1992: 30). Since after the Second World War groom service is rare, and bridewealth is paid in cash preferably before a white wedding. This is impossible for those without money. Elders responded by demanding a cash component

in bridewealth in addition to livestock, thereby making bridewealth more expensive but allowing them to retain tighter control on their daughters, knowing that junior males would still come back to the elders to seek wives. Controlling women's mobility was therefore about stabilizing the rural economy as well as keeping gerontocrats happy, lest they revolted against colonial administrators (Barnes 1992, Smith 2007, Schmidt 1992).

Colonial administrators gave in to the pressure by keeping women in rural areas, deporting unauthorised women migrants from urban areas and allowing male heads of households and traditional leaders to give women permission to travel at their discretion. Male migrants formed vigilante groups in urban areas to effect the deportations by reporting unaccompanied and unauthorised women migrants to the police (see Barnes 1992, Schmidt 1992).⁸ Civic organisations gave direct and indirect support to these interests by educating African women on new forms of domesticity and against mobility. Churches converted them to Christianity making women more open to new ways of life (living separately from husbands) by teaching them about self-restraint, selflessness and industriousness (Barnes 1992, Kaler 1999, Labode 1993). In time rural areas came to be seen as sanctuaries of African culture and morality, while unlike women in urban areas stoked suspicion as "loose" and given to subverting culture (Benson and Chadya 2005:589, Ranchod-Nilsson 2006:66). This is still a problem today.

African women have often been seen as gatekeepers of African culture. For missionaries African women were thus an entry point to engineering social change in the African population and for colonial administrators they were a means of controlling African men by assuring them that their marriages would be kept intact through passage of adultery laws and controlling women's mobility into urban areas among others (Barnes 1992, L. Jackson 1999, Benson and Chadya 2005, Kaler 1999, Schmidt 1992). Through adultery laws for instance, married women left in rural areas were punished if they had extramarital affairs. Their lovers were forced to pay a fine to wronged husbands (Schmidt 1992). By contrast, migrant men could have extramarital affairs in urban areas as a way of making them stay at work. The latter was not seen as adultery but a means of retaining labour. However, unattached urban women with whom the men likely had sex were described as "strays" and subjected to physical checks for sexually transmitted infections (STIs), allowed to stay if not infected or deported if infected for fear that they would spread diseases (L. Jackson 1999). The word "stray" here has two meanings referring to women seen as lost in the manner of losing their culture and adopting little understood western ways in urban areas as well as straying from patriarchal and gerontocratic controls of elders in rural areas. Besides, urban areas were seen as dangerous to women who were raped by male strangers to assert male

domination (Benson and Chadya 2005). This construction justified their deportation and confinement to rural areas.

Although views of colonial administrators, missionaries and African men were not always complementary, they converged around keeping African women under the control of African men for the sake of stability of rural areas thus consolidating male dominated gender relations in Sub-Saharan Africa. The effect of this convergence was to render African women perpetual minors, needing male approval both within their households (fathers, husbands, or adult sons and their proxies) and outside (traditional leaders) in order to travel to urban areas, to sue or be witnesses in courts of law, to work, to open bank accounts and so on. This was the state of affairs before the passage of Legal Age and Majority Act (LAMA) in 1982 (discussed in chapter 1).

Technically, each ethnic group has its own customary laws although customs of ethnic minorities are rather invisible.⁹ The malleability of ethnic identity means that customs are continuously recreated, thus no customs are insular and static. This aspect is often invisible in debates about customs.

Customary laws are still protected by the Zimbabwean constitution despite anti-colonial rhetoric (Knobelsdorf 2006:751, Brigge and von Briesen 2000). They exist side-by-side with general laws and the bill of rights but seen as “un-African” and challenged by older persons and men since independence in 1980 to the present (Ranchod-Nilsson 2006, Christiansen 2009). Meanwhile patriarchal aspects of Christianity are seen as naturalising traditional patriarchy despite the colonial origins of the former (Christiansen 2009). Consequently the rhetoric of “cultural reasons” is deployed for instance in youth sexuality to resist modern discourses of access to information, reproductive technologies and individual autonomy (Marindo et al 2003, Betts et al 2003) and in gender equality and women’s rights debates as seen in parliamentary debates on domestic violence laws in 2006-2007 (Christiansen 2009).¹⁰

In 1999 (at the height of economic crises discussed in preceding sections in this chapter) the Supreme Court of Zimbabwe courted local and international condemnation when it unanimously found in favour of a lower court’s decision that daughters cannot inherit from their fathers ahead of brothers on “cultural” grounds in the much cited *Magaya versus Magaya* case (Knobelsdorf 2006, Brigge and von Briesen 2000, Ranchod-Nilsson 2006). Thus despite laws on equality such the Legal Age of Majority Act (LAMA) of 1982, women and girls can be discriminated against on cultural grounds. As a result whatever the meaning of culture, it challenges lived realities, aspirations and demands of globalisation such as women’s rights and gender equality and child and youth rights. Thus “culture” is

a political tool wielded by patriarchs and gerontocrats to keep women and young people in line, given common complaints that rights discourses and claims and empowerment make the latter wayward. The struggle to reassert “African culture” by undoing or pruning clauses deemed threatening to patriarchy and gerontocracy – such as pro-women and pro-youth legislation of the 1980s – is on-going through legal and policy reforms (Kaler 1998, Ranchod-Nilsson 2006, Christiansen 2009).

Women in urban areas

As already noted, from the colonial era to the present, there is a lingering sense in Zimbabwe that women’s presence in urban areas opens them to subverting traditions and customs. With growing urbanisation, there are some attitudinal concessions to women in urban areas if they live with parents, adult carers or spouse. Negative attitudes are reserved for women who live alone or are “independent” and fashion conscious. After Zimbabwe’s independence in 1983, for instance, there was a crackdown to “clean-up” the capital city by rounding up unaccompanied women on suspicions of prostitution (Ranchod-Nilsson 2006:58). Urban women challenge “African traditions” through clothes, fashion and use of cosmetics, which apparently point to mimicry of white women (Pattman 2005, Thomas 2006). Furthermore urban women evade accounting to patriarchs and gerontocrats apparently by engaging in behaviours which go against the grain of rural morality, such as drinking, smoking, casual sex and informal/temporary marriages or cohabitation unions derogatorily called *mapoto* in Zimbabwe (Thomas 2006, West 1997, Barnes 1992). These relationships emerged in urban areas far from the purview of elders’ authority.

The word *mapoto* means “pots”, a derogatory reference to the shallowness of these relationships indicating that they were initiated to provide domestic services (cooking and sex only) thus inappropriate. Unlike socially approved marriages, *mapoto* unions did not involve elders, the payment of bridewealth and other prestations. Sometimes children were born and the unions would survive for life not only challenging the myth that they are shallow but also creating considerable problems for gerontocratic interests. Some urban residents evaded elders’ controls by approaching the courts to legalise their unions. Still, this did not change the low status of these unions to rural patriarchs, gerontocrats and their supporters. Thus the infamy of *mapoto* unions was in subverting gerontocracy and colonial administration by giving women reason to be in urban areas where they were not allowed (Barnes 1992:597). Urban areas were therefore seen as corrupting to young people as they exposed them to ways of life and gave them alternatives beyond the purview of elders. *Mapoto* unions helped women to access urban accommodation which only men, as

recognised labourers, accessed. I refer to *mapoto* unions in the past tense because the term is not used in everyday language. In chapter 6, I discuss what youth respondents referred to as “*tumichato*” literally “marriages of no consequence” or “of diminished value” to refer to similar practices. This makes a discussion of the beliefs and politics surrounding these urban unions relevant in this study.

It was also in urban areas that paid sex first emerged, diminishing women’s claims to sexual violation and where it gaining power to tarnish women who engaged in it because it subverted rural sensibilities. Using court transcripts Koni Benson and Joyce Chadya show that there was a commonly held belief that “city girls” were prostitutes and accepted money for sex to make ends meet thus erasing the validity of claims of sexual violation in courts (2005: 601-605). This was especially the case because many city girls did not have families with them so they could not use traditional courts and kinsmen to restore their honour. Many were “runaways” or had otherwise defied patriarchal and gerontocratic authority to stay in urban spaces where they were not allowed (Schmidt 1992). In traditional courts, it was (and still is) male kin whose interests are deemed violated through rape/sexual violation of female kin (sisters, daughters and wives). It is also men who claim indemnity from offenders. By contrast, urban young women approached strangers in the manner of state functionaries on personal and kinship related issues of sex and sexual violation, and wanted compensation for themselves or to have the offenders punished. The offenders countered by claiming that women were loose as they had collected payments for sex in person rather than giving it to their male kin. The women’s impropriety was further demonstrated by the lack of male kin to speak on their behalf to shame offenders as customary values dictate (Benson and Chadya 2005). In addition urban women came to be seen as sources of STIs and this justified humiliating public health practices in which women were forcibly checked for infections (L. Jackson 1999). I mention this here because paid sex and its negative halo effect on female youth is an issue in this study. These attitudes carry the indelible mark of past experiences, contradictions and attempts to resolve them. Thus culture is dynamic, continuously manipulated and resisted by individuals, groups for their own ends thereby producing new cultures. But those who can argue that they are on the side of culture are more powerful.

Marriage, bridewealth and attendant beliefs in changing contexts

Notwithstanding debates about culture, the origins and politics of customary law, and post-independence socio-economic changes, one of the most enduring aspects of marriage is bridewealth, including “seduction” payments locally called “damage”. The latter are paid to

indemnify a family for likely ill reputation of their daughter, bridewealth losses or reductions following loss of virginity and/or premarital sex. Negotiation for their payment depends on young women and girls reporting or being discovered in a premarital sexual relationship. In the past, these payments were demanded even when a young woman was raped. These days many families prefer to report rapists to the police although as the discussion on age of sexual consent in Chapter 1 shows, some rapists can use damage negotiations to evade prosecution for rape. After the passage of the LAMA, bridewealth and damage payments were supposed to be optional especially for women over 18 years. However these payments persist and are compulsory for socially acceptable marriages. Damage is paid before bridewealth especially when a woman falls pregnant before marriage. Both damage and bridewealth payments precede church or court weddings.

Bridewealth is comprised of money, cattle and goods-in-kind paid by a man to his fiancée's family in multiple meetings as prescribed by the latter.¹¹ The goods-in-kind are specified items of clothing, bed linen, food and others as trends dictate and as specified by the bride's family. In the past bridewealth was an inter-lineage exchange and was embedded in a web of reciprocal relations into which the young couple was inserted (Smith 2007, Kuper 1982). Latterly it is individualised, commercialised and paid in hard currency as bonds within kin groups weaken (Smith 2007, Kuper 1982). It is not unheard of for a young man to approach his fiancée's family with friends, neighbours and fictive kin. In the past, bridewealth was shared among certain relatives who were expected to take a keen interest in preserving the marriage by offering counselling and other support. Today this support is rare. In the event of problems in the relationship, couples are left to their own devices such as gender-based violence, the courts and churches.

The value of bridewealth changes with the education and professional status of the bride-to-be, her family background and the status of the groom. In general the groom is expected to be of higher status and economic standing. This is discussed in chapter 6. Bridewealth is not value neutral as it affirms virilocality, patriliney, and men, women's and children's roles in relationships. Embedded in bridewealth payments are cultural norms, which in today's realities lead to discrimination of women and children. Bridewealth is paid for a woman's social and biological reproductive capacities including her economic role. Children belong to the payee of bridewealth or his family. Because non-payment of bridewealth flouts norms of virilocality, it leads to the children and their mother living with her kin. If the mother of the child(ren) is unemployed, the children could be seen as an economic burden by her kin as well as stigmatised for epitomising a subversion of virilocality (see Katapa 1998). The mother of the children could be blamed for the non-

payment of bridewealth too, creating life long stigma on the children. Bridewealth therefore allows a woman's relatives to evade responsibility for children using normative arguments. Thus bridewealth payment and non-payment are implicated in the vulnerability of children/young people by shrinking their support network. (Non)payment of bridewealth has implications for the surname registered in the birth certificate, whose documents (father's or mother's male relatives) are needed to get the child a birth certificate and so on. International and national laws on children's rights demand that all children be registered regardless of bridewealth payment or circumstances of birth. Zimbabwean law, following the principle of "best interest of the child" allows both men and women to confer family affiliation, in a sense neutering patriliney. In cases where parents of a child are not married, registration proceeds smoothly if the father acknowledges paternity.

Bridewealth customs assume that married women accumulate wealth under their husbands' names and that men preside over the wealth as heads of households. This has implications for inheritance leading to dispossession of orphans and widows. Customary laws draw from kin based arguments of "lineage inheritance" according to which only members of the same lineage inherit from each other in order to keep wealth in the lineage. This worked well in past eras when kin groups worked, saved and ate together. Thus wives could not inherit from their husbands because they were not members of the same lineage. Daughters could not inherit from fathers because they were transient members of lineages they were born into; they were expected to get married outside the lineage (Knobelsdorf 2006, Brigge and von Briesen 2000). This leaves sons to inherit from fathers or brothers to inherit from each other. The notion of "lineage inheritance" has been at the centre of abuse of women and children's inheritance rights. It assumes the inherent benevolence of (male) patrikin because of kinship bonds, even when bonds are tenuous as they increasingly are these days. Many bitter inheritance disputes end in the courts and further weaken kin connections as aggrieved kin decline future contact and/or withdraw likely help if widows win inheritance disputes. The reality of child headed households (CHH), street children and the growing number of women single parents, some of them disinherited widows, attest to these issues (Moyo and Kawewe 2009). Such poor households as female and CHH are the source of youth encountered in this study.

Bridewealth persists because its payment symbolises responsibility and social adulthood, it says a young man has come of age and of his fiancée it says she chose her partner well (see Ansell 2001). It is believed to cement relations with ancestors, while its non-payment stokes ancestral anger leading to misfortune for current and future generations. Thus despite a legal dispensation pointing to bridewealth as optional, men pay bridewealth

if they have resources to do so. Poor men pay piecemeal because none dares to challenge the gerontocratic system including ancestral spirits or risk “bad luck” when partners die before bridewealth is sent to their parents. Most men promise to pay but abscond because of pervasive economic challenges. Many elders resent this.

Bridewealth affirms patriliney and by extension patriarchy. In Southern African patrilineal communities, there are widespread beliefs that sperm contains an indelible imprint of a men’s ancestral identity, a kind of genetic typing perhaps, but not present in women’s ova hence women do not confer identity (Kuper 1982). In this vein, even when a man denies paternity in a pregnancy, at a later stage, possession of the child or his/her relatives by ancestral spirits is believed to sometimes lead the child to his/her father’s people. Again the reality of the number of CHH and street children indicates that ancestral imprints in sperm notwithstanding, ancestral connections are increasingly challenged under neoliberalism. If this was not the case, there would be no CHH as patrikin would claim the child, on the grounds of ancestral possessions. The other side of the coin is that children from marriages where bridewealth has not been paid are especially vulnerable to abandonment by their mothers’ kin in the event of the mother’s death or incapacitation. Such children are likely to be labelled as “fatherless” which is not a complimentary reference.

In the past, women’s chastity ensured higher bridewealth, which included a special cow to the mother of the bride to thank her for giving birth and raising a virgin bride. Proof of virginity was possible because of chaperoned dating, watched over by paternal aunts (for girls) and maternal uncles (for boys). These relatives also gave sexuality education, and were the first port of call in case of marital problems (Jeater 1993). The sexuality of an individual had implications for the lineage especially in its reproductive potential hence the involvement of kin. These days verification of virginity is challenged by a number of factors not least that bodily inspections are increasingly considered intrusive given a climate defined by changing notions of privacy, bodily integrity, Christianity and schooling (Jeater 1993, Schmidt 1992, Burke 1996). Kin dispersals due to migration and urbanisation render such supervision (even surveillance) and inspections impossible hence virgin marriages are hard to prove and the special gifts to mothers of the bride are rare or not publicised. In addition, the control of sexuality is increasingly personal and private albeit debated publicly. Some churches are increasingly taking over these kin roles using Christianity, which is amenable to individually controlled sexuality.

In the event of a divorce or infertility, always believed to be the fault of a woman, bridewealth was refunded in full or in part in the past. How much was refunded depended on the number of children born whose custody the woman was certain to lose because of

their patrilineal affiliation. Since the 1940s bitter disputes, including through the courts over bridewealth refunds and recipients' inability to reimburse claimants have erased refunds in practice though not in principle (Smith 2007, Barnes 1992). The fear of indebtedness because of failure to return bridewealth may be the reason why women are encouraged to endure difficult marriages. Rather than the inability to refund bridewealth being prominent, it is often a woman's blameworthiness that is highlighted thereby discouraging divorce.

Traditional beliefs are now scrambled but this too seems to be an idiom of despair under situational living. The invisibility and disempowerment of benevolent ancestors, and anxiety about the neglected ancestors whose anger is believed to unleash havoc seem to have led many desperate young people and adults to attribute their misfortunes to spirits. In colloquial Shona the popular refrain is *mhepo* or *mamhepo* short for spirits gone awry. In Shona, *mamhepo* means malevolent spirits. Ancestors are properly referred to as *vadzimu* and ordinarily supposed to be benevolent and concerned with consolidating kinship (Kiernan 1982). Ancestors are the ultimate arbiters for well being when properly honoured through family gatherings, consultations, commemorations and libations. Their respect perpetuates gerontocracy increasingly challenged by family dispersals, urbanisation and Christianisation. In general, consulting traditional and faith healers diagnose *mamhepo*.¹² *Mamhepo* is also used to refer to witchcraft attributed to the envy of relatives, neighbours and colleagues. *Mamhepo* cause deviance such as criminality, prostitution, failure to secure meaningful work, illnesses including mental illness and discord in the family. The popular reference to *mamhepo* has become a code for pervasive insecurity.

The growing corps of faith and traditional healers fan pervasive outcries about witchcraft. Witchcraft is not recognised as an offense or a crime in Zimbabwe since the 1890s. The prevailing insecurity means that witchcraft accusations even when not recognised in courts of law accentuate structural violence typical under neoliberal contexts and poignantly point to pervasive dysfunctions of kinship under these conditions (Geschiere and Fisiy 1994:324-5).

The growing phenomenon of Pentecostalism also fans attributions to spirit possessions and afflictions. Although Pentecostalists do not believe in ancestral worship they accentuate anxieties about the workings of malevolent spirits which they call "territorial spirits" blamed for deviance, failure to comply with Christian teachings, failure to marry, high divorce rates, marital instability, infertility, poverty and mental ill-health (Mate 2002, Robbins 2004: 127-129). As far back as the 1960s, I. M Lewis argued that beliefs in spirit possession and possession cults were instruments used by persons of low status such as women in hierarchical societies, but also some men to temporarily seek reprieve from

dominant groups and be the centre of attention under the guise of possession (Lewis 1966). Admittedly this is controversial with many newer studies seeking to disprove this argument. I will not review them here for limitations of space and scope. Suffice it to say, according to Lewis, when possessed persons speak or when individuals are afflicted by a malevolent spirit, they should be assisted by close kin who gather in a feast to either exorcise the spirit or celebrate it. The gathering is organised according to demands of the spirit(s). This makes the possessed person of lowly status the centre of attention for some time while s/he is a medium through which the more powerful spirit speaks. Thus the attribution of *mamhepo* and implausibility of returning to the fold of kin relations given prevailing conditions allows young people to delve into traditional rituals to empower themselves through means they are not supposed to be well-versed in as noted by C. Burke (2000). It is an inversion of social norms when young people unilaterally resort to traditional medicine without consulting their elders. This was reportedly a common practice among respondents I encountered. At the hands of young people and their healers, these traditional beliefs have evinced creative narratives of kinship and morality, which add specific accents to subjectivities of growing up and how emerging adulthoods are fashioned as shown in chapter 7.

The foregoing shows that whether through bridewealth customs and attendant beliefs and norms and /or through use of traditional medicine, both young men and women fashion their adulthoods in unique ways punctuated by neoliberal globalisation. The beliefs described above point to deeply entrenched social sanctions associated with bridewealth and ancestral beliefs. Prevailing realities point to palpable challenges in complying with these expectations. Gerontocracy and connections to ancestors also seem challenged as the latter seem unable to correct non-compliant persons.

Sexuality education in changing contexts

In view of the foregoing, in Zimbabwe as elsewhere in patrilineal bantu speaking Sub-Saharan Africa (see Parikh 2005 on Uganda), kin relations such as fathers' sisters and mothers' brothers no longer play lead roles in sexuality education because of the changing values, Christianity, education and kin dispersals. Various media have become sites for educating the public about traditional sexuality. In Zimbabwe sexuality debates on public radio predate HIV awareness programming but were meant to re-educate adult listeners about ethno-traditions pertaining to marriage and sexuality (Mano 2004).¹³ The programmes are based on letters and phone-in discussions facilitated by a panel of male and female cultural gurus who are addressed using kin references such as uncle/grandfather and aunt/grandmother, in Shona *sekuru* and *tete* or *ambuya* respectively. Mano

(2004) observes that the Shona programs for instance, try to reproduce spaces where, in past generations, people of the same gender could hold discussions on any topic. However in radio settings, panelists and listeners are mixed. Still, listeners are warned, if in polite company, to either change channels or disband so that persons of different ages, generations and kin categories can listen to the programme from separate receivers (Mano 2001: 319). These neo-traditional programs seek to restore patrilineal respectability of individuals by referring callers/writers to their relatives in order to restore kin bonds, discussing cultural practices, which apparently ensure marital stability such as the extension of minor labia for women, emphasising the privacy of matrimonial sex among others. However, the extent to which kin bonds are restored is open to speculation because not all callers can go back to kin for reasons already discussed. Pentecostal churches (not so much older churches) also give advice on sex and partner obligations in matrimonial sex, with discussions accompanied by testimonials (see Mate 2002). These radio programs exclude young people, as they do not focus on dating. Dating is discussed in HIV awareness programs targeting youth and in abstinence only SBSE programs (discussed in Chapter 1).

With the AIDS pandemic, one chief tried to reintroduce virginity testing only to raise more controversy about exposing girls to sexual predation once certified as virgins as virginity itself becomes a sought-after commodity. The prestige of virgin marriages may be one reason behind the secrecy of teenage sex especially involving girls, as it is better to pretend not to be sexually active. The need to preserve girls' virginity may be the "cultural reason" behind abstinence-only SBSE as noted in preceding discussions. There is reason to think that virginity is also performed through naïveté to enhance female youth's sexual desirability (Shefer and Foster 2006). The reliance on especially social media creates room for the content of the "hidden curriculum" (Kehily 2009) to spread faster. Churches increasingly teach their versions of age appropriate sexuality education too. This creates competing messages and realities for young people.

Deepening monetisation and consumerism: effects on social relations

In Zimbabwe consumerism and monetisation are traceable to the interwar years in the colonial era. Their impact is undeniable change in interpersonal relations (precisely, relations between the young and old, between men and women and among kin) and living arrangements due to wage work, aspirations for using factory-made goods and urbanity (Schmidt 1992, Smith 2007, T. Burke 1996). Some of this consumerism was clearly influenced by Christian missionaries' teachings on domesticity, new ways of arranging and decorating living spaces, new ways of grooming and dressing the body, new cooking

and eating habits (Kaler 1999, Schmidt 1992, Labode 1993, T. Burke 1996:45-61). These teachings transformed notions of femininity and masculinity as urban femininity and forms of domesticity competed with rural options. Urban women needed wage work/regular incomes or attachment to men with incomes as the bridge to its promises. The growth of Pentecostalism is consolidating this process of change. These churches are globally associated with propagating specific versions of western modernity among their followers by providing supernatural resources for getting ahead in the face of economic volatility (Stambach 2000, Robbins 2004, Mate 2002).

From the colonial era to the present, women desiring fashion and urban domesticity have to do so with caution and in moderation because of pervasive anxieties about “losing” or “straying from” African culture among blacks and whites alike (Thomas 2006, Ferguson 1999, T. Burke 1996).¹⁴ The distrust of urbanised African women has already been discussed in the foregoing. Here I would like to highlight the consumerist dimension of urbanisation and its effects on gender relations. To participate in consumerism, monetary gain, no matter how small, supersedes other considerations and obligations. Monetary gain dominates people’s rationalisation of their own actions and choices (Bauman 2003, Kaler 2006, Zelizer 2005). Kaler (2006: 339) observes that

....[M]oney erases social distance, throwing individuals into abrupt collision with individuals’ passions, wants, irrational desires without respect for distinctions of status, such as the status of spouse or parent.

Thus rather than instilling rationality and calculability, monetisation has its own irrationalities too as far as it displaces certainties of the past. Under neoliberalism, monetisation accentuates the erosion of prevailing moral standards introducing new calculability which tallies with the neoliberal subject as agentive and calculating being (Makhulu et al 2010, Bauman 2004). There is no restraint as the incitement to consumerism is everywhere, accessible to all whether with or without the wherewithal to partake in consumerism. Juxtaposed with the allure of commodities and their ability to transform statuses, other considerations diminish (Weiss 1993:19, Curtis 2009: 128-138, Bauman 2004: 105-110, Nyamnjoh 2005). Equally the unprecedented depths of poverty into which people are thrust, and the shame or awareness of poverty as a state of abjection force the poor to take matters into their hands by any means at their disposal (Ferguson 1999, Chant and Evans 2010, Scheld 2007, Weiss 1993).

The volatility wrought by monetisation is seen in the use of money to entice others to partake in activities they would otherwise not partake in, or in the pressure for individuals

to insert themselves into others' schemes thereby underlining the potential for the degradation of moral and social relations (Kaler 2006, Weiss 1993, Bauman 2004, D. Smith 2001). Thus people are induced to engage in these exchanges were/are not dupes who do not see both sides of the story and contradictions of their existence. Often people are aware of, but still comply with pressures of the moment – to be seen as successful consumers. This is especially evident in transactional sex as marital, kin and parent-child relations become unstable (Weiss 1993, Nyamnjoh 2005, Longfield 2004) in the context of evolving informal livelihoods underlined by chronic insecurity, declining returns and opportunism (Simone 2005, Jackson 2010, Vigh 2008). Changing morality is also evident in the resort to supernatural powers to amass wealth, to protect oneself against further impoverishment and the heightened propensity for witchcraft accusations (Harnischfeger 2006, D. Smith 2001, de Boeck 2005) and in the violence and plunder seen in many civil wars. The point here is to underline the fact that poverty and sense of shame, exclusion and low self-esteem under neoliberalism force people to seek means to participate in consumer culture in order to affirm their personhoods or worldliness. This is disruptive as these practices go hand in hand with unstable relations and individuals compete with each other to limited opportunities.

In Zimbabwe the 2000s crisis left an indelible mark in the collective psyche that earning money is within each individual's ability whether by shady or supernatural means or hard work. This is seen in activities encapsulated in the term *kukiya-kiya*, to refer to intensive, speculative, opportunistic informal sector/grey economy activities (J. Jones 2010). Many Zimbabweans emigrated in search of better wages and sent remittances in cash and kind in the form of consumer electronics, second-hand utility vehicles for small businesses, food and others (Bracking and Sachikonye 2006). The crisis also brought other changes as declines in household income are reflected in marital instability with women likely to look for partners of better means (Spark-du Preez 2009). The volatility wrought by deepening monetisation is further seen in the observation that sudden increases in income make it easy for men to engage in casual paid sex thus increasing marital insecurity (Kaler 2006). Thus money and commodity desires are implicated in family disputes and marital instability. Fluctuations in income are also implicated in making male and female youth hard to control, unpredictable and highly mobile (Walsh 2003, Weiss 1993). Mobility has increased mobile persons' vulnerability to a range of dangers, illnesses, human trafficking and so on but also exacerbated tensions and conflicts over unmet expectations with significant others. All these were in evidence in Zimbabwe in 2009-10, as subsequent chapters will show.

Impacts of HIV and AIDS

The multifaceted impacts of HIV and AIDS have also contributed to the construction of youth in two paternalistic ways as victims because of orphanhood and hence CHH and as “at risk” because of high prevalence rates among youths in the 1990s (MOHCW 2005: 12, Francis-Chizororo 2008, CSO and UNICEF 2009:27) but also as at the forefront of behaviour change hence key to stemming the tide of the pandemic. There are an estimated 1 million orphans since the 1990s (UNAIDS 2009); a sizeable proportion of whom live as CHH with no co-residential adult caregivers thus fending for themselves (Francis-Chizororo 2008, van Dijk 2008). The increase in the number of CHH – whose members have a higher propensity to drift into urban areas where they live off begging, hustling and other marginalised livelihoods – points to a deepening crisis of reproduction (Ennew 2005). Many orphaned children and youth were set adrift as households became less stable after adults fell ill and died and the children were sent to different relatives for foster care (Ansell and van Blerk 2004). People are no longer guided by kin obligations but by ability to pay, contingent choices and cost-benefit analyses therein thus challenging normative arguments about the benevolence of kin. The social value of children is changing from being assets to wider kin to being extra expenses to relatively well-off kin (Bourdillon (ed.) 2000, Ansell and van Blerk 2004). Pervasive unemployment, escalating costs of living, insecure alternative livelihoods and the deepening of nuclearisation of families are also contributory factors to these changes. Many orphaned children and youth drop out of school even when education is technically “free of charge”¹⁵ and have to fend for themselves by any means at their disposal, hence the urban drift. Dropping out of school is attributable to the absence of adults to supervise enrolment, be consulted when problems arise, or to help with referrals to other service providers. Consequently CHH epitomise worst forms of impoverishment as many of them emerged on the back of dissipated estates of deceased parents or because they had been dispossessed and then abandoned by selfish relatives (Foster 2002, Lockhart 2008, van Dijk 2008). The betrayal by kin, neighbours and others that is encapsulated in being a CHH may be the major reason for disaffection of many youth (Diouf 2003, Ibrahim 2005, Kamete 2008). If there is any value to gerontocracy and establishment norms why do people leave vulnerable CHH to their own devices?

With regard as youth as “at risk” of HIV, attention focused on high prevalence rates among youth in the 1990s (MOHCW 2005: 12). CHH and associated poverty came to be seen as pushing young people into early sexual debut to secure resources or because of abuse; both on account of lack of adult protection and guidance (Grant 2003, Wood et al 2006). With studies focusing attention on especially the vulnerability of female youth

to HIV infection, the “sugar daddy” phenomenon (dating older men for economic reasons) loomed large pointing at poverty and gender inequality as concerns (Luke 2003, NAC 2007). However, rather than focussing on contextual issues of poverty and gender inequality, awareness campaigns blame youth not older men for lack of self-restraint. In 1993 the government introduced abstinence-only school based sexuality education (SBSE) apparently to preserve local culture (Marindo et al 2003, Betts et al 2003). Blaming young women for dating older men essentially extends prevailing local norms that women and girls are gatekeepers of their own sexuality thereby managing a stereotypically rampant male sexuality. However the gate keeping was not supported with assertiveness training and encouragement to use available contraceptive technologies as such information is seen to removing women from ideal of naïveté to an agentive sexuality perceived as denoting looseness. These contradictions are important for how youth construct their subjectivities as discussed in chapters 6 and 7.

Youth visibility, opportunistic livelihoods and hardening views about deficient youth

Given a long history going back to the colonial era that wage work was a rite of passage for young men, growing unemployment was bound to cause tension between genders, generations and among kin. It has been observed that urban migration increases in times of crises even when employment opportunities are low. This increases the burden of dependence on those who had urban accommodation and are still bound by kinship norms to take in relatives from rural areas (Potts 2011, Grant 2003). Often kin who are assisted in this way are expected to reciprocate by either contributing either groceries or rent. This was impossible given the unemployment. These pressures could have fuelled the conspicuous presence of young people in the informal sector making officials and members of the public uncomfortable (Kamete 2008) of which more below.

From the 1990s onwards unemployed male youth in provinces adjacent to borders with Botswana and South Africa took to emigration to these countries in search of wage work (Bennell and Ncube 1994). Migration grew in the 2000s to include people from all corners of Zimbabwe going abroad as well as within the region for long and short-term jobs. Recorded female youth unemployment is lower than that of males due to the technicality of how employment is internationally defined and enumerated (see Luebker 2008).¹⁶ Female youth’s visibility in the wage work and informal sector is lower than that of males. Where recognised, female youth unemployment is assumed to be temporary, as it would supposedly end with marriage to a wage earning or otherwise economically

active man. This social expectation is fallacious in contexts where male employment is not guaranteed. As male wage employment stagnated and declined, it challenged men's ability to perform marriage rites characterised by payment of bridewealth in cash and cattle. This expectation is also reflected in marital instability during economic decline when men can no longer be economically active (Spark-du Preez et al 2009). Male unemployment soon forced a growing number of women, regardless of marital status, into informal sector work (Gaidzanwa 1996, Muzvidziwa 2001). Thus, while the growth of the informal sector is celebrated as enterprise, the fact that it is dominated by women and young people points to a change in relations of dependence between men and women, old and young. For youth especially, earning own income leads to independence but sometimes challenges adult authority (Scheld 2007, Diouf 2003). In addition, many individuals join the informal sector as aggrieved persons let down by prevailing normative narratives which idealise dependence of the young on older persons and women on men because these narratives are at variance with reality given pervasive unemployment. These individuals are seen as deviant. Many are very critical of normative narratives and more reflexive precisely because of experiences of being let down by ideals (Giddens 1991). Ironically, successful informal sector workers are also blamed for fomenting the crisis they find themselves in and for the economy (Grant 2003, Kamete 2008, Gaidzanwa 1996). They are seen as cunning, greedy, graspy and anti-status quo. Hence many such individuals also devise strategies to counter the criticism. The theoretical significance of these issues is referred to in chapter 2 and will be elaborated on in the subsequent chapters. Young people did not just resort to the informal sector; activity some resorted to hustling exacerbating public outcries on the need for order (Kamete 2006).

As elsewhere in Sub Saharan Africa the presence of young people doing informal sector work and hustling on the streets in Zimbabwe met with a public outcry about insecurity as youth "created" work for themselves by providing unsolicited services and manipulating the public with threats of violence or damage to property if not paid for services rendered¹⁷ (see Kamete 2006, also Ismail 2009, Marguerat 2005, Walsh 2003 for other parts of Africa). Youth guerrilla tactics include aggressive forms of begging such *demanding* food from passers-by carrying groceries or cooked food at lunch, snatching or spitting at the food to make passers-by give it up; aggressively demanding to guard and/or wash cars for a fee, to ferry goods by head or pushcarts for pedestrians. By night service lanes literally became toilets much to the annoyance of businesses adjacent to the service lanes and to street cleaners who resented having to handle human excreta; and to members of the public who complain about unbecoming stench. In due course some of the service lanes were

gated, locked and security guards installed to marshal service vehicles to prevent the crude use of the lanes.

Youth activities created and took advantage of an increasingly informalised economy where survival was based on *kukiya-kiya* which describes an emergent, opportunistic, intensive economy whose activities are small-scale and marginal, some bordering on the criminal (J. Jones 2010: 290). These activities were the focus of public debates about “order” in urban spaces in the late 1990s and intensified in the 2000s. They entailed illegal use of open spaces as markets yet there were no sanitary facilities; flouting national and urban byelaws; use of storefronts and intersections without paying levies to local authorities or official owners of the spaces; others engaged in artisanal mining for gold and diamonds, scamming, cross-border trade, theft and transactional sex (J. Jones 2010, Kamete 2008:1721). Youth living on the street could earn money by keeping places in queues whether for a bank, passport, identity card and birth certificate applications or for a supermarket rumoured to have a sought-after commodity. These young people would then sell their favourable places in the queue to any willing buyer who desperately needed access to the services on offer. Others were small-scale and opportunistic commodity brokers for a wide range of commodities in short supply during the crisis, from office supplies, food, medicines, fuel and money in sought after currencies with no means of verifying source and/or authenticity of products.

Official responses – such as deporting youth to resettlement areas to be employed as agricultural labourers, multiple clearances of informal businesses and running battles with multiple law enforcement agencies – came to nothing as arrested individuals or deportees soon returned (Kamete 2008, Bourdillon 2000). The growing number of youth in towns led some scholars to argue that their presence marked the emergence of an “underclass” not keen on wage work but content with misemployment and criminality (Kamete 2006). Young people were seen as having a sense of entitlement to a better life leading them to shun low paid work and choose the autonomy of hustling instead. The stereotyping denoted by the notion of an underclass points to alarm about “moral decline” but also obscures the reality of unemployment. These existences constructed youth as miscreants with no respect for law and order encapsulated in urban regulations and national laws and for social norms of gerontocracy and gender relations. In Beitbridge as is shown in chapters 4 and 5, young people who earned incomes on through these opportunistic means were described as “gone feral” or “impossible” to point to the fact that they were cunning, out of control and deviant.

Hustling and the opportunism it entails are seen in touting increasingly associated with the informal public transport system and done for a fee from crews sometimes unknown

to owners of the minibuses. In the 1990s minibus crews used to take advantage of street children and made them sleep in their vehicles but neglected to pay them (Bourdillon (ed.) 2000). As the street children got older they understood they were being exploited and used their experience to turn to touting as an income generating activity. They can use violence to get paid as touts. Touts are foul-mouthed, unkempt and on the margins of society. They are found mostly at minibus termini. They earn money by advertising through shouting/chanting the route, fare of the vehicle and assisting to load it. The latter means ushering or hustling people into a vehicle and loading luggage so that the vehicle fills fast and the touts get their fees. Sometimes luggage is damaged and people get hurt. They get paid 1-2USD per load at current rates. With touts using street names, investigations are not easy. Passengers cannot claim compensation from minibus owners who should have third party insurance.

Touts are not employees, they are bands of unemployed young men who impose or ingratiate themselves to crews. They are seen as a nuisance for riding roughshod over others. They ride minibuses for free clinging precariously on doorways, while shouting/chanting the route and fare; they play music aloud on retrofitted minibus radios speakers. The resulting noise makes the vehicles, youth crews and touts notorious for being rude as they are a law unto themselves and much resented by officials and the public alike. Until there are viable public transport alternatives there is little that ordinary people can do. In recent years, touts reportedly learnt to drive and can liaise with some crews to use a vehicle to earn more. Because most minibus owners use piece rates for daily income so that extra money technically belongs to the crew, it does not matter who drives if there is no adverse event.¹⁸

Touting has since percolated into other informal sector activities such as produce and flea markets often done by youth who are not stallholders but want a share of business for their effort as human loud hailer. In Beitbridge, it was especially aggressive and a high stakes game given that travellers there usually carried high value goods such as household appliances and food in bulk at an unlit bus terminus. In addition to complaints about public safety (Kamete 2006), youth activities inverted social relations in that some earned respect and patronage of well-heeled individuals in need of commodities and services the young people could supply.¹⁹ These are mentioned here for their implications for youth livelihood strategies and hardening views about youth as anti-establishment and deficient. I return to a detailed discussion of youth creativity and emerging livelihoods in urban areas below.

Mitigating deficient youth? Official responses

Due to HIV and AIDS and the fact that in the 1990s young people were constructed as most at risk, and their growing visibility on street of urban centres, officials responded through policies, creation of a ministry responsible for youth issues and also through crackdowns.

In 2000 a ministry-level unit was created with a mandate to look into employment creation for youth. Given the prevailing economic climate, its approach was to encourage small-scale enterprises typical of the informal sector while the war of attrition with law enforcement agencies and crackdowns raged. In the same year the Government of Zimbabwe published the first National Youth Policy with the help of multi- and bi-lateral donors (GoZ 2000).²⁰ The policy's rationale is to ensure "multi-sectoral", "participatory development" and "youth empowerment". The policy says

No nation can move forward when *its young people are trapped in cycles of poverty* when they have inadequate health care, and limited education or when they are constrained by social and cultural values that hinder their progress, there is a recognition that *youths are a vulnerable group that needs protection* by government ...other supporting agencies and their own communities...Youth...constitutes the pillar upon which a nation is built. (added emphasis) (GoZ 2000).

This policy makes it clear that a) 10-30 years age group is seen as vulnerable to problems seen as unique to the age group, b) they are seen as needing protection by government, communities and their families, and c) that this policy sets out to redress these issues. Given its timing at the onset of a deep crisis as discussed in the foregoing, the policy's feasibility was in doubt. This pattern of policies is in evidence elsewhere in Sub-Saharan Africa where youth policies emerged in the 1990s as most African countries ran the gauntlet of neoliberal economic policies after which development contradictions became unsustainable and youth visibility became an issue. This was discussed in chapter 1. Examples of these policies are in evidence in Nigeria in 1992 (Momoh 2000, Ya'u 2000), Cameroon (Simone 2005) and Botswana in 1996 (Durham 2007: 106).

In addition to this policy, there were official concerns that young people born after independence had limited understanding of nationalist history, and hence needed re-education in controversial youth camps (see Ranger 2004, Solidarity Peace Trust 2003). Young people who attended the youth camps were promised preferential access to tertiary and vocational education. In Zimbabwe until the 2000s, NGO activity on youth issues predominantly focused on governance issues. Later in the 2000s there were more efforts

to increase awareness of risks of uninformed travel, such as human trafficking, rape and murder especially given the gullibility of youth in search of wage work.

As in most of Sub Saharan Africa, young people remain the object of crackdowns meant to rein in miscreants (Comaroff and Comaroff 2007, Simone 2005, Kamete 2008, Perullo 2005). In Zimbabwe mounting calls for action to remedy the unfolding chaos and “unruliness” in urban spaces are seen in the much-publicised Operation Restore Order (ORO), discussed above. ORO was controversial because planning technocrats supported it; with some of its victims still sympathising with the need to obey urban bye-laws and for so-called “order” while decrying lost livelihoods (Fontein 2009, Kamete 2008).

Researchers have since said that youth were the majority of victims as the line between youth informal sector and criminal activities blurred. Criminals used the informal sector to sell ill-gotten goods hence the informal sector was seen by officials as a threat to national and personal security (Kamete 2008, Bratton and Masunungure 2006). It has been said that officials were also worried that some of the unemployed youth were a ticking time bomb for social unrest, believed imminent given the severity of social adversity and the pervasiveness of disaffection with the decline in living standards (Kamete 2008). The point here is that by the late 1990s and through the 2000s, youth unemployment and deepening informalisation of the economy were a cause for concern to policy makers and the public. Youth were constructed as wayward, out of line and miscreants needing discipline. For instance, in twenty-four months Amin Kamete (2008) counted 29 raids by two law enforcement agencies in parts of Harare before ORO in 2005 (Kamete 2008). In total, five law enforcement agencies – each raiding, arresting vendors, confiscating goods, and some involved in covert criminal investigations and national security operations.²¹ This meant that informal sector activities were underlined by fleeting opportunities and profits not only because of limitations of scale and stiff competition, but also a stifling legal and political environment evinced by frequent crackdowns.

After ORO, a war of attrition between law enforcement agencies and informal sector workers continues to this day across the country.²² The war of attrition is seen in daily running battles and goods seizures in town and multiple checkpoints along main roads against commuter minibuses. The impact of these crackdowns has been to increased tension. People see blitzes as “operational costs” against which one devises counter-strategies thus perpetuating a sense of defiance.

The crises of the 2000s – hyperinflation, law enforcement and the livelihood strategies they evinced left an indelible mark of changed attitudes to how to get by and relations with law enforcement characterised by cynicism as affected persons learnt to play hide-and-

seek, pay pre-emptive fines (or bribes) as well as not resist fines when apprehended in order to quickly get back to work (Kamete 2008, Musoni 2010). Cynicism is seen in satirical reference to a 2007 Reserve Bank policy, which, according to Gono (2007) meant to alleviate commodity shortages by assisting Zimbabwean manufacturers overcome production and distribution challenges of the time. But its implementation not only worsened the crisis by relying on South African products and making a loss by buying at a high price and selling at a lower price on account of hyperinflation and unstable exchange rates. The policy was called Basic Commodities Supply Side Intervention (BACOSSSI).²³ This acronym and paradoxes of the policy entered the popular lexicon where it refers to items and services on sale. Here BACOSSSI means “affordable” but also suggests inferiority, gimmickry, an element of despair and accessibility to all hence only people with no money buy bacossi. In 2010 people in Harare and Beitbridge still talked about “bacossi biscuits” for instance which retailed for US 30-50 cents a packet. They were imported from neighbouring countries from less well-known manufacturers who took advantage of shortages to supply these products through cross border traders. As will be shown in Beitbridge, there is bacossi sex, assumed provided by schoolgirls and desperate women because of their need for money it is cheap believed to be dangerous to all involved because the need to earn money and quick gratification preclude precautions.

Zeroing in on the frontier town: Beitbridge, an overview

As shown on Map 1 below, Beitbridge is a small border town in a district of the same name. It is situated in the Lowveld (400 metres above sea level) hence characterised by high temperatures averaging 30 degrees Celsius. The town’s hinterland has low agricultural potential hence many households are net food buyers and the province is characterised by an above average total consumption poverty line (TCPL) of USD500 for a household of 5 persons, whereas the national average was USD 453 in the same period (CSO 2010). Thus people in the district and town need comparatively more income than the national average. Beitbridge was declared a town recently in 2006, to attract investment and to improve its infrastructure, which was yet to happen during fieldwork. Lack of infrastructure was attributed to the town’s being the epicentre of two cholera outbreaks since the 1990s, with a recent one at the end of 2008 to January 2009 (WHO 2008).

Until 2007 when change to town status was finalised, Beitbridge was run as a rural area despite the fact that it generates considerable income as southern Africa’s busiest land border and one of the region’s major gateways to South African ports. Beitbridge has an

estimated population of 20 000 people although officials put the figure much higher, around 130 000 inhabitants because of people in-transit who linger for months on end. These people are housed in 4 000 housing units which fall short of demand. The housing stock includes units that are under construction but occupied by desperate home seekers. Informal houses were destroyed during ORO in 2005 worsening the accommodation shortage as discussed in the foregoing. This crackdown, and many before it, made some male youth outcasts as they now occupy nearby forests from where they terrorise travellers or live in car wrecks. Male youth of undisclosed occupation find it hard to get accommodation as lodgers as homeowners are afraid these young men could be criminals.

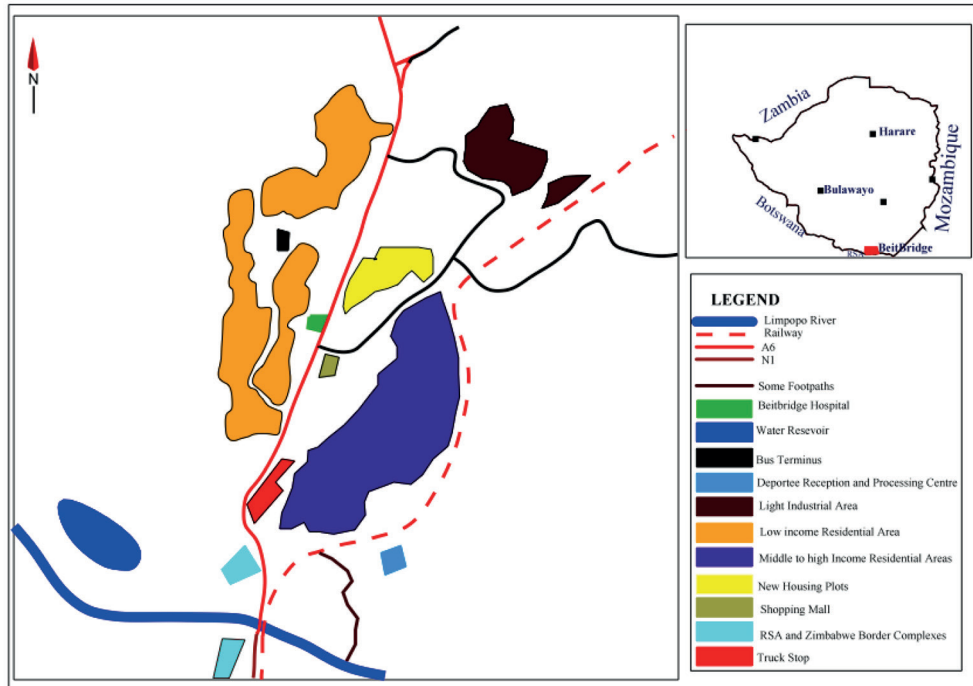
The town has no industries or other large-scale enterprises save for a handful of ranches and citrus fruit estates hence limited employment opportunities. There are comparatively few people employed by the Department of Immigration and the Zimbabwe Revenue Authority (ZimRA), in numerable primary schools and the first tier referral district hospital and a clinic, which also employ a comparative, few. The health care facilities provide a wide range of health care services. During my fieldwork (May 2009-April 2010) health emergencies were referred to Musina in South Africa by virtue of being closest, 18 kilometres compared to more than 100km distance to Gwanda (the provincial hospital), and 300 km to Bulawayo (where there are teaching hospitals). At the time Beitbridge had two clinics run by NGOs targeting specific demographic groups namely mobile populations, irregular migrants and sex workers. They are called “bacossi clinics”. They were largely staffed by expatriates and located in the low-income residential area. The town has a handful of retail outlets including some international franchise supermarkets, service stations, bars and owner-run informal taverns hidden from scrutiny because they are not registered.

During fieldwork Beitbridge was trying to shake off its bad image of poor waste management and address clean water supply in the wake of the October 2008-January 2009 cholera outbreak. Erratic refuse collection was still the norm. Residents got by burning kitchen waste far from houses in nearby forests. Burning supposedly helped to prevent vermin as well as pungent smells of decaying matter near homes. However the kitchen waste did not burn well so the dumps were frequented by scavenging mange-skinned donkeys, stray dogs and cats, and periodically visited by an aggressive troop of baboons which helped themselves to half-burnt organic refuse. Sewage pipes frequently burst with sewage waste and the resulting stench was constant features in low-lying neighbourhoods. The stench was not helped by the fact that because of lack of running water people relieved themselves in forests on the verge of residences (*The Sunday Mail* 8-14 March 2009). When I did my reconnaissance visit in June 2009 I was warned by key informants that under no

circumstances should I be tempted to use bush paths for security reasons and to avoid the unbecoming smells and waste.

Supply of piped water was erratic despite being close to water bodies in the form the Limpopo River and a dam as shown on the map. There are technical challenges to water provision from water treatments, maintaining adequate water pressure in the network and supply to each residence. At the start of fieldwork, the Municipality of Vhembe in neighbouring Limpopo Province in South Africa trucked in treated water twice a day to sections of the low-income residential area in response to the 2008/9 cholera outbreak. Locals called this service “bacossi water”. Residents stored water in containers to get by. NGOs eventually sunk boreholes and provided plastic containers with lids for water storage. Whether from the tap or borehole, people I knew pre-boiled their drinking water because of fear of cholera. The same NGOs also built communal pit latrines because water borne sanitation facilities were a farce without piped water. (All planned and existing houses are by Zimbabwean law supposed to have water borne toilet facilities.) Problems of cleaning the communal pit latrines led to some people simply resorting to using nearby forests. There was palpable panic in early 2010 when rumours circulated that cholera was detected at the district hospital (*The Herald* 11 February 2010). NGOs immediately took to public campaigns (using loud hailers mounted on vehicles) and neighbourhood women organised themselves to do thorough cleaning of communal pit latrines, re-disposing of household waste dumped in shallow bush pits and so on. The alarm turned out to be false and people quickly returned to their carefree routines.

The bus terminus was a hub of activity yet not a built-up area, save for a small guardhouse with a boom from where parking fees for buses were collected. The terminus is situated on a dry riverbed, sheltered by wild savannah trees and flanked by shops and houses. The area is prone to flush flooding. Food vendors implicated in spreading the 2008-2009 cholera were still selling cooked food to travellers during my field stay. The food was sold in sealable Styrofoam containers sourced from South Africa. However questions remained about handling before and during serving as well as unavailability of appropriate hand washing facilities for consumers given a finger eating culture.



Map 1 | Land use map of Beitbridge

Note: The map is not drawn to scale. It is adapted from Google Earth at an elevation of about 500m using ArcGIS 10.1; and colour coded and labelled using TNTmips 2013. The small insert shows the location of Beitbridge in Zimbabwe relative to the capital city, Harare and second largest city, Bulawayo. A railway and road network, not shown on the map to avoid clutter, joins all three and others also not shown. The road and railway link extends to neighbouring countries South Africa, Botswana, Zambia, Mozambique and Malawi. It is important to note that other than the road shown in thick black (not labelled in the legend) and the main road (in red), roads in Beitbridge were not tarred. In addition, within Beitbridge, outside and between residential areas and other establishments is a natural forest, which is slowly being depleted as people resort to firewood when there are power cuts. The natural forest makes use of footpaths at night, and sometimes by day, dangerous. Miscreants waylay people on forest footpaths, dark corners, the footbridge over the river joining the two border posts, between the deportee reception centre and the nearest residential area and any crossing point across the river. Murders were common. During fieldwork there was no street lighting on the Zimbabwean side. The nightclubs and booking houses referred to in the thesis are all in the low-income residential area, which is also where I lived.

Residents had to contend with nightly noises from nightclubs without soundproofing; noise from their discos wafted to residential areas enough to enable singing along.²⁴ These noises made the rhythm of the town. The nightclub music stopped at dawn, around 5am. Revellers went home as discos fell silent. I often heard typical drunken conversations from these individuals as they passed where I lived or entered neighbourhood houses. Sometimes the drinking and revelling flowed into neighbourhood houses if occupied by “players” who had successful “games” the night before. Sojourns at the nightclubs were not only for entertainment but also safety for persons-in-transit who missed transport to different parts of Zimbabwe and for homeless youth. Many of the latter would soon disappear from the discos to return to their hideouts or turfs in the forest. Female youth in sex work used these gatherings to solicit for paid sex. Truck drivers in transit used them to unwind while waiting for their cargos to be cleared, vendors sold them snacks, matches and cigarettes by the stick. Some children watched the goings-on at these joints from their homes.

At around 5 am, neighbourhood women got up and started the almost mandatory sweeping of their unpaved yards leading to a tell-tale light smog of dust which dissipated by sunrise but leaving a thin film of dust on other domestic surfaces. An equally fervent scrubbing and polishing of floors followed the yard sweeping as school children left for school around 7am. Laundry would soon be on washing lines afterwards. Many other residents headed to the official border to hike to Musina to buy goods for sale or domestic supplies. Some simply cycled in order to catch queues for bread and other supplies, to dupe confused travellers from other parts of Zimbabwe and beyond. By day noise came from neighbourhood radios played loudly as part of neighbourhood showing off, entertainment at taverns or to mask conversations to ensure privacy of domestic conversations and activities. Thus on a typical day, it was normal to have three radios from nearby houses blaring out different songs. It was sometimes overwhelming especially in the sweltering afternoon heat when sitting outside in the shade of houses or trees to shelter from the heat. Commuter minibuses also contributed to noise pollution as they drove by with loud music from retrofitted speakers.

Economic infrastructure and youth livelihoods

Informal sector activities were predominant yet most of them were described as illegal in one-way or another. Illegality emanated from the fact that many informal sector workers traded from undesignated places, thus running the risk of official harassment. Many also did not have licenses to trade in the town while many others were smuggling goods in and out of Zimbabwe. Many traders left their day trading posts to converge at the bus terminus

in the evening when transports to the interior left. When buses arrived at dawn there were minibuses whose touts claimed that they helped people cross the border without documents for a fee. Despite it being illegal because of links to human trafficking/people smuggling and armed robbery of travellers, rape of women travellers and sometimes murder, the touts went about their business openly. I saw them often when I arrived from Harare. During one of my dawn arrivals, I saw an International Organisation for Migration (IOM) outreach team trying to counter the misinformation by alerting would-be irregular travellers to be aware of dangers of people smuggling and that travelling without documents is an offence and risky. Head-to-head with the touts, chances are the touts won as desperate travellers are tempted by prospects of crossing the border without documents (*The Sunday Mail* 5 November 2006).

There are many unmetered taxis which charge 20 ZAR a trip within the town. Recently minibuses were introduced for US 50 cents (5 ZAR)²⁵ per person per trip. The minibuses use a perimeter road to drive round the town's business and residential areas picking and dropping off passengers and stopping at the bus terminus in either direction. Because of lack of street lighting, night travel is safer by unmetered taxi than by foot lest one falls victim to muggers. The taxis and minibus offer employment to a lucky few young people.

The housing crunch coupled with a need to augment household income has seen an increasing number of Beitbridge's residents resort to taking in lodgers. Overcrowding is a major problem in low-income residential areas. Still, people mind their business within their four walls or behind their perimeter wall. Minibuses have tinted windows, as do some taxis to prevent prying eyes (*The Sunday Mail* 29 October-4 November 2006). As noted above, people play loud music to mask conversations otherwise inevitably audible to neighbours given the proximity of houses. Gossip is seen as particularly anti-social and dangerous as it endangers livelihoods of some residents given the ubiquity of shady activities from sex work, scamming, smuggling of people and goods sometimes within view or knowledge of neighbours.

Beitbridge is notorious for the ubiquity of paid sex, a pointer to gender inequality. A lot of the sex work takes place in the growing number of "booking houses" so-called because these are residences which take in female lodgers who in turn receive male guests by appointment, also on streets in the night, bars, nearby forests and truck stops. The booking houses are largely in the low-income residential area. Owners of booking houses are well-known older women, some of them in leadership positions in their churches but quietly resented for the impact of their businesses on other women's relationships. The community is ambivalent towards them. They are seen as greedy and questionable for failing to

straighten out their lodgers even though their relative wealth is admired. Their leadership roles in church and possibly in other spaces mean that they are influential. Privately some people spoke strongly against the immorality booking houses have spawned but there were few public complaints except an incident before I did fieldwork where residents of one booking house aggressively solicited for clients through nudity. This incensed neighbours who reported the well-connected owner of the booking house to the local authority. The matter was resolved amicably and he is back in business. Some key informants such as Sekuru Hanga, a traditional-cum-faith healer interviewed on 8 September 2009 and also expressed in an FGD with older women on 27 February 2010 complained that local leaders do not set a good example by punishing booking house owners.

Booking house owners, like fellow residents, live with these contradictions by protecting identities of men seen visiting their lodgers. Because many booking houses are also residences of the landlords, privacy is managed in two ways. First, it is done through the design of houses. The family residence is closest to the gate; often the house has lace curtains making it hard for visitors to see inside the house during the day. The female lodgers and their visitors use a back entrance and back rooms. Sections of the house used by landlords are separated by well-secured doors (with lockable wrought iron grills) or walls to those used by lodgers. Lodgers are not allowed in the landlord/lady's residential area. They have separate shower cubicle and toilet. Because of water shortages, the shower cubicle is a bath area with water brought in in buckets. (For toilets, residents who could ferry water in buckets used a pour-flush system). In the event of an emergency such as when male visitors become violent, the owner of the booking house is called to the lodgers' part of the house rather than the other way round. The landlord/lady's living area provides a vantage view of the gate and allows him/her to observe visitors entering and leaving the premises. At night some booking houses have watchmen and only men accompanied by lodgers are allowed in the premises. Even where booking houses sell refreshments to lodgers, they use a separate fridge for goods on sale from those meant for the family's consumption. Even then the fridges are located in the kitchen to allow the landlord/lady's family to control both. The lodgers go round to be served. Secondly, there is the culture of silence. People are not supposed to show too much interest in goings-on in the neighbourhood nor talk to strangers about what they see. Informal traders especially use the code of silence and always profess ignorance to events they may be privy. In this context, people smuggling gangs lure would-be victims publicly without anyone raising the alarm.

Most booking houses seem comparatively affluent. They have plastered brick-and-cement perimeter walls while neighbours make do with a mesh wire fence. Some of the

perimeter walls are decked with electric fences or razor wire for added security. Some key informants confided that installing a razor wire or an electric fence prevents law enforcement personnel climbing over the wall during crackdowns when residents do not answer the gate.

Consumerism and changing ways of life

The proximity and the abundance of transport to and from South African towns such as Musina, Louis Trichardt and Polokwane, a border open around the clock meant that people regularly shopped in South Africa. Proximity to South Africa enabled a change in consumer habits. On several occasions when I visited informants and research participants, I was offered South African bread, cold meats and fizzy drinks or my hosts were eating them. South African cold meats are more affordable and preferred compared to Zimbabwean equivalents. Change in eating habits is attributed in part to economic reforms of the 1990s which made three cooked meals expensive as people resorted to skipping some meals, delaying breakfast so that breakfast was combined with lunch, having bread and tea for lunch and/or one cooked meal in the evening (Kanji and Jazdowska 1993, Grant 2003). Thus cold meat sandwiches and a fizzy drink are considered an upgrade compared to plain bread and black tea. Breakfast of eggs, processed meats (sausages, bacon), bread, margarine, jam, tea with powdered milk (a couple of competing brands from South Africa) are no longer reserved for elites as everyone aspires for and consumes them at least some days during the month. People are moving away from the local staple of maize meal *sadza*, (cooked by adding maize meal to boiling water, stirring until thick and cooked through) eaten with meat stew, vegetables, sour milk and so on seen as old-fashioned and cumbersome to prepare. The allure of South Africa includes accessing fast foods such as the much-liked Kentucky Fried Chicken (KFC) chicken and chips that cost 22 ZAR (slightly more than 2 Euros) without a drink and extras. Fast foods were mentioned as superior food young people liked to eat, and which gave men who could buy them the edge in attracting partners. There are several other well-known franchise fast food outlets including in-store services in numerous supermarkets in nearby South African towns. As I show in empirical chapters below, fast foods are seen as good “modern/western food” or “*chikafu chechirungu*” in Shona.

During the 2000s’ crippling shortages and my field stay, South Africa’s proximity enabled Zimbabweans access to foods bought in bulk such as poultry products, frozen and tinned fish, drinks, starches such as bread, rice, pasta sold in 5kg and 10kg packs, as well edible oils and detergents sold in large containers and/or by the carton.²⁶ Eggs were sold in customised packaging of 5-dozen packs for between 55-65 ZAR each (approximately

6 Euros). Some of the eggs retailed for 1 USD for 6 in Harare. Proteins including poultry, beef and dairy were smuggled into the country as they attracted punitive import duty to protect local producers and for public health considerations. Many women, male and female youth also bought beer for resale. A 6-pack of canned beer or spirits with sweet mixers was between 35 and 40 ZAR. Business was brisk in shops which sell Chinese imports such as fluffy and colourful blankets (increasingly demanded as part of bridewealth), clothing, shoes, toiletries, appliances and household utensils. Cross border traders from across Zimbabwe brought these goods for sale in informal markets too.²⁷ These items were in demand across Zimbabwe but especially in Beitbridge where young people were keen consumers who bought the goods to remit to expectant kin.

There is poor reception of Zimbabwean broadcasts and cellphone services, hence Beitbridge residents prefer South African services. South African broadcasts were seen as more entertaining and better than Zimbabwean fare. In South Africa television sets are as cheap as 700 ZAR (70 Euros) for Chinese brands more for South African and western brands. Most households have at least one television set. The two booking houses I visited are not only well furnished with sofas, and well-tended concrete or tiled floors, they have large screen televisions. However, complaints abound about the negative influence of South African television as young people apparently aspire for “South African life” imagined as hedonistic and consumerist, one that does not encourage good school performance. One informant said South African broadcasts seem to have a low age limit, 13 years, for explicit material, by which he meant displays of affection such as passionate kissing, sexually suggestive dances and language. In this regard, adults were not so keen on South African broadcasts but felt unable to avoid them or to follow age limits to control their children’s television viewing.

Zimbabwean cellphone services providers are out-competed by South African companies in terms of quality and diversity of services in this town. Cellphone lines were sold cheaply at 1ZAR (about 10 Euro cents) per SIM pack and widely available in South African supermarkets while SIM packs for Zimbabwean networks cost between 80 and 100 USD on the black market until 2008. In 2009 things improved in Zimbabwe, cellphone lines were easily available on every street corner for between 2 and 5 USD, still more expensive than South African products. Handsets are also easily accessible in South Africa starting at 30 USD for basic handsets. Zimbabwean young people are enchanted with the more upmarket handsets. I found it disconcerting when questions were asked about my cellphone, a basic Samsung handset (internet enabled and with a camera) which invariably always led to research participants either verifying if it was true that I studied abroad or

wondering if handsets are very expensive abroad for me to have a basic handset. There was a craze for “touchscreen” phones. No one talked about smartphones as Internet connectivity is generally poor and services very expensive.²⁸

Youth activities and security concerns

Beitbridge like other border posts was declared a security zone “with zero tolerance for crime” in 2004 (*The Herald* 2 February 2010). The declaration followed a spike in smuggling and black market trade including in foreign currency, as the number of travellers going to South Africa grew. In 2004 the problem was smuggling of Zimbabwean goods to neighbouring countries where they fetched more money than in Zimbabwe because of hyperinflation and government insistence on price controls. The declaration of the border as a security zone saw a fence erected around the immigration buildings apparently to keep out people with no business at the border, a larger police presence, a military barracks set up to bolster security operations and security cameras erected within the enclosure. Milling around inside the enclosure or buildings where out-bound commercial vehicles are inspected is not allowed. I frequently saw travellers and vendors milling around watching the goings-on. This is made possible by the fact that genuine travellers sit there waiting for travel companions to go through procedures. Unless an official asks questions to verify reasons for being there, it is hard to discern genuine travellers from scamsters on the look out for opportunities. During crackdowns several youths were arrested on suspicions of intending to commit crimes. According to *The Herald* of 5 June 2009, one hundred suspects were nabbed that month on suspicions of sex work, touting, and illegal vending. The report says “Illegal vending...fuelled other crimes such as housebreaking, stock theft, and the spread of diseases like cholera”. From 2007 to the fieldwork period, smuggling was in the opposite direction with goods coming into Zimbabwe and people leaving. The security declaration was neither here nor there.

The influx of young in Beitbridge, many of them intending to go to South Africa, was followed by a public outcry about youth as unruly, risk taking, a security threat, selfish, opportunist, dishonest but also vulnerable because of their ignorance, age and origins from rural areas making them gullibly believe that there is money to be made in Beitbridge. In the former view youth lack discipline, sense of propriety and self-restraint because they flout laws and manipulate institutions in their livelihoods and lifestyles. Verbal condemnation of youth was widespread. The common refrain was “most youths are crooks/hoodlums” (“...*matsotsi*”), “...unmanageable” (“...*hamuvagone*”) or “they are difficult/unreliable” (“...*vanonetsa*”). Lack of identity documents and use of street names made for difficulties in

verifying identity. Chapter 5 discusses these constructions and how they shape youth subjectivities, livelihoods, relations with adults and authorities and reinforce Beitbridge's notoriety.

Law enforcement agencies intermittently tried to demonstrate authority and/or restore security when things got out of hand. During fieldwork there was a drawn out crackdown (*The Herald* 12 May 2009, 5 June 2009, 19 December 2009, 2 February 2010), justified by the fact that a number of African football enthusiasts were expected to use the Beitbridge border to go to South Africa to attend the FIFA World Cup in June 2010 with one of the stadia just 200 km away in Polokwane. Youth livelihood strategies were targeted in the crackdown. These livelihood strategies were popularly referred to, as "games" in which "scores" in the form of money in one's pocket, gained by any means possible were preferable while "losses" or failure/missed opportunities and "penalties" such as interactions with law enforcement leading to fines or bribes and delays should be avoided. These "games" include commodity smuggling to and from South Africa, human smuggling (possibly trafficking) into South Africa, value added tax (VAT) scams on the South African side,²⁹ and self-styled clearing agents. Some of the high stakes games had links to organized crime. Winning these games is like playing the lottery; it is about being lucky, influencing the stakes to one's favour by manipulating fellow players and the authorities; as well as using supernatural means to gain an upper hand or evade arrest. Mustering all these tactics demanded a lot of skill, being observant and knowing when to leave a "hot" scene, people or schemes. "Hot" schemes include smuggling cigarettes to South Africa or poultry and dairy product from South Africa. The former attracted an instant prison term sometimes in addition to fines. One heard people referring to "hot goods" such as cigarettes smuggled into South Africa, a high stakes game with high penalties if caught as it attracted an automatic 3 months prison term. If not caught head porters earn 200 ZAR (20 Euro) per load. The heat of schemes attracts attention of officials so peers avoid colleagues involved in hot scams.

There was also low income informal sector work such as ambulant trade in produce, textiles, pirate music and videos from West Africa including pornography, selling of snacks and trinkets, selling fuel by the two-litre Coca Cola plastic container;³⁰ disc jockeying at taverns or own homes, dancing, paid sex, ferrying goods by head portage and home-made pushcarts, touting for and loading buses and minibuses and touting for human smugglers. Most youth combined several of these activities some moved through them serially.

As elsewhere in Zimbabwe, adult residents in Beitbridge expressed impatience and openly negative attitudes towards youth because of their lifestyles and being players in so-called "games". Popular outcry about insecurity was not unfounded because of the increased

incidence of muggings, stabbings and murder of people who walk alone at night, and rape of women who pay contract human traffickers/people smugglers to cross the border.

During fieldwork for instance, I heard, through word-of-mouth³¹ of the following violent crime: on three consecutive days a dead body was picked up on the South African side of the border on bush paths in the first half of September 2009. The bodies were assumed to be of Zimbabweans crossing the border illegally or smugglers on errands. There was a fourth murder at a booking house in the same month. There were several reports of travellers and some truckers mugged and murdered while crossing on foot between the South African and Zimbabwean Immigration complexes. Miscreants hide along the river or below the pedestrian walkway on the bridge from where they launch surprise attacks.

Complaints about police complacency and corruption abound. Thus police were under pressure to be seen to prevent crime even though arrests of suspects were surprisingly low for the small town. It could be argued that because violent crime happened at night there were no witnesses to provide leads to aid investigations. Still, people would rather the police (and local authorities) proactively put systems in place to aid investigations or prevent crime such as improving street lighting at night. Most informants argued that suspects hid in their lairs in the forest or were accommodated overnight by female youth who live in booking houses. The police were apparently deliberately not pursuing them.

In 2006 an undercover newspaper reporter investigated irregular migration by pretending to be interested in crossing the border. She discovered that gangs operated brazenly complete with turf wars. After finding a fixer, she was assigned to a band of travellers comprised of 15 Nigerians. She was sworn to silence including not talking to fellow travellers and told that she needed enough money to bribe Zimbabwean and South African police, soldiers and other officials. Twelve Somalis had been arrested a few days previously³² (*The Sunday Mail* 29 October-4 November 2006). The undercover reporter changed her mind when their contact handed her over to a trio of mean looking young men who made calls to verify who she was because of suspicions that she could be an undercover law enforcement agent. Subsequently, she got a police escort and was taken along three trails where she discovered 10 pieces of women's underwear cut on the side to suggest sexual assault on one trail; she saw torn Zimbabwean, Kenyan and South African passports and was told that rape and murder were common.³³ She was told that corpses were thrown into the crocodile-infested Limpopo River, thus the evidence of violent crime was lost forever. Those left behind may still believe that their relatives are incommunicado in South Africa. These issues are highlighted here as citable media items to corroborate versions of similar

experiences reported by some research participants but whose life stories cannot be given in detail without incriminating them.

Because of its location, Beitbridge naturally became an International Organisation for Migration (IOM) reception centre for deportees dumped by South Africa until May 2009 when visa restrictions were lifted. By 2009 the deportations were attracting a lot of attention from human rights campaigners as illegal and a violation of human rights. In addition, the formation of Government of National Unity (GNU) in February 2009 also changed relations in the region making the potential confrontation encapsulated in the deportations no longer necessary.

Justification of the research site

The choice of Beitbridge was precipitated by two interrelated facts. One was logistical due to the economic crisis and the other was the role of Beitbridge during the same crisis. Logistically, Beitbridge's proximity to South Africa offered the best place for me to do research, find supplies and stay in touch with supervisors in the Netherlands. In December 2008 I visited Zimbabwe for a month to do reconnaissance.³⁴ I found the situation in Harare rather harsh, unpredictable and challenging for doing research due to shortages of basic commodities (food, fuel) and bank notes. I spent two hours in the bank to withdraw half billion Zimbabwean dollars. The money was not enough for a return trip home in public transport. I bought one banana with the bundle of notes and gave up.³⁵ In other words if I had no US Dollars I would have been stuck in town unable to go home, never mind buying supplies. Changing foreign currency took a bit of effort too, phoning and rendezvousing with informal sector foreign currency dealers and then contacting black marketers for supplies. The economic crisis was such that people spent a lot of time in queues to withdraw Zimbabwe dollars from banks because of the shortage of bank notes, more time in queues to get one item of food such as maize meal, bread, milk or meat. It took an inordinately long time to find a basket of food because supermarkets were literally empty. Food was available on the black market. By end of 2008, a few supermarkets in upmarket residential areas in Harare offered groceries in foreign currency to cater for expatriates and the well heeled. They were expensive.

By December 2008 Zimbabwe was functioning without a government following disputed results of elections in March and a disputed runoff in June 2008. Negotiations between the then ruling party (ZANU-PF) and the opposition (MDC) facilitated by regional leaders were deadlocked. Like most Zimbabweans, I had no way of guessing that the matter would be finally resolved in February 2009 (11 months later) with the formation of

government of national unity (GNU) which initiated the multi-currency policy abandoning the much weakened Zimbabwe dollar. Consequently, all I knew at the time was that to have a viable research project within the borders of Zimbabwe I had to choose a border town which would allow me to source supplies elsewhere such as South Africa in this case.³⁶ The logistical challenges included the fact that I could not use my Netherlands debit card in Zimbabwe. Internet connections were so slow that I could not always access my Netherlands bank account. It did not seem prudent to have my research funds transferred to Zimbabwe either given the fact I did not know how things would pan out with regards to the multiple currencies policy. Past experiences clearly taught me that the central bank could change policies at short notice such as overnight and leave depositors to their devices. By contrast in Musina (the South African town near Beitbridge), I could use the Netherlands debit card in ATMs of almost all banks, get all supplies, access the internet to communicate with supervisors and submit reports.

As a staging site for short and long term trips to South Africa, Beitbridge was described as a “barometer of socio-economic pressure” within Zimbabwe by Family Health International (www.fhi.org accessed on 30 Nov 2008). This is because Beitbridge as the gateway to South Africa with a stronger and more stable economy is a gateway to means of survival for many people from cross border traders, individuals who go to South Africa to get household supplies, to professionals who work there and come home at the end of the month, to hustlers, people and goods smugglers. Its being a barometer is seen for instance in the fact that when crossborder trade became a dominant livelihood one could see this through increased vehicular and human traffic at the official crossing. When prices of basic goods increase in Zimbabwe, there is an observable traffic of traders going south in search of cheaper alternatives. Thus Beitbridge’s being a social barometer made it ideal for me to study the struggles of young people given the economic stresses within Zimbabwe. However this also presented challenges of the grey economy I had not foreseen in the proposal writing stage. Beitbridge being a security zone, and the consummate fear of exposure by players in the grey economy, made people less open to interviews and observation. Still, this does not do away with the town being a social barometer of what is happening within the country, so Beitbridge offered the best glimpse into the crisis and how young people survived it. It is reasonable to argue that young people I encountered show how the crisis reverberated in the young and how they came of age as the crisis unfolded.

Conclusion

This chapter has shown the socio-economic, cultural and political contexts within which youth concerns emerged in Zimbabwe. It shows that in the first decade of independence, there was modernisation and a move away from tradition seen in the passage of legislation on gender equality as part of appreciating women and young people's roles in the armed struggles and getting them to vote. In due course as economic stagnation set in in the 1990s, women's contributions in the war of independence were thrown onto the back burner as patriarchs called for a return to tradition in a vain attempt to restore stability. This saw traditional leaders' powers reinstated marking a concerted return to the patriarchal and gerontocratic fold. This was also seen in Supreme Court rulings that clawed back post-independence legal reforms.

The chapter shows that the 1990s attempts to restore traditions pointed not only to the reversal of socio-economic gains due to effects of SAPs, unfavourable climatic conditions, HIV and AIDS and inadequate safety nets which left many reeling, but also the extent to which instability reverberated in the social fabric. Restoration of traditions was supposed to restore stability. This could not happen given the extent of structural challenges. Children and youth were some of the hardest hit as orphans, and children from poor households missed school, could not access health care or lived as child headed households. These circumstances set young people set adrift as adult kin were helpless. Instead of lamenting the structural causes of this helplessness many adults blamed young people's reactions to it as wayward. The necessity and inevitability of youth practices remains hidden. Consequently the growth of the informal sector saw many youth spending time on the street, surviving on hustling, begging, theft and others. These developments hardened negative attitudes towards urban youth. The attitudes further hardened with the deepening informalisation of the economy and opportunism of situational living in the 2000s. Young people were blamed for the inversion of social structure; violation of norms and morality as survival and ability to care for oneself and others mattered more than the means by which people earned their money. Some described the situation as the "urban governance crisis" (Kamete 2003) or the "fetishisation of authority" (Comaroff and Comaroff 2007) to which the government responded through multiple crackdowns arguing runaway lawlessness. The crackdowns do not seem to have achieved their intended objectives in the long term. This intensified economic insecurity side-by-side with growing cynicism about authority on the part of young people. These experiences texture the subjectivities of young people, as will be

discussed in subsequent chapters. The vilification of youth hides the fact that many officials increasingly made ends meet from bribes as media accounts attest.

The discussion also shows the endurance of culture and neo-traditions as people seek to hold on to some stability, familiarity and predictability in a sea of contradictions, insecurity and poverty. This saw an increase in attributions of misfortune and insecurity to malevolent and aggrieved benevolent spirits who could not be appeased in usual ways (kin gatherings). People resorted to going to faith and traditional healers seeking protection and fortification to face their challenges. Many impostor healers emerged and made money by capitalising on the gullibility of vulnerable poor persons. Increased use of traditional and alternative medicine by youth challenges existing norms where gerontocratic principles demand that young people go to healers with their parents or caregivers.

Descriptions of the research site show that young people are not work-shy but very creative, daring and keen to make a living against all odds. While some of their activities entail taking risks, youth pragmatism and ability to work with their circumstances is what is described in this thesis as “situational living”. Many youth avoid arrest by police through astute observation and being suspicious of strangers. Young people make money by understanding what people need, what is in short supply, where in the world it is available and how to get there to get it or fake supplies. This is the sense of understated cynicism, caution and defiance I encountered in Beitbridge.

Notes

1. The Zimbabwe education system has a recently introduced compulsory early childhood education (ECE) provided by primary schools called Grade Zero (theoretically from ages 0 to 5 or 6 years of age). Primary school is seven years (thus Grades 1-7) and promotion to the next stage is automatic unless parents insist on their child repeating. Primary school ends with a formal exam, which some secondary schools use to grade secondary school applicants into classes and to allot subjects. Secondary education is in two stages the first four years (Forms 1-4), end with an exam called General Certificate of Education (GCE) or Ordinary Level hence O-Level. Candidates with good passes, the best of five subjects including Mathematics and English compete for limited spaces for a two-year Higher Certificate of Education (HSE) a.k.a. Advanced Level (also A-Level). It is a pre-university course usually consisting of only three to four complementary subjects. Due to the inflation of qualifications, A-Level has become a basic school-leaving exam. In other words, students who only have 5 O Levels are disadvantaged in placements in vocational colleges. Places in universities and colleges are limited so the best students are considered first, on the basis of subject combinations preferred for the degree or trade. Many students do not make it because of poor combinations of subjects at A Level or mismatch between A Level subjects and courses they wish to pursue in tertiary institutions indicating either lack of information or teachers for a wider range of subjects in some schools. Such school leavers end up as informal sector traders.
2. In teachers' and nurses' colleges female students constituted 54% and 100% respectively (CSO 2005).
3. The Government of Zimbabwe (together with Namibia and Angola) sent an army contingent to support the government of Laurent Kabila against armed insurgents. After Laurent died, these governments supported Laurent's son, Joseph Kabila who succeeded him. In Zimbabwe the support was controversial because donors wanted more disclosure on resources spent in the war effort.
4. These include women's rights. Things came to a head in 1999 in the notoriety of the Magaya versus Magaya inheritance dispute between a sister and brother born to co-wives. The courts decided that the female sibling and older of the two litigants, could not inherit her father's estate because of customary laws. On appeal, the Supreme Court upheld the same conclusions of lower courts. Local and international protest ensued to no avail as the decision did not change (Knobeldorf 2006; Brigge and von Briesen 2000, Ranchod-Nilsson 2006).
5. Irin News, 10 October 2008- 'Zimbabwe: how do you rein in 231 000 000 per cent inflation?'
6. According to Bracking and Sachikonye (2006) migrants send to Zimbabwe items like satellite decoders, an assortment of electronics, clothes and food.
7. Irin News, 5 November 2008- 'Zimbabwe: All aboard for a 2,500 km shopping trip.'
8. These practices were common across Anglophone Africa; see for instance Simelane (2004) for Swaziland; but also Davis (2000) for Uganda.
9. Although technically each ethnic group has its own customs, in Zimbabwe it is Shona and Ndebele customs that are most commonly debated.
10. As of 2013, Zimbabwe adopted a new constitution whose content is not referred here because it is outside the temporal scope of this thesis.
11. This is because there are initial meetings to express an intention to marry, then relatives gather to discuss different elements of bridewealth and their prices. The groom and his party visit and negotiate the amount and so on, they pay the bridewealth in stages on agreed dates before the church/court wedding.

12. The difference between faith and traditional healers is that the former claim to draw their power from the Christian faith while the latter are possessed by ancestral spirits. In practice, the differences are fuzzy.
13. The broadcast under discussion was in Shona, thus refers to Shona culture.
14. Anthropological research shows that concern with “detrribalised natives” in urban areas, simultaneously celebrated and disapproved, is leading to yet more laws to ensure that urbanised natives retained their traditions (for instance see Bascom 1963: 176-168)
15. With neoliberalism, teacher and parent school committees are allowed to charge school development levy per student, creating quasi-school fees, to fund infrastructural developments and maintenance of installations. Although against the law, children are regularly expelled for non-payment.
16. According to the International Labour Organisation (ILO)’s definitions, unemployment means that individuals are currently not engaged in any income earning activity, actively looking for work (applying, going to factory and farm gates), are available for employment should an offer be made. This excludes many young women who, even when they desire wage work, will least likely go to factory/farm gates actively and who are likely to be engaged as unpaid domestic help. Further, if they are not in school or academically gifted they are likely to be encouraged to become homemakers, which further limits their access to wage work.
17. Parking and guarding cars. Sometimes such services undercut or are superimposed on local authorities’ or contracted service providers hence seen as a nuisance.
18. This is because it is difficult for vehicle owners to tally hours spent on the road and money earned per day. Owners make concessions by setting ceilings on expected daily earnings, no questions asked.
19. For instance, a fuel pump attendant could be enticed with money by the well heeled to reserve fuel while depriving non-bribe paying clients.
20. The policy was funded by UNFPA, UNICEF, the Commonwealth Youth Programme for Africa Centre and the W K Kellogg Foundation.
21. The agencies were municipal police who cannot use force hence often call state police for reinforcements. Within the police, units such as the Riot Squad and Criminal Investigations Department (CID) were reportedly involved with the Central Intelligence Organisation (CIO) also reportedly doing national security operations by raiding informal sector workers (Kamete 2008: 1728).
22. There were also four blitzes after ORO between 2005-7. These were Operation Sunrise, in Shona Operation Zuva Rabuda, (in August 2006) in which overnight the Reserve Bank Governor announced changes in local bank notes by slashing three zeroes and issuing new notes; thus for instance, 20 000 Zimbabwe dollars became 20 dollars. People were forced to empty their safes to be given new notes thereby exposing them for hoarding cash although this was not the intended purpose. Operation Chikorokoza Chapera that is, Operation End Informal Mining, (in December 2006) primarily targeting artisanal diamond mining in Mutare where the diamond craze was causing mayhem; Operation Reduce Prices, in Shona, Operation Mitengo Ngaidzike, (in May 2007) aimed at retailers who were accused of fuelling hyperinflation by increasing the price of commodities sometimes a couple of times in one day. Overnight commodities moved from supermarket shelves to pavements at exorbitant prices. There was a sequel to Operation Sunrise in December 2007 to introduce higher denomination bank notes above 200 000 Zimbabwe dollars. The notes were withdrawn and re-instated in a few days leading to confusion.

23. Apparently because of the depth of structural challenges of the time, emphasis on supplying basic commodities meant importing them from South Africa instead of supporting local manufacturers and selling them using the official exchange rates. This made the goods cheaper than those supplied by informal traders for instance (because they used black market exchange rates which changed daily). However this also made BACOSI a loss-making venture, as official exchange rates were lower than black market rates considered more realistic.
24. Some of the songs I heard frequently were also mentioned by some research participants as their favourites. Their being banned from public radio prompted me to write a paper on youth lyrics and age relations in Zimbabwe (see Mate 2012).
25. The conversion here is based on convenience and takes advantage of unavailability of USD coins so 5 ZAR is equivalent to USD 50 cents.
26. Perishables were ferried frozen on night buses with traders gambling on the fact that bulk purchases and cooler night temperatures would allow them to get home with the goods still in good condition.
27. For instance, blankets from 100 ZAR, t-shirts, shoes and bags from 20 ZAR apiece. Travel blankets and/or blankets for babies are cheaper. Denim apparel was more expensive but business was generally brisk.
28. During fieldwork Beitbridge had two Internet cafes with prices starting at 5USD for 20 minutes. On the few occasions I tried both cafes it was hard to get to my email because of slowness of connections. I did most of my emailing from Musina (South Africa) where connections were faster and cheaper at 1 Rand a minute at a private post office. At the end of 2010 one Zimbabwean cellphone provider expanded Internet access using 3G connections. Connectivity was faster but expensive at USD 20 for 20 megabytes of data for both up- and downloading.
29. The VAT scams entailed collecting receipts from travellers entitled to reclaim VAT on purchases made in South Africa as they left the South African border into Zimbabwe. The scamsters often made sure that the VAT kiosk had long queues (exaggerated by their friends and colleagues brought in to mill round the kiosk and create an impression of slow queues) so that time conscious travellers would give up. The scamsters would then approach these travellers with an offer to give them a fraction of the VAT rebate as a favour. For persons in transit, it was better to get a fraction of the VAT than to lose all of it so most agreed. Consequently scamsters would accumulate receipts of purchases they did not make and claimed VAT in their names. This allowed them to make significant sums of money as much as 10 000 ZAR (1000 Euros) per person at the end of a month in some cases. By the time I left the field in April 2010, South African authorities were making strides to seal weaknesses in the VAT system. For instance, would-be exporters and foreign shoppers were encouraged to declare intentions to export the purchase. South African retailers would then issue a receipt on which passport details of the purchaser were included. This way the holder of the passport was the only one who could claim VAT.
30. Without secure overnight shelter, cars could be drained of fuel, whole wheels, tyres and/or car radios. Many people either bought enough fuel for immediate use or hired informal sector security guards to protect their cars overnight. The guards are unemployed and homeless youth who by being security guards earn some money and find overnight shelter in cars.
31. Beitbridge no longer has its own newspaper. Some headline stories were published in the second largest national daily *The Chronicle*.
32. Somalis reportedly get automatic asylum in South Africa. On several occasions I saw more than 20 Somali men either waiting inside the South African immigration or walking the 18-kilometre stretch between Beitbridge and Musina. Musina has a small Somali and Moslem community. Some of the Somali in Musina are established retailers.

33. These items were in photographs she and her colleagues took.
34. Initially my proposal was to do the research in Victoria Falls, a holiday resort north of Zimbabwe which attracted a lot of young people who made ends meet on the sidelines of tourism. However when I visited in December 2008, tourist arrivals had plummeted and youth visibility had declined dramatically. I heard from informants that many young people had gone south to South Africa or towns closer to it where livelihoods were better. The nearest Zambian town from Victoria Falls is Livingstone. It is small, had a limited range of supplies. People from Victoria Falls had to travel further afield to Lusaka, some went to Botswana and/or Namibia. Capital cities of these latter countries are hundreds of kilometres away, and transport less reliable. Often people depended on commercial trucks and informal public transport. By contrast in Beitbridge, there are buses, taxis, informal public transport and commercial trucks to the interior of South Africa. The nearest town Musina had all supplies banks, Internet, stationery, supermarkets and health care facilities with possibility for referrals further south if need be. This attracted many more Zimbabweans and therefore seemed an ideal research site.
35. Despite the fact that from November 2007 to October 2008 I had received my salary through the bank, I could not access it. To manage the shortage of bank notes and apparently to curtail speculation activities, meaningful withdrawals were permitted only to people who could prove that they were in formal wage work by showing current pay slips. By December 2008 I was no longer on the pay roll because of terms of my study leave contract. Thus I could not access whatever was in the bank despite my explanations and pleas with bank officials. Some of the speculative activities banks were guarding against entailed people either opening bank accounts into which friends and family would dump their Zimbabwe dollars. The account holder would then access sought-after commodities from suppliers who did not mind the local currency or would sell the local currency for foreign currency thereby distorting the exchange rate. Thus those who did not have current pay slips, like me, were seen as speculators hence not allowed to withdraw meaningful sums of money. This was the unpredictability of the time.
36. Other border towns like Mutare on the border with Mozambique had their own challenges. Not only is access to nearest towns more difficult because of unreliable transport, there were security challenges in the wake of the discovery of alluvial diamonds in Marange, close to this border.

Chapter 4

Between “restriction” and “running around”: narratives of dependence and personal pursuits

Introduction

This chapter discusses young people’s understandings and experiences of being young. In reference to different theorisations of youth discussed in previous chapters,¹ this chapter tries to show that being young is shaped by the socio-cultural context, by practices and functions/dysfunctions and power relations within context specific social institutions as well as individual agency. Social institutions here are the family/household, school, neighbourhood, the market and the state. Following a definition of youth as emerging adulthoods (Flacks 2007, Arnett 2000, 2007, Arnett and Taber 1994, Hartmann and Swartz 2007, Berzin and de Marco 2010), transitions to adulthoods are increasingly individualised, unpredictable, defy objective markers and proceed without support or validation by social institutions which subscribe to the traditional thesis of transitions: from schooling, vocational training, wage work, to marriage and family, in that order. These institutional preferences evince effects of intertwined gerontocratic and patriarchal aspects of globalisation, as discussed in chapter 1. Young people’s aspirations and critical analysis of their circumstances underlines their agency but does not change structural limitations, as discussed in chapters 2 and 3.

This chapter responds to the question: How do male and female youth speak about and explain their experiences of being young? What are their aspirations for the future? Narratives of being young are discussed under four themes which respondents mentioned

repeatedly namely a) multidimensional “restrictions” – a term which came from interviews and discussions with young people and denotes expectations of obedience, compliance with rules and expectations; b) schooling as one of adult normative ideals but the promises of which do not come true or are increasingly implausible; this is about the quest for child protection which in normative narratives leads to achievement of social adulthoods but which young people see as fallacious given the social environment they live in; c) “running around” which is resorted to when young people abandon the idea that through obedience they will succeed in life especially when personal needs are not met or school achievements are believed not to change one’s fortunes. They “run around” “looking for money”, seeking sexual and social partners as well as in search of other day-to-day needs; and d) disaffection, especially for youth in special circumstances who argued that they did not experience being young as something special because they had lost their youth through sexual abuse, unplanned pregnancy and other circumstances which made them feel hopeless.

Restriction and lacks: experiences of adult power?

In an FGD with Form 4 boys about what it means and feels like to be young in Beitbridge, the animated participants talked about “restriction” by adults, schools and churches from engaging in popular activities which underline being young. In Ndebele they said “*asivunyelwa*” and in Shona “*hatibvumidzwe*”, in English these words mean “not to be allowed” by custom or law. The restrictions include not being allowed to drink alcohol, smoke, date, have sex and go wherever they choose. This was a follow-up to a suggestion by some participants that being youth is “to be without rights and own possessions” thus not able to do as one pleases as adults do FGD with Form 4 boys school A, 11 February 2010. Others countered saying adults and institutions are not being literal when they restrict youth. The latter argued that no one gets tacit permission to drink, smoke, to have sex and to date. They said adults’ interdicts are metaphorical and mean “be careful” or “be discreet”, thus the point is not to be found out. Being found out embarrasses the individual and his/her family. Being discreet is the general norm, everywhere, meaning that even adults do not conduct their personal affairs publicly even if people know what they get up to. The young man who proposed this argument and his supporters had reasons too. Below I discuss these restrictions thematically because the narrative of restriction was repeated in many FGDs.

Restrictions from dating

Restriction from dating is upheld by schools, parents and churches for fear that it gives girls a bad reputation and could lead to pregnancy. The boys in the FGD above also argued that youth who are defiant if caught and reported to the authorities are punished harshly for dating (especially if their partners are below 16 and in school). At the same school some students told me about a couple of schoolboys who were caned by the police for “harassing” or “hitting on”² one girl at school. The boys were reported by the girl to school authorities for harassment; parents were brought in and the matter ended at the police charge office reported by parents of the complainant. The Form 4 boys in this FGD observed that dating peers was out of the question as it was “criminalised” because of the possibility of police involvement in addition to the embarrassment of parents’ involvement. The police caned the boys. Caning is typical punishment for juvenile delinquents with minor offences and no past records.

The Form 4 boys observed that schoolgirls could date out-of-school youth no longer answerable to schools, and are therefore not afraid of punishments. Thus dating, suspicions of attempting to do so or close friendships with the opposite sex seem to cause so much anxiety in schools and to parents that the criminal justice system is brought in. This points to deep-seated concerns and anxieties about girls’ respectability. As shown in Chapter 3, respectability is intersubjective; how a girl behaves shows how much she cares about her social standing and that of her family (see Ogden 1996, Campbell 1998). There seems to be fear that dating automatically means sexual relations; this in turn increases the likelihood of pregnancy for girls. Still parents of girls would rather resort to these extreme measures instead of empowering both girls and boys about healthy relationships without sex, and how to assertively resist sex (not to mention how to have safe sex). These measures seem to mean that when boys and girls date they automatically have sex. Yet this is not always the case.

If the above seems extreme consider the following event in early February 2010 as I was introducing myself at school A and preparing for FGDs there. By the time I did the FGDs a boy and girl in Form 2 were on punishment for a week, watering plants in the schoolyard while their colleagues were in class. Their offence was that they were “caught” sitting alone in a classroom when the rest of the school was in the sports field for a sporting event. The question of *exactly* what they were doing or *about to do*, and how this was discerned is not well explained.³ The pair confessed to the authorities to a two week old relationship for which they were punished for a week and the relationship ended promptly. Parents were called in. The girl, however, managed to get some adults who later proved

not to be related to her to represent her. She probably extended her offence in addition to the fact that it was established that she was, apparently, the more sexually experienced of the pair. To my mind she clearly understood that she was in trouble at home, school and in the community and sought to deflect some of the attention by introducing non-kin as her parents. It did not work as she was found out. The tone of discussion by those adults privy to the case suggested alarm at a 15-year-old girl apparently keen on sex as to mislead an apparently innocent 15-year-old-boy who was still a virgin. She had failed at being a gatekeeper of her own sexuality by not showing self-restraint and acting on her feelings (van Roosmalen 2000:218) if the speakers could discern them at all. A growing number of researchers have noted the impact of the hypocrisy of entrusting girls with gatekeeping of their own sexuality and punishing them for acting on their feelings while denying them access to protective technologies necessary for effective gatekeeping (Bay-Cheng 2003, van Roosmalen 2000).

Clearly, the adults' fears are projected on young people. The idea is that young people are not ready for sexual relationships because they are not emotionally mature and economically empowered to deal with effects of break-ups, pregnancy, and diseases and bad reputations (Cote and Allahar 1994, Edwards 1997). Are adults comparatively better equipped to deal with unforeseen effects of sexualities? Adult anxiety is easy to see in this story. If the event is based on what really happened, the girl still gets punished; and if she lied, she is untrustworthy because somehow adults know what she was going to do. These fears are projected on boy-girl friendships, which supposedly point to an uncontrollable slide into sexual activity. I use the word slide because adults argue that young people cannot control themselves but are slave to hormone driven impulses. This is perhaps the reason why girls and boys are acutely aware of the need to manage relationships with the opposite sex by hiding them. For a relationship a week or so old, physical punishment is excessive, the gossip damaging; this drives teen relationships underground. I was not able to talk to the pair because it seemed not in good taste to talk to them while they were on punishment or to return later as I feared it would accentuate their humiliation. However this is enough as an example of a deterrent from dating and friendships with the opposite sex. There are some youth who see dating as disruptive to their studies as expressed by Forms 1 and 2 girls and some Form 4 boys in School A. Thus beyond the fear of punishment, they argued that relationships were a recipe for poor academic results especially for classes with impending exams. All students conceded that in general platonic and romantic relationships are experimented with discreetly, away from parents and teachers. They are part of growing up.

One school head said he accepts that dating is part of growing up and that every adult did it at some point in their youth. He said students take advantage of being away from home to engage in behaviours parents do not condone so schools should not be held responsible for the consequences of student relationships. He said if parents condone the relationships, they should take responsibility for them. Thus it was better if students had relationships at home after school hours under their parents' care. For him condoning these relationships at school undermines the reputation of a school as unable to discipline students. In addition, schools are compelled to comply with the parent ministry's regulations. The latter are guided by local cultural sensitivities. Precisely close relations between people of opposite sexes are seen as inappropriate when not considered old enough to be in a relationship. Students comply by being discreet about where and how they conduct their affairs. Consequently, after-school activities (such as sports, doing homework or swotting with colleagues) create occasions and spaces for experimenting with relationships as they allow students to legitimately leave home and be with the opposite sex under the guise of school-related activities. What they get up to in these interactions is kept away from teachers and parents.

Thus for young people to become proper adults they should concentrate on “school first and relationships later” as one Form 1 girl described her mother's advice to her. Relationships with the opposite sex are invariably believed to be sexual and likely to lead to pregnancy, hence the advice. Her mother said relationships with the opposite sex will be acceptable after her twenty-first birthday, ideally when at university or in vocational college or working. Thus parents prefer the traditional thesis of transitions. She complies with her mother's wishes for now. Her colleagues concurred saying this advice is tacitly or implicitly stated. Some said they learnt from older siblings whose experiments with having relationships had caused immense pain and disappointment for parents when they failed at school, had misdemeanours leading to parents being called to school or falling pregnant along the way. The girls want to please their parents by staying away from trouble.

In the wake of HIV and AIDS, schools have grudgingly accepted an unexamined abstinence-only Life Skills curriculum. Because it is not examined it is treated as optional since it is not a core result area as academic subjects are. It focuses on HIV prevention in a narrow framework of “talking about” rather than imparting skills about observing abstinence such as how young people can abstain from sex while in a relationship. In addition it does not allow talking about condoms and condom demonstrations (Marindo et al 2003, Betts et al 2003). The preceding discussion has already shown that even two-week long relationship can have negative social effects. Interactions with the opposite sex invariably raise anxieties about sexual activity. If we accept for a moment that young people

are driven by hormones, abstinence-only SBSE does not impart practical skills to young people about how to deal with real life situations of hormone driven impulses. It is clear that restrictions are not mere constructions by young people but part of technocratic, parental as well as church rules. Deviance on the part of young people is seen as a pointer to poor academic performance and not likely to lead to the desired models adulthood characterised by marriage.

In churches there are rules and regulations about what young people can do based on Biblical teachings. In this vein out-of-school male youth from a Pentecostal church described themselves as preparing for ideal Christian adulthoods. According to church teachings male youth are expected to be breadwinners in their future households while female youth should be industrious homemakers and selfless mothers. They were praying to God for “honest” wage work (FGD with male youth from a Pentecostal church). Because readily available work is illicit such as people and goods smuggling, male youth in this church are discouraged from such work as contravening Christian principles of honesty. In addition these forms of work mean that the young people would have to use, or be in the company of people who use alcohol, drugs and nicotine. Substance (ab)use is forbidden in the church. The youth would be sworn to secrecy so they would not disclose what they see in the forest. Consequently since grey economy activities at the border are not an option, the glaring reality of unemployment remains a challenge mitigated by faith, according to some research participants. The church does not allow dating “for fun” which does not lead to marriage for youth not ready for marriage or unemployed and therefore not ready for marriage as such relationships tarnish girls’ reputations. This raises questions about the pressures exerted on young men and the likely low self-esteem wrought by not in being in wage work, seen as an indicator of not being ready for marriage, as also noted by Jeffrey’s (2005) young respondents in India.

Young people deemed ready to date do so under the supervision of church elders or relatives especially of the girl. Female youth were in a “girls’ ministry”⁴ where they were preparing for Christian adulthoods through baking, housekeeping, personal grooming lessons and Bible study. They were praying for ideal partners who are breadwinners and Christians. They said prayer is the failsafe means to an ideal adulthood of monogamous and faithful married life. They explained to me that they needed domestic skills in order to know how to manage their future homes, but also to augment household income by cooking and selling foodstuffs and textiles. In addition they are taught about sexual abstinence and “saving” themselves for marriage by simply dating when old enough to marry. The latter meant that if they dated, they observed abstinence (of which more in Chapter 6). The skills

that the girls acquire are also widely available among non-Christians already working as food vendors. Because young women prefer young men in wage work or with viable income generating projects, competition for such young men is stiff.

In one African Independent Church (AIC) in which I could not interview youth but spoke with the head of the fast growing congregation, Madzibaba Peter said church members are encouraged to watch over their daughters; to discourage them from seeking wage work from strangers to prevent sexual affairs and unplanned pregnancy leading to out-of-wedlock childbirth. Adherents prefer that daughters of church members work for fellow church members so that church teachings are reinforced. Other informants confirmed that going to this independent church shows serious commitment to their teachings such as fidelity if married and abstinence if single. Church members claim that they only marry within the church, increasingly after HIV counselling and testing. The head of the congregation said if a couple is discordant chances are church elders do not bless the union lest they are held responsible if the HIV negative partner becomes infected. The church uses divination and faith healing to instil discipline amongst members. Members believe that when a spouse is adulterous, church elders can divine him/her and publicly announce their visions in church thereby shaming the wrongdoer. Apparently this helps to prevent promiscuity. The head of the congregation argued that these practices ensured that their youth became adults of good moral standing. Elsewhere in Zimbabwe and South Africa it has been observed that some exclusive religious groups such as the AIC described in the foregoing use religion and strict “sexual behavioural codes” to control young adherents and married women (Gregson et al 1999: 180, Garner 2000:46-50). Through exclusive interactions adherents monitor each other’s behaviour, while indoctrination and public humiliation of adherents who deviate also help to ensure compliance.

Some young women not in these strict church denominations saw religion as cover for deviance to make one look decent and to attract marriageable young men. This is because regular attendance at church services requires a certain type of deportment to make women ideal marriage partners. On the other hand vendors and sex workers spoke of the utilitarian needs that faith healers in independent churches satisfy such as access to talisman to wad off bad luck including harassment by law enforcement agents, to attract clients and for treatment of chronic ailments. They do not convert to these churches because their livelihoods are incompatible with the churches’ austere regimens.

Restrictions from some forms of entertainment

In the FGD with Form 4 boys in school A, they mentioned restricted access into spaces where alcohol is sold and to partaking in the revelry typical of Beitbridge's ubiquitous beer halls (*bhawa*) and nightclubs. Underage drinking is an offence under the Liquor Act. Alcohol outlets should display age restrictions for alcohol sales and not to sell alcohol to persons below 18 years (see Appendix 1 for a schedule of fines for different offences since dollarisation in February 2009).

In this FGD, some research participants conceded that adult interdicts are not to be obeyed because adults do not tacitly give permission for youth to drink or to date and have sex. Perhaps this interpretation is attributable to underage drinking; a common practice in Beitbridge especially during weekends. Alcohol is available, with no questions asked from most retail outlets (from supermarkets, tuck shops, roadside stalls and so on). There were no reports of arrests for underage drinking while I was in the field. This may be because adults routinely send children as young as 10 to buy alcoholic drinks for adult consumption in neighbourhood outlets. Thus retailers have reason not to assume that (pre)teens buying alcoholic drinks are buying for their own consumption. Often underage youth drink in secret, away from disapproving adults' eyes. The use of substances such as alcohol, nicotine and drugs is also common although frowned upon at when female youth partake in it. Among female youth only sex workers and dancers could openly speak of pleasurable experiences with alcohol especially ciders which are marketed widely to those new to alcohol. Some eventually graduate to beer. I observed some of them smoking including, marijuana in the case of dancers. Schoolgirls who drink and smoke risk expulsion from school so none could admit to doing it. This is not to say that they do not do it, they are under more pressure to be discreet. Christians would not admit to it while in church and with fellow believers because smoking and drinking are against church teachings.

Underage drinking was a cause for complaint in an FGD with older women who said it is far too common. Thus indeed young people do not see restrictions as intended to be complied with but rather as rules to be manipulated as long as they do not get caught and punished. The latter was made difficult by conditions explained by the older women and other adult key informants. The women said that the Liquor Act was the most flouted law as formal and informal retailers (including *shebeens* and nightclubs) did not ask for proof of age of their patrons because all they are after are high turnover and sales. If these retailers followed the law, they said, they would not allow sales and patronage of their businesses for persons below 18 years of age, and this would ensure sobriety of youth. The women in the FGD conceded that the ubiquity of booking houses, taverns and tuck-shops made

monitoring difficult. They blamed this on growing individualism seen in diminishing empathy and social responsibility for the plight of neighbourhood children and youth. People increasingly prioritise their own interests. Owners of alcohol selling establishments apparently have no qualms allowing underage youth. The women blamed local elites and officials who also supplement their incomes by running taverns, nightclubs and similar activities patronised by underage patrons. The women also lamented diminishing civic pride as reflected in the proliferation of booking houses making the town notorious for sex work. This makes it difficult for officials to punish residents who earn money through running illegal taverns and *shebeens*, much less discipline underage drinkers. Police routinely raid some houses known to be *shebeens*, and booking houses pay the so-called pre-emptive fines to keep the police at bay while their activities go on. The women said these conditions undermine parental authority over young people. They lamented that Beitbridge was a challenging environment to raise children. Being a practicing Christian and having children, who were keen on faith, were suggested as antidote. Another key informant, the police chaplain, echoed the women’s laments but blamed lax parental controls and pointed out that a growing number of children and young people live alone because their parents work in South Africa and other towns in Zimbabwe returning to Beitbridge only during weekends. The children and youth do as they please in their parents’ absence and the neighbours do not intervene either.

Other adult key informants observed that in fact taverns, booking houses and nightclubs are far too accessible for children and young people. Sekuru Hanga said that children hang outside these spaces at night trying to see what happens inside. Given the nightclubs’ loud music and lack of soundproofing, children and youth stand outside to dance and have as much fun as those inside. According to Sekuru Hanga this puts girls especially at risk of abuse as well as priming them for sex work. I often saw the children hanging out by lanterns in front of booking houses, with sex workers going through their paces, clients coming and going. Thus restrictions may exist but many young people are in fact living in spaces where they are not insulated from the activities they are restricted from. Compliance with rules is difficult under these circumstances.

Proximity to South Africa, and accessibility of its broadcasts which project South African life as “permissive” and hedonistic, characterised by pursuit of fashion, binge drinking, partying and casual sex, was also blamed by a number of key informants. These broadcasts apparently undermined parental authority to discipline the children because of the “human rights” ethos now increasingly pervasive in South Africa. However, South African broadcasts have an elaborate age and content guide (for instance about sex, language,

violence, drugs) to guide parents if they want to control what their children watch. These aids seem to elude most parents for many reasons including working away from home.

Overcrowding also contributes to parental exasperation with regard to access to illicit entertainment. For example Form 2 girls and Form 3 boys at school A mentioned limited physical living space at home as households take in lodgers and relatives. Overcrowding challenges maintenance of social values such as respecting social distance between people of different generations and genders. Under these conditions, rooms are multi-purpose and their uses shift through the day and night. In houses not designated as booking houses but shared with women who use sex work to augment their incomes, fellow lodgers have to deal with the sex workers bringing clients home in full view of their children. Form 1 and Form 2 girls mentioned these issues as problems. For instance, one girl in Form 1 explained in an FGD her dilemma interacting with a woman who combines vending and paid sex and lives in the same house with her family. The woman sends her on errands. The teenager obliges in keeping with norms of respecting older persons. One day, the woman called her to room to get some avocados but she and her male guest were stark naked. She did not like what she saw and reported it to her parents whereupon her father said he would beat her if she talked to the woman again. The teenager does not know how not to comply with her father's rules without being rude. She did not tell her parents that the woman had previously asked her why she was going to secondary school when other girls her age were already earning "bacossi money" meaning that they were earning independent income from paid sex. She elaborated that the woman often tells her about how well her life is going because she is in paid sex. She often says marriage is pointless, loudly, as she cooks or eats what the girl described as better food to goad the girl's mother. She belittles married life saying in Shona "...*mazuvano kuroorwa hakubatsiri*". That is "...these days marriage is pointless." The teen who related this story said she is staying in school determined to write her O Levels. Other girls in the same FGD agreed that women in sex work taunt them, saying they are wasting time and parents' money going to school where they will soon fail. The girls have a small circle of people in the neighbourhood they can talk to without being accused of being primed into sex work.

Overcrowding also affects girls who live with siblings in sex work who get to see how their siblings raise money for their school fees. Other youth complained about noise, loud music from neighbourhood radios and nightclubs making studying or thinking about alternative lifestyles difficult.

Male youth talked of their experience of overcrowding in terms of interfering with studies but also giving leeway to watch late night television. This is because they sleep in

common spaces where televisions are kept. Once adults are in bed, they can clandestinely watch late television night broadcasts meant for adult. The police chaplain said that these living arrangements imposed by poverty, make young people watch pornography because they lack adult supervision. In addition he said he is sure that adult content in broadcasts and videos primes young people and children into early sex as they experiment with what they watch.

The point here is that activities that young people are not supposed to know about or engage in are omnipresent in their neighbourhoods, within earshot and/or view. Thus although young people cannot openly go to these spaces, they can hear and see goings-on. This makes it easy for youth to defy social norms. It is clear that restrictions by parents and schools lack reinforcement in the neighbourhood. This is why under age drinking seems commonplace. Some of the illicit entertainment, such as pirated pornographic materials, circulates predominantly in youth circles. This makes it difficult for adults to intervene.

Lack of citizenship documents

Restriction was also mentioned in connection with not having identity papers such as the national identity card and passport. Lack of these documents hinders participation in many activities. This was more a concern for boys than it was for girls. Without a national identity card, mobility was technically restricted especially given the crackdowns underway in Beitbridge at the time. Without papers young people risked being rounded up during a crackdown on suspicions of loitering with intent to commit crimes (more on this in chapter 5.) In an FGD with Form 3 boys in school B, the boys echoed sentiments of their peers in school A, telling that one way to know who is youth is through “lack of papers”. Young people lack papers primarily because of their age but also because some parents do not promptly apply for them when the teens reach 16 years of age. Sixteen is not only the age of national registration, it is also the age of sexual consent, the age when individuals can formally apply for a drivers’ licence, and look for wage work, among others. Consequently most school-going youth do not have national identity cards and cannot, legally have the above-mentioned experiences. Parents may rush to apply for these documents when youth are due to sit major exams, need to look for work or to reside in distant towns. Some in-school youth do not have birth certificates either. In-school youth have uniforms that mark them as in-school, thus exempt them from searches or suspicions of crime. If traveling far within the country a school note with an official stamp suffices together with the school uniform. In the event that in-school youth are suspected of an offence, the uniform leads the police to the school where information about family background is easily accessible,

or because they are referred to guardians of the suspect. Uniforms also prevent in-school youth from accessing certain spaces such as recreational spaces where alcohol is sold.

Lack of personal identity documents affects out-of-school youth more. In individual interviews, Martin (age 19) detailed the personal impediments due to lack of. He said he is unable to start driving lessons in order to be a commercial truck driver because he has no national identity card. He only has an uncertified photocopy of his birth certificate. It is not adequate for formal procedures so he could not use it to apply for the identity card. He has no passport either hence is unable to join his maternal aunt and half-sisters in South Africa. His parents are deceased (his father in 1994 and mother in 2008 after remarrying). He left school in Form 3 for lack of school fees. He thought he had even lower prospects for procuring exam fees. Without a valid birth certificate he is unlikely to sit for the exams in the first place, even if he had exam fees, because names used in the exam must match those on the birth certificate.

These personal documents are linked and obtained in a particular order. The birth certificate and identity card require parents' assistance to obtain them for the first time. The national identity card is a prerequisite in formal interactions: to get formal work, to access central and local government services including getting a market stall, to open and use a bank account, to register as a voter in elections or stand for office among others. When I told Martin that he could go back to his father's village and ask his relatives to vouch for him as son of his deceased father, he said he would do so after saving for a return trip by bus to his village and local district offices. It is official policy that other persons can stand in for fathers using the deceased's death certificate (if it was processed) and/or officials (such as the chief of one's father's village) can vouch for individuals like Martin if they present themselves.⁵ Even maternal kin can vouch for youth born out of wedlock. For passports there are fees. At the time of doing research the fees were USD150.00 (now reduced to USD50.00 for a regular application).⁶ Thus accessing these documents is not easy because of costs, broken kin ties, expenses of multiple trips to higher tier local government offices where these documents are processed⁷ and the long wait for them to be processed. Consequently young people from poor backgrounds are least likely to have these documents or get them only later in life because of challenges such as Martin's story evinces.

The day-to-day problem for youth without national identity cards, was that they were most likely to be rounded up by the police during the protracted crackdowns such as those during my fieldwork. In October when the crackdown was especially intense, I heard that soldiers (not the police) had demanded to see national identity cards or passports from people in Harare-bound buses causing considerable tension. When soldiers are involved

in crackdowns, tensions are higher and violence more likely. Negotiations and/or pre-emptive fines are not accepted. Although since 1995 police in Zimbabwe are not allowed to “stop-and-search” specifically for national identity cards, being without one in Beitbridge indexes one as engaged in grey informal sector activities or suspected of miscellaneous offences such as touting, loitering with intent to commit crimes, soliciting for sex work and others. The police also arrest these individuals to pre-empt the commission of crime. This is particularly because in Beitbridge people in maligned informal sector activities deliberately go around without identity cards in order not to have track records linked to their real identities if arrested. Many apprehended youth are released after paying fines.

Some young people do not have identity cards because they meant to cross the border illegally. Many people smugglers do not allow even telecommunication devices to be carried by anyone they are traveling with lest their operations are exposed. Besides Zimbabwean identity cards are of limited use outside the country. Once in South Africa many people hope to buy papers under different names.

Young people in Beitbridge further hide given names by using street names such as Tallerz, (for tall guys), Dread or Ras (followed by an initial) for dreadlocked men; some use international musicians or footballers’ names. Female youth also use aliases like Angela, Melissa, Alice and so on. Until such time that biometrics are mainstreamed, it seems easy to be Lucy today, Alice tomorrow, as long as one does not use a national identity card to tarnish one’s real name. In any case for female youth mobility *per se* is likely to get them into trouble regardless of possession of an identity card. Often young women are rounded up on suspicions of being out at night and because of clothes they are wearing. Being out at night in jeans is grounds for suspicion of prostitution. Thus young women are suspect for being up and about at night, in recreational spaces. Some young women in sex work told me that when they retire, they will join a church, wear long dresses, avoid nightclubs, change towns and get married to shake off their maligned pasts. In this way future husbands will not find out what they did in the past. One of the young women said that when she is in Harare, she does not go to nightclubs at all so her relatives do not associate her with such spaces and with sex work.

The foregoing shows that lack of identity cards is a real concern for all young people if out of school as it profiles one as a likely miscreant that hence is used to justify so-called pre-emptive policing. The crackdowns perpetuate some of the cynicism discussed in chapter 3 as young people learn that pre-emptive fines (also known as bribes) are ways to avoid police investigations and/or long stays in police cells. This consolidates cynicism about the intention of law enforcement agencies. Not all those without identity cards

genuinely lack them. By leaving their identity cards or claiming not to have them, young people seek to retain respectability by dissociating their given names from indiscretions, illicitness and other challenges of situational living which land them in trouble with the police. Thus without identity cards, young people are easily funnelled into people and goods smuggling as the few readily available forms of work. Crackdowns however increase the sense of insecurity for young people who are not able to pay their way out of police custody without involving parents. For the record, I did not hear of any students rounded up during the crackdowns. Many people contended with the curfew-like conditions and stayed home to avoid arrests. Nonetheless, for those out-of-school youth who deliberately went around without identity cards, these conditions were par for the course as the youth could manipulate the rules and regulations in order to get by paying pre-emptive fines to counter pre-emptive arrests. Clearly, young people understood the institutional and structural limitations of their lives and worked to minimise their effects on personal agendas.

“Not having our own stuff”: male narratives of material deprivation

Restriction as not having own significant belongings and money was said to denote an inability to act on personal aspirations not just by in-school youth but also those out-of-school youth. “Not having own stuff” marks male youth as not ready for marriage and implores them to be careful about unprotected sex because if girlfriends fall pregnant, society expects marriage, even when the young men are ill equipped for it. Martin suggested that going to South Africa to look for work is one way to tell if male youth are thinking of settling down. Indeed for a long time labour migration was the rite of passage of choice for many young men allowing them to accumulate resources with which to set up independent households. Melusi, another out of school respondent, reiterated the same explaining that the accumulation of personal possessions demonstrates, responsibility, readiness to live independently and ability to act on aspirations:

A guy knows he is ready to settle down when he has money and some household goods like a bed, a television, a stove, a fridge and so on. Then it is okay to marry. Otherwise one intensifies the burden on relatives....if a girlfriend falls pregnant [before accumulating these things] it is unfortunate, it is hard to continue living with relatives.

He further explained that these goods show that one is on the right track of caring for himself and his future wife and children. Melusi was locked in a bitter inheritance dispute. His father married twice serially. Melusi’s mother and father died leaving the second wife

who still lives in his father’s house. Melusi thinks as eldest son of his late father he should be heir but his stepmother disagrees. There is tension between them over inheritance of the house. For the time being, they live together but Melusi pays rent for the one room he uses with his pregnant girlfriend. He laments not having means either to sue or to move to his own place away from his stepmother. He gets by on vending and disc jockeying for a fee at parties. Thus lack of own resources for him means a stressful life of sharing a house with his stepmother and half siblings.

Male youth recognize that “having your own stuff” enables social adulthood marked by marriage and running an independent household. The onus is on male youth to earn the money to “support” prospective and natal families. This points to particular notions of masculinity, of men as economically dominant but currently scrambled by unemployment. Male youth in the informal sector for instance, have doubts about the possibility to accumulate household goods which they need (even as they lamented the unavailability of ideal partners in Beitbridge on which more in chapter 6). For most of them, education as a means to wage work or decent income to facilitate breadwinning was no longer applicable since they left school before writing school leaving exams for a variety of reasons. Meanwhile they cannot save because of on-going demands of kin back home and own upkeep in Beitbridge. From selling Zimbabwean cellphone cards there is a profit of 8 US cents per card retailing for US\$1,00. However hawking cellphone cards is an oversubscribed sub-sector of the informal sector. Cellphone cards are on sale on every street corner, stall, retail outlet, and in a lot of houses. Street vendors made a bit more on South African cards for which they added a 5 ZAR (50 Euro cents) mark-up on the indicated retail price. Even with South African cards, the number of outlets is high. Thus the vendors realised that they needed to increase the volume of sales in an environment of stiff competition and losses to police and military raids (on which more in chapter 5). They dreamingly expressed their aspirations saying they too “...want to own cars...”. When I asked why cars, the response was rhetorical: one person said “why not?” another “...other people’s children drive cars, why not us?”. Beitbridge as the gateway to South African ports is the port of entry for imported goods including once-used cars from Japan. The cars are bought on-line and delivered to the immigration. The sizeable parking lot for incoming cars awaiting clearance by importers tantalises youth by its stock. These cars’ entry into Zimbabwe is in full view of these youth. Within Beitbridge, people known to the research participants, some of whom are in undisclosed forms of work own cars. Some youth in the FGD even suggested that faith healers aid people to earn more; an option some were thinking about in order to have “own stuff” including cars.

There are differences in urban and rural strategies to accumulate “own stuff”. Urban strategies require household goods and electrical appliances while in rural areas livestock suffice. Consider the case of Biggerz, a 26 year old. He volunteered in a private conversation, weeks following the FGD with male vendors in which he participated, that he has accumulated household goods. He supplements his small profit from cellphone cards by buying and selling foreign currency in the evening when travellers board buses for different parts of Zimbabwe. Many in his trade do the same. He trades ZAR for US Dollars in the evening. In the morning when travellers arrive and are heading to South Africa he buys USD with the ZAR. Thus his small profit margins from cellphone cards are multiplied through this forex trade. I could not establish the margin of profit but can only attest that buying forex in the informal sector was expensive, as prices are above official exchange rates. In Beitbridge foreign currency prices change at night and in the morning at the bus terminus. Buses demanded fares in USD when most people coming from South Africa have ZAR (otherwise passengers risk paying more in ZAR as buses insist on street exchange rates). Biggerz confided that he had managed to buy a four-plate stove with an oven/grill, a fridge (worth around 240 Euro apiece) and a bed which he transported to his mother’s in Harare. He said confidently that when he marries, his future wife will not endure the harsh life of an unfurnished/unfitted first matrimonial residence. He was saving for more household goods. Cooking on a stovetop compared to kneeling by a hearth, sleeping on a bed compared to sleeping on mats on the floor, having one’s own fridge rather than relying on neighbours to store perishables as happens in low-income urban neighbourhoods when households do not have own appliances is how Biggerz narrated his dream and his strategy. Self-possessed personhood and autonomy based on having own appliances are the mark of independence and ideal social adulthood in urban areas. He confided that he would like to build his own house in a low-income area. His father is deceased and left two houses. As an only son he is sure that he will move into one of them when he marries. He embraces adulthood through saving the little he has in order to have something to show for his work.

By contrast, Simba a 21-year old male youth who gets by selling boiled eggs has a rural strategy. He sells eggs at 2 ZAR each (served with a factory-made hot chilli sauce and salt). When he started he sold on average 120 eggs a day, earning him a gross daily income of 240 ZAR (half of it is his profit). He targets people with hangovers craving savoury snacks. However as more people take to selling boiled eggs, sales are no longer as good. He invested his past profits (after sending remittances home) in livestock. When I met him in September 2009 he had one heifer. He seemed quite proud of his achievements as he beamed when he mentioned it although he discursively stayed humble. He was hoping

that this is the start of a herd of cattle with which to establish rural respectability. A herd of cattle is important for draught power, a source of milk, savings and social standing. Raising livestock is risky though as cyclical droughts are common in Zimbabwe. There are also veterinary challenges to deal with. During the crisis rural livestock dipping was stopped due to lack of the inputs. Livestock mobility checks were lax leading to several outbreaks of foot-and-mouth and anthrax. Other animal diseases remain a challenge. Thus to seriously nurture a herd of cattle, Simba needs more money to invest in veterinary services if he is to prevent his investment going to ruin. He also has to contend with security challenges in Beitbridge. I was drawn to speak to him because a week before I met him he had lost 250 ZAR to muggers at the end of a good day of egg sales. His assailants had trailed him for the whole afternoon. He did not bother reporting the matter to the police as he feared it would take too much of his time with no guarantees that his assailants would be arrested. He also feared that they could revenge with more attacks.

Single female youth invariably wanted to get married to men with steady income, citing the need for own economic security “*kuchengetwa*” in Shona, or “to be looked after”, and hence did not make a fuss about accumulating own things, (more on this in chapter 6). Thus “not having own stuff” was not an issue for female youth. Their priority was to find a man with own stuff to marry.

Youth malcontents?

There are young people who are so weighed down by their circumstances as to be withdrawn or live a life of regret and yearning for another life. They are not simply ambivalent. They are in limbo until these circumstances are resolved or until they will themselves to resolve them. In some instance, I got the impression that they faced challenges in accessing or making use of available services in order to move forward. It may well be that they lacked family support. These circumstances include orphanhood, poverty, weak kin ties, and the stigma of HIV infection, sometimes combined with the stigma of being rape survivors. Some of the youth were grappling with failed marriages or were in sex work as a result of these stigmata or restigmatised because of them. Thus these circumstances created youth caught in a vicious cycle of exclusion who did not see a way out of it. I present some examples below.

I met two orphaned girls, also cousins aged 15 and 16 years who lived with the same elderly relative. They both survived rape by two different assailants, and were HIV positive

as a result. They had dropped out of school for lack of fees and inability to cope with the traumatic effects of these experiences. I spoke with the elder of the two. She said life does not make sense to her without giving details. She said explicitly that she could not give me details. She spends her days sleeping at home, has difficulty adhering to her regimen of anti-retrovirals pending the trial of her attacker who is still at large. Rather than talk about youth, which she resisted, she expressed a wish to work in child protection and asked what courses she could do to qualify (even though she was not at school). Thus we talked about social work and activism, with me explaining as much as I could what either entails. She listened attentively asking questions about where such courses could be done in Zimbabwe. I learnt of her true circumstances from secondary sources but did not follow up with her because she did not wish to talk about it.

In another case, a heavily pregnant 16 year old, Tina, whose mother passed away, whose biological father is unknown and whose stepfather was incommunicado, felt ashamed of her pregnant state saying she had moved herself out of childhood ahead of her cohort. She dropped out of school in Form 2. In addition, she attracted attention before she fell pregnant when her partner was reported to the police for having a sexual relationship with an underage girl. He was arrested but seemed to pledge marriage or something which allowed him to wiggle out of an obvious statutory rape charge. Despite the curfews and interdicts not to see him, the relationship continued resulting in pregnancy. After moving in with him, Tina realised that he sees other women while restricting her to his house. Meanwhile she exhausted the goodwill of what seems to be a flimsy kin network, (she does not know many of her maternal relatives because her mother came to Beitbridge from the north of Zimbabwe when she was a baby). She wants to go back to school but will have to find a way to juggle motherhood and studies if she manages to enrol. She was anxious about her and her baby's upkeep if she left her partner, who is likely to leave the town by virtue of the nature of his work. She is aware that prospects of a durable marriage are low.

Finally there is the case of Mandla, who is in his late 20s, with a past record for violent crime in his late teens which landed him in prison. After prison he could not go home because he says the spirit of his deceased paternal grandfather possesses him and is the cause of his troubled past pending its appeasement. Sadly, instead of this spirit being celebrated through rituals his paternal uncle would rather his children host the spirit. Thus the paternal uncle is locked in some kind of spiritual warfare with him over hosting the spirit. His parents are deceased; they died while he was in prison. His paternal uncle is the only surviving close relative. The net effect is that Mandla cannot go back to home for fear that his uncle would hurt him. He knew all this after he sought advice from traditional

and faith healers. As a result, he lives off people and goods smuggling. His body build and “tough guy” notoriety give him respect among fellow smugglers. His circumstances beg a lot of questions. Could it be that his kin do not wish to have him home because of local beliefs that if he has hurt, abused or even killed other people the deceased will come back as avenging spirits to punish the rest of his patrikin in order to extract retribution? These beliefs are widely held by Shona speaking people in Zimbabwe. Homicide is believed to lead to untold misfortune in the offender’s extended family unless the whole patrilineage pays some retribution to the aggrieved family (Gregson et al 1999:187). It is the idea of being linked by blood and kinship to a murderer and the obligation to pay for his/her offences, which challenges kinship ethos in this case. If indeed Mandla’s relatives are ostracising him for his past violent life, it is not clear whether or not ostracising the offender renders effects of the avenging spirit the offender’s problem alone. In any case for the matter to be resolved Mandla would have to confess to his relatives and ask for their forgiveness and accept to participate in rituals which would bring him back in the fold while the aggrieved family is appeased. If as Mandla insisted he merely walks people and ferries goods across the river but does not personally engage in crimes such as rape, robbery and murder, might it be that his past as a former prisoner is stigmatising to his kin? He was adamant that if he goes back home, he would fall sick and die. Could it be that he is personally too ashamed to back to the fold of kinship and humble himself as a junior as is expected in gerontocratic settings? It is hard to answer these questions without talking to his relatives. However his notoriety and the propositions outlined in the questions lead to the conclusion that some young people like Mandla are truly disaffected and rendered rootless by their criminality which kin want to dissociate from. The respect Mandla and his lot have while doing “bush work” or “*basa remusango*” as he called it in Shona, is undomesticated and speaks to “being feral” as adult informants lamented. Working in the bush, hidden from view and given reports of violence which goes on there makes him an outcast for fear that his income will eventually wreak havoc if accessed through violence (for instance *The Sunday Mail* 29 October-4 November 2006). As other informants rhetorically asked, how does he manage it if he is not one of the violent ones? Thus given contextual challenges some youth have been victims of structural violence leaving them in limbo and may be locked in a vicious cycle of life on the margins. How else can people like Mandla come back to the fold given his experiences of isolation in his family and in Beitbridge? Some like Tina now bear the brunt of experimentation gone awry, and face a life of limited possibilities with limited support from an equally limited circle of relatives. Tina’s stepfather lived with her mother but had since returned to his rural area while letting his Beitbridge house. He typically feels less inclined to care for

his stepdaughter with a baby (more on this in chapter 7). The number of such disaffected youth is unknown, but they are part of the tapestry of circumstances of young people in Beitbridge.

In search of a different life: Towards what kind of adulthood?

Schooling: biding time or foundation for future success?

In preceding chapters it has been shown that during the Zimbabwean economic crisis academic qualifications were deflated because youth needed 5 O level passes for menial work whereas previous generations with these qualifications were assured of decent entry-level office work. With government policies making compulsory education for all youth below 16 years, and parents insisting that education is a means for upward social mobility jobs with good remuneration, many Zimbabwean teens are in school. This is a narrative of ideal social adulthood supported by adults, schools and churches. Prevailing low morale and protracted wage disputes during this period textured schooling experiences in specific ways which are important for youth subjectivities of emerging adulthoods. This section looks at in-school youth's opinions about their aspirations for the future and their adulthoods.

Notwithstanding the internalised beliefs about the value of education in Zimbabwe, young people were divided about the value of education for their adulthoods. Respondents in schools described themselves as “preparing”, “waiting to grow-up” by learning some skills, hoping to earn some academic qualifications and the right to be independent in the process. In order to achieve academically, compliance with school and adults' expectations and rules was reportedly inevitable. These include not indulging in forms of youth leisure, but rather, focusing on prescribed after-school activities such as sports and study sessions. Lived realities are more nuanced.

Most students, five out of seven FGDs saw school as a “waste of time”, or a time to grow up to eventually migrate to South Africa “to look for work” in unspecified sectors with “good remuneration” as the only consideration. Academic qualifications were not a pressing concern. In general, students had low academic ambitions. School is an age appropriate activity and an obligation they owed to parents who paid school fees. Many said they have kin and older siblings who quit school early or failed; but went to work in South Africa and apparently returned with cars, groceries, beautiful clothes and money. The students also wanted any kind of wage work or means of earning money. Many stopped as soon as school fees were not paid. A mixed group of Form 6 students, a pre-university class, were different

as they described school as a stepping-stone to careers they dreamed of. They wanted to be economists, lawyers, journalists and so on.

I asked the students about the type of work they wished to do after they leave school. The question invariably drew animated discussion about types of work with income/remuneration as the core criteria. A number of response indicated self-employment such as running a business, including having own car to ferry people back and forth as ideal forms of work. When four students said they would like to be teachers, nurses or to join the police force, they invariably drew laughter or giggles from colleagues which prompted me to find out why. In an FGD with Form 3 boys in school B, the students were quick to talk about local observations. They said their teachers were so lowly paid they were selling snacks and drinks to students to supplement their wages. One participant even observed that the teachers were not making much from the hawking they do because of stiff competition. At this school a handful of women sat outside the school gate selling factory made savoury snacks, drinks, candy imported from South Africa and local produce to students. The school has a tuck shop and teachers were also hawking similar products to students. Some students brought similar products to sell to colleagues. The school is in a relatively low-income area meaning that it was oversubscribed with vendors chasing school children as customers. The same students resented the fact their parents were made to pay for extramural activities to supplement teachers’ wages, in a controversial government-condoned incentives scheme run by schools. The fundraising activities included civvies days (when students came to school in casual clothing instead of mandatory school uniforms) at 5 ZAR per student, several times a trimester, school concerts and so on. This underlined unprecedented despair according to the FGD participants. Other participants cited the fact that teachers were largely homeless, accessing accommodation in Beitbridge as lodgers to enterprising, often less educated local residents. This made teaching a despised career. The palpable low status of the teaching profession did not entice these students to join the vocation. It was not a good reason for 11 years of primary and secondary education.

When I asked about other government jobs such as the police force and nursing the explanation was that nursing was hard work with little pay. Being in the police force was laughed at for what the students saw as prevalent instrumental policing strategies meant to raise income through bribes. This is seen in the fact that crackdowns usually happen on Fridays, at the end of the month and on public holidays when there is more traffic. This means a high probability of people flouting traffic laws during the holidays. However checkpoints are widely seen as a means by which the police augment their incomes through undeclared fines. In Beitbridge, the infamy of bribe-taking is made that much worse by the

fact that everyone knows that people cross the border without papers or with contraband. Media reports corroborate this as shown in chapter 3 where an undercover reporter was told that she needed enough money to bribe officials on both sides of the border (*The Sunday Mail* 29 October- 4 November 2006). Several youth also showed their awareness of the pervasive bribery necessary to gain access into South Africa (of which more in chapter 5). The students conceded that in the end the police made a bit more than teachers making the police force somewhat better because of access to government vehicles and opportunities to earn more through these illicit means. This youth critique of the most widely accessible and available form of work points to disillusionment with the low status of the professions they see around them. It also point to their disillusionment with education if it lands them in these professions. To be recruited for these jobs, applicants must pass secondary school exams (5 O level passes). Teacher and nurse training last three years and are academically and practice oriented. Police training is shorter with a gruelling fitness component.

At the time of doing research there was a nationwide strike by teachers and other government employees calling for higher wages of at least USD630 per month up from around USD 300.00 (*The Sunday News* 31 January-6 February 2010). It is important to recall that according to official statistics the total consumption poverty line (TCPL) was USD 453.00 in January 2010 (CSO 2010). Teachers at school B were on a grinding work-to-rule action in anticipation of higher wages because their school could not afford meaningful incentives. Nationwide debates about the plight of teachers and other government workers were widely publicised in the media. This may have textured in-school youth's descriptions. However they were corroborated by out-of-school youth's experiences, underlined by cynicism due to unfulfilled dreams.

The extent to which schooling can deliver work and social standing in society was also doubted by out of school youth. Many had exited the school system with no academic credentials, and had none or less than five O level passes. They cited school fees as the reason for exit and/or inability to rewrite exams. For the few who had passed O and A levels, lack of jobs, costs of further education and limited places in vocational colleges to pursue courses of choice were reasons cited as reasons for doubt. Some female youth who had O and A levels and were in tertiary colleges out of Beitbridge and were looking forward to marrying successful men. These young people came to appreciate that what mattered most was having money; the challenge was how and where to get it. Education qualifications did not matter. Rather luck, chance, black magic, faith healing and creativity were mobilised to "get" money. Young men without academic qualifications became vendors, smugglers, human traffickers and so on; those with qualifications saw such work as a stopgap measure

while waiting for bigger and better opportunities but no opportunities were available. All agreed that money made male youth attractive to women; it signalled their capacity to provide for others, to accept responsibility and to be a valuable friend to male peers. In this vein, in an FGD with male youth affiliated to a youth corner, who all had passed O levels, they agreed that “...to be *somebody* you need money. School certificates cannot be eaten or worn...”. This statement speaks to the paradox of passing school exams when there is no work. Lack of money led these young men to accept having girlfriends who also dated men with money because they understood the deprivation of their girlfriends and own limited capacity to help.

In an FGD with youth who make a living hawking cellphone recharge cards this sentiment was echoed by the statement that “...in Beitbridge, girls dump guys who run out of/have no money” was held to be true. For female youth money enables them to participate in the global economy as consumers of fashion they call *bling-bling*, hairstyles inspired by international showbiz stars, to have cellphones and buy recharge cards as well as send remittances home. These issues are discussed in detail in chapter 6.

Young people also complained of the lack of role models. Girls in tertiary institutions said that in the town people who engaged in conspicuous consumption were involved in banditry, human trafficking, wheeling and dealing and booking houses. Displays of conspicuous consumption and hedonist lifestyle were seen in parties, alcohol consumption and the ability to attract multiple partners if male. With these models of adulthood the young people, lamented the lack of meaningful employment except in pubs and the underground economy and the lack of tertiary colleges to challenge dominant adulthoods in the town. There are no libraries in Beitbridge, no youth centres, cinemas or other spaces for youth to meet. One participant asked rhetorically “during the weekend it is church or what else”? Her co-participants responded ruefully saying when they go home after church all they hear is loud music from neighbours who could be running *shebeens* or booking houses.

Thus although young people are aware of the lack of role models for ideal adulthoods in accordance with normative narratives of adulthood and the limits/bias of available leisure. They are not dupes of their context, but are critical. Hence some tried to invest in their areas of origin. Frustration experienced by the majority, as they are not able to achieve their dreams, leads them not only to discount some norms of becoming an adult also but lead to more creative uses of local opportunities to get by, and try to establish a modicum of economic independence in order to achieve aspired for adulthoods.

“Running around” and “looking for money”: a means to autonomy?

If living at home in obedience to adult caregivers is restrictive, its opposite is “running around”; a purposive mobility fuelled by restlessness and dissatisfaction with own circumstances and therefore “looking for money” for small and big needs. “Running around” may also be because youth are running errands for a fee hence going up and down on behalf of a booking house, a *shebeen* owner or vendor and eventually starting their own business hence smuggling and other activities. Some youth start running around in their own account. Opportunities are different for males and for females.

The notion of “running around” came from an FGD with female youth in tertiary institutions outside Beitbridge, but who live in Beitbridge. They said youth are discernible because they are “*abagijimayo*”, Ndebele meaning “those who run around” looking for/or doing something under tight schedules. Unlike stereotypical narratives of youth deficit such as “idleness” and “milling around” seen as pointless and a waste of time, purposive running around also has a sexual connotation of changing partners rather rapidly. It underlines mobility and transience and also points to untrustworthiness. Purposive running around has to end or lead to settling down as one finds what s/he is looking for, money or a marriage partner. Past a certain age, it is inappropriate to continue running around. Thus young women have to stop “running around” in their 20s to get married. Failure to settle down stigmatises the individual especially when also unemployed and moreso when with a child out-of-wedlock. Thus women have to be discreet in their running around lest they develop a bad reputation; an observation many respondents expressed (of which more in chapter 6). The young women said one way of managing running around is being discreet and being active at church. “Purposive running around” of youth contrasts with the settled life of adults, in terms of work and sources of income. Even when adults engage in shady activities they have youth to run their errands. Thus booking house owners sit and wait for their relatively young lodgers to move about to attract partners while they collect rent. These arrangements also give the sense of social standing where youth are clients of older persons, and are referred to in patronizing terms which define inferiority in status such as *vakomana* or “boys”/ “lads”/ “guys” to refer to men in goods and people smuggling, or *vasikana*, *vana sisi* or “girls” regardless of age to refer to women in sex work.

Given the challenged promise of education in this context, the lack of role models, and mixed messages from parents most youth were going it alone, looking for money to get by and to send home. They had left home to live alone and got by by pursuing opportunities to make money through undeclared means. The need to make money is said to be the onset of critical thinking, the end of innocence. It also coincides with an awareness of self in relation

with others including the opposite sex. For instance, some sex workers described this as “*kuvhurika* brain”, a colloquial reference which literally means, “when the brain opens” to suggestions and to question things whereas before the individuals accepted adult teachings and circumstances as inevitable. It suggests an ability to think and make assessments for oneself and act on them, which according to adults also suggests the onset of deviance. Sekuru Hanga, a traditional healer and key informant made the same point arguing that the need for money makes children develop faster and become unaccountable to their adults making them “wild”, “feral” or “undomesticated”. Thus *kuvhurika* brain may be the point when children become aware that money is more important than sitting at home being obedient. They start to relate instrumentally with others, articulating their gender identities in ways that earn them money; hence the beginning of an awareness their of own agency to get/earn money and in relations with others. Thus as observed by Hartman and Swartz (2007: 263), emerging adulthoods may be marked as “mounting roles” and responsibilities. By contrast, respondents noted that childlike innocence is characterised by non-appreciation of money in changing social standing or its effect on the opposite sex. It denotes acceptance of one’s circumstances, making-do with what parents provide and being content to stay, at home with whatever leisure activities at one’s disposal.

Adults corroborated this saying young people’s increased mobility and money seeking ventures were inappropriate and made young people lose their innocence. Mobile young people who moved around looking for opportunities to make money were described as “gone wild” or feral. In vernacular languages respondents used words such as “*baxwalile*” in Ndebele or “*vapanduka*” in Shona, i.e. young people who move around Beitbridge selling produce, snacks and trinkets looking for money and courting security threats in the process. Apparently some of the vending activities were cover to scout for opportunities to steal. Being “wild” or “feral” is apparently evident in “lack of respect” for older persons, lack of consideration for other persons and their property, sexual relations with persons old enough to be their parents or grandparents especially where there are possibilities for monetary gain, greed, rudeness and lack of regard for laws of the land. The use of words “wild” or “feral” in reference to these young people points to a prior state of domestication. Rationalisations of use of these terms shows that domesticated young people stay at home, obey gerontocratic norms, and are less brash about wanting money against all odds. The women said young people are increasingly feral because of “laxity of parental controls” and poor socialisation or growing up without caregivers. Domesticated young people apparently accept their real, relative or imagined poverty as normal. This however flies in the face of research findings that nowadays young people across Sub-Saharan Africa do not think

that poverty (real, imagined, relative or object) is acceptable. They see it as humiliating and disempowering hence it should be fought, hidden or played down (Chant and Evans 2010, Scheld 2007). These strategies are seen in fantasies about life abroad and efforts to go overseas at great personal costs reported for young men in Cameroon (Nyamnjoh and Page 2002) and Ethiopia (Mains 2007). The lack of patience with poverty is also seen in a growing numbers of young people living on the street across Sub-Saharan Africa, where they make a living from hustling seen as better than living with unkind and equally poor relatives (Lockhart 2008, de Boeck 2005, Marguerat 2005). Begging and charity are not acceptable alternatives for many young people. Thus “running around” is a quest for independence and standing on one’s own feet. It could also be because of prevailing neoliberal notions of the self as a DIY project, (Kelly 2001) emphasising individual agency even where conditions are not conducive. This aspect of neoliberalism is pervasive.

When their real and imagined deprivations become intolerable, young people seek means to alleviate their circumstances. Young people described this as “weaning themselves from parental care” (in Shona “*kuzvirumura pavabereki*”) because of circumstances. Thus rather than parents weaning off their children, children were aware of the paltriness of parental provisioning making them seek their own means of sustenance. Circumstances are described as “*nhamo*”, “*nzara*” which mean “severe” and/or “chronic deprivation/hunger/poverty” and “*kuwoma kwenyika*” to mean prevailing harsh circumstances underline decisions to wean oneself off. This sentiment is supported by academic research which shows that it is poor people’s children and youth who become independent earlier or mature faster than those who are provided for (see Nieuwenhuys 1999, Scheld 2007). When parents can no longer provide for children or meet their needs the latter leave home sometimes with parental consent. The problem though is that independence from parents. Historically marriage was the way girls got this independence. It was encouraged because parents received bridewealth. In addition, sons-in-law were expected to be on stand-by to help their wife’s families in times of need. Few families receive bridewealth today, and the lifelong assistance of sons-in-law is no longer guaranteed.

Male youth saw purposive running around looking for money as particularly unfeminine and described female colleagues adept at looking for money as “spoilt”, “gone bad” or “rotten”, using words like “*vatoshata*” and “*marara*” which means “garbage” and therefore not worthy of dating and especially marrying. Female youth saw themselves as riding the wave of circumstance and context – wanting to help their families or raise their children after being deserted by partners. The point here is the enduring idea that looking for money corrupts young women. This idea has its origins in the colonial era (see Barnes

1992, Benson and Chadya 2005) as discussed in chapter 3. It makes women independent and less amenable to patriarchal and gerontocratic controls. However, as women in one the FGD show, the undomesticated agencies of young people have another dimension in relations with elders. When young people send remittances to expectant relatives, the relatives are happy and appreciate their children’s diligence. But the women complained that parents’ failure to ask questions about the source of income encourage deviance. Male youth complained that female peers use groceries to cover up their deviance. They observed that increasingly many parents prefer daughters because they are more conscientious about remittances unlike sons. These respondents further lamented the fact that relatives in rural areas do not ask questions about where and how their daughters came by the money and goods they send.

Clearly, purposive running around is a double-edged sword for many youth. It gives the impression of youth as feral, restless and out of control, and female youth are seen as loose, greedy and not marriageable. Running around is also a sign that individual youth are critical of parents/caregivers provisions and want to make up for perceived shortfalls. Young people self-consciously compare themselves to others. Not only does this lead to young people going it alone, but some fall into risky and predatory relations. Purposive mobility and restlessness have become markers of being young and part of the transience of emerging adulthoods. Poverty or backgrounds defined by insecurity and compromised adult care are implicated in those processes as studies across Sub-Saharan Africa show (for instance Scheld 2007, Nyamnjoh and Page 2002, Mains 2007).

Youth leisure and consumer pursuits

Other aspects of being young which my young research participants talked about were fashion awareness, knowledge of South African television soaps (of which there are several per day all showing between 5pm and 9pm spread over three channels), music, football and food eaten at school. These aspects of being young were concerned with peer-to-peer knowledge and information. Young people follow soaps in order to update their own information and authoritatively participate in discussions with colleagues.

Beitbridge female youth talk about “*bling-blinging*”, in Shona they defined it as *zvinoonekera* or *okukhanyawo* in Ndebele, to refer to types of clothes which stand out in their colour, shape and form as different. Adornments and hairstyles inspired by latest trends and music stars are also part of it. In its original use, the word *bling-bling* refers to excessive and exaggerated ornaments associated with North-American hip-hop cultures. As hip-hop became mainstreamed *bling-bling* means conspicuous consumption associated

with hip-hop and increasingly with popular youth cultures. In the impoverished contexts of Beitbridge, *bling-bling* means colourful, showy and trendy clothes imported from Asia and sourced from cheap shops in South Africa for as low as 20 ZAR for tops and blouses. In Musina where I bought my supplies I saw Zimbabwean traders buying bagfuls of these clothes for resale in Zimbabwe. The clothes are form fitting, have plunging necklines, exposes parts of the upper torso such as the back or mid-riff. Wearing these clothes is part of being up to-date according to female respondents.

Male out-of-school youth on the other hand condemned female peers' fashion pursuits mentioning wearing trousers (especially tight ones with low waists) as bad. They said it is unbecoming for women to wear form-fitting clothing especially around the hip and the crotch. Such women are apparently not worthy of respect because they do not respect themselves. In a private conversation Biggerz said women who are too fond of urban lifestyles and fashions do not make good wives. Describing such women as having "*chi-salad chekutsvaga*", to mean that they are pretentious as they aspired for a lifestyle they could not afford and/or did not grow up with, he said they do not look like the types that would commit to a long marriage. In the FGD with Form 3 boys in school B participants referred to clothes as pointers to "good" and "bad" would be-be wives saying women who wear mini-skirts and hipsters do not qualify. They described these clothes as scandalous and disrespectful of their parents. One of the boys even stated that these clothes are not ideal for rural life where people do back breaking work in the fields. Thus as Pattman (2005) observes fashionable clothes render women less than ideal as partners as fashion is seen as a violation of culture. For young women to be ideal future wives they have to observe cultural norms of respect, including through choice of clothes. Schoolgirls and boys are not exempt from pursuing *bling-bling* because they try to participate in consumer culture too.

Some schoolgirls noted that their Pentecostal churches do not allow them to wear clothes that expose parts of the torso. Such clothing is criticized as self-advertisement and therefore sinful. School going youth use civvies day to show friends and colleagues that they are fashion aware, but also use friends' clothes to try out new styles. One teacher observed that on civvies day, students are restless because they are trying out friends' accessories (belts, sunglasses, bags, shoes and so on). However, one teacher commented that female youth who "overdress" risk being sent home to change or attract closer monitoring from teachers to ascertain that the clothes are provided by parents/caregivers. Day-to-day, schoolgirls also show that they are fashionable through the use of prohibited cosmetics such as foundation, lip-gloss and conspicuous perfumes among others. These products are available from as little as 5 ZAR in local markets. Cosmetics are not allowed with school

uniform and if found out the students risk punishment. The girls in the FGD described use of cosmetics as “putting oneself on the noticeboard” to stand out among colleagues and to be noticed especially by the opposite sex. The downside of being “on the noticeboard” is that boys assume such girls are available for all boys willing to try their luck. When spurned the boys escalate the verbal abuse of the girls leading to threats of beatings after school. The boys derogatively say girls use “clay on their faces” to be noticed yet reject the attention thereby playing hard to get. Clay here is an indirect reference to age-old grooming techniques in which women used ochre to manage skin problems. Thus a tongue in cheek reference to the apparent despair of users who resort to such backward techniques and yet reject the attention they obviously seek. Such girls are described as “ugly” hence they resort to props like cosmetics. Girls who use cosmetics become the butt of jokes by both girls and boys. In both FGDs there were girls who were well turned out and who through non-verbal communication, stares, giggles and indirect references became the attention of the conversation on cosmetics. In one FGD one girl had her hair closely cropped, dyed jet black and had her hairline shaved to accentuate it. She also wore foundation. Despite these negative connotations, in FGDs with Form 1 and 2 girls, there was acceptance of the fact that being young means looking beautiful to appeal to both male and female peers. Failure to manage one’s looks results in one being seen as backward but also stokes labelling as putting oneself on the noticeboard. Here lie some of the challenges of managing emerging femininities, knowing where to draw to the line and to balance the act for different audiences (van Roosmalen 2000, Bay-Cheng 2003, Tolman 1994). The FGD participants described strategies of managing looks as “*kuda kupoda-poda*”, which literally means wanting/having to use Ponds facial cream or similar (the word “*kupoda*” is a verb calibrated from Ponds meaning the use of Ponds. It has become part of the lexicon because Elida Ponds, a toiletries company now part of Unilever, provided some of the first cosmetics for African women in Zimbabwe in the 1950s (see Glenn 2008, Thomas 2006). Giving in to *kupoda* means using products that are not ordinarily available to most households. To give in to the urge means living with teasing by some colleagues, affirmation and admiration by others and risking punishment at school. As will be shown in chapter 6, the problem with wanting to use cosmetics is that many parents think they are inappropriate for school going children. Besides they show that students are actors in small but meaningful acts of global consumer culture.

Enterprising boys in Form 3 (including some in lower classes) run errands between older boys and girls, carrying messages and getting paid for it thus raising or augmenting pocket money to buy snacks, candy, pirated CDs and DVDs. Younger boys are needed

especially by students who do not have cellphones and have to hide their relationships given harsh punishments at school. A boy in a junior class hanging out with senior girls is not as suspicious as a Form 4 boy hanging out with his female peers. Boys run errands because their mobility from house to house or neighbourhood-to-neighbourhood is not questioned. If girls did the same they would raise more suspicion. In due time these enterprising boys attract the attention of female peers as capable of providing snacks. These practices also expose the messengers to tricks of the trade by equipping them with knowledge, thus reflecting a “hidden curriculum” (Kehily 2009) going against the official curriculum.

Leisure activities

Leisure activities were also identified as denoting being young. Many youth spent their spare time watching television or listening to South African radio, watching pirated movies circulated on DVD and listening to music shared with friends. Football is a favourite pastime of male youth. They closely follow Zimbabwean, South African and English Premier League football teams they, collect jerseys and other paraphernalia and wear them to show off to peers. Because of limited access to Zimbabwean broadcasts many followed South African and international football fixtures more. Here knowledge of players’ performance, team ranking and exciting games shows how up-to date one is.

With regards to music, enterprising messengers trying to get results for their patrons use lyrics of popular songs in correspondence between partners. For instance Form 3 boys at school A mentioned Akon’s popular songs which blared from public transport, neighbourhood radios and nightclubs around the clock as favourites for the task.⁸ The lyrics are sexually explicit but perhaps many adults do not realise it since they do not listen to the same music anyway. Still listening to the radio, watching television and DVDs, hanging out with friends are seen as counterproductive by school authorities, church and parents because these activities compete for time.

Young people with parents who worked out of town and leave behind enough cash for discretionary spending, have a lot of free time to spend at will, and have space for leisure activities of choice. They also create what some described as “bases” for themselves and colleagues to enjoy a range of activities in private including meeting with the opposite sex. There were reports that youth watch a lot of pornography this way; some schoolboys also acknowledged its wide availability. The videos are mostly pirate copies of West African amateur productions. The police routinely impounded pornographic DVDs, a sizeable collection of which was in evidence at the police station. The police chaplain said that he sees parents in shock after their children are apprehended for possession of this contraband.

According to the chaplain most parents cannot bear to watch the videos. The chaplain saw young people’s preference for pornography as pointing to pervasive immorality and failure to regulate the flow of these prohibited materials with the effect that children and youth are primed into early sexual debut. Possessing and circulating pornographic materials, pirate CDs and DVDs are offences in Zimbabwe yet these materials are everywhere. Young people discreetly sell the DVDs. My attempts to find out more about these youth circuits of pornographic material came to naught. Informants told me that to avoid arrest, youth vendors are quick to sell to teens while less keen to sell to adults they do not know in case they are undercover police. This survival strategy makes these materials widely available to teens. The videos sell for 10 ZAR per disc with several movies on one disc sometimes edited to show only the titillating bits. At the time of doing research, the town had no video club (from which to borrow videos) or cinema to watch movies. Thus many people got by with entertainment at home watching television and videos.

Consuming “modern” food

Consuming “modern food” (meaning processed food) including fast foods such as fried chicken and chips were mentioned as aspects of global culture young people wanted to partake in. Female youth marvelled at its difference from traditional foods. All round, male partners who provide such food are sought after. Beautiful 25-year-old Marita, related her intermittent movements in and out of sex work on the basis of looking for an elusive lifestyle. She described her “brief marriage” (the words said with cynicism) to a local well-heeled man I will call Mr BigShot through food. Mr BigShot afforded her what she described as a luxurious life, described as “...a cooked breakfast of bacon and eggs, toast with white tea or coffee...”; “...a well-stocked large fridge” and a maid on her beck and call in “a large house” with a “large screen television” among others. The items she described are not implausible for a number of people in the town considering the proximity of South Africa where access to global consumer goods is better than elsewhere in Zimbabwe. She left the man after she fell pregnant and had to have an abortion in South Africa but lied to him that she miscarried. By all accounts she believed Mr BigShot was single. However she learnt that the man does not marry partners who fall pregnant although he could maintain the children. Mr BigShot was not amused and resorted to calling her names. They parted forcing her into sex work. She was “married” to yet another man by the time I left the field. Marita had related the story to illustrate that with a secure source of income and an ideal lifestyle she can exit sex work even though she confessed that she was not emotionally attached to Mr

BigShot. Mr BigShot however gave her enough pocket money to send presents and clothing to her children.

School lunches are also another arena to show trendiness, so fizzy drinks are better than squash⁹ and factory-made corn and potato snacks are considered better than bread and margarine or peanut butter sandwiches from home. In the preceding discussion I have noted that some enterprising boys had created fund raising activities running errands between older girls and boys, being lookouts and getting paid for their efforts. Other in-school youth were also looking for money for discretionary spending for commodities parents could not provide or because parents provided them in quantities and quality that the youth deemed unsatisfactory. If youth were able to combine these extramural pursuits with school then they were successful. If they were unable to combine them they risked stigmatisation. The pursuit of money means that even well off parents may be challenged by children and wards who want a different lifestyle starting with a seemingly small matter such as wanting better school lunches and toiletries. These challenges come even from primary school children who in some households are known to nag adults about the contents of their school lunch.¹⁰

The foregoing shows that youth is about partaking in global consumer (sub)cultures as portrayed in the media, being enchanted with sports and television stars of which South Africa has a growing corps. Increasingly consumerism underpins definitions of youth in neoliberal times (Cole 2007, Posel 2005, Nyamnjoh 2005, Scheld 2007, Chant and Evans 2010). Many objects of youth consumption circulate outside the control and grasp of adults. In schools, rules that students must have short and natural hair are meaningless in an environment where increasingly street fashion embraces short, natural and simple plaits like cornrows as trendy. Students can bring these hairstyles to school and authorities will not know any better. Young people in this study also emulate the stars' fashion albeit using cheap counterfeit apparels. Thus pirate copies of international teams' apparel; music and DVDs are par for the course.

As shown in the foregoing, female youth keenly use skincare products and cosmetics to achieve aspired for effects on their skins. Most of these items are available for as little as five ZAR. Authenticity does not matter. These consumerist desires prime youth into transactional and predatory relations, pilfering and other means to access requisites of these lifestyles.

Discussion: between “restriction” and “running around”

By “restriction” and “running around” this chapter shows that young people are caught between obedience to adults and institutions such as schools and churches going their own way especially because compliance with schooling and other adult preferences is not seen as profitable. They are aware of paradoxes of obedience and dependence where adults’ command of resources needed for preferred transitions have waned, but also that are going it alone, unsupported, is risky. Unsupported transitions have unpredictable outcomes and are considered deviant but inevitable. Young people are acutely aware of power in their relations to others. The narrative of “restriction” shows young people’s awareness of the institutional, normative and material restrictions they endure while trying to conform to adult demands and personal aspirations. Their lived experiences show the irrelevancy of the traditional “transitions” thesis in this context. Academic qualifications are no guarantee for decent work and ability to muster the wherewithal for ideal adulthoods. Paradoxes of these restrictions are seen in the fact that looking for and having money in this context is considered more important than school qualifications.

Not only are young people embedded in hierarchical relations of power in which young people those who buck normative expectations risk being labelled as deviant and immoral, many have to constantly negotiate overtly or subtly with those in power. Given the devaluation of academic qualifications, low wages and statuses of civil servants, young people’s arguments that schooling is not as valuable for upward social mobility holds. It resonates with complaints about an ill-designed curriculum (Grant 2003, Nherera 2010) and points to uncertainties and instabilities of the time. It also points to awareness of pervasive unemployment and low incomes in wage work. Thus effects of structural dislocation are real in young people’s knowledges and experiences and shape their attitudes to school.

Young people’s observations also point to lack of positive reinforcement for schooling when they see teachers fund-raising through civvies days and competing with less educated people from the neighbourhood in selling snacks to school children or the police using instrumental policing to augment their incomes. Thus there is dissonance between the expected benefits of academic achievement and reality. Hence for some schooling is an age-appropriate activity done to comply with parental demands but no longer a means to a better life. Ironically it is these unmet expectations of post-school employment which push young people to going it alone, “running around” leading to adult laments about wayward youth.

Restrictions are also glocalised as seen in a multilateral donor initiative of “zero tolerance to child abuse” which locally dovetailed into parents’ anxieties about boys sexually harassing or bullying their daughters at school. That bullying needs different debates and solutions or that the “zero tolerance to child abuse” campaign also refers to abuse at home by parents and teachers at school is a moot point. Thus abuse by adults in the community remains unchallenged in keeping with the “don’t ask, don’t tell” ethos of the town. Key informants dealing with child abuse campaigns complained about the latter. The “zero tolerance” campaign empowered parents and girls to report wayward boys. It gave ammunition to cultural values which buttress abstinence-only SBSE according to which girls and boys are not supposed to have close relations (Pattman 2005). Boys complained that it is out-of-school older boys who have access to their in-school peers by virtue of being beyond the purview of school authorities. The unintended outcome of these practices is to reinscribe the idea that young women date older partners and that relationships with the opposite sex should be discreet. Thus schoolgirls cannot date while in school but could get away with dating a partner who is out of school. Likewise boys who have left school can date schoolgirls.

It is clear from the foregoing that young people manage these restrictions at a micro-level through negotiation and (re)interpretation of adult interdicts to meet their own needs hence the argument that adults never tacitly give permission to anyone to have sex, drink, and so on. In scholarly literature the notion of when young people are “ready” for sex or to marry is well discussed and shown to be fuzzy (see Ashcraft 2006, Hartmann and Swartz 2007). This is especially pertinent given contexts where readiness and therefore growing up are increasingly subjective. Safe sex, the ability to command adequate resources to found a family or run a household, what constitutes meaningful work as well social pressure from peers all challenge notions of objective markers of adulthood. This resonates with what proponents of the emerging adulthood perspective argue to be challenges of growing up in a neoliberal context that is, emerging adulthood point to open-ended process which defies objective markers (see Berzin and de Marco 2010, Arnett 2000, 2007, Flacks 2007, Hartmann and Swartz 2007). Paradoxically, these circumstances of growing up open young people to criticism especially if their situational pragmatisms lead to negative outcomes. This leads to young people being seen as problem bearing because structural challenges are not factored in.

The narrative of “running around” points to the erosion of adult authority and resources in young people’s transitions seen in their inability to pay school fees (Scheld 2007), and to meet other needs of young people in the wake of changing employment patterns, economic

crises and increased awareness of global consumer goods on the part of young people. It also demonstrates lack of faith and patience with the traditional thesis of transitions (the idea that one moves from school, to work, to marriage and family). Young people leave home disavowing dependence on adults and the innocence encapsulated in it in search of (elusive) economic independence. Responses of young people expose Zimbabwean cultural idiosyncrasies where the mobility of women continues to be condemned as perverting idealised gender relations where women stay at home while men seek wage work. This has been the case since the colonial era (see Barnes 1992, Benson and Chadya 2005, Ranchod- Nilsson 2006). Thus young men and adults condemn the running around of young women as denoting immorality and threatening marriageability. In turn young women deflect these negative attitudes by diligently sending remittances to expectant kin. Some admit that being active in church is a way of deflecting negative appraisals and a means to settling down by getting married lest one attracts even worse appraisals. By contrast young men justify their mobility as seeking means to accumulate household goods and appliances with which to found a household. It is expected that that as future heads of households they should command requisite resources for stable patriarchal adulthoods. Clearly there is misrecognition of most young men’s lack of wherewithal to found patriarchal households in which they can have economically dependent wives. This is why young women’s responses are seen as deviant.

Young people’s orientation to the global consumer culture is clearly another reason for running around. Here too there are gender aspects. Young people are not only enchanted with “modern” (fast)food, but also fashion and cosmetics. Lack of work and independent income makes them open to suggestion to earn money by other means as the next chapters show. While young men’s ability to provide these sought after commodities may raise their statuses as desirable men, for young women the pursuit of fashion and consumer goods is seen as ruinous and culturally corrupting (Thomas 2006, Pattman 2005, Nyamnjoh 2005). Some female respondents described fashion and use of cosmetics as “self-advertisement” and therefore immodest, hence the condemnation.

Adult authority expresses itself in national laws, institutions such as schools and law enforcement agencies which respond to adult needs to rein in the young. However the challenges of neoliberalism “fetishise” law and order as the capacity to maintain law and order is undermined by material challenges visited on authorities (Comaroff and Comaroff 2007). As will be shown in chapter 5, the fact that young people are seen as deviant is both a problem and an opportunity for adults to also make their own ends meet. The fetishisation of authority is reflected in schools relying on civvies days to raise money to augment teachers’

incomes whereas in fact street clothes are seen as corrupting and antithetical to learning yet are now brought into school. This is also seen in the inability to police students hairstyles as street fashion appropriates unprocessed and short hair as fashion statements due to hip-hop and evolving notions of African beauty in centres of global fashion and consumption in the global north. This fuzziness between street fashion and school requirements makes it hard for teachers to monitor in-school youth for compliance. Another example is seen in being without identification documents. Young people without these documents risk arrest on suspicions of intent to commit crime. However being without documents is also the best way to work in the grey economy where real names are not needed.

Adult authority is challenged in the experiences of vulnerable youth and children. This is especially the case in examples of some orphaned youth who are taken advantage of by relatives or neglected on account of a flimsy network of kin for reasons beyond their control (such as Tina). The neglect these young people have suffered makes it hard for them to trust and respect adults. Some of these young people are alienated and feel immobilised by their circumstances. The need to muster resources for providing for families forces many adults into migrant labour, and leaves youth to care for themselves. In the process, the young people make their own rules in the absence of adult caregivers. Growing individualism seen in the notion of “minding one’s own business” means that adults’ authority is no longer social, hence the refrain that it is no longer possible to discipline other people’s children. This allows young people to get away with personal agendas of purposive mobility but also allowing vulnerable youth to be taken advantage of. Overcrowding and the accommodation crunch mean that young people have access to activities adults, schools and churches would rather they do not have access to. This undermines schooling in many instances. Furthermore there is also access to foreign broadcasts which portray lifestyles in other countries as flashier than what is available locally. Thus adults who wish to reinstate their authority also have to deal with all these factors working against them. It is in these contradictions that young people fashion their adulthoods. At one level, adult rules and expectations seem worthless and of no consequence but on another level they are very limiting. Young people learn to manipulate these limitations and opportunities in search of their own aspirations.

Notes

1. The material presented here is obtained from FGDs with different youth in and out of school, and in churches, individual interviews with adults in these schools and churches and related to the youth. Only pseudonyms are used.
2. Girls and school authorities described this as “harassment”. For boys it was an expression of romantic interest underlined by incessant pestering of targeted girls and typical of southern African masculinities (see Shefer and Foster 2001).
3. The offence is that they left a school event to be alone later confessing to a budding relationship. The conclusion is that they could easily have had sex. When I first heard the story, words like “caught red-handed” were used yet details of what they were doing remained sketchy. Initially I thought they were having sex, but they were not.
4. Descriptions of the church have been changed slightly to hide its identity.
5. Citizenship registration still retains its colonial imprint thus Africans have rural villages of origin and chiefs determined by their fathers’ affiliations.
6. There are options for “express” applications that cost more than USD 250.00.
7. Beitbridge as a district is unusual in that it does not issue passports. Its residents go to the provincial headquarters in Gwanda, 195 kilometres away, at 60-70 ZAR by bus one way.
8. Akon is a Senegalese-American hip-hop artist of international acclaim. His songs blared from neighbourhood radios and nightclubs in Beitbridge and commuter minibuses in Beitbridge and Harare during my fieldwork. Songs by Akon cited for quotable lines were “*Beautiful*” (2008) Universal Records “*Right now (na na na)*” (2007) Universal Records and “*Sorry, Blame it on me*” (2008) Universal Records. Akon’s popularity in Zimbabwe culminated in his visit and performance in Harare in the first week of September 2010. These research participants probably were not able to attend but newspapers did their bit to keep the interest alive.
9. Squash is a concentrate made with fruit flavoured additives, sugar and water so that when water is added it makes a fruit flavoured drink. Two litres of the concentrate makes eight litres of drink. There are a lot of varieties made in Zimbabwe that many families prefer for school lunches because they are cost-effective.
10. Even preteens in primary school nagged caregivers for ideal packed school lunch such as sandwiches of eggs, processed meats, yoghurt, potato crisps or take-away food from South African outlets instead of peanut butter, margarine and/or jam sandwiches that are more affordable. Those who go to school without preferred lunches end up sharing with colleagues with preferred lunch. Staple food of maize *pap* is frowned at while potatoes, rice and pastas are preferred starches.

Chapter 5

“Impossible youth” or an “impossible situation”?: narratives of work and livelihoods

Introduction

The previous chapter discussed young people's experiences of being young. It showed the critical analysis that many of young people engage in, given normative narratives of what they have to do to become adults. This chapter is a response to the second sub-question: In what ways does the socio-economic setting shape young people's survival strategies, attitudes and relations with authority figures? How are young people viewed by authority figures and how do young people deal with attitudes of authorities? The chapter discusses narratives of life in Beitbridge, to show that young people understand themselves as socially embedded in their contexts, their families and place of work and to outline contextual issues that shape emerging adulthoods. Young people seek to achieve economic independence as part of emerging adulthoods but have to contend with chronic instability given crackdowns and because their livelihoods are criminalised (Ismail 2009: 474, Simone 2005, Perullo 2005). Young people remain a target for complaints about social decay and crackdowns meant to rein in miscreants in Zimbabwe like elsewhere in Sub Saharan Africa (Comaroff and Comaroff 2007, Simone 2005, Perullo 2005, Ismail 2009). The chapter seeks to show that notwithstanding their notoriety, young people fashion their adulthoods in conditions fraught with contradictions and instability and where opportunities and skills training are limited. Their pragmatism and responsiveness to shifty conditions is not only a sign of resilience but also the source of their notoriety. The fact that youth are singularly blamed

for being out of line points both to the extent of their marginalisation and to the fact that adults and institutions are still beholden to beliefs and norms associated with predictability of ways of life they are familiar with.

The chapter is divided into four subsections. The first looks at how adults try to discipline apparently impossible youth because of perceptions of deviance and pervasive insecurity emanating from youth's survival games; the second looks at youth as disciplined beings who pay bills to access accommodation, food and other services but whose lies and cheating are shaped by the context; the third looks at social pressures that youth have to contend with because of obligations to kin hence demonstrating responsibility, and the last is a discussion of the significance of these issues for this study.

Impossible youth”: youth survival versus security concerns in Beitbridge

The growing number of young people coming to Beitbridge in the 2000s was followed by a public outcry about youth as unruly, risk taking, a security threat, selfish, opportunist, dishonest on one hand while the other hand seen as vulnerable because of the young people's ignorance, age and origins from rural areas making them gullibly believe that there is money to be made in Beitbridge. In the former view, youth lack discipline, sense of propriety and self-restraint because they flout laws and manipulate institutions through their livelihoods and lifestyles. Adults intermittently try to restore order when things get out of hand or to demonstrate authority. Verbal and nonverbal disapproval of youth was widespread in Beitbridge. The common refrain was how “impossible” youth in Beitbridge are. Informants said to me “they are crooks/hoodlums”, in Shona (“...*matsotsi*”), “I would not manage them [as research participants]” (“...*hamuvagone*”) or “they are difficult/impossible/unreliable” (“*vanonetsa*”). Youth counter that they are in an “impossible situation” of which more in later sections. That youth are in fact disciplined in that they regularly pay rent and transport as well as adopting diverse short term saving strategies for themselves and to meet kin obligations is not visible in public outcries. Given the lack of industries and therefore limited employment opportunities in Beitbridge, the question of survival of its residents, both young and adult is at issue. The juxtaposition of these two perspectives of youth as out of line and needing discipline while actually sustaining local households on one hand, and vulnerable needing protection when they are exploited on the other hand, exposes contradictions and the hypocrisy of adults and institutions seeking to ensure social order. Paradoxically, these contradictions enable youth to survive, but also restrain them.

In the discussion of the contextual setting in chapter 3, it was noted that youth in Beitbridge as elsewhere in Zimbabwe dominate the informal sector much to the disapproval of adult residents who expressed impatience and openly negative attitudes towards youth because of “problems” emanating from their lifestyles and self-styled work which were locally described as “games” with many young people as “players”. To reiterate, these activities include scams, goods and people smuggling, low income informal sector work such as ambulant trade in produce, textiles, snacks and trinkets, selling fuel by the container (often two litres),¹ disc jockeying, paid sex and ferrying goods by head portorage and home-made pushcarts, touting for buses and minibuses, smuggling and human trafficking. In all this work the possibility to cheat unwary clients is always present. Popular outcry about insecurity is not unfounded because of the increased incidence of muggings, stabbings and murder of people who walk alone at night, and rape of women who contract human traffickers. In chapter 3 the problem of violent crime was explained together with demands for better policing. Thus police were under pressure to be seen to prevent crime even though arrests of suspects were surprisingly low for the small town. These pressures were brought to bear on how youth fashion their adulthoods in terms of activities they could do and how they did them.

Countering loitering

Loitering is the quintessential stereotype by which unemployed youth are portrayed. It is seen as a threat to personal and property security. Loitering is elastic including being at the border without a passport, talking to truckers at a truckstop, milling around at truckstops, markets and/or beerhalls and in neighbourhoods. In Beitbridge survival strategies the “games” referred to in chapter 3, entailed heightened mobility including illegal crossings into South Africa. This raised many security concerns among members of the public and officials alike. However heightened mobility also belies the blurring of lines between law enforcement and miscreants, members of the public and young people. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) Stephen Jackson (2010) observed that the mobility of young people not only brought them more in contact with law enforcement agencies but it also allowed friendships to develop and transactions to take place between the two groups allowing contraband to cross borders. Thus officials use their positions to take advantage of the situation such as taking bribes sometimes as pre-emptive fines to turn a blind eye to the commission of crimes/offences. Thus while public outcries about security threats may increase the presence of law enforcement agencies, they do not lead to improving law and

order. Disorder and lack of regard for the law originates in pervasive structural dislocation, hence the notion of “fetishisation” of authority (Comaroff and Comaroff 2007:134).

During fieldwork three factors seem to have interacted to accentuate the need to restrain youth mobility thus disrupting young people’s survival strategies. Firstly, preparations for the FIFA World Cup in June 2010 in South Africa were in full swing and South Africa was under pressure to secure its land, air and sea borders for the games. This required cooperation and coordination with neighbouring countries to tighten checks on South Africa bound human and vehicular traffic, and to prevent (perhaps minimise) illegal crossings into South Africa. The porosity of the Zimbabwe-South Africa border has a long and controversial history. Consequently, there were aerial surveillance missions by South African police and the military whose two or three helicopters at a time flew low over the border to flush out human traffickers and smugglers who were wildly believed to use bush trails to evade detection at official border posts and hide their cargo in the forest until dusk. Such operations were followed by crackdowns in Zimbabwe.² Secondly, in September 2009 there was an embarrassing exposé by a private South African television station (also viewed in Beitbridge) on corruption by officials on both sides of the border who apparently work with, and cash in on activities of oft-maligned young men in human trafficking and smuggling of contraband such as cigarettes from Zimbabwe. Officials could not pretend that all is well.³ Thirdly, in the same month a man was murdered under unclear circumstances at a well-known booking house in Beitbridge. The suspect(s) escaped leaving residents to bear the brunt of a reportedly harsh police investigation in the neighbourhood of the booking house. This was followed by quasi-curfews from dusk to dawn. “Quasi-curfew” because the threat of violent crime already made being out at night in the town’s poorly lit streets risky. Zimbabwean police mounted stop-and-search operations in which they were likely to arrest people with no identity papers, of no fixed abode in Beitbridge, or those found near or known to live in notorious neighbourhoods. Thus being out at night, seen as loitering “with intent to commit an offense” became grounds to arrest young people who were up and about after dark or in the wrong place.

Individuals picked up for loitering were kept in police cells until they paid a fine of 200 ZAR, which implies an upper limit of 20 USD for miscellaneous offences (see appendix II for a schedule of fines post-dollarisation).⁴ If they could not pay they stayed in the cells for some days. Many young people were apprehended during this time. Young people described these arrests as “disruptive” as fines dent savings and in lost time while in police cells. Some young people described the fines as “penalty fee” in the “game” of “looking for money”. Consequently they rationalised that they had to work harder to make up for losses.

Although officials made crackdowns look like decisive action against wanton lawlessness in Beitbridge, when I tried to collect statistics of loitering arrests I was told that loitering is a miscellaneous offence but not recorded in crime statistics.⁵ Only serious offences, the kind that are investigated, and where suspects are apprehended and tried in court, are recorded and not miscellaneous crimes. As a result, the number of young people who paid the 200 ZAR fines and how much the police made was not immediately discernible. Ordinarily fines are receipted but not all young people I spoke to recalled being given receipts. Loitering arrests created a revolving door of collecting fines and allowing people to go back to their usual activities, only to be arrested again during another crackdown. This nurtured cynicism among youth who saw this practice as creating a slush fund for the police to supplement their wages. They did not see this as a sincere effort at crime prevention but rather self-enrichment by harassing them. In turn they felt justified to beat the system by cheating and flouting bye-laws.

The “nuisance of illegal” vending

Police crackdowns made street life forbidding at night and difficult during the day. Youth vendors were accused of vending “illegally” because of trading from undesignated places thus flouting urban bye-laws. These spaces are deemed inappropriate for public health reasons because they lack appropriate sanitary and refuse disposal facilities. However young people are also accused of not paying levies to local authorities. Because young people are not seen as “breadwinners”, they are not a priority in the allocation of stalls. This line of thinking assumes that young people’s incomes are for their leisure and not strategic for social development compared to allocating stalls to adults with families. The fact that young people use their incomes in family upkeep is invisible. Besides, it has already been shown in chapter 4 that young men, especially, aspire to have “their own stuff” as part of demonstrating adulthood. They recognise that without possessions they cannot convince girlfriends and families that they are ready for the challenges of social adulthood. Officials across the country still fail to see young people’s needs despite realities discussed in chapter 3. The crisis of social reproduction is such that young people have had to join the workforce the best way they can through informal sector work. The time lag in official recognition of this real need may be behind the persistent view that young people’s survival strategies are a nuisance.

Young people argued that the use of designated spaces attracts a 10 ZAR (1 Euro) stall fee daily. This is worth 2 South African cellphone cards per day, 5 boiled eggs or two meals a day. Paying this levy means foregoing lunch and working harder to make up for

the lost income. Youth vendors complained that the fee increases operational costs while constricting returns as use of market stalls means being restricted to the stall while hoping for clients to come by. In undesignated areas, vendors follow the flow of traffic throughout the day or week. Take the example of Simba, the boiled egg vendor whose strategy is to target men with hangovers and travellers; many such people do not visit markets because they are in transit or going home from the beerhalls. Simba would lose his clientele if he sold his wares from a market stall. Here too the view and cost-benefit analysis of young people remain invisible to officials.

Nationwide crackdowns against “illegal” vending render vendors vulnerable to losing their merchandise to police and soldiers who impound or damage the goods. Ordinarily impounded goods are used as evidence in court, if cases end up in court. Despite the pervasive running battles against vendors, few cases end in court and vendors often pay fines. In this punitive environment, vendors prefer it this way as fines allow them to quickly return to work. The problem though is that in most cases the impounded goods are not returned or traceable as goods impounded by the state even if they are non-perishable. There were rumours that impounded perishable goods were given to prison services to feed prisoners. It is not clear what happens to non-edible goods. Youth vendors cited confiscation of wares as a major stumbling block for their livelihoods as shown in the excerpt below from an FGD with male vendors.

.....

RM: What is the difficulty since you can make money?

- We have to contend with disruptions and losses incurred as a result of crackdowns by the police and soldiers. They seize our merchandise under the pretext that we are selling from undesignated places.

Interjection - They disrupt our work.

- You see, with regards to remittances, the crackdowns are usually on a Friday after a week of work and when we are about to send some money home and so on.

Interjection- Let us say you have 2000 ZAR (200 Euro) it is lost at once if you are unfortunate to be nabbed.

RM: [W]hy do you keep that much cash on you?

- It is business

- This type of work requires that we keep cash ready at hand.

- Let me explain, selling airtime has narrow profit margins so we combine it with trading in currency such as between the USD and the Rand. This is how we grow

the profits. It is best to keep one's money on one's person to make it work in this way while selling airtime cards....

Interjection - It is true. If you keep small amounts of cash you go nowhere/do not make progress. (In Shona he said “*hausimuki*”)

RM: What I was trying to say is, for soldiers to access the cash, is it because you have the money on you rather than safely stored somewhere?

- Yes. The money is usually in one's pockets.

RM: Why keep it in your pockets given the situation? You could hide it somewhere?

- Let me show you something. [Pulling out a wad of airtime scratch cards]. These cards are worth about 2000 ZAR.

- Interjection - And that could be a day's business...

Previous speaker continuing-If soldiers get hold of these cards or the cash, it is all lost.

RM: Oh I see. Soldiers take your merchandise thus everything you have.

- They also take cash if available.

- You see, if that happens it leaves one paralysed [economically]. You would have to start all over.

These research participants felt that raids on Friday meant that the soldiers and police were also looking for some out of pocket spending for the weekend or for their families. They described the raids and goods seizures as “robbery” (their exact words) by soldiers. This defeats their efforts to sustain themselves and look after kin. Some young people argued that sometimes even when not on duty some soldiers refuse to pay for purchases. When payment is demanded, soldiers retort that the young people are greedy citing high mark-ups on especially South African cards arguing that not paying for their purchases does not dent the vendors' profits. The fact is some young people borrow to buy cards or sell cards on behalf of colleagues to recover from past losses. Consequently they cannot afford to lose money on any of their inventory. These research participants said it is unwise to argue with members of the military as they respond with slaps or walk off in the knowledge that most people will not invest in escalating the altercation. Soldiers are more notorious than the police because of their brutality, impatience and inability to vary strategies with circumstances or to negotiate. Youth vendors said they routinely negotiate with the police for discounted or deferred of fines. Sometimes they are informed in advance of an operation so they are not in areas where a demonstration crackdown is due. The police live within the community whereas soldiers are isolated in barracks and less friendly.

The use of soldiers in governance issues is controversial but has a long history in Zimbabwe when quick results are needed (Rupiya 2005, also Ranchod-Nilsson 2006). Military style crackdowns point to crises in governance, and the stubborn mismatch between policies, laws and people's needs and modes of existence, leading to blitzes to "restore order" in social relations and relations with the state. The fact that over the years women and young people have been targets of these crackdowns perhaps points to the state's quest to uphold a patriarchal and gerontocratic order, which women and young people challenge through mobility and activities in the informal sector. It also points to a failure to see what has gone wrong with the gerontocratic order and why youth and women are forced to be up and about instead of adult men. With Beitbridge border post designated as a national security concern because of prevalent smuggling and lawlessness leading to deployment of soldiers, soldiers are now a permanent feature. Clearly some of the youth livelihoods mentioned above are national security threats making youth targets of blitzes as well as joint operations between the police and soldiers. Vendors could not risk being defiant or feign ignorance with soldiers as could be done with the police. Ignorant or not, soldiers respond to all with brutality against people leading to goods being seized, lost and damaged.

Martin Rupiya says soldiers use military approaches to non-combat situations of "social order" because they are quick, mechanical and brutal. Regrettably, military style crackdowns against the informal sector have been in place for several years now. The swiftness of soldiers gets the job done but they are also prone to human rights abuses. The indelible effect of their deployment seen in recurring crackdowns is a source of some of the notoriety Zimbabwe has. Meanwhile, the multiplicity of these blitzes since independence shows that people revert back to their "chaotic" ways as soon as soldiers are back in the barracks. For this reason, despite protracted blitzes, informal sector activities have not waned but rather continue to multiply and draw in more people especially youth. Soldiers are impatient with crime and vice which they blame on lax and instrumental policing. They argue that if law enforcement was more stringent lawlessness would not proliferate. However there is the glaring problem of willy-nilly seizures and unaccounted for impounded goods. Young people see soldiers as equally corrupt and worse because of their brutality and impunity.

Young people do not see vending as breaking any law as implied by the notion of its being "illegal". Rather they argue that it is an honest livelihood for which they should not be punished especially given the obvious lack of alternative employment. They see the crackdowns as a form of harassment which causes them untold suffering and economic loss. Melusi who hires out a music system and disc jockeys at parties but also clandestinely

sells beer at his groceries stall in front of his deceased father’s house, reiterated this point when he said:

The soldiers beat up people for no reason other than being out and about. I think we [vendors] should be allowed to sell our things. I am unemployed. I need a way to make money. This harassment has to stop...otherwise I will end up stealing and that is bad. If I go to prison for theft what would my pregnant [unemployed] girlfriend do given other problems we have?

The police and soldiers frequently visit Melusi attracted by his loud music, and accuse him of running a *shebeen*. They respond by taking away any beer they can access. He denies the allegation that he runs a *shebeen* but concedes he plays music aloud (like most people in the town) for relaxation while manning his groceries stall and that the beer is for his consumption. Unlike in nearby South Africa, *shebeens* are illegal in Zimbabwe; never mind that they are commonplace. *Shebeens* flout the Liquor Act according to which liquor outlets should be licensed, sited appropriately, well-equipped as recreational spaces, not serve under-18s and work within specified hours. In Beitbridge, people drink around the clock. Thus Melusi is not the only one to sell liquor around the clock. Other people do it too. Like him, they have a front stall with groceries while alcohol is hidden in a fridge somewhere. Melusi could be said to be lying, but he is trying to save his livelihood (like everyone else). The problem is that anyone who is apprehended once for miscellaneous offences will be checked on by the police (and soldiers) in future. Such individuals are forced to lie, hide their merchandise while continuing with chosen informal sector activities albeit illegal. Vendors see survival as being resilient, thus returning to work after the police and soldiers strike. This resilience is not deviance or stubbornness as local refrains mentioned earlier imply. Other cultivated strategies to avoid losing all of their merchandise include hiding bulky merchandise in unlikely places such as rubbish dumps or below bushes where a soldier in a hurry to get the job done will not look. Although this would not work well for vendors of cellphone recharge cards because they are sought after to hide under a bush, it works for other bulky products. This may look like defying law enforcement but it is part of survival. The point here is what alternative does Melusi have if he does not lie? If he accepts the allegations he risks fines, loss of his merchandise and possibly his music system. That would set him back much more.

Despite the foregoing, when the crackdown intensified in October 2009, youth vendors said “sanity” was returning to Beitbridge. They suggested that soldiers should close booking houses and deport sex workers to rural areas to help their families in agricultural

work. They argued that sex work is illicit because the women “rob” men of their hard earned money through “immoral deeds”. This was mentioned by some male vendors I had in FGDs. The conversation came up as youth recounted recent raids targeting loiterers at the border, at truck stops and nightclubs forcing the latter to be silent for some nights in October 2009. The same youth research participants who in September lavishly complained about the brutality of soldiers were now in favour of it when female youth were targeted. In September and October 2009 some owners of booking houses reported a decline in business as their female lodgers left town to take a break until tensions eased in Beitbridge. In this sense then, popular critiques of military style governance are qualified. In male youth’s sentiments people who make money from “honest” and morally acceptable means should be exempt from soldier brutality. Vending, they argue, is honest work unlike sex work. This leaves female youth in sex work open to abuse as their being out and about challenges gender norms and looking for money makes them look greedy and deviant. This does not mean that female youth do not fight back. It means that female youth in sex work or other occupations which demand mobility are in trouble with the law and have limited sympathy from the public.

Female youth harbouring bandits and criminals in booking houses?

Female youth living in booking houses were singularly accused of harbouring hardened criminals thereby obstructing the course of justice and frustrating police investigations. The argument here is that hardened criminals who hide, rob, rape and murder people in the forest by day actually sleep in the town using sex workers as hosts. Some of the sex workers are also apparently lookouts for the criminals, alerting them in the event that they identify a man with a lot of money in the town. The sex workers set a trap for their quarry by pretending interest in giving the man company while allowing their male friends to rob him and share spoils later. Thus these young women are accused of working in cahoots with criminals. Consequently, police failure to apprehend hardened criminals was attributed to female youth obstructing justice by failing to report sighting of the wanted persons. Not all residents of booking houses are self-identified sex workers. However many have long-term relations with men with disposable income especially men willing to pay for some of their expenses such as room rent, meals and pocket money. Some female lodgers referred to their regular partners as “working at the border” in unspecified occupations or sometimes referred to them as “clearing and forwarding agents”. Typically, in the no-questions-asked culture of Beitbridge, homeowners turn a blind eye to the likely source of rent or details of men who the night in their booking houses. The men shower and leave at dawn as is typical

of people who are self-employed who rush to the border for this and that activity. If these men are hardened criminals then owners of booking houses will not disclose, hence their jitteriness about me asking questions as discussed in chapter 2.

With the accommodation crunch, homeowners could be picky about potential lodgers, preferring females for “security reasons” and because homeless women are seen as vulnerable. By contrast, single men as lodgers were branded as a security threat as they could be thieves, rapists and much harder to control. The argument goes that homeless women cannot sleep in the open without a place to wash even though they are also known not to have sources of income. Homeowners argue that no one has money but all people can “look” for it saying in Shona “*mari inotsvagwa*”. That is “money is something one looks for” without disclosing how and where. Thus in these multiple non-disclosures lies the possibility for criminals to spend the night in comfort of homes in Beitbridge.

These emergent living arrangements work well for wanted criminals as they access accommodation by having relationships with female lodgers in booking houses without leaving a trail. They work well too for female youth, who occupy all available beds so that male travellers access accommodation on their terms. This works well for homeowners as long as female youth pay rent every morning. However it is the female youth lodgers who solely bear the brunt of harbouring criminals, and not the homeowners who should rightly decide who comes into their homes. Homeowners claim that female lodgers are adults not accountable to them in terms of social relations. During the crackdown many female youth in booking houses in the proximity of the bus terminus were rounded up and beaten for harbouring criminals and for hiding information about criminal suspects who frequented nearby booking houses. Those who were rounded up were released only after naming one criminal they supposedly knew and giving details of where he lives and where he was last seen. It is taken as a given that being in sex work or living in a booking house means one knows or is in touch with criminals. I witnessed some of the rounding up in the evening of 6 October 2009 near the bus terminus. When I subsequently met with Rita, she told me that most female youth lodgers at booking houses had to share stories about local criminals some of whom had long escaped to appease the police. Sometimes they told vague stories of suspicious individuals who lived at particular houses but had long moved. The latter was Rita’s strategy. Thus lying was the only way to be released. This created a self-fulfilling prophecy that sex workers have relations with criminals and that they were a source of information about criminal activities. It is possible that some of these young women dated men who work at the border without knowing exactly what they do. In Rita’s case, she could not verify the story she had been told namely that her boyfriend is a “clearing agent”

– whether genuine or an impostor she could not say. He used to visit her on Fridays only, arguing that this was his only free time but she did not know where he lives. She did not visit him at his place either. She had rationalized that it was pointless to visit him at home by day as he is at work, and at night she is busy so the matter of home visits had not really come up. It sounded plausible. In November 2009 he suddenly broke off the relationship arguing that he was leaving for his rural home in Chiredzi until Christmas. It is also possible that as the crackdown intensified in October 2009, he decided to lay low for a while as many people did. On the other hand, Rita had also had been exposed to law enforcement which could have made him want to lay low.

During the crackdown youth in sex work were used as decoys to capture bandits and criminals who hide in the forest near the border. Rita was in one such sting operation. After being beaten as investigations for the September booking house murder got underway, she and a couple of her colleagues were woken up at dawn by undercover police. The young women were ordered to take a sizeable bag each and pretend to be travellers attempting to cross into South Africa using bush trails. The police were behind them at a safe distance. As soon as they approached the river, a gang of young men gave chase. The young women ran towards South Africa as per instruction. The police gave chase to the young men and apprehended five of them, Rita told me. Some of the bandits ran away when they realised this was a police trap.

Clearly, young sex workers' sexuality is taken advantage of by many with impunity. Landlords use it to raise rent while denying that they are living off proceeds of sex work, the police use these young women as informants and honey traps to bait criminals. Criminals cooperate with them to access better accommodation. The point here is that it is the young women who are blamed for "harbouring" criminals as if they own the houses in which criminals are harboured. Owners of houses turn a blind eye to whom their lodgers bring home for the night.

If homeowners sound kind and considerate to female youth lodgers, their empathy falls apart when their lodgers fall pregnant and have babies. One booking house owner complained about tenants with babies saying she cannot allow them to stay on because her accommodation is not appropriate for babies. In addition, she said that babies mean increased use of utilities. In another booking house Tatenda, Rita's colleague who found herself homeless in 2010 and had to return to her booking house with a newborn, found it difficult to combine paid sex with baby care (more on Tatenda in chapter 7). The baby cried all night to the annoyance of other lodgers and their clients. She was behind in rent and the owner of the booking house was becoming impatient with her. She had not accumulated

much for the owner to hold as a lien against unpaid rent as is the practice. She asked to do domestic work for the booking house in exchange for a rent reduction. This was not working well as it meant reduced income for the booking owner, hence the tension. Booking house owners, thus, are not entirely empathetic but simply seek to make money out of homeless female youth.

Booking house owners manipulate the police to evade arrest, while obliging young women to engage in sex work to pay rent. Youth lodgers on the other hand had to learn to cooperate with homeowners, the police and thieves to get by. Forced cooperation with the police was controversial. Some saw it as buying goodwill, while others saw it as exploitative as it brought no material benefits other than an intensification of work, as they had to collect information for the police and do their own work to survive. It was sufficient for some to circulate exaggerated stories which were common knowledge. Clearly where the goodwill includes giving false information to the police and creating possibilities for patron-client relations then it extends corruption rather than ending it. Although none of the youth respondents in this study confessed to any dealings with criminals, they have to manage what information they have lest they are punished by the criminals or risk ostracism for being police informants. Through misinforming the police some young women could save their boyfriends if wanted by the police. There is no telling if some of the sex workers were not informants in exchange for police protection and exemption from police harassment. Thus if youth are “impossible”, they are in an equally impossible situation characterised by low employment opportunities, criminalisation of the informal sector and crackdowns therein. How else could they get by if not through giving false information and manipulation?

Youth as a source of income for the informal sector

In this section, the focus is on youth as disciplined individuals who work, albeit in low return informal sector activities, pay for services and meet obligations to kin. Young people live in marginalised areas with limited access to utilities thus they access services through informal arrangements. In the process, given limited employment in this setting, desperate young people are the core market for accommodation, transport, food and clothing and many other items sold in open markets. The provision of some of these services is regulated but continues outside of regulations as people struggle to augment incomes. In this vein, this section tries to show how adults’ are involved in youth’s maligned existences, but that adults are not blamed for it.

Adults cashing in on the accommodation crunch

There is a shortage of accommodation from which homeowners cash in by leasing rooms to urban migrants. This is a nationwide phenomenon made worse by growing demand in the face of reduced capacity to building new housing units. Renting out rooms is not entirely legal but accepted to some extent on humanitarian grounds and for political expediency, as it has become a nationwide survival strategy. In Beitbridge some people lease temporary shelters in plots awaiting development, thus shacks persist despite slum clearance.

In general youth live in less appealing, marginal neighbourhoods not yet connected to utilities and essential services (water, electricity and sewerage). The houses are in different stages of construction in what are supposed to be site-and-service schemes but often the latter are lacking. These are the same neighbourhoods where some people use the bush rather than the communal, NGO-built pit latrines as indicated in chapter 3. They use firewood rather than electricity. Firewood of indigenous savannah trees is bought in bulk from neighbouring rural areas and resold in smaller quantities to local people, from 5 Rand for a bundle enough for cooking one or two meals. This has implications for the extent to which young people cook in their places of residence. Owners of these houses save for complete construction by renting out to desperate individuals working in the informal sector. Rent is relatively expensive between 400 and 800 ZAR (40-80 Euro)/month per room even when the room has unplastered walls and an unfinished floor (that is with rammed earth pending a concrete filling). Rent is lower in shacks occupied by youth under the pretext of taking care of someone's property. Because of multiple slum clearances, shacks are ordinarily no longer permitted. However they exist as temporary shelters in undeveloped plots of land where they are justified as storerooms for building materials or temporary guardrooms for caretakers of the property pending completion of construction. Regardless of the state of the temporary shelter, young people still pay rent while risking illnesses, exposure to the elements and other hazards. Because of the unpleasantness of these dwellings, many young people are not keen to stay in them, another factor encouraging young people's mobility.

In completed houses, young people share rooms to reduce expenses. In January 2010 I visited a six member, all-female dance group at their residence, a rented small room, about 3 by 4 metres. Its walls were unplastered, floors had rough concrete pending a smooth finish with windows on two sides which did little to cool the place in the sweltering afternoon heat. The exterior door was kept closed for privacy as many people sat outside to cool from the heat. The interior door had a threadbare cloth for privacy. Neighbours went up and down the passage in full view of the girls' room. The dancers spread a large imported Chinese blanket on the floor indicating that they all slept together. The blanket doubled

somewhat as a floor rug-cum-mat; we sat on it. It was discoloured with dirt as the young women stepped on it with shoes and bare feet alike. The dancers had few utensils with most items having multiple uses such as metal enamelled plates serving as pans. (I say this as I saw one of them making herself something to eat while I talked to the rest of the group. She heated some cooking oil in an enamel plate, added a diced tomato and after it was ready she ate it with bread from the same plate. Meanwhile she had also heated water with an enamel cup to make herself some tea). They were using an electric hotplate. Their electricity came from outside via an electric cord, an informal connection.

As already shown in the foregoing, Beitbridge residents converted part of their homes into “booking houses” – informal boarding houses – in response to the housing crunch. A senior town official referred to them as “informal accommodation businesses” and as a perennial problem in the town. He suggested that these homes should follow regulations to meet set standards on bedding and facilities if they wish to operate as bed and breakfast facilities. Another town official described them as “brothels”, making money by giving beds to young unemployed women who pay rent daily from paid sex. The former reference means that they are tolerable while the latter means that they are illegal. In Zimbabwe it is an offence to live off proceeds of, to provide facilities for, and/or to recruit people into sex work. House owners are careful not to be seen as running brothels as it points to breaking the law. When I spoke with booking house owners, one of them made this point saying she understands that there are questions about how she and other in her trade make money. She was quick to say, she does not get into details as she had an agreement with lodgers that she wants X ZAR a day. If a lodger agrees she expects to collect the money no questions asked. Rent is between 40 and 60 ZAR per person per day. Often there are between 2 and 4 persons per room with booking houses having around 10 tenants at the time of doing fieldwork, thus making at least 12 000 ZAR (1200 Euro) per month. Access to such accommodation is through a referral system. I was turned down when I pretended to be new in town and looking for accommodation at the start of fieldwork. I had no referees. Booking houses generally look better than ordinary houses. Booking house owners also take advantage of female lodgers by unilaterally holding their groceries and other shopping as liens if the lodgers default on rent. Rita explained the practice this way

Rita: Ah. You know, mother sometimes understands. When sick, for instance, she makes note of it in her book where she records all transactions. Once well, one is obliged to pay back all debts bit-by-bit. [For girls in debt or about to go home] she checks goods in her care for safekeeping, usually clothing, Chinese blankets and

groceries. She takes items to the value of the debt.... she prefers imported Chinese blankets⁶ so she will take them first if available...

RM: What if lodgers leave without telling her?

Rita: Yes, some run away because of this. They keep their possessions elsewhere rather than with her. Otherwise they would forfeit all their possessions because mother unilaterally decides how much the goods are worth.

RM: Oh. Do *you* have a place where you keep your possessions?

Rita: [*In a low voice*] Yes. My colleague and I have a woman who keeps our things. I have asked her to keep my new blankets too.

The tendency to “run away” as mentioned by Rita makes female youth lodgers unreliable to landlords/ladies as they are seen as untrustworthy and manipulative. The owner of booking house A complained about it, saying the female youth come looking for accommodation with no belongings and leave many months apparently still with no belongings. Coming with nothing gives an impression of despair. With the right references one gets accommodation but the booking house owner has no way of finding out where the young woman comes from much less where she keeps her clothes. Maintaining the look of having nothing allows female youth to leave at a moment’s notice in response to opportunities or threats. However it does not give the landlady anything to hold on to. The owner of booking house A complained that it is hard to trace such lodgers because they use false names. Thus a truant lodger could move into a neighbouring booking house and the former landlady would not know as lodgers give themselves different names and personae. The use of false names and lack of identity cards makes it hard to track movements of lodgers. For instance, some young women claim that they just disembarked from a bus and are desperate for accommodation. If they have references, the new booking house will not know any better. The booking house owners cannot report this truancy to the police because often there are no lease agreements signed with the lodgers.

Owners of booking houses do not agree that they are breaking the law, even when their lodgers are accused of harbouring hardened criminals or of prostitution. They argue that they are trying to look after their families by using properties they worked hard to acquire. They have children in boarding schools and private universities where tuition fees are annually over 1000 USD. As noted in chapter 3, most booking house owners actively cooperate with non-governmental organisations (NGOs) working on sexual and reproductive health issues target youth “at risk” and vulnerable to HIV and STI infections. There were several such organisations at the time of doing research. These organisations

make no qualms about why they are targeting booking houses. These are places to meet sex workers in private. Despite the fact that the activities of NGOs take place in broad daylight, the same booking house owners deny involvement in sex work to the police, local authority officials and to me as a researcher. They however routinely pay fines to the police when their lodgers are arrested. This is portrayed as kindness but in reality it expedites the release of lodgers, to return to work as sex workers and to pay rent.

Thus booking house owners are not harassed or suspected of aiding sex work as their lodgers are. Yet booking houses' collaboration with NGOs shows that their owners live off proceeds of sex work. The same applies to beer hall and nightclub operators who argue that they are running licensed businesses and that it is not their role to police patrons to ensure that they are not using these spaces for soliciting for paid sex. Thus prostitution continues in these places with no punishment despite the law. Consequently sex work ceases to be a problem created and sustained by a chain of interactions and institutional arrangements but become a problem blamed on apprehended sex workers. Focusing on young women highlights their deficiencies, poor upbringing, and poor judgement rather than the injustice and marginalisation they have to cope with and their attempts to resolve them through sex work. In turn young women devise ingenious strategies to work with the police and soldiers to avoid harassment while also enjoying the patronage of criminals for protection, money, romantic relations on the side. Their patronage with the police might also be deployed for the benefit of criminal friends. Lies and manipulation are part of survival in this environment.

“You need at least 5 ZAR to get by”: rationalizing basic income?

The common refrain I heard was “one needs 5 ZAR to get by”, because it is the price of a plate of basic food (*sadza*⁷ and vegetables or pulses). The plate costs more when served with meat. Thus 5 ZAR is the minimum price for many services and commodities offered by vendors. There are no cooking facilities in most dwellings used by young people including booking houses. Most young people survived through buying cooked food while those who try to cook do so using limited utensils they have. Buying food makes life very costly, but it creates a large ready market for food vendors. Even when individuals restrict themselves to just one cooked meal a day at 5 ZAR for a plate, it amounts to 150 ZAR per month on meals. The single meal is usually supplemented by sharing a loaf of bread with friends accompanied by a fizzy drink at 5 ZAR for a 300ml bottle. Booking house owners also cash-in by keeping well stocked fridges with fizzy drinks and imported beer to sell to their lodgers sometimes on credit.

Vendors of all manner of merchandise are allowed to come into the booking house to interest lodgers in their wares. I saw sales of a range of foods sold by the portion between 5 and 10 ZAR, clothes, beauty products and many others sold for cash or credit. Skincare products such as skin lighteners were available for 5 ZAR as were lip-glosses, face powders and foundations. Often some vendors found themselves at loggerheads with young women who, having taken goods on credit, claimed inability to pay at the end of the month when vendors demanded payment. Young people lie, hide from their creditors and/or run away or change identity. These strategies mean that some of the goods given on credit may never be paid for. In schools most snacks cost 5 ZAR thus even in-school youth need at least 5 ZAR. Most snacks sold at school gates cost 5 ZAR including potato crisps, ice creams, ice-llollies, soft drinks and home baked products. Civvies day also costs 5 ZAR as discussed in previous chapters. Consequently having or not having 5 ZAR measures young person's exclusion from consumption and/or inability to survive.

Malayitshas: duping and dumping young people

Crossborder minibus drivers who doubled as couriers ferrying groceries and money when going to Zimbabwe and human transports (including people smuggling) when going to South Africa cashed in on the increased mobility and gullibility of young people. The drivers and sometimes the vehicles were locally referred to as *malayitshas*. This literally means "courier" or "haulage vehicle". Often family members who are related or otherwise know the driver or owner of the minibus entrust them with children and adults going to South Africa sometimes without papers. Young people were robbed, raped and later dumped by crews of these crossborder minibuses for a variety of reasons in contradiction agreements entered into with sending kin in Zimbabwe. Many of the kin do not get feedback about the safe arrival of their dependents as the excerpt below shows:

Biggerz: I was going to Jo'burg [Johannesburg]. I was dumped here by a *malayitsha* [others laugh]. Well, I am telling the truth, I do not want to shy away from real experiences. I do not lie like some of us sitting here...Yes. I was dumped by *malayitshas*. They left us here at the service station (naming it). As a man, (In Shona *semunhu wemurume...*) I had to survive.

RM: Why did the *malayitshas* dump you?

Biggerz: You know what happens, passengers pay full fare for the trip to Johannesburg in advance, but the driver can force you to drop off here instead of your preferred destination. There were many of us in similar circumstances. Some females

subsequently got “married” here. We ended up doing all sorts of odd piecework (*kujingirisa-jingirisa*).

RM: Why did he dump you if you had paid full fare for the journey? He knew where you were going when he collected your fares.

Biggerz: Yes he knew.

RM: So why did he dump you? Surely crossing the border is not that complicated?

Biggerz: He said he could not cross with all of us at once because we were too many. He said he would come back for us in smaller groups. We obviously did not know any better. We agreed with the plan. Seven of us who had paid in advance were left behind. We did not know that the rest who remained in the car were “pay forwards” whose fares would be paid by their hosts on arrival in Johannesburg. We waited for him from 8 am till around 5 pm, and then it dawned on us that we had been had.

[Interjection] You realised that you had lost all your money.

Biggerz tried to show bravery and manliness by arguing that *kujingirisa-jingirisa* (street language for unspecified piece work which sometimes includes theft) came in handy for his survival. It belies the sense of shame associated with returning home with nothing to show from the trip especially after being robbed. Thus as a man, he could not give up and go back home, he had to make the trip worthwhile somehow. My efforts at coaxing him to tell me how he started vending and sources of his start-up capital were futile. He was consistently vague. His colleagues’ laughter points to a common refrain I heard from young people in Beitbridge. It acknowledges common experiences of gullibility and believing in the kindness of strangers only to be hurt by them. Many subsequently learnt not to trust strangers or to take advantage of visitors in the town.

Jane aged 20 and currently a fruit vendor echoed these sentiments in her story. She was orphaned in her early teens and subsequently taken in by a married sister. The latter’s husband eventually could not cope with caring for his in-laws and his own family. He sponsored her trip to South Africa expecting remittances in return to alleviate his household reproductive crisis. Here is a portion of Jane’s story.

I wanted to go to South Africa...Then my fares were stolen and I was stuck.We got to Bubi [almost 100km from the border] and the driver said we had to put up there because he was tired. While we were asleep in the minibus my purse was stolen. I do not know who stole it but I have my suspicions. I think the driver knows who did it. I lost all the money I had. By the time we arrived in Beitbridge I was desperate. I could not go back home or proceed to South Africa. I had paid to get to Beitbridge before

the theft...I had enough money for my friend and myself. I had invited a friend to come along with me. My brother-in-law had sold two cows, one for family upkeep and the other one for my trip. I had all that money. My brother-in-law sponsored the trip to South Africa after trying to look after us to no avail. Things got so bad his income as a soldier was not enough for all of us. He gave me money from one cow because I needed to bribe ("*kudhiza*") our way to get a residence and work permit to enter South Africa, as was reportedly the practice.

From Jane's story it is clear that there is misinformation about the ease of crossing with border without papers. People frequently budgeted for bribes too only to be cheated by persons acting as fronts many times removed from officials. People smugglers' prices for an illegal crossing excluding bribes, and are comparatively hefty 1500-2000 ZAR (150-200 Euro). Considering that a bus ticket from Harare to Johannesburg is between 350-400 ZAR the former is expensive. The money is divided equally among three people: the driver (the *malayitsha*), the people smuggler who actually guides people across the river and a local fixer who links the driver with the people smuggler. Links between these people are not always secure so money could disappear at any stage leaving the travellers stranded or left at the mercy of strangers. Many were then held hostage either in the forest or in the town and told they were waiting for an opportunity to cross the river when in reality the crossing would not happen. Often it was impossible to report the theft because travellers were accomplices in border jumping. Many young people who live in Beitbridge also survived by peddling misinformation such as claiming to have contacts that can help people into South Africa. Some research participants took these stories and experiences as some kind of initiation into a life of independence and living away from home, into urban life where people do not care much for strangers. Consequently they felt no guilt if they could cheat or lie to gullible peers in despair. Trusting couriers and seemingly benevolent strangers underlines youth gullibility, leading many to say that their rural upbringing was to blame for their circumstances.

Filial piety: pressure to send remittances and to save

Diligence in caring for one's elders is an important aspect of Zimbabwean culture. During the crisis many young people understood that their parents/caregivers were struggling to make ends meet. The pressure this exerted on young people to send remittances was palpable. This was raised by some key informants including a local businessman. In a multilingual discussion (in Zimbabwean vernacular languages and English) he explained

that parents exert pressure on young people. He asked me what I understood from an Ndebele proverb, which says “*Ukuzala yikuz’elula*”. Literally it means “to give birth is to extend oneself”. The proverb is a celebration of childbirth as an inexhaustible endowment from which (biological and social) parents draw for the rest of their lives. The proverb is mentioned when a child does something appreciable for elders. In addition, filial piety is seen as a blessing to young people who observe it. Young people who are less conscientious about minding their elders are believed to be cursed. People believe that when one’s parents are not happy because they are neglected their discontent unleashes misfortune by ancestral wrath. After my explanation, the businessman said that for him this proverb buttresses some of the most enduring norms and injustices in intergenerational relations given changing economic circumstances. Parents expect to reap from their children’s efforts whether or not they were able to give the young people a befitting foundation. Where adults have no skills or ability to look after themselves, children especially sons are expected to make up for parents’ limitations. Thus young people feel duty bound to please parents through remittances and accumulating own property, and struggle to achieve urban and rural respectability I discussed. Peer pressure also plays a role in shaming those who are not able to send remittances home or not able to do as much as peers do. Sending remittances gives young people a chance to perform success, even though many scrimp and save to buy the large food packs.

The businessman observed that many young people were trying in vain to live up to social expectations. If they do not meet these expectations they feel guilty and conflicted. Thus young people do not focus on the limitations of their circumstances. Instead, they present themselves as managing regardless of day-to-day challenges hence sending remittances against all odds. Parents on their part do not question how their children make money as shown in the discussion in chapter 4, for example, older women’s laments about lax parenting and accepting groceries bought with undisclosed sources of income. Rural parents yearn to eat sought-after food items such as powdered milks, edible oils, rice and pastas hence they goad their children to send remittances. The businessman spoke passionately saying that in order to control vice, there is a need to let young people be, to extend opportunities to them and not to pressure them to provide when they have nothing. If he had his way, parents would not impose on their children such high expectations given pervasive unemployment.

I am reminded of the titillating stories of returning migrants during the holidays in my rural area in Gwanda district. Whether the migrants do menial work in South African farms, factories, and homes or do professional work, the villagers know that so-and-so’s

daughter/son came or sent some groceries of this or that nature. These stories are shared through local conviviality and common courtesy. When the villagers see a car parked or when they see someone disembarking from a bus they visit. Common hospitality demands that they are served with some of the migrant's groceries. In fact it is part of a common greeting when seeing a migrant to say "what did you bring for us?" It is both literal and metaphorical. These metaphors force compliance with the idea that migrants must bring "something" or else it is pointless to come home empty-handed. Invariably the returnee has to engage in conversation about life outside the country. Few talk of hardship in any literal sense. What spreads is the grandeur of these distant places and their fortunes. To listeners senses of deprivation are created and magnified, hence many parents urge their own children and wards to migrate to seek wage work or other income earning opportunities.

Youth respondents in Beitbridge were more nuanced. They argued that if they did not send remittances and share the little they have, all manner of misfortune would befall them. Some were of the opinion that the end justified the means. Thus if they cared for their parents, it did not matter how they earned the money. Others complained about burdens brought to bear on young people forcing them to lie, to manipulate and to be manipulated by others. For instance, some young people earn money from sex work while pretending to be doing domestic work. Those in domestic work are primed into sex work because of low wages. Precisely, live-in domestic workers are paid 300 ZAR per month. Many work from morning till evening. The seemingly higher returns and autonomy of paid sex obscured its occupational hazards, demands such as daily rent before making some money for oneself. The owner of booking house A said youth in sex work are simply "lazy" because they think sex work is "easy". She said they do not wish to exert themselves doing other available informal sector work such as vending. The fact that the profits are thin is not obvious to many people. Thus young people are pushed by the need to demonstrate responsibility and worthiness of their migration, and will look for activities with relatively higher incomes in order to send money home. Some like Jane saw some kind of career progression in their work history moving from domestic work to vending for instance. Jane was pleased with the experience and confidence she gained to date, as shown in the excerpt below.

Jane: To tell you the truth about my life, things are different. My life changed for the better since I started working for myself. When I first got here, I worked as a maid. I earned 300 ZAR/month. I was quite pleased with myself at first because I had never handled that much money. I could buy myself basic food and clothes. Then I started vending, I earned even more. So I am really pleased with myself. Sometimes I cannot

believe the change. I make quite a bit of money – I am able to buy groceries in bulk and remit them home every other month.

RM: How much did you make when you started vending?

Jane: Daily I would say about 100-150 ZAR (10-15 Euro). Every day I bought something significant for myself.

...

RM: How much do you send home in remittances?

Jane: I do not know. I do not calculate it. I try to buy major grocery items in bulk over time like 10 kg of wheat flour, long life [ultra-heat treated] or powdered milk, a carton of soap, cooking oil etc. I buy any of these items whenever I have money such as 50 ZAR (5 Euro) to spare.

Remittances are sent as groceries bought in bulk. They are sent by bus, through informal couriers (*malayitshas*) or taken home in person. It is important to note that most grocery packs that I saw being purchased or being sent off were not staple food, maize meal. Young people like Jane sent bulk packs of rice, pasta, potatoes, cooking oil, bath and laundry soaps by the carton, powdered milk, sugar, vegetable oil (cooking oil and margarine⁸), eggs (sold in five dozen customised packs to prevent breakage), corned tinned meat in addition to money. In the last quarter of 2009 some were buying agro-inputs to send to their rural homes in preparation for the agricultural season.

The owner of booking house A satirically marvelled at the groceries that some of her lodgers send home saying their parents and neighbours “must be impressed”. Some young people buy appliances and household goods such as refrigerators, freezers, stoves, beds and moveable bedroom cupboards in South Africa. She observed that most people in formal work do not shop like some of “her girls”. She said it is easy to see how those left at home are pressured to emulate the migrants lest they are left behind. That this shopping may be a way of protecting one’s incomes from theft and raids since many young people do not have bank accounts also goes unnoticed. Consequently, when youth respondents are compared to people in formal work, they shop more because it is the only way they can hold on to their earnings lest the money is stolen or lost during crackdowns. People in formal work do not face the same pressure nor are they subjected to police checks as much as these young people. Thus buying groceries is also part of survival strategies in the town.

In any case, many young people do not have and cannot operate bank accounts because they do not have national identity cards, fixed incomes and fixed addresses as demanded by banks. The class and occupational biases of banks are clear despite the fact

that there are fewer people in wage work than informal sector workers. Banks demand disclosure of sources of income for security reasons. This excludes people such as research respondents in this study whose sources of income are unspecified. Thus if young people keep profits as cash, they would have to keep the money on their person everywhere they go hence risking loss. It is hard to keep money at home given that they share the rooms with colleagues whether at booking houses or elsewhere. Often as already described the dwellings have limited fittings thus no lockable cupboards to keep valuables safe. In general, female youth I spoke to shop and remit more in frequency, quality and quantity than their male counterparts. This is because some of them have children out of wedlock in the care of mothers or other relatives. If still single, young women are not ordinarily expected to invest in household goods and other property because it is assumed that they will get married. Their wages are consumed. If they invest in household goods, chances are they are forced to leave them to their natal families when they get married. In other words, it is not the norm for a woman to bring goods and clothing acquired before marriage into her matrimonial home. The husband as provider of the family furnishes the matrimonial home either from personal or joint income. However there is also the common refrain that “girls do not forget their parents” while boys easily forget once they found their own households. Through socialization, female youth learn to share, save and consider others above themselves, unlike male youth. Rudo, aged 23 years, explained:

... [W]e live frugally. We eat *sadza* with *matemba* [brined and sun-dried fresh water sardines or white baiting] or spoiled tripe from XX Supermarket to save.

Rudo's reference to eating *sadza* and *matemba* (also known as *kapenta*) illustrates saving in that this is understood to be a simple meal, poor people's food. *Matemba* are a comparatively expensive source of protein but still cheaper and seen as inferior to beef or chicken. The latter are relatively more expensive. She tries to show that to save they do not spend on “modern food” referred to in chapter 4 despite its desirability and accessibility in South Africa. This points to discipline and strong sense of obligation to kin left behind. In addition, some young people sometimes skip lunch or share meals to save.

Male youth send remittances too but are also concerned with accumulating resources for setting up independent households they would head later, hence they purchase cattle, and other household goods, as discussed in chapter 4. In chapter 6, we will see that they also complain about local leisure pursuits such as alcohol and paid sex deplete limited incomes and savings and sometimes challenge on-going income generating activities.

These saving strategies speak to a strong sense of duty among young people. When not able to send meaningful remittances home for several consecutive months, some respondents reported an immense sense of guilt and bad luck. For instance, Maggie, said when she does not send remittances to her mother and daughter for three months, her job as a sex worker does not go well. She finds it harder to find clients (and money). She believes that her mother's displeasure is a curse and it impedes her efforts. Thus appeasing one's parents is a way to prevent bad luck locally referred to as “*munyama*”. Consequently, Maggie needs to mind her obligations to remain successful. Other respondents such as those in the FGD with a second group of dancers (with 4 young men and 4 young women), said they send remittances to account for being away from home. One dancer said in Ndebele that “... *uyathumeza nje khonokho okuncinyane ukuthi kukhanye ukuthi ulolutho olwenzayo*”, that is, “...one sends home small items/parcels of groceries to demonstrate that one is away from home for a reason.” These young women complained of low income from their trade. They wanted to retire but had no savings and income generating activities to retire to. The notion that some remittances are simply to demonstrate and justify being away is important to bear in mind. Often if there is nothing to show for being away, it is considered better to go back home and to contribute through labour. Having nothing says one is a failure. These young women with no O levels, clearly seek to avoid being seen as failures. Thus making an effort to send money home is important and young people are locked in struggles to prove that they are “somebodies” and not failures in life.

In another example, Rita was conflicted by her circumstances too. She had run away from home with a view to go to South Africa. She was unable to proceed and to keep her job in a local bar-cum-nightclub ending up in sex work. She was unwell when I first met her and unable to earn money in sex work, and not happy with herself.

Rita: No...I have not remitted any money or groceries home. I have not gone back either....I cannot lie about it. I have not been back home. I will go in December (2009), I hope...I have bought some grocery items – they are in safe keeping with “mother”. Yes I do buy things bit-by-bitI have not sent anything yet. Nothing at all. I am accumulating things in anticipation of going home....In December I am definitely going home. I will take the groceries with me. Sometimes I get messages that someone back home needs a pair of shoes, so I buy that but I have not sent any groceries yet....I have no money for bus fare [hence no visit]. Besides I have been away from home for more than one year now. I *have* to take something with me....

In Rita's case too, there is fear of being seen as a failure if she went home without any groceries to justify her absence. The last sentence of the above excerpt shows that the duration of her absence also exerted pressures of its own. Thus the longer one is away the larger the parcel of groceries of goods one is expected to bring home.

When I visited the all-female dance group (with 6 members) who shared a small room in which all their belongings were kept, groceries were conspicuously stacked in one corner next to their suitcases also stacked to create space. The groceries comprised of a carton of green bar laundry soap, a six-by-two litres carton of cooking oil, two cartons of rice they proudly told me they would share after buying more items. That is, after getting more requests to dance at bars to entertain patrons. Two of them have children; one of has twins and is a divorcee while the other is a single parent. They were proud of their work despite living in austere conditions characterised by overcrowding and without cooking utensils.

It is not only female youth who lie about how they make money. Male youth lie too especially if they are engaged in smuggling and related activities such as Mandla referred to in chapter 4. Below is Taurai's story and why he lies.

Taurai, in his early twenties, lives with his father on and off. He is a self-confessed people and goods smuggler and thief. He was recruited into people smuggling when he worked in a bar frequented by people smugglers. His lowly paid father (a security guard) does not criticise him for what Tau describes as "the battle to get rich". From people smuggling he makes 500 ZAR per person smuggled and 200 ZAR per crossing per given load of smuggled goods. In people smuggling, when female clients cannot pay he gets his dues through sex. It is not clear if this is consensual sex. Taurai's father apparently says his son is "manly", although it is not clear how much his father knows about what Taurai really does. Tau is saving money to marry and settle down one day. He admitted that he lives in fear of arrest if the police catch wind of what he does, hence being careful about going home. He was once arrested on the South African side of the border and brutally beaten by South African police. He escaped. His insecurity when in town emanates from the fact that some people who know him say within earshot that he is a "thug", "killer" and "rapist" because they know how he gets money. He does not answer back because an escalation could end up at the police station leading to his arrest. Regardless of source of income, sex work, theft/goods and people smuggling or vending, young people who are conscientious of kin obligations and conform to social expectation are applauded. Their lies about how they earn their incomes are meant to save their parents from heartache because of livelihoods that are seen as transgressive.

Discussion: “impossible youth” or an “impossible situation”?

Notions of “impossible youth” capture adults’ disapproval of young people’s pragmatism as they seek economic self-sufficiency in conditions of economic crises, pervasive unemployment and relentless crackdowns. Explanations in the foregoing paint a picture of young people who lie and cheat to get what they want, and are therefore seen as not trustworthy. In academic literature, Zimbabwean unemployed youth have been described as an emerging “underclass”, marginalised, discriminated against and unrealistic in their sense of entitlement to better work and better pay for which they have neither training nor experience. They are seen as shunning honest work preferring survival based on illicit and criminal activities (Kamete 2006: 78). In other countries unemployed young men (especially) also spend time musing and fantasising about better life elsewhere and shunning local informal sector work, much to the disapproval of adults (see Mains 2007 on Ethiopia, Masquelier 2010 on Mali, Nyamnjoh and Page 2002 on Cameroon). This shows that young people are aware of better life elsewhere and aspire for adulthoods that are economically secure by either going to these far away places or making money locally by other means as long as not deemed shameful by peers. Adults are alarmed by the sheer determination to succeed and the uppity to shun some forms of work. They see this as a threat to society especially when the determination lands young people in activities bordering on criminality. References to “impossible youth” leave little room to critique society itself, how young people are treated and the effects of economic dislocation visited on them. Young people are lied to through false promises that take advantage of their aspirations for better life and work. They lie in turn to get what they need and want. Thus social conditions and structures produce the youth practices found in the specific context. Young people learn from the hypocrisy they see around them juxtaposed with incitements to be consumers and self-made persons as the notion of DIY selves (Kelly 2001) suggests thanks to neoliberalism. This has warranted the counter-narrative of an “impossible situation” to decry the situation in which young people find themselves.

In the foregoing the illicitness of youth livelihoods including sex work, informal sector work and goods and people smuggling were explained. Illicitness of youth activities is double-edged it renders young people outside of the law, easy suspects and targets when there is need for an investigation. Hence young people are easy “mythic felons” (Comaroff and Comaroff 2007). They cannot complain to the police or authorities when exploited because they are accomplices in offences such as sex work, smuggling and others. Hence they describe their activities as “games” which are lost and/or won. Like all players, young

people play to win as part of gaining economic independence much like adult players who seek to augment their incomes by exploiting them. This chapter gave examples of owners of booking houses who pretend to be caring and gender sensitive by preferring homeless young women as lodgers and who quickly pay fines for arrested lodgers when in reality they want to keep their sources of income active. The police use miscellaneous offence clauses to arrest and fine anyone without a national identity card as part of crime prevention yet they raise their incomes through fines and/or pre-emptive fines (bribes). Because youth activities are illicit regardless of what they are, the likelihood of being fined is high. Fines and arrests cease to be deterrents. Crackdowns create a conveyor belt of fines for the police. Consequently releasing the minor offenders after they pay fines for miscellaneous offences works for all involved given that alternatives such as suing the police through the civil courts is expensive and time consuming (Musoni 2010, Kamete 2008). Everyone returns to daily activities to make up for lost income and time, only to risk arrest when there is another crackdown. Young people learn that laws can be manipulated for one's own ends. Thus one can vend anywhere as long as one hides some of his/her merchandise to avoid losses in police crackdowns or is open to pre-emptive fines.

Still, young people in this study are breadwinners or aspire to be breadwinners even though not recognised as such by officials and some adult observers. The pressure brought to bear on young people to save and send some of their profits home is largely invisible to many adults. Those who see it disapprove because it is seen as a bad influence to those still at home. The discipline to save and send money home makes the young people more responsible than they are given credit for. It demonstrates emerging adulthood as "mounting roles" (Hartmann and Swartz 2007) and sending remittances in this case shows incremental responsibilities. Thus youth narratives underline the pressures to contribute to their natal families as a way of demonstrating responsibility and adulthood as well as to support their independent living in Beitbridge. The former allows recognition of one's coming of age while the latter leads to denigration because of suspicions of engaging in illicit activities. Young people have to live with these contradictions by adopting multiple identities for different spaces; deflecting, filtering out, playing and distancing oneself from "reflected appraisals" or out performing expectations such as in sending remittances (Kaufman and Johnson 2004). Thus young people are seen as "migrant workers" by expectant kin left in rural areas and "a threat" to security in urban spaces. Thus emerging adulthood of respondents are carved in contradictory circumstances of affirmation and condemnation.

It has been observed that neoliberal globalisation comes with "fetishisation of law and order and of authority" (Comaroff and Comaroff 2007: 134). Authority and law and

order are undermined by neoliberalism itself. The institutional incapacitation unleashed by the neoliberal dispensation and resultant survival strategies for individuals force actors to ignore national and bye-laws. While spirited responses to the crises were at first celebrated such as the initial informalisation of the economy, they were eventually criticised as chaotic, disruptive and perverse (Kamete 2008, 2013, Comaroff and Comaroff 2007). These contradictions reinforce each other creating young people who do not respect authority because it is not meant to be respected (Simone 2005). People pretend to respect the law, go along with what authority figures tell them but soon revert to their ways, away from the official gaze. This allows both young people and adults down on their luck to survive. As noted by Comaroff and Comaroff (2007), when officials are under pressure to take action on the chaos, they crackdown on “mythic felons” with young people as easy targets. Thus young people are arrested for loitering when bandits are not followed to their forest hideouts or young women on the street are accused of soliciting for sex work when booking house owners live off proceeds of sex work brazenly breaking the law. Few adults are arrested for their role in goods and people smuggling as many of them do not do the actual field operations of the illegal acts but hire young people as mules and foot soldiers with the latter risking arrest. Clearly this points to the marginalization and powerlessness of young people rather than their deviance. It also challenges their struggles for adult responsibility and self-sufficiency. It speaks to intractable effects of economic dislocation.

Youth practices highlight multi-layered contradictions and have a way of shaming those in authority. Adults are shown to be hypocrites as seen in NGOs dealing with booking houses as brothels yet this fact is fudged when dealing with the police. This allows adults to evade arrest for unlawful activities they are involved in. Laws are applied selectively and lack of transparency on the part of officials gives room to perpetuate corruption and hypocrisy. Young people show this to be the case by referring to their survival strategies as “games”, play it or be played. Young people may be villains yet differences between adults and youth activities are blurred, as are differences between licit and illicit (Simone 2005). Kin expectations with no questions asked go hand in hand with landlords/ladies and vendors who sell merchandise to young people no questions asked as long as dues are paid. Thus cynicism is a product of the social environment, not an innate quality of young people.

By an “impossible situation” this chapter has argued that social relations between and among young people and adults show that those who cannot be flexible, and open to suggestion as implied in the concept of situational living (Blatterer 2010, 2007) cannot survive. It also means that to get by one needs to be multi-skilled, ready to try one’s hand in new income generating activities as argued by S. Jackson (2010) in the DRC where young

men try their hand at anything going to make ends meet. In a few years, many young people in Beitbridge had held at least two jobs. Jane for instance had been a maid, then a vendor selling produce. Ratidzo was a maid. She moved to selling food and now selling cellphone cards (while clandestinely having transactional sex with multiple partners to augment her income). Rita waitressed in a bar and now in sex work, Taurai worked in a bar and ended up in people and goods smuggling combined with theft. Biggerz combined vending cellphone cards with trading forex. These occupations change with changing perceptions of opportunities. Thus situational pragmatism is important.

Crackdowns have a downside for young people in that by limiting mobility and loitering they hinder information gathering and scouting for opportunities. They demand a change of strategy. As the crackdown intensified in October 2009, male youth suspected of smuggling activities and banditry were flushed out of the forest into town where they worked at the bus terminus, where my feeble attempts to photograph the night scene at the bus terminus threatened exposing some of them (discussed in chapter 2). Ordinarily, the bus terminus was a good space to hide or to engage in clandestine activity, as it was not lit at night. There was a hive of activity until midnight when the last buses leave. It provides odd work such as loading heavy goods on bus tops or container trailers.⁹ There was no shortage of these heavy goods. However law enforcement followed there too unannounced within the same month and demanded national identity cards from people they found at the terminus as well as travellers. Bus crews were forced to give their part-time assistants identity cards with employers' names so that hangers-on seen as likely to cause trouble could be easily flushed out.

We also see from the foregoing that young people have mustered tricks of lying and evading goods and money seizures by the police. They do this by splitting the money into small amounts and putting it in different pockets then hope that they are not subjected to a body search. Some ask friends working in shops to keep the money for them, as shop workers are least likely to be searched. The fact that some young people refer to law enforcement and their tactics as "robbery" captures the notion of fetishisation of the law (Comaroff and Comaroff 2007). That is, those who maintain the law are themselves brazenly breaking it with impunity. Losses incurred from multiple crackdowns amount to thousands of USD as shown by Kamete (2008) with reference to Harare. It was hard to estimate losses for Beitbridge but respondents' sentiments clearly point to considerable losses. Young people's adaptability and openness to suggestion is evident in local refrains of dancing to the tune and going with the flow and others mentioned in chapter 2. That is, the idea that one decides which card to play when the game is on or decides on dance moves depending on the tune

and so on, illustrate the flexibility, adaptability and improvisation visited on young people. The constant vigilance this entails, even as it threatened my research endeavours, is typical of chronic instability (S. Jackson 2010, Vigh 2008).

Notes

1. Cars that were not in secure overnight parking ran the risk being drained of fuel or being stripped of tyres, radios and other accessories at night. Thus many people either bought enough fuel for use during the day, 2 litres at a time or hired informal sector security guards to watch over the cars overnight. This allowed unemployed youth with no accommodation to get somewhere to sleep and sometimes earned money from guarding cars.
2. On 14 October 2009, at 4pm I saw 3 helicopters circling over the two border complexes and nearby forests. There were several such operations until January 2010.
3. I tried to no avail to get a copy of the programme by emailing the television station.
4. The street exchange rate was 1USD: 10 ZAR for convenience. Compared to the official exchange of around 1USD: 7 or 8 ZAR, these young people were paying well above the upper limit of 20USD for miscellaneous offences as shown in Appendix 1.
5. The police had given me permission to go through crime records. However the records were not catalogued. I was warned that it would take a long time to go through them, to bring my own mask and gloves because of dust in the storeroom where the records are kept. I decided not to pursue the matter.
6. Blankets from China are popular in Zimbabwe because they are colourful, fluffier and warmer. They were in evidence everywhere as people aired them for the day or because they slept in the open with nowhere to store them except on laundry lines or perimeter walls.
7. *Sadza* is the Shona word for the Zimbabwean staple source of carbohydrates. In Ndebele it is called *isitshwala*. It is made from maize meal, (but could be substituted with meals of other grains such as sorghums or millets) incrementally added to boiling water and cooked until thick enough to mold by hand. Most people use their fingers to eat it. It is also eaten in most of east and southern Africa.
8. There are brands sold in plastic containers that last long without refrigeration. In any case, goods sent to urban areas are likely to have been sent to homes with or where neighbours have fridges.
9. Depending on the bus and time of year, those transporting household appliances such as stoves, fridges and freezers paid loaders between 5-10USD to manually haul the goods to the top of the bus and secure them against falling and the elements. This is a physically demanding task. Most young men worked for more than 4 hours per bus per day. I understood that fees paid by passenger for the goods were shared equally between the loaders and bus companies which implored crews to ticket goods to prevent theft and accidental loss. If it is true that the money is shared this way, the loaders made a comparatively decent sum per day judging by the amount of goods that are typically ferried.

Chapter 6

From “not playing with boys” to “*kukech(w)a*” and informal marriages: narratives of sexual practices

Introduction

This chapter discusses narratives of idealised and lived sexualities of young people as they embrace emergent adulthoods. It tries to show that normative ideals emphasise modesty beseeching especially young women to be gatekeepers of their own sexuality (Bay-Cheng 2003, van Roosmalen 2000) by telling them “not to play with boys”. This is supported by schools’ abstinence-only SBSE and church teachings about Christian adulthoods characterised by chastity at the time of marriage, formal marriages and households headed by economically active and dominant males. The reality of economic challenges discussed in chapters 4 and 5 challenge these ideals, hence narratives of “*kukecha*” and “*kukechwa*” which point to the prevalence of episodic and casual sex. The reality of informal marriages, which some young people see as a foot-in-the-door towards marriage is seen as equally deviant. The latter should present parents with a *fait accompli* forcing them to accept the relation but realities of respondents in this study show that some of their partners desert them, thus undermining even this *fait accompli*. The chapter shows how young people strive to conform to ideals even when prevailing conditions thwart their efforts as seen in informal marriages and dreams of getting married towards which many make piecemeal preparations. The chapter concludes that young people who do not conform to social ideals are seen as blameworthy. Nonetheless, non-conformity is pervasive. The chapter responds to the question: How do young people in different circumstances talk about their sexuality?

How do local socio-economic contexts shape young people's sexual practices and meanings they attach to them?

“Don't play with boys”: how adults talk to youth about ideal sexuality

In FGDs Form 1 and 2 girls indicated that at home they are advised against “playing with boys” – a teaching which tallies with abstinence but is expressed to suit local cultural needs for female decency, to prevent pregnancy and to make girls marriageable. It points to the notion of women, regardless of their age, as gatekeepers of sexuality and morality (Bay-Cheng 2003, van Roosmalen 2000). Conversely when women do not conform to these expectations they are blamed for lax gatekeeping. In Shona and Ndebele FGD participants used these expressions “*kusatamba nevakomana*”/ “*ukungadlali labafana*” respectively meaning, “not playing with boys”. “Playing” here is both metaphorical and literal. As a metaphor it refers to sex and any form of intimacy with the opposite sex. Literally it also means not being friends with and spending time with boys. “Playing” also suggests being carried away and ending up in a regrettable situation such as out of wedlock pregnancy, disruption of one's studies and shame to the family. Those who hang out in mixed group are seen as courting trouble. Friendship is understood as a foundation and cover for sex and intimacy between the sexes hence it has to be avoided. Clearly all meanings of “playing” are interconnected, thus such “play” should be avoided. As a result girls associate with girls and boys with boys. The FGD participants were aware that if they have friendships with boys at school it would get to their parents. They agreed that,

If seen with one boy consistently or if teachers intercept correspondence [usually handwritten notes] it means trouble. The headmaster is told, parents are called in.... punishment might follow and embarrassment is guaranteed.

Thus the separation of genders is observed as a demonstration of conformity even when reality is far more complicated. School rules following the parent ministry's regulations comply with customary preferences for ideal gender relationships that draw from past traditions in which men and women spent their time in separate same sex settings. Ideally, students should study and pass school exams first before dating. Often sitting Ordinary Level exams suffices as an achievement for most students (until they realise that even if they pass these exams, there is an inflation of qualifications which make O levels no guarantee for decent wage work). Given these circumstances students did not talk about relationships in the first person but as commentaries on young people's lives in general. Form 2 girls said that suspicions of friendships with boys were enough for parents with means to withdraw

their daughters from day schools taking them to comparatively more expensive boarding schools. Boarding schools have tighter surveillance and monitoring systems. After classes and sports girls and boys go to their self-contained side of the school, where they have dining rooms, ablution facilities and dormitories. This way schools are able to prevent girls and boys mixing outside the classroom. There is roll call and inspection to account for all students at appointed times. Some boarding schools are single sex schools making the strict controls unnecessary but also removing the fear of mixing with peers of the opposite sexes. The assumption here is that sex is heterosexual, leads to pregnancy, so once the environment is homosocial there are no risks.

To illustrate dangers of “playing” with boys several girls gave recollections of parents’ disappointments when older sisters fell pregnant, and many more knew of neighbours’ daughters who fell pregnant while at school. In one case, a young woman who was at university fell pregnant but her boyfriend was not ready for marriage. Her mother developed hypertension from the family dispute which ensued as she was typically blamed for her daughter’s behaviour. The older woman had to care for the baby while the younger woman continued with her studies. The latter subsequently married someone else while the older woman continued to care for the child born out of wedlock. Meanwhile the FGD participant who related the story swore that she could not afford to repeat the same mistake lest her mother “dies” from heartache and disappointment. Her mother continuously pleads with her for a decent send off in the form of a decent marriage before pregnancy. She is in Form 2 and abiding by her mother’s wishes. All FGD participants agreed that it is irresponsible to make one’s parents suffer such embarrassment. Thus most young people live with this fear of embarrassing their parents even though the fear *per se* does not prevent pregnancy.

Respondents affiliated to churches spoke of “not playing with the opposite sex” in terms of complying with their faith and church teachings and as a basis for successful transition into Christian adulthoods marked by virgin marriages and weddings before starting a family. Respondents were drawn from a denomination in which there is close surveillance and monitoring of young members, dating is allowed only for young people who are “ready for marriage” because of having reached a certain age, having an acceptable economic activity such as having a job and having their own place to stay on the part of male youth. This is because the church fears that when all young people are allowed to date it would stigmatise girls who fall pregnant and fail to get married as loose. Dating is allowed only under the guidance of church elders. Couples do not meet in secluded places alone. They are encouraged to visit in the presence of chaperones whether peers or adults. However, research participants said it is awkward and intrusive to be a chaperone.

When a relationship is understood to be serious, young couples visit each other at home in the presence of parents who make space for the couple to interact. Often both males and females are vetted by relatives and friends of either partners to see if they are compatible or conform to church expectations. The church does not practice arranged marriages. Prayer is also another strategy used to help individuals against temptation.

There are indications that students go round school rules by dating, picking casual sex partners in the neighbourhood, looking for partners in other schools or enjoying relationships with the opposite sex away from the adult gaze. The ubiquity of booking houses and their no-questions-asked practices makes this possible. Some sex worker research participants confirmed having teenage boy clients. Some secondary school boys date Grade 6 and Grade 7 girls in primary school. Take the examples of Tambudzani, a 15-year-old school dropout. She started having sex while in primary school in Grade 5 with secondary school boys. She eventually landed a relationship with an older man, a taxi driver. Her grandfather was so angry with her partner he threatened to axe him. Sixteen-year-old Tina (referred to in chapter 4) told me that she dated her older boyfriend and stopped seeing her school boyfriend with whom the relationship was simply about “carrying each other’s satchels” to and from school. Schoolboys also have exploits they related in individual interviews. For example, James, an 18-year-old, said dating and “...having sex is part of life like going to school”. He thinks it is possible to have both, concurrently, against what parents and schools say. He lives with his single mother outside Beitbridge and says he defied her, and smuggled a series of school-going girlfriends into his room at night. He was anxious to have sex in order to affirm his “manliness”. His friends goaded him to try having sex saying that his mother would never permit it anyway. While at school, he tries not to expose his girlfriends in order not to attract punishment and humiliation. Thus there can be no public displays of affection.

In these examples, it is clear that in-school youth evade school surveillance systems by having relationships outside their schools and with partners in other schools or no longer at school. This implies platonic relations and expressions of fondness between girls and boys while walking between home and school which is beyond the reach of adult and school surveillance. Because schools work in cahoots with parents, taking relationships outside school prevents detection by both. This perpetuates the idea that in-school youth are innocent, while also socialising them into a parallel “hidden curriculum” dominated by peers and other sources of information (Kehily 2009: 225, Izugbara 2005:613).

It is also clear from the foregoing that schools help in the manufacture of discreetness in sexual relations as teens in relationships or those aiding them are socialized into secrecy.

In addition school rules and hidden student practices create and consolidate norms of hypergamy (that women date and marry men who are older and higher standing than they are). There is at least four years age difference between someone in Grade 5 and Form 2. The hidden curriculum is as much about “gender intensification” (Tolman 1994) and affirmation of ideal gender ideal and relations as it is about the reproduction of gender hierarchies and heteronormative sexualities seen in prevalent bullying and sexual harassment. While girls are socialised to be gatekeepers, boys are socialised to defy them and get their way.

Adults support abstinence as a sexual practice with a vested interest in normative aspects of youth sexuality. It is the preferred approach to youth sexuality for “cultural reasons” leading to schools teaching Life Skills in ways that do not mention condoms and other contraceptives as key to pregnancy prevention (Marindo et al. 2003). The appeal and controversy of abstinence has been documented and discussed in chapter 1. Increasingly global “facts of life” seen in public health concerns vis-à-vis HIV and AIDS (Pigg and Adams 2005) bolster the stances of adults and conservative institutions. It is this powerful narrative of youth sexuality which parents, adults and major donors¹ support. In this sense, young people I met through institutions such as schools and churches were keen to speak to conformity with practising abstinence by playing down their experiences deemed deviant through silence or giggles in response to my questions. School rules encourage students to hide relationships. That the reality is complicated is seen in a mixed FGD with Upper Sixths, who said there is “...no love without sex...[and gifts]”. From their observation, abstinence was possible for those in lower classes such as Forms 1 and 2, those without partners and/or preparing for exams. Girls in lower classes confirmed this arguing that they were abstaining from dating altogether because they wanted to finish their studies, did not want to disappoint their parents and because of church teachings against “fornication”, “sinful thoughts” and behaviour related to having sexual desire and especially having premarital sex. Upper Sixes argued that Form 1s and 2s are able to abstain. They “fall in real love”, which is simple and uncomplicated and does not involve sex. Partners are happy talking to each other on their way home or to school, carrying each other’s school bags and doing homework together. Later, most students have to contend with complicated relationships characterised by manipulation and counter-manipulation, pressure to have sex and being hurt by older men with money, peers and others. Thus if there were senior students who are abstaining, it would be because they tried dating, had sex and got hurt. Abstinence here becomes a strategy towards secondary virginity.² Thus the notion of “not playing with boys” also means learning to be discreet and not exposing what one does with the opposite sex to adults as part of respectability.

“Putting oneself on the noticeboard”: schoolgirls’ narratives of emerging sexualised femininities

Some students show their individuality by deviating from prescribed schoolwear and through use of disallowed cosmetics and hairstyles. They risk being seen as “putting themselves on the noticeboard”, that is, being sexually available also described as “self-advertisement” to the opposite sex. “Self-advertisement” is seen as unbecoming especially for girls. Girls who advertise themselves are seen as on the road to getting bad reputations. The effort of self-packaging, making oneself look beautiful, is said to detract from academic performance too. There is also a counter-detraction of harassment and bullying endured by girls in general and particularly those accused of “self-advertising”. Because girls who use cosmetics are also flouting school rules and regulations, they get very little sympathy from school authorities when harassed by boys.

Attempts to control students’ deportment are increasingly challenged by two developments. Firstly, over the years the difference between ideal schoolwear and streetwear is increasingly blurred, whereas school hairstyles were distinguishable as natural, unprocessed hair worn short for both boys and girls. Girls could also wear their hair in simple plaits such as cornrows but not with hair extensions. Over the years, street fashion has appropriated natural and short hairstyles including cornrows as unisex high fashion thanks to the spread of hip-hop. Consequently cornrows are no longer the symbol of innocence they once were especially when worn by men because of their association with the outlaw preferred by many hip-hop artists (Kubrin 2005). Thus school authorities find it hard to draw the line between the modest and immodest. The only exception is that male youth cannot plait/braid their hair to school. Secondly, the need to raise funds to complement insufficient public funding and to supplement teachers’ salaries has brought streetwear into schools. At least once a month, schools hold events such as “civvies day”, (a day when students come in own clothes or civilian clothes) hence “civvies”.³ Students then have cause to pressure parents about casualwear so that they do not wear the same items repeatedly. On such days forays into and aspirations about consumerism are played out.

One Friday in February 2010 when I was at one of the schools when there was “civvies day”, I discussed fashion with girls. Although not speaking about personal stories they alleged that most well dressed girls got the clothes from boyfriends. When I asked about how they know who is fashionably dressed they said that rarely seen items decide. They gave the example of ubiquitous brightly coloured sandals imported from China, which almost every woman wears in Beitbridge (they cost between 20-24 ZAR at a Somali shop in Musina, South Africa). Zimbabwean informal sector traders buy them in bagfuls. The

girls were conscious of superior varieties from bigger and more expensive stores such as Foschini, Jet, and others in bigger towns further south from Musina. Girls who can access shoes (and clothes) from these more expensive shops, or better still, access imports from abroad because they have kin in the diaspora, stand out on civvies day. It is a coveted status to be the talk of the school and neighbourhood.

The downside of these fundraisers is not lost on teachers. One female teacher confided that on civvies day it is hard to teach as students spend the day engrossed in fashion and cosmetics – exchanging accessories such as belts, bags, caps, sunglasses, shoes and trying different cosmetics to look different for a few minutes. The students become restless with many trips to the toilet to meet friends for comments and to change into borrowed items. Some students lose their accessories to theft by colleagues. Even on civvies day teachers draw the line about what is decent and what is not especially for girls. Plunging necklines, high hemlines, too many sequins and conspicuous cosmetics are not allowed. On civvies day students easily go to nightclubs that are open around the clock because they are in streetwear and not the easy-to-see school uniform and telltale satchels. Besides civvies, sports events also allow girls to come in street clothes such as shorts and tracksuits, halter-tops and so on.

The official rationale for school uniforms and disallowing cosmetics at school which parents sympathise with is that fashion detracts students from their studies. School uniforms are utilitarian garments not meant to accentuate beauty and the body. By contrast, there are lingering fears that street fashion tempts girls to pursue sugar daddies or that the latter pursue fashionably dressed girls (Pattman 2005: 505). Within school, young people are imagined as desexualised yet ubiquitous bullying is often as much about sexualisation of bodies as it is about heteronormativity (Valentine et al 2010). Concerns that streetwear sexualises bodies of apparently innocent teens (Attwood 2006) are therefore not entirely true. In contemporary Zimbabwe, there are longstanding debates and disapproval of fashion conscious young women referred to as “*masalala*” or *ma-salad*, meaning that they are or feign westernization hence eating salads. Salads are seen as a particularly western way of preparing and eating vegetables and apparently preferred by these young women. Not only does street fashion sexualise in-school youth’s bodies, it is seen as culturally corrupting and undermines “respectability” (Campbell 1998, Ogden 1996). However for young people mastering fashion points to success, being “up-to-date” and shying away from poverty (Scheld 2007, Chant and Evans 2010).

“Dropping”: boys’ self-advertisement?

Deviance from adult expectations and apparent signalling sexual availability is not the province of girls alone. Boys do so conspicuously through what they call “dropping”, letting trousers or shorts sag to expose underwear. This style of dress originates in US loose fitting prison uniforms where belts are disallowed. It was popularised worldwide by hip-hop artists whose association with outlaws has seen prison life brought into music as the ultimate defiance against authority (Kubrin 2005) and permeated into streetwear as “cool” and an expression of personal style. “Dropping” is not permitted with school uniforms and on school premises because it is street fashion. It defies norms of decent dressing to which students are or should be socialized while at school. Nonetheless it is common among school going male youth albeit ameliorated with rough tucks and tugs of clothes in the presence of authorities as if the look is an accident. While waiting for an engagement in front of the school administration block, I noticed that boys would straighten themselves up when they approached this part of the school. This is where the staffroom, reception and headmaster and his deputy’s offices are situated. Thus it is the seat of authority. The boys would quickly and roughly, tuck in their shirts at the back deliberately leaving the front looking slightly not tucked in thereby hiding belt buckles with naughty messages. They would pull up their shorts/trousers; make a quick tug of their socks and so on. At this school, socks are worn at knee length, despite the stifling heat, held up by garters when elastics fail. Not all students can afford garters or improvised alternatives. Maybe they cannot be bothered. Sagging trousers and shorts may seem like negligible youth resistance. Its significance is seen elsewhere in the US, with “pull up your pants” campaigns, passage of laws which make sagging trousers in public an offence and court battles in several states (Gordon 2010, Swaine 2011). Thus this is no small act of deviance. Globally, sagging trousers are seen as pointing to bad manners, bad interpersonal skills, and poor orientation to school and to work. They are considered a public indecency. The “pull up your pants” campaign in the US is seen as “pro-family, pro-jobs, pro-education” and comes with sanctions such as suspension from school for a few days and from extracurricular activities (Swaine 2011). In Zimbabwe, there are no such laws but sagging trousers rile authorities and point to deviance on the part of young men.

Schoolboys also deviated from school rules through the use of chunky belt buckles with brash messages such as “Star”, “Hot”, “Sexy”, “B.I.G.” The latter I thought was a play at the name of a controversial and deceased US hip-hop artist (known as The Notorious B.I.G. sometimes as Biggie Smalls). These words could be read as sexually suggestive, praise for anti-establishment qualities of hip-hop artists and antithetical to a buttoned-up school

culture which school authorities were trying to uphold. The students got away with the buckles because it is widely seen as unbecoming not to wear a belt, but also recognised that parents do not have resources to buy multiple items for school and home. Students defy school rules through using forbidden clothes and claim inability to access prescribed schoolwear because parents are poor. Teachers could not take action even when some students were lying about their circumstances. The government intervened telling school administrators that students could not be expelled for not having prescribed schoolwear especially when parents had paid fees. Thus school officials are forced to accept some of the street clothes in their premises. Significantly, these clothes do not point to young men as illicitly sexually active (as they do with girls), and therefore increasing their likelihood to be punished or be monitored by school authorities.

Bullying and sexual harassment: challenging schools’ desexualized culture

There is mutual suspicion between boys and girls during school hours perhaps because they are not officially permitted to be seen fraternising. Given the notion of being gatekeepers of their own sexuality and morality (Bay-Cheng 2003, van Roosmalen 2000), girls are anxious not to be seen as inviting boys’ attention, soliciting for physical contact and/or enjoying it; boys want to show their friends that they can touch girls’ breasts or buttocks knowing full well that they risk punishment. If reported, boys’ first line of defence is denial arguing that girls want attention through false accusations. Thus girls risk being seen as loose for seeking attention or claiming that boys are harassing them. Girls especially have to manage their deportment not to attract male attention while remaining attractive by maintaining silence. Silence is of course a tool in being a gatekeeper of own sexuality (Bay-Cheng 2003). Silence makes it hard for girls to articulate their feelings but helps them to become “self-respecting” women. This means some of the abuse goes unreported because girls try not to be seen as trouble causers. The few reports that reach the authorities are likely to be denied by boys anyway.

Boys on the other hand were resentful of not being seen as worthy friends by girls, because girls always rebut their efforts at friendship or at affection. They complained about it. This resentment manifested in what the boys described as a “baptism of fire” by “teaching some girls a lesson”. The practice entails leading targeted girls into a secluded place, where several boys grope them and collude by denying the event if reported. If not punished, the boys revel in the event, as it becomes the butt of jokes at school where the touched girl’s body parts (usually breasts or buttocks) become objects of extended fantasies. At school B, Form 3 boys lamented the “cruelty” of girls in positions of authority as such prefects. They

explained it as sexual though, in that the girls used their power to punish boys they like until the boys notice them or become nicer and the punishments apparently stop. I was not able to verify this with girls as the boys FGD was after that of girls.

Unsolicited fondling of girls' breasts is also a disconcerting aspect of boys and girls' interactions. It is embarrassing for some girls to report it to teachers. Some boys devised tricks such as hiding chairs in storerooms so that when girls go out looking for chairs they find boys hiding too, in a poorly lit storeroom. The boys fondle at will any girl unlucky to walk into the storeroom while she cannot see who her attackers are. This makes it difficult for girls to report such events. Not only are girls expected to be gatekeepers of their own sexuality, by contrast boys are socialised to defy girls (Izugbara 2005, Bay-Cheng 2003: 70, van Roosmalen 2000: 218-9). The confusion this creates in young women is palpable. It is a confusion that is effective in bestowing low self-esteem on women as none of their wishes materialise and they are blamed for the outcomes. Their refusals are defied while their coerced consent is misconstrued as wilfulness and used as evidence of personal failure and immorality (Bay-Cheng 2003, Izugbara 2005, Tolman 1994). Thus if going to a classroom short of furniture, girls are cautious about approaching poorly lit storerooms. Still, boys reportedly challenge girls not to behave as if in Grade Zero (pre-school classes) by complaining about being "touched". Boys do clearly not appreciate the notion of consent. In fact boys assume that girls want to be fondled but will never say it. They also referred to girls in dehumanizing terms for instance referring to unsolicited fondling as "checking if the tomatoes are ripe" (the way people choose produce in the market). Some boys grab girls' pens and put them in their shorts or trouser pockets. When girls demand them back they are asked to retrieve them from the boys' trousers/shorts pockets. Few girls do so lest they are accused of provoking boys by touching them in the crotch. This leads to arguments and accusation and counter-accusations about who is out of line. That is, when girls report to teachers, boys maintain that girls are exaggerating as they were asked to take back their stationery but refused suggesting that girls are up to something mischievous too, they want to get boys into trouble for no reason. In the presence of teachers, some girls are emboldened and stand their ground but also risk being asked what they fear from retrieving these pens from boys' pockets. It is this lack of affirmation, which confounds emerging femininities of young women.

Form 1 and 2 girls complained about verbal abuse because of accidents during menstruation. Boys say girls are "dirty", "smelly" and "loose" because they associate bleeding with (illicit) sexual activity and impropriety, a sign of abnormal or excess sexual activity which they stereotypically associated with sex work. So they laugh about it. Girls

feel anxious when having periods in case of protection failure and ending up as the object of school jokes. In addition, many are told at home that menstruation should be managed in utmost privacy and secrecy as a sign of respect for self and adults (especially men) in the family and neighbourhood. Thus girls should not openly say when menstruating even when it prevents school attendance (because of heavy flows, inadequate sanitaryware or premenstrual tension), they are simply reported as “sick”. In this regard, girls are portrayed as weak and prone to illness seen in being absent from school every month. The anxiety of managing menstruation also emanates from the fact that some girls complained of not having adequate sanitary towels. To avoid soiling their skirts, they sit differently. Female youth vendors also mentioned anxiety of managing menstruation. Some of them said lack of decent sanitary protection (and underwear) before they started vending made them feel ashamed of themselves. Thus challenges of managing menstruation is an issue in young women’s senses of self and decency but also very difficult to discuss publicly given beliefs that menstruation is “dirty” or a source of embarrassment and not to be discussed in public (especially with men). The youth vendors for instance, said their male relatives (fathers, brothers and other guardians) could not supply underwear and sanitaryware as food and other needs of the family took first priority and because there was very little money to go round. Besides they were told that menstruation is not to be discussed with male kin nor can one petition them for sanitaryware to be on the household budget. Thus menstruation is sidelined and in a blindspot of household budgeting leaving young women to their own devices. It is an area, which needs more study as an aspect of youth sexuality especially because it seems implicated in re-inscribing low self-esteem for being beholden to the “tyranny of biology” (Brook 1999) and elicits the strongest sentiments of cultural propriety. If young women do not have female siblings and other female relatives with resources who are inclined to buy sanitaryware for them, they are on their own.

Verbal abuse insinuating sexual impropriety was also used for girls who dozed off in class or walk with a different gait. Such girls were teased with statements like “...what were you doing last night to be so sleepy...?”, implying excessive sexual activity which interferes with sleep. There were unconfirmed reports that some school girls do indeed engage in sex work after school to make ends meet because they live alone or to supplement incomes of older sister’s sex work. Poverty itself is implicated in poor sleep. Most student FGD participants said that a number of their colleagues live in overcrowded houses, including houses shared with relatives and non-kin in sex work. Thus they do not get good sleep because of incessant nightly comings and goings of visitors. Some live near booking houses and/or *shebeens* where there is noise from nocturnal patrons. Some young people are forced

to assist parents/guardians' informal sector activities late at night. Thus girls said it was unfair to be teased about dozing off in class because it is due to reasons beyond their control.

Girls who conspicuously use cosmetics attract verbal abuse from boys and condemnation from female peers. The boys assume that women enhance their beauty in order to be noticed by men. Boys argued that girls were unpredictable because they rejected attention which they apparently sought to attract by using make-up. Tensions between some girls and boys run so high that sometimes fights are arranged for after school to "fix" wayward girls for a variety of misdemeanours including reporting boys to teachers. Some girls therefore also ensure that they have protection after school in the form of older brothers, friends or even out of school boyfriends. It helps to let schoolboys know one's network so they leave one alone. This leaves girls who do not have such a network of male patronage as sitting ducks for abuse.

Girls are locked in a shifty and paradoxical process of protecting their reputations, gatekeeping their sexualities and social standing. In a multi-country study of school-going boys and girls, Robert Pattman found the same observing that boys were "...misogynistic and...talk[ed] about girls in derogatory or impersonal ways..." (2005:507). Boys I spoke with felt entitled to have access to their female peers but felt prejudiced by school norms and rules which, by default, privileged ex-students and older men's access to their female colleagues ahead of them. Some boys told me that girls pretend not to enjoy the unsolicited touching when they secretly want and enjoy it. This made boys so persistent that their behaviour bordered on bullying and sexual harassment. Persistence and getting one's way vis-à-vis females is seen as a demonstration of being manly (Izugbara 2005, Shefer and Foster 2001). There is also the reality that girls who want to be seen as decent *cannot* and *should not* express sexual desire for boys (Pattman 2005: 503, Shefer and Foster 2001). Similarly, some girls accused colleagues who did not report the harassment as enjoying it thus making all girls look like they enjoy it. Divisions of opinion and strategy make it impossible for girls to approach school authorities with a united voice. The paradox of silence here comes into its own compounding the victimisation of silent and vocal girls alike. It shames those who may want to be touched by particular boys as they cannot say or show it. This renders female sexuality contradictory, embarrassing and shameful. These contradictions are also the same in life outside school. Within these contradictions lie abuses, which young women learn to manage depending on possibilities made available in their contexts. One of the confounding aspects of coming of age for girls is having to manage a fine line between being attractive, feminine and being seen as a slut if excessively enhanced (Tolman 1994, Bay-

Cheng 2003, van Roosmalen 2000). These struggles were evidently at work in one school I visited.

Some girls felt recently empowered by a multilateral agency funded “zero tolerance to child abuse” campaign which made them aware of the ills of abuse and encouraged them to report boys for bullying and sexual harassment. The police were championing the campaign with local NGOs. Parents of daughters see peer-to-peer relations as potentially abusive to their daughters, as disruptive to their studies, and if sexual and if the girls fall pregnant out of wedlock they are stigmatised for life with limited chances of decent marriage. This in turn tarnishes their family honour. By contrast boys were openly bewildered by recent events in which some male students were punished by the school and caned by the police for what they saw as playful accosting of targeted girls. As already noted, the possibility of being caned at the police station if reported for harassing girls increasingly made many boys more cautious and less persistent. Clearly many were waiting for the day they would leave school, when they too would be able to date schoolgirls without school authorities interfering with them.

The harassment of schoolgirls who use cosmetics needs not be seen as an isolated event. As already shown in the literature review, its origins lie in anxieties about African women “aping” white women (T. Burke 1996, Thomas 2006). This “aping” is seen as shunning one’s customs and identity; it apparently indicates being ashamed of being black/African or use of ochre clays. In a study of the construction of the “modern girl” in 1930s South Africa, Lynn Thomas says commentators were concerned that white women were not aping African women, while the reverse was allegedly the case because of growing use of factory made cosmetics (Thomas 2006). There is also a stereotype that women who use cosmetics embrace an apparently permissive western/urban culture, which is different from conservative, rural sensibility. Thus the use of cosmetics is seen as pointing to immorality – to women shunning cultural expectations rather than an expression of individuality. To this day, well-groomed and fashionably dressed women attract negative commentary in Zimbabwe. Thus bringing fashion consciousness to school is seen as undermining quests for academic achievement and allowing an assertive sexuality which render female students deviant.

Bullying and sexual harassment not only point to male students’ awareness of their sexualised bodies as most bullying revolves around conformity to heterosexual norms (Valentine et al 2010, also Kehily 2009), they also point to internalisation of masculinity as domination of girls/women (Izugbara 2005, Pattman 2005). Thus when girls say “no” boys try to rebut them to get their way (Bay-Cheng 2003, Izugbara 2005, Tolman 1994, Shefer

and Foster 2001). Boys do not seem to have learnt how to talk to girls without dominating them and persisting to break their will. Their misogynistic reference to and objectification of girls' bodies indicate unchallenged machismo fuelled by ignorance about women's bodies. Conclusions that women are dirty or engaged in rampant illicit sex because of menstruation were disconcerting for me. I felt insulted along with the girls. These insults reproduce male dominance over women and make women withdraw from (public) spaces where this verbal abuse is likely. This gender tension is escalated by gerontocratic interventions as seen in the high-handedness of school authorities and the police who use caning to respond to boys' curiosity, albeit misogynistic, about girls' bodies. As noted by other researchers, this climate does not foster responsible discussion of sex and sexuality and precludes agentive sexuality (Bay-Cheng 2003:66). It locks girls in low self-esteem and boys in machismo.

When I suggested that perhaps menstruation should be discussed in all Life Skills classes, I was told that it is an academic topic taught in Science classes. However not all secondary school students have grades which qualify them for the sciences track, while all of them encounter menstruation in one way or another. Boys encounter it through colleagues and siblings and girls experience it personally. Some adults think that boys will somehow learn how to deal with women and understand women's bodies as they grow older forgetting that masculinities and femininities are learnt (see Shire 1994). Most teaching and learning is left to the "hidden curriculum" (Kehily 2009), which clearly does not help as it perpetuates myths and misogyny. It would be better if the formal curriculum was more pro-active and actively countered the hidden curriculum. Consequently it can be seen that girls come of age in a double bind because of multi-layered contradictions in their dealing with male peers and adults. Those girls who report abuse risk more abuse at the hands of boys or need the protection of other boys in the manner of brothers, friends and/or boyfriends who can ward off offending male peers. On the other hand, those who do not complain because they do not want to bring attention to themselves in keeping with expectations of discreetness as a means to respectability are also blamed for the continued abuse they endure. Girls who are harassed for reporting boys' abuse feel let down by the boys arguing that they probably enjoy it. Likewise girls who disobey school codes because they want to show their individuality lose protection of the school because they are seen as asking for it by "self-advertisement". They lack sympathy from colleagues too. Brown (2011) observed that girls have to negotiate their identities against stereotypes of "bad", "sad" and "mad" girlhood which all point to different articulations of femininity in its struggles with patriarchy. These issues need further research in Zimbabwe.

Sexuality as a livelihood asset: youth exchanging money for sex and sex in place of money

It is increasingly acknowledged that young people use sexuality a source of income or asset for livelihood diversification (Chant and Evans 2010, Cole 2007, Nyamnjoh 2005, Posel 2005). This is controversial especially because it approximates prostitution widely seen as immoral; it is illicit and stigmatised. This leads to condemnation of young people’s sexualities. The following discussion tries to highlight how young people deal with transactions related to sex and how they rationalise them as part of deliberate strategies to accumulate resources, to save for remittances and as stopgap measures on the way to idealised adulthoods. These rationalisations show both how young people deal with economic crises and how they use socio-cultural tropes to rationalise payments.

Saving incomes and paying for sex: male youth’s narratives of kukecha

Casual paid sex is colloquially referred to as *kukecha/ukukhetsha* (Shona and Ndebele respectively), both derived from the English verb “to catch”. They indicate men as initiators of sex, the ones with sexual desire, while women supposedly have none or it is invisible. Men use money and other resources as bait for the “catch”. These references portray women as being only after money for which they provide sex but in which they are otherwise uninterested. As one male youth observed, “...it is the *colour* of money which attracts women to men...” meaning the choice between USD and ZAR in the Zimbabwean context. The former yields more favourable results than the latter. Thus *kukecha* underscores nuances of the objectification of women’s bodies. It gives the impression of hunting where money is the bait, and women invariably walking into the trap because of allure of money; they get caught to the hunter’s triumph. Women’s wilful role in “being caught” is ambivalent. Motives for men were stated as “manliness”, an affirmation of virility and a response to men’s apparently high libidos, mastery of their bodies and resources as well as getting their way with women through persistence (see Izugbara 2005, Shefer and Foster 2001, Wood et al 2007). Some young men see bragging about their exploits as another dimension of manliness where fact and fiction are blurred but where the objectification of women is a common denominator.

Because of rules of propriety only out-of-school respondents talked freely about paid sex. In-school and church affiliated youth could not say much because they were accessed in schools and in places of worship respectively where abstinence-only SBSE is encouraged. Among male youth vendors, paid sex was discussed amid uncomfortable laughter and giggles. Looking back, perhaps the giggles signified something familiar yet embarrassing

to reveal. Some participants admitted to regularly and willingly participating in it. Others claimed being manipulated into it.

RM: What is *kukecha*?

- *Kukecha* is asking for sex from a woman...

Interjection: Asking? What do you mean by asking? There is no such thing as asking.

It is buying. That sort of thing is buying...

- Another interjection- Buying death...

- Yes. Buying death

- Whatever it is, whether buying or selling it is pointless.

From the above excerpt, *kukecha* is familiar and controversial to young men as “buying sex” and “courting death” through risks to HIV infection hence also described as “pointless”. Controversy is also in the fact that I had been told by adult male informants that male youth were abstinent because they do not earn “a lot of money”. One local authority official went to the extent of saying that HIV and reproductive health awareness were more important for girls than for boys, because girls were “lured” by money into sex with older men and could not protect themselves if the men did not want to use protection. He was adamant that male youth “do not have money”, thus they “do not have girlfriends...” so were forced to abstain from sex by circumstance. According to this informant young men were saving for remittances and for marriage. By contrast Sekuru Hanga, the traditional-cum-faith healer argued that:

SH: When young men have a bit of money then they want to have sex too. ...What woman/girl would like to have sex with a penniless man?’

RM:...[A]re you suggesting that women do not fall in love for love’s sake?

SH: There are few such women. Here in Beitbridge *women want money*...Perhaps in rural areas you could come across girls who fall in love without the promise of earning money, not here in Beitbridge or other towns for that matter... [I]f a guy gets a small sum of money, say five ZAR he can have sex. These days it is easy to get sex for five ZAR.....Five ZAR buys a plate of food.

Sekuru Hanga deals with a lot of young men and women as a traditional healer and is bound to know. From his point of view paid sex is normal and to be expected in urban settings. Relationships without gift exchange are also unthinkable. Gifts indicate commitment to the relationship regardless of its duration (see Poulin 2007). Sekuru Hanga later argued that it was man’s nature to want to have sex with a woman. If regular partners are far or

non-existent then casual paid sex becomes an option. Most young men resort to ubiquitous low-cost sex commonly referred to as “bacossi sex”, pegged at the lowest price of 5 ZAR, the same price for a plate of food in the informal sector. As explained in chapter 3, BACOSI stands for Basic Commodities Supply Side Intervention, a central bank scheme which sought to provide basic commodities to low-income households at the depth of Zimbabwe’s economic crisis. In this sense, “bacossi sex” is seen as some kind basic service/commodity which satisfies man’s need for sex without emotional attachment. Set at the same price as a plate of food “bacossi sex” is indeed “basic” from the perspective of female service providers because she is in need of money to meet pressing basic needs: food and rent; and if there are several such encounters in a day she should save for kin obligations. Bacossi sex is also associated with young girls whose need for money are believed to be easy to satisfy (hence “basic”) or who are so desperate that they accept such small sums of money for sex. Thus “bacossi sex” makes paid sex accessible to male and female youth. It helps both parties get by in this highly individualised setting but also degrades all differently.

In a heated debate with male vendors about the role of money in relationships, one participant countered suggestions by colleagues that “hard times”, “economic difficulties”, and “the situation” made girls look for money through paid sex,

- [B]ut if you buy a girl biscuits, [between 3 and 5 ZAR] if she cannot afford them, she will do anything you ask her to do. You could even get an informal marriage.
- Yes because you are meeting her needs (*laughter*)
- No. You are doing what she wants you to do (*more laughter*)

The above excerpt shows the pervasiveness and paradoxes of paid sex. It shows that the exchange of money determines the duration of the relationship. Low prices make episodic sex accessible for men in different occupations but demean recipients of the money even more. The wide availability of paid sex made some research participants doubt arguments about poverty as the underlying reason preferring to blame young women for lack of restraint or greed. The above excerpt reveals another aspect in male-female relations: men’s ambivalence to female youth’s agency albeit fuelled by despair. Despite their cynicism, young men seem to think that meeting women’s need is part of being a man and a means to dominating women. In this FGD, male youth admitted to enjoying some of the paying and gift giving but also decrying the waste of their money. The sense one gets is that for young women the attractiveness of men is measured by “ability to pay” for small needs as an indicator (a poor one it seems) for future provision.

Accepting money for sex degrades women because of what is seen as corruption of bridewealth norms. This is because of the widely held belief that bridewealth – paid to parents of a young woman – is the only respectable payment for women’s sexuality. Youth in sex work and other forms of paid sex are seen as pre-empting bridewealth by receiving payments piecemeal themselves. Thus they usurp their parents’ authority over their bodies and sexuality. Consequently by not conforming to these norms young women undermine the social role of giving gifts where traditionally gifts and young people were circulated among kin to consolidate kinship. Now young women control the receipt and distribution of gifts themselves such as through remittances. Sex workers referred to some men saying “can I marry you for the night?” meaning “Can I have paid sex with you tonight?” While many people will rightly consider the notion of marriage for one night extreme cynicism, it points to deep-seated notions that payments give exclusive rights albeit with a time limit in this case. Male youth vendors above referred to paid episodic sex as the corruption of marriage payments seen in the statement that

It [casual sex/*kukecha*] is paying bridewealth to a woman so she spends the money herself [*Kuzvidyira pfuma yake*]. (All participants laugh)... Yes. Because the money is not given to and spent by her parents.

In her analysis of the stigmatization of women in sex work in Nairobi’s Mathare Valley, Nelson (1987) observed that receiving payments for their own sexuality rather than allowing patrikin to receive and make decisions on how to spend it, is at issue. In this sense, it is the corruption customs of gift giving which makes these young women so immoral in the eyes of the community.

Male youth were conflicted by paid and casual sex. They described it as “*Kudya mari nezipa*” literally meaning “spending money through one’s zipper (rather than the mouth)”. This is seen as anti-social and irresponsible because it diverts money from socially approved pursuits such as kin obligations and saving for the future especially marriage. Chant and Evans (2010) also observed the disapproval of paid sex by male youth in the Gambia. However the inability to give their girlfriends gifts in money and/or in kind marks a new form of marginalization of young men because women shun them. Consequently, as the practice of paid sex becomes commonplace those not able to partake in it may be signalling extreme poverty and failure to take evasive action to ameliorate the situation.

The downside of paid episodic sex is that it competes with other obligations. The young men complained that some of their male colleagues work daily but have nothing to show for it because of *kukecha*. Some girls are adept at incrementally “borrowing” small sums of

money apparently with no intention or means to repay. They borrow money in the form of cellphone recharge card, 1USD at a time, drinks at 5 ZAR apiece, taxi fares at 20 ZAR and so on. Young men who are owed large sums of money and realise that they are not likely to get it back could opt for sex instead. Respondents said they are forced into it because of an unbalanced exchange, and to avoid this trap it is better not to yield to requests for assistance in the first place.

Concurring with Sekuru Hanga that girls in Beitbridge do not date men who do not give gifts and money, boys said the antidote to wasting money this way is having girlfriends in places of origin who will be married later. Being far, means that they cannot ask for money as often as girls in Beitbridge do. Besides, rural girls apparently wait to be given rather than presenting a list of deprivations to their boyfriends to fund. Apparently rural girls are less exposed to having independent income and spending on cellphone recharge cards.⁴ Indeed some respondents like Jane attest to this when she said until she worked as a maid she had never had 300 ZAR (30 Euro) as discretionary spending. Girls who remain in rural areas are seen as symbolizing domestication and marriageability and not exposed to consumerism. Other adult informants said paid episodic sex is inappropriate for young men. Because they have not yet married, young single men apparently have no excuse to engage in such sex and not to marry single colleagues they have sex with.⁵ In addition, it was indicated that casual sex socializes male youth into bad manners: disrespecting older men whose daughters they sleep with. This creates a downward spiral in which girls do not get married, and risk out of wedlock parenting thus deviating from ideal norms. It makes it easy for young men to delay marriage while having some of its benefits. However these arguments belie the inability to pay bridewealth and to raise incomes with which to provide for a family.

Male youth rationalised that paid sex degrades girls who engage in it describing them as “garbage” or “spoilt”/ “rotten” (in Shona “*marara*” and “*atoshata*”), not suitable to marry because of their propensity for multiple partner sex for monetary gain. Some respondents related tricks of the trade such as the girls receiving many calls including at odd hours usually attributed to a long list of demanding relatives. Apparently no self-respecting young man accepts responsibility when such girls become pregnant. In this sense, paid casual sex is good for what Pattman (2005:507) describes as male youth’s strategies of “refutation of obligations”. Consequently knowing or suspecting that a girlfriend has several partners is one and the same thing. It is only assertive young women who can insist on paternity tests or withstand demands of court processes. Few get support from their families who

see supporting these acts as condoning immorality. Young women who are mobile, are generally questionable and less likely to have family support.

Towards the end of the FGD when I asked for a clarification about difference in practices of *kukecha* as paid sex and dating, male vendors were more reflective and their responses were more guarded:

- There is no difference. None at all. These terms are meaningless.
- The difference is poverty. (*Inhamo*).
- Yes that hurts us.
- I think that is an honest answer. That is our reality....real things we see everyday.

Thus, while these young men acknowledge that dating is normal and natural, they also acknowledge that because customs dictate that they pay bridewealth, poverty makes this difficult. Many are locked in dead-end relationships and practices of running away from commitment such as through *kukecha* and subsequent “refutations of obligations” (Pattman 2005). In this sense, young men who pay bridewealth are respected by their peers as having mustered a rite of passage into adulthood. Consequently despite denigrating women who participate in paid casual sex, male youth are aware of paradoxes of paid sex for them too. Paid casual sex is wasteful because it is an impediment to saving and transitions to ideal adulthoods through marriage. They deal with it by withdrawing from these activities or cheating women by refusing to pay or give gifts if they can get away with it.

Some young men said the pervasiveness of paid sex leaves them “feeling inadequate” as they live with the knowledge that “one will be cheated on” as expressed by a young man with ambitions to be a lawyer. The speaker and his colleagues date, but are also aware that their girlfriends likely cheat on them with men with money. The young men were sympathetic to some girls’ circumstances saying some of them are orphaned and live in child-headed households (CHH) without adult breadwinners so they make do with whatever money and food they get. They related how at a newly established private college,⁶ grey economy entrepreneurs bring girls chicken and chips from Kentucky Fried Chicken (KFC) for lunch. Beitbridge does not have a KFC outlet. Thus a KFC meal has to be imported from the nearby Musina, South Africa, where most people do their shopping and work. Two pieces of fried chicken, a small portion of chips sell for twenty-two ZAR, thirty ZAR (3 Euros) with a fizzy drink, a bit more with a fruit juice and/or a salad. Men who make an effort to bring take-aways from Musina, are sought after and will have their way with their female partners. Such men also signal being well-heeled. This means that demands will surely escalate in their direction. Young men’s feelings of inadequacy emanate from not

being able to compete. The fact that pursuing higher education is demanding, its supposed yields in the form of well-paying job, cars and others take long to materialize and are not guaranteed under prevailing conditions makes them less desirable. Such frustrations are not unique to Zimbabwe. Unemployed young male graduates in India described themselves as “generation nowhere”, meaning people who went to school to be upwardly mobile but have to contend with the grim reality of limited employment opportunities and continued dependence on parents (Jeffrey 2005). In Addis Ababa, young men preferred overseas migration to locally available low wage work (Mains 2007). The young men in Beitbridge lamented their inadequacy saying “...to be *somebody* you need money. You cannot eat or wear school certificates...”. Thus while educational achievement is good, it is pointless if it brings no material benefit in the form of high income. Without money, these young men would not be able to show manliness by spending on women. Such inability to compete evinces senses of inadequacy (Chant and Evans 2010).

Female youth’s narratives of kukechwa

The notion of *kukechwa* portrays female youth as “caught”, “baited” by, and therefore objects of men’s wilfulness, resources and power. The term *kukechwa* refers to a wide range of exchanges in different types of relationships given that both male and female youth as well as adult key informants agree that gifts and money are core exchanges in any relationship. However, only young women in sex work specifically associated *kukechwa* with their own lives. Other young women did not use this term in connection to their own practices. They associated it with bad practices of peers in sex work. Thus by dissociating themselves from this term and its practices they sought to deflect stigmatisation by male peers and other commentators (Kaufman and Johnson 2004). However, in general all female youth prefer dating economically dominant males, who give them gifts. Thus exchanging money for sex and other favours is subsumed in sex work, casual sex and in romantic relationships where economically superior partners irrespective of age, understand needs of their partners. Often gifts or money also become means to control and discipline weaker partners, recipients of gifts. The discussion highlights young women’s rationalisation of gifts in sexual relationships regardless of whether or not the relationships are categorised as sex work.

Male youth spoke about paying for sex with derision vis-à-vis their female peers, they described it as a waste of resources, degrading their youth and interfering with pathways of becoming upright adults. Female youth talked about it as part of surviving and getting by for their own upkeep, recompense for social and biological degradation of their bodies (implying perceptions of wear-and-tear due to sexual activity) and their social standing

and to meet family obligations for remittances. Female youth categorised men according to whether they understood their pressing needs and could meet them. Thus some men are troublesome and not worth the trouble if they cannot simplify their needs, pay/give money, get what they need and let girls be. This ties in with Longfield's (2004) observation in Ivory Coast that girls maintained multiple partners whom they categorised according to their utility. Paid sex and gifts exchanges are worthwhile stopgap measures while waiting for marriage to well-heeled partners young women hope to meet. Their male peers do not consider such female who participate in paid episodic sex suitable for marriage. The bad reputations earned by female youth in the process were also very clear to female youth and featured prominently in their arguments as discussed below. Female youth compete against each other for men with disposable income in practices that blur the line between sex work and non-sex work.

Having multiple partners is one example of these practices. Rita, a self-identified 18 year old sex worker, when asked if she knew how many men she slept with per day, responded that for her the issue is primarily *how much money* she makes per day whether or not she makes 40 ZAR daily rent, not the number of men. In fact she did not know about the latter because she does not keep count. Thus, if she happens to have one client who pays enough to cover rent and more, she would not be under pressure to see another man for the day. Likewise, if a man offers to pay only 10 ZAR for sex, she would reject it depending on her estimation of the probability of meeting more clients to make enough for rent that day. The estimation considers the flow of clients and whether or not there are police patrols. If the day is relaxed, she might reject such a client. If there are police patrols she might accept him in the knowledge that she has a quarter of minimum daily requirements (rent). Another self-identified sex worker who uses pubs to meet clients reiterated the same, saying she gets into a panic if she gets past midnight without a client. She worries about accumulating debts on daily rent, 60 ZAR in her case, and obligations to kin which linger incessantly. These anxieties have forced her to look for a talisman for good fortune and to attract better paying clients.

A school going youth, 17 years old, was very clear that dating many men serially and concurrently as well as sharing one man with other women is acceptable because there are few men with resources hence women have to share. Sharing men with resources is part of life these days, and women who cannot take the heat can leave, but this is reality. She likened men to a cob of maize (eaten as a snack) usually shared by several people. Each gets a few lines of corn and passes the cob to others to get their couple of lines thus everyone gets something (in Ndebele "*Indoda yisiqu, hulula utshiyele abanye*"). In summer when fresh

maize is in season, it is not the kind of snack to be stingy with unlike a packet of chips. Maize is the national staple, so it is a basic food. The girl’s attitude was very confident bordering on brazen. Her older co-participants looked stunned and did not support or challenge her arguments. I got the impression she was talking about lived experiences which underline pressures which force some women to stay in relationships with men in relationships with other women because of men’s relative wealth. Certainly married women are encouraged to endure and not to publicise their husbands’ adulterous relationships. Often girlfriends and married women compete with each other either by not acknowledging the competition or trying to out do it by being more fashionable or more humble. Sometimes the women fight. The strategy depends on perceived vantage points. Statements by this teenager hint at girls being socialised to tolerate men’s adulterous relationships as long as the men have resources.

Another issue that blurs the line between sex work and non-sex work is an assumption about biological degeneration of the body and social devaluation of girls due to being sexually active. Degeneration and devaluation come from sex with multiple partners (serially or concurrently) the evidence of which is sagging breasts apparently announcing to the world that girls are sexually active. Form 3 girls in school B expressed this passionately. They said men and boys should pay for the degeneration visited on their bodies to alleviate the humiliation they will suffer later in life and questions from suspicious parents and future husbands. Not only is this telltale evidence embarrassing, the girls argued, it earns them bad reputations and limits their future chances of marriage. It is living evidence of illicit premarital sex. The idea of sagging breasts as evidence of early sexual activity may seem strange but Fiona Scorgie was told, during virginity testing debates in Kwa-Zulu Natal (South Africa) by older women that one way to tell whether or not girls are sexually active is by “muscle tone” – that is, firm buttocks, breasts and flat abdomens as signs of virginity (Scorgie 2002: 58-59). Girls I spoke with said this is indeed the case. Thus they engage in sex knowing that even when the act is private, it leaves indelible tell-tale signs to experienced eyes of adults, and therefore, male partners must pay for it.

One male informant in his 70s confirmed the same saying he is amazed that these days some girls leave primary school already wearing bras. Not only is this inappropriate but it is evidence of early sexual debut as far as he is concerned. He blamed parents who aid this waywardness by providing girls with apparently age-inappropriate clothing (bras). He said as far as bras are for supporting breasts, they point to sexual activity without which the breasts would not need support. He said in his days, only married women who had had babies wore bras. They were sexually active in marriage, had legitimately fallen pregnant

and were breastfeeding or had breastfed. Their breasts understandably needed support. Bras were garments husbands bought for their wives and never fathers or mothers buying them for their daughters. Furthermore, he said girls who are “innocent” should not worry about the shape of breasts and demand bras. The concern with shapely breasts points to inappropriate experiences with girls wanting to dupe onlookers. My argument that bras are garments like others do not signify sexual impropriety *per se*, and that perhaps in his days people were poorer and less exposed to the necessity for bras did not convince him.

The notion of women’s bodies being devalued by what one might describe as perceived wear and tear of sex and childbirth is deep-seated in Zimbabwe. In sexual and reproductive health programs there have been campaigns against the use of herbal suppositories to modify the reproductive tract making it “youthful” by tightening it. The efficacy of these herbs is well studied and their chronic use sometimes implicated in cancer inducing damages in the reproductive tract (Civic and Wilson 1996, Ruganga et al. 1992). Respondents in Beitbridge were also involved in these battles to restore their apparently degenerating bodies because of paid sex and multi-partner sex. The prevalent use of herbal remedies was evident in the deep scars on the *morula/mupfura tree*⁷ (*sclerocarya birrea*) whose inner bark, when soaked in water and used in a hipbath, is reportedly effective in restoring sexual and reproductive tract health by tightening pelvic muscle tone. The point here is that the belief that bodies degenerate or lose value from attractive youthfulness to aged, “used”, “less attractive”, less functional and not fit for marriage is something female youth have a need to guard against or at least seek payment for. Indeed, some female youth used the words “being used” and “discarded as useless” by boys to suggest being taken advantage of. Boys fondle girls’ breasts causing sagging. Thus boys must pay or give gifts.

These narratives are in conversation with norms and ideals of sparing oneself for marriage which youth flout by being in sexual relationships. Payments then become a tool of screening determined and less determined partners as well recompense for (ab)use perhaps in anticipation of future punishment. However given the low prices for sex, the effectiveness of these payments is questionable. Even risks to HIV infection are dealt with through a “danger fee” a surcharge on going rates by sex workers. Thus condomless sex attracts relatively higher fees. Awareness of the body and how to manipulate and restore it speaks of youth who, according to adults, have lost their innocence. Such knowledge is seen as adult knowledge and attached to adult experiences. Thus even bras cease to be utilitarian garments but a corrective for bodies degenerated by illicit activities.

The quest for economic independence is yet another issue that blurs the distinction between sex work and other forms of sexual engagements. A nurse in a bacossi clinic related

her frustrations with young women visiting the clinic. Many have told her that there is no need to complain about not having money as every woman has some kind of piggy bank to draw on when in hard times. In her words she said the young women talk about having “a purse” referring to their vaginas, which can be accessed by men for their sexual gratification for a fee. In-school youth complained about risks to being recruited into sex work arguing that often people talk about girls going “on bacossi” meaning using sex work to earn some pocket money. Thus when youth report to parents that they do not have something such as sanitary towels, some female neighbours advice “bacossi” as a solution. In individual interviews, several young women claimed to be in sex work to raise capital for an income generating venture, until they find better paying work or a man willing to marry them. Some were in sex work to pursue “town fun” (Adams 2009) in the form of nightclubbing and modern alcoholic drinks such as ciders and beer. In a study of young women in a peri-urban settlement in Harare in the late 1980s, Adams (2009) observed that “town fun” was seen as transitory and “playful”, something that girls would soon outgrow to become serious, settled, non-fun seeking married woman. This ties in with the idea that paid episodic sex is seen as transitory ending with marriage to Mr Right. Respondents in this study were adamant that many people including those who run entertainment businesses such as pubs and nightclubs were relying on availability of sex to boost patronage and sales thus saying that there is money to be had in sex work. They are also very clear that available alternatives such as domestic work are less favourable because of low wages (300-400 ZAR per month) in addition to living with employers and being controlled by them. Vending requires discipline (the frugality of penny capitalism). This is not to everyone’s ability. Clearly female youth narratives show concerted efforts to counter male peers’ and adults’ arguments that girls’ are degraded/wasted by paid sex. They show that demanding or expecting gifts in cash or kind offsets degradation.

Sex in place of “bush money”: rationalization of sexual violence?

The idea that sex can be exchanged for services applies to men as it does to women. Men demand sex in place of money in cases where they render services to women but are not paid as expected. Outside this research project, I am aware that for years women have been reported to willingly travel within the region by hitching rides with commercial truckers promising to pay for the ride through sex or drivers demand sex if no money is forthcoming (UNDP/Poverty Reduction Forum 2003). Some of these interactions yield long-term relationships, while some accentuate the vulnerability of women interacting with men in the grey economy.

During fieldwork there were several examples of women whose money was stolen while travelling. Some tried to proceed without enough money persuaded by seemingly sympathetic people smugglers and their fixers. The reality is that no one is “assisted” across the border for free no matter how sympathetic the people smuggler claims to be. The other problem is that an individual traveling alone and seeking such services talks to many people before s/he is handed over to individuals who know which routes to use and where to pay “bush money”. In this vein, Taurai, referred to in chapter 5 who is a self-styled human smuggler and thief, confessed to having sex with female travellers he assists to cross the border illegally if they cannot pay him. He ordinarily charges 500 ZAR (50 Euro) per person. It was hard to ascertain the extent to which this is consensual sex given reports of prevalent rape of female travellers by people smugglers and bandits. Taurai’s notoriety and how people described him (“killer”, “thug”, “rapist”) suggest that he and his colleagues rape the women.

Another self-confessed people smuggler, Mandla (referred to in chapter 4) admitted that rape of male and female travellers does take place. He witnessed many such harrowing events. He distanced people in his trade (people smuggling) from these heinous activities saying they are strategies used by wanted criminals who live in the forest to hide from the law and see irregular migrants as sitting ducks for their sexual desires. In most instances, sex is part of inter-gang transactions “of the bush”, between people smugglers and bandits. The latter levy fees to grant people/goods smugglers free passage on bush trails hence “bush money”. Bush money was pegged at 250 ZAR (25 Euro) per passage of people or goods. These gangsters demand payments on the spot. Sometimes debts and grudges between controllers of trails and smugglers lead to the former seeking to malign and punish the latter by raping their clients thus discrediting their “business”. In addition, failure to pay is linked to increased risks of being snitched on to officials, thus increasing risks of arrests, beatings in police custody and deportations thereby threatening business opportunities for people smugglers. Thus, according to Mandla when “bush money” is not paid travellers are raped, robbed at knife or gunpoint and/or the convoy is ambushed.

Mandla told me that in his experience men are raped and/or forced to participate in rape of women to humiliate and to emasculate them. Where for instance a man protests the rape of a woman he is travelling with, he might be raped to silence him. This apparently ensures that the man does not shun or expose his female partner, sister or companion. Thus rape is used to silence travellers due to shame. This cruel manipulation of travellers is also noted in an International Organisation for Migration (IOM) undated pamphlet (likely produced around 2006/7) to increase awareness of gender-based violence among undocumented

migrants. It notes that male travellers were either ordered to leave their female companions to the gangs or to partake in gang rape leaving them multiply traumatized by illegal travel, involuntary rape of women at knife point, fear of being infected with HIV and inability to talk about their ordeals. One of IOM’s stories from the pamphlet is of a 37-year-old male survivor:

In the company of three other men we crossed the river into RSA [Republic of South Africa]. Suddenly we met seven men with knives. They brought 2 women who were also travelling to RSA. The men then forced us to gang rape one woman, while they took turns raping the other one. The woman we were forced to rape told us she was HIV positive.⁷

To avoid rape of his customers, Mandla said that he always makes sure that he has “bush money” to pay gangsters they might encounter. Mandla admitted that in a game of competing loyalties such as his trade, disgruntled members of the team could contact gangsters to get back at him or others involved in the operation, hence a code of conduct where no one is allowed to have a cellphone except the leader of the operation. I heard from several informants too that the “no cellphone” rule applies to transport providers too, not just the people who are smuggled across the border. Travellers were also forced to discard their personal identity documents. Thus, without cellphone, victims could not immediately report abuse under these circumstances. The IOM pamphlet referred to above shows that people referred women to people smugglers they knew or trusted in their places of origin or in Beitbridge (IOM et al not dated). Knowing that crossing the border illegally is an offence, female travellers agreed to wait with the smugglers in the forest until dusk, apparently in order to evade detection by authorities.⁸ However after dark with the women’s vulnerability magnified, the smugglers reportedly change terms of business and demanded sex as part of the deal. The pamphlet does not show that the women would have paid in advance or that there were conflicts over payments. It is possible that some women thought they could use sex as payment when they ran short of funds to pay people smugglers because of the prevalence of theft as explained in chapter 5. The problem is that they found themselves confronted sometimes by several individuals demanding sex at the same time leading to gang rape. Under these circumstances and with few alternatives, few women would have been able to negotiate better terms.⁹ Two key informants also noted that the stigma of rape, HIV and AIDS, even through taking post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP) for HIV, made it difficult for women to report lest they were shunned by family and partners.¹⁰ Statistics

of rape of irregular travellers were hard to ascertain apparently because of diplomatic wrangling.

Men receiving money for sex: an inversion of gender norms?

Other examples of men using their sexuality to get by were less violent, such as young men who go to South Africa and end up as live-in lovers of South African women. Sekuru Hanga observed that this way men too could be said to be involved in sex work, trapped in relationships by material resources such as well-furnished houses, cars and disposable income because of limited alternatives to be independent back home. Other informants concurred saying that older, single women entrepreneurs who made money at the depth of the crisis “keep” younger men “captive” using their resources. These women were talked about in disparaging terms as cunning, graspy and libidinous, while their wealth, cars and houses were said to be illicit not just because of links to speculative activities of past years but also because of suspicions of using black magic to acquire them. Often the younger men are allowed use of the women’s cars and given generous pocket money. This gives the young men a modicum of autonomy in keeping with local masculinity norms, and a quick route to looking “successful”. The young men provide sex to the older women. Among other things some of the older women already have children and are seen as past child bearing age, meaning that they will not bear children for the young men. Young men who tie themselves to women known to be unable to bear children are seen as wasting and emasculating themselves. Apparently some of the young men use these relationships for self-enrichment by sometimes defrauding the women of cars or stealing money to use as start-up capital for informal sector ventures. Some young men attach themselves to older women, running errands such as sourcing the goods they need for their businesses but also pilfering to set themselves up. The older women also condemned these practices saying young people should learn to do honest work. This conversation, one afternoon in March 2010, took place at an open market surrounded by a handful of bars, a nightclub and supermarket. Several young men were pointed out to me as they drove by or came to the bars. The young men looked like they were in their late twenties to early thirties. Informants disapproved of their way of life arguing that young men not used to working for their own things would never marry their peers because they would have to work hard to provide. These relationships are seen as emasculating and hence wrong.

In the foregoing, sex is a commodity and a currency; something one gives or demands in place of money and /or goods. This means that among young people there is no free lunch, all persons who need and get services must pay with something; including sex. This

is a case of the neoliberal agency gone awry. These practices also reveal sex as an instrument of violence wielded by the powerful to subjugate and punish and silence others through shame and humiliation. Participants seemingly do this willingly yet these activities belie the structural violence and pervasive inequality leading to infection with STIs, HIV and the trauma of sexual assault.

The double bind of informal marriages

Informal marriages or cohabiting have a long and contradictory history in southern Africa not least because they are formed without due performance of traditional rituals. There is an underlying assumption by observers that informal marriages are transitory. Thus they are an embarrassment to any family whose daughters are in such. The women are seen as greedy, lacking self-restraint and hence having no regard for customary rites. These unions are fraught with tension and conflict pitting partners with kin over the status of the union. They proliferate in urban areas because of material conditions that make it difficult to observe customary rites.

Practitioners of informal marriages see the practice as better than casual or paid sex, a halfway house to marriage and to decency. Legal rights for people in informal marriages are not as well publicised or observed. In these unions women perform domestic work as wives while the men enjoy being husbands, heads of families/households and are expected to meet the bulk of expenses. Some informants noted that some men pay bridewealth but not with genuine kin in the party of people who negotiate bridewealth or genuine kin on the part of the woman. This is why these marriages are derided, as they do not respect kinship norms. Thus even acts of complying with local customs of paying bridewealth may be a front to cover up for challenged identities and forms of work. The marriages soon unravel when there are crackdowns when the men are picked up by the police for a variety of offences. The women and children are left to their own devices as the following examples show.

Tsitsi, 19 years old, cohabits with a self-styled clearing agent (someone who clears and forwards imported goods). She is pregnant with her first baby. He pays rent for their accommodation and buys food. She came to Beitbridge as a hired hand escorting a blind family who wanted to go to South Africa because beggars were allowed to enter South Africa without papers. Her family is very poor and had sent her to work for the visually impaired couple to earn some money for her family. She says she was a virgin when she met her partner. In the customs of her people in the north of Zimbabwe, the *Korekore*, a girl marries the man who deflowers her. Meanwhile she learnt from neighbours that her

partner serially deserts women he cohabits with. She is anxious about the security of their relationship. In her circumstances, not only is she no longer a virgin, she is pregnant and realises she does not really know her partner. The knowledge that she is likely being taken advantage of dashed her hopes of a secure married future. Her partner is not taking steps to approach her parents to formalise the union. Meanwhile her pregnancy is growing. It is seen as insincere to approach one's parents with plans to get married when in advanced pregnancy. She had believed her partner when he said he was saving for bridewealth. She does not know his patrilineal kin never mind where to find them in order to pressure them to make him behave. Young women who are pregnant out of wedlock can approach their boyfriends' kin to wiggle their way into marriage thus preventing embarrassment for themselves and their families. Despite its frequency, denying paternity of a pregnancy or children is frowned upon. Men who deny paternity do so without telling their relatives or using moral arguments (such as arguing that the woman is of questionable social standing) to justify their decisions. Tsitsi had hoped that through marriage, her parents would get the assistance they anticipated from a son-in-law, through the payment of bridewealth and lifelong support as is traditionally expected. Tsitsi has also become anxious about HIV and AIDS. She hopes to be tested for HIV at the antenatal clinic together with her partner if she can convince him.

Tsitsi attends an independent African church with a neighbour's wife. This church is known for close monitoring and surveillance of its adherents. It encourages marriage among its followers. The church has called on her boyfriend to attend as well in the hope of converting him to a path of faithfulness and transparency to his partner; but to no avail. Leaders of the church pledged to contact Tsitsi's parents to alert them to her circumstances. Through the church's mediation she hopes her parents can forgive her and take her back with the baby in the event that her partner deserts her, as expected.

Nyasha is 21-year-old single mother with a small sickly baby. She lives alone, in a temporary structure on a housing development site where she is apparently "taking care" of someone's house pending the onset of construction. She stays there for free. She resorted to sex work because she could not fend for herself and the baby. She came to Beitbridge from nearby rural areas to look for work. Initially she worked as a maid. The family she worked for was apparently cruel to her. They did not give her food and did not pay her on time. She eloped with a man she was dating and ended up cohabiting with him. She eventually became pregnant. She was happy and looked forward to marriage thinking that it was a means to economic security. However, her partner was not forthcoming vis-à-vis customary rites such as meeting her parents and negotiating bridewealth. The man deserted

her six months into the pregnancy. She became stranded with no money for food and no accommodation. She could not go back home pregnant with a baby with “no father” and ended up in the construction site. In despair, she is having sex for food and upkeep with, in her words, “any man who shows pity on her situation”. The baby is sickly, underweight suggesting *kwashiorkor* or worse HIV infection. She says she no longer prioritises STI and HIV prevention because she is desperate for money. When she gets a client and heads for the forest where she has sex she leaves her sickly baby behind, alone. Female peers – who say she is “mentally retarded” or “lazy” for failing to think of a better solution – ridicule her. She has been advised by HIV peer educators of one NGO to test for HIV and attend Baby Wellness Clinics so the baby could be enrolled in an observed feeding program or receive food packs for free. She was so distraught she was not attending these free clinics to save her baby and herself.

Tina, 16 years old, was introduced earlier in chapter 4. When I met her she was a client of an NGO specialising on counselling sexually abused children. Her advanced pregnancy at 16 is evidence that she was sexually active before she was of age, thus a victim of statutory rape. In the eyes of the law she is a victim of sexual abuse. The dire circumstances of her life may have been the source of vulnerability long before she met the man who got her pregnant. Even as a victim of circumstances, her role in the relationship is invisible because of her age. She admitted to me that she thought she was in love with the man who is 6-7 years her senior. When their relationship first led to his arrest on suspicion of “having sex with a minor”, he evaded prosecution. She does not know how. Subsequently she moved in with him believing she would get married to him only to encounter more challenges. Not only did she become pregnant, her partner is violent and confines her to the house. He is unfaithful and she is anxious about the durability of the relationship. Once she reaches 18 years of age, she cannot expect support from NGOs dealing with abused children, as she will be seen as adult, albeit an adult scarred by her teenage experiences and with a child to care for.

In Tina’s case we see that the law protects girls reactively but remains unable to prevent such informal marriages from happening or protecting young women who end up in single parenting but without the wherewithal to be parents. In earlier discussions about age of sexual consent in chapter 1, it has been shown that motions towards marriage and the payment of damages are a customary way by which men evade prosecution for having sex with girls below 16. The fact is that such young women find themselves alone because of the propensity of accused men to evade prosecution through customary loopholes. Tina did not have strong family support to insist on his punishment.

Nyasha's story brings out the dilemmas of having a "baby with no father", because of partner desertion or non-performance of traditional rites. If she chose to leave Beitbridge Nyasha would have to take the baby to her natal family. Besides, if she thought she was on the road to marriage and that childbirth consolidated the likelihood of marriage, her naïveté is criticised as lack of self-restraint. Not only is this shameful for a young woman, it suggests looseness and failure of judgement to discern a serious proposition and less serious one. However, in conditions of rapid change pregnancy no longer guarantees marriage. Furthermore, the heterosex economy is inherently contradictory for young women. Access to and knowledge about contraceptives is deliberately limited for unmarried teens and they remain unequipped gatekeepers of their sexuality (Bay-Cheng 2003, van Roosmalen 2000). This does not allow young women to control outcomes of their actions as they gamble for marriage. They are expected to know when and how much to give in without the means to control for undesired outcomes such as unplanned pre-marital childbirth. The young women's families have to contend with more mouths to feed when they are already impoverished.

Through these three examples, we can see how these untenable circumstances create "rebels" in some young women who are intellectually empowered but lack the material wherewithal to fashion preferred emerging adulthoods based on faithful marriages, attracting men of means and equitable access to resources or to live economically independent adult lives (see Baylies and Bujra 1999, also Weiss 1993). Youth in informal marriages soon learn the limits of domesticity when they are deserted. Tsitsi has reason to be worried, as she will likely find herself caring for a child without the father's support. Many female youth as Nyasha's case shows, end up in sex work on unfavourable terms. Those like Tina and Tsitsi who are seen as "innocent victims" of predatory males can at least benefit from sympathy from the neighbourhood, church and NGOs. This might help in family reunions. However, in the long term, pressing questions of economic dimensions of childcare dog the women and their families in the absence of viable employment alternatives or means to claim child support. The tensions this brings might still send the women into sex work they sought to avoid by being in the informal marriage. Young women rebel quietly against norms of domesticity and strive for independence by trying to earn as much as they can, using their sexuality and domesticity. Rebelling can lead to increased mobility and sexual networking. However, not all rebels are able to achieve personal goals. Rebelling is fraught with risks to sexual and reproductive health, especially given the HIV scourge.

Young women in informal marriages are in a double bind because the chances of making their statuses recognizable through the fanfare of public rituals such as bridewealth

payments or better still through weddings are not guaranteed. When the unions fail, the women are worse off in their social standing and economic circumstances as they are often left with children to look after. With a bigger burden of care, it is difficult to go back home especially if paternity of the child(ren) is not acknowledged. Eventually the young women realise that in patrilineal societies marriage is much more difficult to get into when one has children from previous relationships. This is made worse by the fact that female youth do not seem to know their legal rights so they cannot sue for child maintenance in the event of desertion or force their errant partners to take paternity tests. Often the women do not have full information about their partners such as nature of income generating activities, real names and places of origins leaving the women little leeway to seek redress through the courts, employers or kinship based systems.

Managing personal reputations

The situations described above, create many instances in which young people are called names. Female youth who engage in paid sex, multi-partner sex, are self-identified sex workers, live in booking houses, or rape survivors are all seen as “spoilt”/ “garbage” or “damaged” and therefore “not suitable to marry” as are those known to be infected with HIV. Even when not in sex work, young women who live alone making ends meet through unspecified means risk “spoilt identities” as “loose” and “immoral”, for not being accountable to patriarchs. Consequently young women who seek economic independence are walking a tight rope. They are stigmatised because of interactions with health care providers who openly disparage sex work and sex workers.

The name calling and objectification of young women as “garbage” must be understood as part of power struggles to control and discipline them especially those known to have gone “feral” or “rebelled” against cultural norms and believed to bring shame to their families and communities (V. Bond 2002: 38-40, Parker and Aggleton 2003: 18, Baylies and Bujra 1999). Naming them as careless, blemished and untrustworthy devalues the young women as prospective wives. To be marriageable, young women must be known or be judged as of good character, must be faithful to their partners and/or be observant Christians (see also Campbell 1998, Ogden 1997). Many girls worked to achieve such respectable standing or had a plan to repackage themselves as “suitable to marry”. Their strategies included being discreet by using fake names, going to church to deflect negative attention to their participation in multiple partnerships, paid sex, and other sexual practices which are stigmatizing. Young women in sex work live double lives. This is handy when a stigmatised label needs to be shed. For most such young women, parents and partners

in places of origin do not know what they do for a living as they claim to work in the informal sector, in shops, as maids or simply “working in South Africa” when they are in Beitbridge. They sustain the notion of being in South Africa through use of South African cellphone lines. Some openly declared that when they are done with making money they would change towns, names, dressing, go to church and stop visiting nightclubs in order to be homebound. Because many use fake names when in Beitbridge this change in persona is possible. Many also got by through non-disclosure of stigmatizing experiences such as rape and gang rape. I recall a pretty girl living in a booking house and engaged in sex work who tried to tell me a story about being kept in a house where she was repeatedly raped but she got stared at by colleagues and the story trailed off. She had been referred to the house by relatives but ended up in a gang’s lair. I could not secure a one-to-one appointment with her. Non-disclosure of rape is a well-known problem acknowledged by health care practitioners and non-governmental agencies I spoke with. It foments discrimination of rape survivors and denial of the prevalence of rape.

Aspirations for settling down: talking about getting married

Most young people talked about wanting to get married. They grapple with normative expectations and pathways to “good” marriages at variance with day-to-day pressures for survival and economic realities. Thus many were either preparing for marriage or simply dreaming of it because its realisability depended on a lot of factors which most could not control. One of the uncontrollable factors is the elusiveness of an economically dominant man. Both male and female youth talk about the male economic dominance as important for their settling down or a condition for marriage. Women want men to provide for them while young men want resources as a demonstration of responsibility and of economically secure patriarchal dominance, idealised by culture and Christianity. Mustering economic resources is one of the most difficult tasks under conditions of economic uncertainty. Male youth talked about the need to save money and/or invest in household goods as a way of getting ready for marriage and to ensure bridewealth payment. In my discussion with Martin and Melusi (introduced in chapter 4 and 5 respectively) they used words like “... *angizimiselanga*”, (“I am not yet ready”) where being ready to marry is seen in “...having own stuff”, and/or having “...saved enough to marry...”. Melusi elaborated that the former means at least having one’s own bed and linen, electric stove, television and fridge because these are basics on which one can build an independent household. I also referred to Biggerz talking about savings in the form of the same household goods, being triumphant for having achieved something from vending and selling forex because he had managed

to buy some of these items. Church affiliated male youth confirmed the need to have independent income as part of church teachings. Access to a steady income, ability to save (seen in owning some household appliances if not more expensive assets like a house and cars), should ideally precede marriage. This way, it is assumed, male youth would be better able to control their girlfriends.

Male youth vendors had mixed feelings about this narrative. While they agreed that marriage requires savings, most were not able to save because of competing interests such as remittances to kin, fun (drinking and casual paid sex) and the cost of living in Beitbridge. The pressure was so high that at the end of fieldwork one vendor BigPlaya had left Beitbridge because he was not coping. He lacked discipline (according to another informant, also a vendor) and often spent all his income including borrowed operating capital on personal leisure. His colleagues got tired of bailing him out and having to demand reimbursements of past debts before they could give new loans when they too were struggling. BigPlaya left school at 15, went gold panning but left because he thought he could not make much of his life there. Some of his friends confided that he probably learnt “fast” life in gold mines where money is spent on sex and alcohol as soon as it is earned. In Madagascar’s informal sapphire mining camps, Walsh (2003) observed lifestyles and discourses of recklessness associated with relatively high incomes of male youth miners. Many spent money on alcohol, casual sex partners and high mobility and confident that they would earn even more money in their next mining expedition. BigPlaya openly admitted to me that drinking and paid sex were his weakness. He said he could not save because he did not earn “enough” for all his needs. He even got a good fortune talisman from a faith healer to turn around his fortunes (of which more in chapter 7). He said there were many young vendors like him, who despite earnings something daily still slept on the floor because they are unable to buy beds despite the availability of beds at competitive prices in South Africa.

Since the 1940s when anthropologists first took interests in urban Africa as different from the rural areas (on which anthropologists had previously focused) it has been noted that urban spaces have their own prestige systems based on consumption of western clothes, food, general comportment, and where and how one lives (see Ferguson 1999). In Beitbridge there is stiff competition to be seen as successful through clothes, household appliances, personal gadgets such as cellphones, the food one eats and modes of transport (with driving one’s own car as most coveted).¹¹ Thus although having fun is part of life, many young men were also aware that they needed to be “somebodies” through owning status conferring commodities. Such possessions signal maturity and readiness to settle down and being up-to-date vis-à-vis global consumer culture. These possessions signal access to

income that puts male youth who have them in a good position to choose marriage partners. Young men have no choice but to make money to marry decently or be banished to living their lives running away from or being unable to make commitment because of lack of resources. Some young men discerned that the economic crisis is such that expectations for bridewealth payment are less stringent. Under conditions of unemployment some fathers would rather have a decent marriage (founded on bridewealth negotiations and promises to pay) than one where the young men do not present themselves and their daughters have children of unacknowledged paternity or end up in an informal marriage. The young people I spoke with also lamented the greed of some fathers who make impossible demands and preconditions for marrying off their daughters. This all makes an ideal marriage – with performing customary rites before living together or pregnancy – impossible. After the girl is pregnant, the girl's family is under pressure for her to get married to hide the shame or not to shoulder the burden of caring for the child(ren). However, once the girl is pregnant, it is easy for the man to abscond. Indeed some male youth said pregnancy as a means to marriage is the only strategy open to them, given their economic limitations. De Boeck (2005) also reports that young men in Kinshasa claimed that pregnancy presented parents on both sides with a *fait accompli* forcing them to accept the union without gifts, bridewealth and other prestations which should precede marriage. Thus young women do not have to have much by way of material resources but a lot is demanded in terms of character as shown in the foregoing (domesticity, respectability, sobriety to mention a few).

Female youth are beholden to the notion of the “male provider” as a sought after quality in ideal marriage partners. They want to get married to men of means, with some elaborating that they can tell a man's economic status by the status conferring commodities such as disposable income, cars and latest model cellphones. In an FGD with upper Sixth students, girls elaborated that the “3Cs” were important: cash, cellphones (the newer the model the better), and a car define a man as having means to date and marry. No one mentioned having a house because it is assumed that other possessions suggest ability to pay for accommodation or perhaps having one's own home is too far fetched even for the imagination. Elsewhere, Nyamnjoh (2005:304) describes Francophone female youth talking of 4Vs (in French *voitures, villa, virement bancaire, voyages*) meaning cars, nice house, (ability to send money through) bank transfers and (paid for) trips as sought after qualities in a man. In South Africa, Hunter (2002) observed that the latest cellphone models as well South African high street fashions were sought after among low-income respondents in KwaZulu Natal. Clothes and cellphones are displayed and confer status to the wearer at ubiquitous street parties.

Sex workers said that they too look at men’s spending patterns in the bar to gauge ability and prices to charge for the night. However they had observed that few men with money want to marry their lot. This point was echoed by in-school male youth who said that men prefer wives who are not materialistic, are less demanding and can persevere in relative poverty rather than those who want a quick improvement of life upon marriage as this puts men under pressure to provide under harsh conditions. In the foregoing, most girls seem tired with the state of their real or relative deprivation and see marriage as means to economic security, dignity and decency. But while both male and female youth agree that men have to be economically dominant, prevailing economic conditions make such men hard to find.

Foregoing views of respondents were bolstered by admonishments of adults. In-school youth reported that the common refrain from parents is that they should choose their partners wisely with attention to a man’s resource or future capacity to earn them. One Form 1 girl said in an FGD that she was advised that “*Usadanana nemunhu asina mari*” which means “Do not fall in love/date a poor man/a man with no disposable income”. This is because ability to pay bridewealth and fund a wedding is the crowning glory in family honour. Both male and female youth in Zimbabwe and most of Southern Africa subscribe to bridewealth as a mark of respecting their parents (Ansell 2001). The Upper Sixth girls admitted that men with 3Cs are rarely faithful because they treat young women as “trophy”. These men know that they are in demand because of the high number of young women hoping for marriage or long-term attachment to such men. The comparatively modest and thoroughly gendered aspirations of female respondents of this study, are clearly part of an Africa wide phenomenon of young women aspiring for better lives through their femininity, domesticity and sexuality, in episodic relations for which they receive payments and gifts which allows them momentary escape from poverty.

Discussion: from “not playing with boys” to “*kukech(w)a*” and informal marriages

This chapter set out to discuss narratives of ideal and lived realities of youth sexualities as young people embrace emerging adulthoods. It has shown that there is dissonance between ideals that adults recommend and realities visited on young people. Not only do young people have to deal with contradictions in messages they get from adults, they also live with contradictions in their social environment which reproduce gerontocratic and patriarchal domination, regardless of young people’s comparatively miniscule deviations.

One of these contradictions is seen in parents' and schools' preference for abstinence-only SBSE, hence anxiety about close relations between boys and girls. Emphasis is placed on girls' sexuality with a demand "not to play with boys", making girls responsible for various outcomes of interacting with boys: bad reputation, punishments at school and pregnancy. Thus girls are socialised into gatekeeping their sexuality at an early age and risk blame if not compliant. By contrast, boys are not warned in the same way. If anything, boys subscribe to assertive heterosexual, macho masculinities underlined by dominating over women and by pervasive misogyny. Girls are socialised into gatekeeping of their sexuality at an early age, and risk blame if not compliant. Girls also have to live with and somehow manage assertive masculinities of male peers. These teachings and practices are bolstered with close monitoring and surveillance of girls and punitive measures taken against those who deviate. However the official curriculum and regimen coexist with a "hidden curriculum" (Kehily 2009), invisible to officials and parents, thus allowing young people to experiment and deviate from norms. Adults' advice that when older, girls should look out for marriageable men with ability to pay bridewealth and provide for a household seem to support a consumerist existence in impoverished conditions. These teachings ensure that girls stay within the heterosex economy as subordinate partners vis-a-vis their assertive, presumably economically dominant male peers. As other researchers show this reproduces gender inequality and low self-esteem among young women (Bay-Cheng 2003, van Roosmalen 2000).

Despite schools generally thinking of their environments as desexualised, boys try to show manliness and being street smart in school through letting their school shorts and trousers sag and using fashionable belt buckles with sexually suggestive messages. This gives them defiant personas yet they are not condemned for them. By contrast girls tread with care between affirming their gender identities through outfits and make-up, lest being seen as out of line and seeking male attention. As already noted, adolescence is a time of embracing gender identities within a heteronormative culture (van Roosmalen 2000, Bay-Cheng 2003, Tolman 1994). Schools therefore perpetuate or do not critique myths of an active male sexuality co-joined to a passive female sexuality. Clearly, my discussions show that the idea that school uniforms desexualise students' bodies is a myth. The verbal abuse and sexual harassment of girls revolves around recognition of the sexual body and surveilling it for conformity with heteronormativity (Valentine et al 2010).

Young people are adept at performing innocence through silence, feigned ignorance and non-disclosure. Non-disclosure has multiple meanings. It points to desirable aspects of being discreet thus not exposing personal indiscretions, hiding one's sexual activities as

a sign of self-respect, respect for school authorities and family, demanded by local customs (Campbell 1998, Ogden 1996). It also points to conformity with norms of innocence as not engaging in and being knowledgeable about sex. Conformity marks acceptance of schools’ authority and protection over students, and confers innocence to the compliant student (see Pini 2005). The giggles, chuckles, exchanged looks and inter-gender tensions point to the contrary, but are dismissed as childishness by school authorities. Being discreet though publicly upholding idealised sexualities in Zimbabwe has a downside: it permits non-disclosure of abuse and harassment. It contributes to the creation of gendered naiveté by which femininities are evaluated in their interaction with masculinities (Shefer and Foster 2001). Thus school rules and parental teachings collude to create seemingly asexual youth but actually produce gendered sexualities of young people. Non-disclosure speaks to active sexuality being “forbidden”, hence the “unsaying” of sex between/among certain individuals (Epprecht 1998). It is very costly for students to be suspected of having had sex even when there is no proof. Both girls and boys risk having a reputation as loose and truant respectively. For girls, reputations are important and seen as indicators of future marriageability. For boys the risks of punishment including corporal punishment by the police are real as shown in chapter 4. Non-disclosure also allows young people to evade adult surveillance and thus maintaining a semblance of autonomy despite risks. That is, if parents and guardians find out about young people’s personal indiscretions they escalate surveillance, hence young people think it better that adults do not know.

Adult anxieties about the sexualisation of young people and denuded innocence speak to changing relations between generations and genders. Adults express their anxiety through discursive condemnation of young people especially young women as “gone feral”. Young people’s awareness of their developing bodies and their usability for economic independence is alarming for adults. Fashion consciousness and changing regimes of self-care become a source of friction through escalating personal needs which force parents and guardians to spend more when they do not have money. When unmet personal needs demand/force youth to challenge or creatively interpret rules and expectations and independently look for source resources, their innocence is deleted and replaced with “competences” (Nieuwenhuys 1999). With regards to sexuality, moral panics about the risks of HIV have become an all-consuming concern attached to young people’s sexual competences.

Situational pragmatism, creativity and competences in this chapter bring us to controversies of so-called transactional sex and narratives of *kukecha* and *kukechwa*. The notion of “catching” women with money and resources is misogynistic as it objectifies women and points to growing monetisation which obscures or erases other considerations

such as pleasure and conformity to cultural norms. This objectification occurs in a socio-economic context of rapid change where practices, values and rationalisations of behaviour have changed drastically. Studies abound on sexuality as rooted in “everyday materiality” Hunter (2002), thus everyday needs are inextricably entangled with sex and sexual behaviour in resource-short circumstances. Others talk of “needs based” relationships (P-A. Nguyen 2007), and sexuality increasingly becoming a “livelihood asset” (Chant and Evans 2010) in acquiring basic needs and status conferring commodities, start-up capital for informal sector ventures, as well as intimacy and social respect earned through changed social standing, (Nyamnjoh 2005, Longfield 2004, Kaufman and Stavrou 2004, V. K. Nguyen 2005, Posel 2005). Clearly, since morality is intertwined with consumption (Sassatelli 2006), the boundary between economic needs and security on one hand and sexual desire and emotional security on the other are increasingly blurred. This blurring is a source of moral panics as adult blame especially young women for cultural erosion and corruption because of their apparent love for money and materialistic pursuits.

Paid and transactional sex draw on customary beliefs and ideals of an “economically dominant” male attached to an economically dependent woman. In an environment of limited opportunities for men, economic dominance is shortlived in episodic sex focused on individualised interests (Giddens 1992, Attwood 2005, 2006). Episodic sex here does not quite mean the “postmodern sex” of the global North since the 1990s where individual choice, auto-stimulation, autonomy and personal pleasure are important (Simon 1996). In the global South, relation with other humans are increasingly important to transactions of survival, including those that entail sex. This points to unintended but pervasive changes in which sexual relations are part of getting by and going with the situation because of chronic unemployment, thus a component of situational pragmatism (Blatterer 2007, 2010). In this vein, there are connections between youth practices and preferred ideals. These sexual changes are part of situational pragmatism as young people respond to and are challenged by exacting demands of adults and economic crises.

Whereas in the past women achieved social adulthood and ideal sexual identities through marriage, this avenue is now blocked for many not least because of the prevalence of episodic sex. Male partners who hitherto realised social adulthood through wage work, professional skills and entrepreneurship (Adams 2009:802) find that opportunities are limited in all these spheres, restricting the possibility of marriage as a community sanctioned, “legitimate” way of engaging in sex. Outside marriage and its economic exchanges, some young people resort to intermittent episodic exchanges as a way of getting by. These episodic relationships speak to the growing fragility of heterosexual relationships

wrought by economic structural volatility (Giddens 1992, Bauman 2003). The interweaving of economic and sexual desires speaks of the evolving creativity of “situational living”. Youth are open to suggestion, live flexibly following their objectives for material goods and obeying school, church and adults’ rules, and are blamed for negative outcomes. These contradictions and flexibilities underline emerging adulthoods that are subjective and defy objective markers.

Both male and female youth in Beitbridge are still bound to gerontocratic expectations of bridewealth marriages, despite economic challenges. Thus failure to pay bridewealth is an obstacle to socially sanctioned sex in marriage (Hunter 2002). The obligation to pay bridewealth as means to socially sanctioned sex leads to judgement of paid casual sex as immoral. Despite its importance for survival, paid sex undermines individuals’ aspirations for marriage. Furthermore paid sex practices speak to the depth of alienation of female youth who cannot access decent wage work but also wish to participate in the consumption of modern commodities. Consequently, emerging youth cultures are about mastery of consumer status items (even without means), as a sign of mastery of sexual capital affirming young men’s macho status while indexing desirability for women (Posel 2005:131). Following Diouf (2005), youth are caught among the triad of patriarchy, gerontocracy and globalisation whose articulation produce contradictions which in turn leave young people to their own devices as they interpret the social expectations brought to bear on them. Not all young people achieve success by going it alone in an environment with lean pickings such as Beitbridge.

Cultural beliefs (and the need to comply with gerontocracy and patriarchy) are also attributable to the production of femininities underlined by sexual naïveté, creating many traps for the women further undermining their self-esteem and consolidating their marginalization (van Roosmalen 2000, Bay-Cheng 2003). This is seen in the choice and rationalisation of informal marriages whose insecurity is highlighted in Beitbridge. These marriages afford men in shady activities space to look decent and anchor into the community. Sexual naïveté does not permit the young women to be agentive by using contraceptives to prevent unplanned pregnancies. Pregnancy does not cement relations with partners. Because young women are expected to be sexual gatekeepers and not allowed to access reproductive technologies, they are judged harshly when their gatekeeping fails and they are left, literally, holding babies.

Notes

1. For example, the Bush Administration in the US.
2. Secondary virginity means a situation where a previously sexually active young person pledges to abstain from having sex until she (usually it applies to women) gets married. It is encouraged in abstinence-only programs.
3. Civvies Day used to be a preserve of elite multiracial schools. Increasingly, many schools use it across Zimbabwe to raise money for teacher “incentives”, that is, allowances paid by schools to augment teachers’ earnings. These incentives emerged in the wake of the multi-currency policy since February 2009. This policy ushered in relatively low wages in the public sector. At one of the schools I visited, each student pays five ZAR to come in casual clothes for the day. The school has about 800 children, so it makes 4000 ZAR per month (about 400 Euro) from each Civvies Day. All over Zimbabwe, students and parents complain that they cannot opt out of Civvies Day payments by not participating. Students who opt to wear uniforms because they do not have casual clothes worthy of the event pay double. This frustrates many parents/guardians not only because it increases school fees but they also have to provide casual clothes for their children.
4. In 2009-10 there was limited cellphone coverage in rural areas. The situation has since changed dramatically. It remains to be seen whether or not rural girls with cellphones ask for cellphone recharge cards from their partners.
5. As part of the colonial legacy of male labour migration, paid casual sex was apparently excusable for migrant married men whose migration did not permit co-residence with their wives and children. Such men had cause not to marry the women they had sex with because they had wives in rural areas. Casual sex allowed male migrants to cope with town life.
6. This privately owned college was neither well fitted nor fully functional during my fieldwork, even though students attended daily. The owners were banking on high fees to raise income for furniture, equipment and to attract staff.
7. Fruits of which make the famous Amarula liqueur.
8. At the official border there are numerous conspicuous posters about human trafficking and asking travelers to be alert, have formal job offers, to report suspicious fellow travellers (if suspected of people smuggling and/or human trafficking) and so on.
9. A news reporter who investigated these activities in 2006, took pictures of several pieces of women’s underwear left on the bank of the river as well as personal effects such as shoes, torn passports and so on (Sachiti, R. *The Sunday Mail* 29 October – 4 November 2006).
10. PEP is applicable when exposure (such as rape or unprotected sex) is reported within 72 hours of its occurrence for individuals found to be HIV negative. If HIV positive, it would suggest an existing infection which would require lifetime treatment with ARVs. Rigorous protocols of accessing ARVs are not favourable for mobile persons hence many dispense with these health requirements.
11. Most cars are imported second-hand from Japan and landed through Beitbridge hence awareness of car ownership as a form of achievement.

Chapter 7

Witchcraft and malevolent spirits versus personal responsibility: narratives of health and wellbeing

Introduction

The previous chapter showed young people struggling with and against ideals of preferred sexualities and adulthoods in a context of socio-economic uncertainties that affect both male and female youth's sexual behaviour and choices. Young people are held individually responsible for not achieving the ideal of youth asexuality and adult marriage-bound sexuality. They are accused of making wrong choices and being wayward, despite intractable structural challenges. Young people in this study place the blame elsewhere. They see pervasive malevolent spirits and witchcraft hence the elastic "African ailments thesis" that social and biomedical maladies that cannot be diagnosed or treated through western biomedical approaches belong to the spirit world. Illhealth, misfortune and failure to achieve one's aspirations are interpreted as being due to neglected benevolent and malevolent spirits, or witchcraft by envious colleagues and kin, as well as sexual impropriety of intimate partners (Kiernan 1982, Dover 2002, Lewis 1966, Ingstad 1990, Klaitz 2005, Chapman 2006). Young people see such "African ailments" as impediments to their aspirations for ideal adulthoods.

The present chapter is based on young people's narratives that utilise the African ailments thesis in the face of HIV and AIDS and other reproductive health challenges. It seeks to show how young people navigate and manage sexual and reproductive health challenges thorough the multidimensional notion of African ailments, by developing

narratives which seem to challenge focus on personal responsibility for the predicaments they find themselves in. It shows that young people creatively play different structures against each other, but are also differently constrained by demands placed on them by the different structures. The chapter also shows that young people are firmly embedded in their socio-cultural context which they shape and are shaped by hence the recourse to notions of spirits and witchcraft, and practices of traditional and faith healers. The chapter is based on young people's responses to the question: How do socio-cultural norms and beliefs shape young people's approaches to health (including sexual and reproductive health) and wellbeing? How do these choices impinge on young people's options in fulfilling their aspirations?

The “African ailments” thesis and the proliferation of faith and traditional healers

The reliance on traditional and faith healers¹ was revealed to me serendipitously during reconnaissance of Beitbridge in June 2009. My guide and I passed through a roadside market which sells curios for tourists. As we admired wooden sculptures on display, I asked to take pictures and was given grudging permission as stall owners asked me if I would pay for the pictures since I did not look like I was interested in buying. I felt obliged to buy something so I asked about shallow clay pots that I thought were flowerpots. When I inquired about the price, 30 ZAR seemed a lot so I complained about it. As we haggled over the price, the female vendor remarked something to the effect that after all I would soon break the pot and thus I needed it for purposes which would bring me money suggesting that I should not be tight-fisted. I was jolted by the response and asked for an explanation. She told me that the shallow baked clay pots are called *mbiya* in Shona, and used to hold herbs/holy water, milk, oil and other similar agents for ritual cleansing. I had not been aware of this fact prior to this encounter. When I professed my ignorance, the woman told me that demand for the pots was very high hence she was hesitant to change the price. People who came to buy them were either desperate or determined to get the prescribed rituals performed. They paid promptly. I did not buy the pot after the explanation but the encounter alerted me the prevalence of these emergent practices.

I learnt that the rituals are performed by traditional and/or faith healers. The rituals entail baths, incantations and consumption of the innocuous power-bearing agents such as milk, water or vegetable oil carried in the clay pots. The rituals are performed in the forest,

never at home because bad spirits/bad luck and other negative forces should be kept at bay in undomesticated spaces of the forest. They are always performed at dawn or dusk in order for adversaries not to see that their power has been emasculated. The clay pots are broken afterwards. Broken pieces of the pots are left in the forest as a way of leaving bad luck and misfortune in the forest. Evidence of the prevalence of these rituals existed in the manner of broken clay pots near makeshift shrines in the forest. I did not verify them myself but heard from informants that the broken pieces exist. This encounter at the market and evidence of shrines whose cloth flags were visible along the valley of the Limpopo River as well as what informants told me, gave me reason to discuss with respondents the resort to faith and traditional healers.²

Not all faith and traditional healers are genuine in the sense of being trained in their trade or craft. Many are opportunists and impostors who capitalise on the heightened gullibility of clients because of uncertainty by citing the vague and elastic notion of “African ailments”. At the time of doing research throughout Zimbabwe the number of roadside shrines of independent churches offering healing services were visible in different towns. In addition to the shrines in Beitbridge there were adverts in South African newspapers’ classifieds publicising a range of alternative health services available in nearby South African towns including retribution for theft, bad luck, bad/unsatisfactory relationships and illnesses.³ There were many leaflets and plaques in Musina’s main thoroughfare with infomercials and addresses to service providers. It has been observed that economic crises such as those spawned by neoliberalism rework existing socio-cultural beliefs producing new forms to explain new experiences of marginalisation and despair in the wake of economic dislocation (de Boeck 2005, Harnischfeger 2006, Smith 2001, Comaroff and Comaroff 1999). Respondents in this study also resorted to fighting invisible forces believed hell-bent on foiling their aspirations rather than acknowledging the deep structural dislocation, which, perhaps, they did not understand. Their narratives are emblematic of what anthropologists say are deeply felt crises and marginalisation. They are cries for help, recognition, and relief from stresses of low status and deprivation (Lewis 1966).

Malevolent spirits interfering with young people’s wellbeing?

Different respondents used narratives of and allusions to “African ailments”. Mandla, of whom I spoke in chapters 4 and 6, attributed his circumstances to possession by an ancestral spirit (*mudzimu*), the spirit of his dead paternal grandfather. He was battling ill health having just completed a six-month tuberculosis treatment course when I interviewed him in November 2009 and had seen four children and their mother (his first wife) die, while

his second wife had recently left him. He claimed that possession by his grandfather made him a target for witchcraft by his envious paternal uncle. His paternal uncle apparently wants to kill Mandla as a way of transferring the *mudzimu* to one of his children, to bolster his prestige and authority in the family. This spiritual fight caused the illness and deaths of Mandla's young family according to Mandla. Among other things, Mandla wore a sash woven from red yarn below his shirt as protection given to him by one of the independent church "prophets" in Shona "*maporofita*" (faith healers) he had consulted. He showed me the sash of his own volition to bolster his argument about spiritual bases of his circumstances. He had also consulted traditional healers as ill health took its toll on his young family. The healer corroborated the story of Mandla's possession by a paternal grandfather and witchcraft by his uncle.

It is not clear why the spirit of a paternal grandfather would permit its host to be exiled from home, its domain, simply because of interference of Mandla's father's brother's witchcraft. Why is Mandla's deceased grandfather not able to mobilise benevolent forces and defeat the latter? After all, ancestral beliefs hold that ancestors are inherently benevolent and seek protection of their descendants, thus would not let them suffer (Kiernan 1982). These questions are apparently not asked as beliefs are so broad they render believers open to manipulation by diviners who translate and interpret signs from the world of the departed (Kiernan 1982: 299). Mandla may be shaping his narratives of the spirit world for his own convenience, to justify his personal circumstances such as the stigma of his past life of violent crime and the recent events of deaths of his wife and children, which friends and colleagues around him attributed to infection with HIV. Besides, going home might mean subordinating himself to his paternal uncle's authority and participation in ceremonies to verify that the spirit is genuinely that of the late patriarch. This would mean inviting key relatives to witness and participate in ancestral worship ceremonies. Without these ceremonies and public acknowledgement, Mandla's claims are empty. Ancestral spirits are effectively dealt with in family/kinship contexts, so failure to resolve these issues points to broken kinship relations.

Allusions to "African ailments" are also seen in female research participants' explanations of abdominal discomforts reportedly typical of sleeping with many men and with sexual impropriety (see for instance Chapman 2006, Klaitis 2005, Ingstad 1990, Dover 2002). These explanations allowed these young women to explore alternative health care treatments because of stigmatisation and moralisation of treatment in health care facilities.

The traditional and faith healers are also consulted when medical problems persist despite repeated visits to the clinic. For example at the time of doing research, Rita who had persistent pelvic bleeding:

Rita: ...I have a continuous period from April till now (September). It is relentless. Everyday. Even the doctors are baffled by my case.

Rita maintained that there are adequate supplies of condoms at her booking house and that she, like all her colleagues use condoms consistently. She had been to several bacossi clinics and claimed that there was no let up to the bleeding. Meanwhile, her colleagues and the “mother” of her booking house had advised her that persistent bleeding which did not seem to respond to clinic based/western medical treatments meant that the disease was an “African ailment”. Beliefs that “continuous bleeding” points to sexual impropriety as well as to the supernatural causes persist as shown by Dover (2002) in Southern Zambia, Chapman (2006) for central Mozambique, Klaitis (2005) and Ingstad (1990) for Botswana. Engaging in sex with prohibited partners, in a prohibited place, or at the wrong time (such as during menstruation, immediately following a miscarriage, while in mourning and so on), could result in bodily upsets such as continuous bleeding but could also cause illness in men and in breastfeeding babies. Pelvic bleeding could also point to ancestral wrath and witchcraft by envious competitors. Discerning which strand of causality is at work and therefore which remedy is usable requires a traditional healer. Rita confided that a colleague who had the same problem got better after consulting a traditional healer. Rita consulted the same traditional healer, but to no avail. She was eager to go home to consult with traditional healers there. She saw one when she eventually went home during Christmas 2009 and was told that she was bewitched by one of her colleagues. She got a talisman to cleanse and protect herself. Meanwhile she continued going to the bacossi clinic (run by the humanitarian agency) and using their prescriptions. Given her self-reported diligence in condom use and practising safe sex, the traditional healer’s diagnosis allowed her to claim to have been afflicted by a “mystery” illness. The bleeding had stopped by Christmas 2009. By attributing her health problems to “African ailments”, Rita exonerated herself from any responsibility for her health and claimed circumstantial causes beyond her control. Luckily for Rita, she had used a multi-pronged approach going to both traditional healers and the bacossi clinic and hopefully reaping the benefits of both.

These explanations not only constitute reworking the tenets of what one might describe as blueprints of known beliefs (witchcraft, ancestral worship), but also exonerate respondents from any wrongdoing. The re-workings of traditional beliefs support the

idea that new situations require new magic (Comaroff and Comaroff 1999). My young respondents were actively participating in new interpretations/applications of traditional beliefs, engaging spirits to suit their own circumstances and exonerate themselves from any blame. This has created new forms of magic for neoliberal times.

With regard to Rita's circumstances, a key informant, a medical doctor with a medical humanitarian agency explained to me that their clinic offers health education in which they tell clients that STIs could be syndromic (where symptoms point to several ailments/infections which they treat systematically using a multi-tiered approach and a process of elimination). Consequently effective treatment of the STIs requires that the client adheres to treatment and check-ups where called for as well as avoids re-infection while on treatment. Thus the health education places responsibility on individual clients. Clients, however, expect to be well after the first treatment while behaviour change remains debatable given the circumstances. Among other things, not all young women stop drinking and other substance abuse when in paid sex work, not all can convince partners to use condoms and to use them correctly, because of gender hierarchies, threats of gender based violence and pressures of the job (see Wojcicki 2002). Thus, if young women are not cured immediately after the first treatment, some clients dismiss western medicine as ineffective and go to traditional healers. Repeat visits to clinics might be seen as pointing to being very ill while having several STIs as their syndromic character in fact suggests casts a shadow of irresponsibility on the individual. Besides, infections that "do not respond to treatment" are seen as pointing to infection with HIV, a much harder reality to contend with given the deep-seated stigma of HIV. Meanwhile traditional healers' interventions, if herbal, may be short-lived and cause long-term complications as they do not effectively target disease-causing agents (bacteria, viruses, fungi). If interventions are based on divination, then the treatment focuses attention on factors beyond the client's control and not the infection itself. If one traditional healer does not provide wanted results people continue searching on the basis of verbal recommendations from others until they get desired results; answers to who is or what forces are behind the suffering (Chapman 2006). Thus through the resort to traditional medicine, research participants rebut the notion of personal responsibility associated with clinics and hospitals.

There is yet another value to resorting to the spiritual world: some young women in sex work attributed being in the profession to possession by alien spirits (*mashave*) and/or possession by spirits of female relatives who led deviant lifestyles and were therefore bent on preventing socially desirable relationships such as marriage. By possessing some of their living female relatives, these spirits pass on traits that render the young women un-

marriageable (for being in sex work, being too assertive or given to physically fighting men, thus doomed to shortlived relationships). The flipside of this explanation is that women should be mild mannered and passive to be marriageable. The solution is exorcism of the bad spirit. This is a complicated exercise requiring well-trained traditional healers who can verify the possession and administer remedies. Families have to be involved. Alternatively one has to attend a Pentecostal church. Many Pentecostal churches increasingly specialise in exorcising ancestral and alien spirits believed to block individuals' potential and achievement of socially desirable goals including marriage and fertility (Meyer 1998, de Boeck 2005). Once possessed, young women (irrespective of economic circumstances), become promiscuous and prefer sex work or multiple partner sex to marriage. The belief that deceased, never married female ancestors interfere with living female relatives' reproductive careers and therefore their marriages persists, as shown by Chapman in the case of Shona speaking groups in central Mozambique (Chapman 2006). Meanwhile Pentecostal teachings also claim that sex addiction or constant desire to have sex is a sign of possession by malevolent spirits and could prevent marriage (see Mate 2002). In Beitbridge the narrative of possession by female spirits coexists with the reality that young women who ran away from home did so because they had been led to believe that they would find work with "good pay", because they experienced school as boring, they were not doing well or were already skipping school or because they wanted to have fun. Many of them ended up in sex work, as Rita's example shows. It seems that they could not return home to face angry parents, with nothing/as failures. In two FGDs young women also acknowledged economic reasons such as lack of employment or the need to care for their children and aging parents because their partners deserted them as another reason for being in sex work. Thus the spirit possession argument allowed research participants to deflect blame and draw attention elsewhere to invisible and apparently powerful deceased relatives. Thus the prevalence of these beliefs allows young people to deflect personal responsibility and draw attention elsewhere.

Some key informants reported that some parents/care givers also see rampant youth sexuality as a kind of possession because they cannot understand or relate to it. It is in response to the incomprehensiveness of any discord in relations or its effects, that possession by malevolent spirits is evoked. In this vein, some adults also resort to churches to pray for their children/wards to leave sex work and youth cultures driven by flagrant sexuality and enter into marriage in which they are expected to remain faithful to their partners thus restoring personal and family dignity. Consequently, livelihoods that people adopt under

crises such as transactional sex and sex work lead to women especially being seen as under the influence of malevolent spirits.

However some strands of narratives of spirit possession and the pervasive resort to use of magic and herbs also speak to powerlessness in age and gender relations. This is evident in women's use of herbs to influence or "tame" errant partners; or to beat female competitors for over access to men. In separate FGDs, male and female youth vendors said women in Beitbridge consult traditional and faith healers for these purposes. Sekuru Hanga the faith-cum-traditional healer, could only say that women dominate in requests for charms to clandestinely tame errant partners and to stabilise relationships. He could not say how many requests he receives or in what ways he assists and how effective they are. Research in other parts of Zimbabwe shows that there is a thriving information exchange about herbs and healers with expertise to deal with errant partners (Goebel 2002). Thus because women cannot publicly complain about men having lovers, spending on their personal leisure and the relationship instability, they resort to traditional practices. Some resort to clandestine manipulation of men. As Goebel observes, this fuels men's distrust and even fear of women's power to undermine their virility and patriarchal prerogatives. Thus, young women and men try to challenge power structures using strategies which do not lead to restructuring power relations, but may bring some relief to the suffering individual.

Students expressed the age (generational) dimensions of this powerlessness. In an ask-me-questions session at the end of an FGD with Upper Sixth students, I was asked about supernatural sex, a kind of witchcraft called *mubobobo* in Shona but apparently practiced by other ethnic groups too. The example presented was from rural Beitbridge. The question was about the extent to which young people can prevent HIV, when older men can use supernatural powers to have non-consensual sex with young women who could be in relationships with young men? *Mubobobo* is roundly condemned as bad medicine possessed by some men. Needless to say, it is believed to exist and is feared. Victims report dreaming of having sex with persons or beings they cannot identify. Sometimes the victim only sees or notices that she has been interfered with and/or violated when she wakes up but cannot tell by whom, when and how. Through divination and confession culprits are exposed. When I told the Upper Sixth students that my understanding is that HIV is spread through physical contact and that supernatural contact seems less amenable to infection, the questioner was adamant saying supernatural sex must also be responsible for infection. He explained that in his rural area, the wife of a labour migrant, long gone to South Africa, fell pregnant during her husband's extended period of absence. When the matter went to traditional courts, the woman argued that a local man had used *mubobobo* witchcraft on her

leading to pregnancy. Thus, argued the questioner, if she fell pregnant from supernatural sex she could easily contract HIV.

Without dwelling on customary jurisprudence, if the traditional court accepted the notion of pregnancy from supernatural sex, it cannot exclude the transmissibility of HIV. In effect this again takes away or reinscribes women as lacking agency to refuse sex and prevent its unwanted outcomes. This lack of agency underlines the strong sanction against women engaging in extramarital sex. It also creates opportunities, albeit contradictory. It could be that the woman, who was obviously bearing a child with another man while married, could have argued supernatural causes to exonerate herself because her husband had been gone for a long time. Maybe she connived with her partner so that he would bear responsibility by pleading being under the influence of bad medicines in the hope of both parties saving face as not having been wilfully adulterous. Assuming that the traditional court could prove *mubobobo* the matter would have been resolved constructively saving the woman's marriage and forcing the man to "get rid of" these medicines and hopefully avoid having sex with other men's wives. However this leaves us a problem: how can young women protect themselves and their partners from these apparently potent forms of older men's witchcraft? I have no answer save to say that older people's access to these potent malevolent powers reinscribes their power over young people. Acknowledgement of these powers points to youth's awareness of limits to individual agency, and at the same time allows them some protection by traditional beliefs and practices. As some participants asked how *mubobobo* works, another male participant gave a concise response: "sex by Bluetooth". The students are familiar with Bluetooth technology in cellphones as enabling wireless communication and therefore invisible or virtual connections/communication between devices if synchronised by users. We all laughed at the imagery. Weeks later in Harare, I saw a newspaper article in a local tabloid entitled "*Mubobobo man caught*". The story had pictures of the alleged culprit with descriptions of what he did before he was caught in one of Harare's markets. It also referred to *mubobobo* as "sex by Bluetooth" (*The H-Metro*, 6 April 2010). Thus the young people's questions resonate across Zimbabwe and leave us with questions about how can they be individually responsible in a cultural landscape where invisible forces loom so large.

In the foregoing research participants attribute their medical conditions, life circumstances and general insecurities to unknown causes implicitly and explicitly linked to a vague carryall concept of "African ailments" thereby playing down or rebutting personal responsibility. This creative use of traditional beliefs allows these individuals to continue with the same livelihoods because alternatives have lower remuneration.

These explanations also highlight some of the structural violence that young women face which impedes individual agency. They also speak to a limited understanding of human reproduction on account of limited education. The young women often had a curious understanding of their own bodies especially reproductive systems. This could have been a result of some aspects of popular myths about female bodies in which vaginal secretions and bleeding are given specific (polluting) powers. In practice, this may lead to failure of the young women to discern normal from abnormal secretions as the clinic based study by Ruganga et al (1992) shows. While embracing traditional beliefs may be a form of resistance to intrusion and discipline by hegemonic medical practices and knowledges, it also often locks young women in attributions to spirit possession, witchcraft and bad luck allow young women not to confront consequences of their casual and long-term multi-partner sex work and allows men to blame the jealousy of kin rather than their own actions and criminal past. Furthermore, these explanations allow individuals to exonerate themselves of any wrongdoing.

While this study has repeatedly argued that structural conditions of neoliberal economy often pose insurmountable challenges to young people, these conditions also allow young people's creativity and agency in dealing with them. Whether real or imagined, these supernatural attributions underline increased insecurity, instability and unpredictability in social relationships in which the young people are embedded. These beliefs draw attention to helplessness and inability to fight back on the part of research participants. Examples given above show that spirit possession can exonerate individuals from wrongdoing in a context in which sexuality and ill (reproductive and sexual) health are perceived through the moral lens. Affirming individual agency is incriminating when on the wrong side of norms. Thus, being without agency means also being relieved of responsibility and receiving public sympathy, rather than criticism.

Challenges of STIs and young people's resort to alternative health care

At the end of my pilot FGDs held at booking house A to see if my questions worked, I asked if participants had questions and issues arising from the discussion they wanted clarified. They said they were concerned about the efficacy of "medicines to cleanse uteruses" (in Shona "*mishonga yekugeza chibereko*"). It was a baffling subject to bring up at the end of a discussion.

In traditional medicine, cleaning procedures are associated with older women, whose uteruses are believed to get "dirty" because of repeated childbirth and related activities or because of witchcraft seen in complicated reproductive careers (Chapman 2006). STIs are

not directly seen as a cause of pollution. I asked these young women (age range was 19-21 years) why they needed these medicines and/or procedures. They told me about persistent abdominal cramps, stabbing pains and discomforts similar to premenstrual pain but which they attributed to having sex with many men. I was confused because of their claims of consistent condom use. To my mind, sex with many men if correctly and consistently condomised would not cause such problems. In traditional explanations, the exchange of body fluids associated with sex and/or reproductive processes is believed to be a potential source of illness when sexual taboos and abstinences are not observed (Chapman 2006, Dover 2002, Ingstad 1990, Klaitis 2005). Women (and men's) failure to observe sexual taboos and abstinences afflicts men causing life threatening illness and/or breastfed babies manifesting as failure to thrive. Changeable reproductive fluids in women's bodies are seen as the source of/ or indicating a propensity to "bad blood" which pollutes others in intimate contacts of sex and breastfeeding. Across southern African communities, women's apparent possibilities to pollute others are present after delivery, after a miscarriage/abortion, during menstruation or when in mourning after losing a husband/the father of one's children.⁴ Witchcraft and ancestral anger can also cause reproductive ailments. Diagnosis of any of these causes depends on divination or traditional healers' interpretation of symptoms.

The young women who asked about cleansing explained that they were particularly concerned because someone at the market had sold one of them tablets apparently sourced from Zambia. The women showed me a small Ziploc plastic bag typically used for dispensing pills in Zimbabwe on which the words "docx" were scribbled in ink indicating contents and dosage. They told me that they were advised that the pills would cure the abdominal pain and discomforts but were not sure. To my untrained mind this did not sound like genuine medicine. I stated upfront the extent of my limited knowledge and advised that they consult health professionals on the matter if in doubt as they seemed to be.⁵ I also thought that because medicines are controlled substances in Zimbabwe, any sales in informal markets must be counterfeits and that they were likely being cheated, likely to be harmed by unspecified chemicals disguised as medicines. I left booking house A feeling baffled and convinced that the whole FGD was a lie, things did not add up. My concern then was how to manage lies in this study because I did not know the extent to which STIs were a problem. These young women could not be brought to explain how they got the condition if they were using condoms consistently as they claimed.

In early November 2009, I interviewed a medical doctor and project coordinator of a humanitarian agency on a range of issues pertaining to youth and their sexuality in Beitbridge. The agency ran one of the two bacossi clinics. She observed that at their clinic

they deal mostly with STIs. Citing recently collated September 2009 statistics, she reported that out of 150 consultations 108 were for STIs.⁶ The statistics were not age disaggregated. Because the clinic targets “vulnerable persons” including those in transit, sex workers and the homeless, it is safe to say many of them were young people who dominated the ranks of these categories. In addition, attempts to get more monthly statistics proved impossible for other reasons.⁷ (At the district hospital too, STIs in 19-29 year age groups featured prominently, but the figures were for the whole district). I asked the doctor about docx which she recognised to be a shortcut for “doxycycline”, a broad-spectrum antibiotic used in treating some STIs. While she could not say if it was genuine or counterfeit, she acknowledged its mass circulation in the 2008/9 cholera outbreaks. People are familiar with the use of cotrimoxazole, another broad spectrum antibiotic, locally referred to as “cotri” and recommended as a long-term prophylaxis for a number of HIV related opportunistic infections (OIs) and to delay initiation of treatment with ARVs where their accessibility is difficult (see WHO, UNAIDS, UNICEF 2004). During the cholera outbreak a rumour circulated to the effect that docx could be used in the prevention of cholera as well hence its apparent high demand.⁸ In this argument, docx could fortify the body against and/or neuter a likely infection by the cholera bacteria, as “cotri” is popularly believed to do for HIV OIs. The doctor explained that even if this is a logical popular argument, scientifically “docx” does not do for cholera what “cotri” does for HIV OIs. Besides, cholera and HIV OIs are different diseases, which manifest differently but could also compound each other. In addition, the most effective prevention of cholera is simply using clean, treated or pre-boiled water and observing hygienic practices in handling food, utensils, when eating and after using the toilet as well as disposal of human waste. Beitbridge’s challenge at the time was water sanitation while the most afflicted were the homeless and people in transit who got food and water from sources they did not control in the informal sector. In addition to running a cholera treatment and corpse disposal unit, her agency had to dissuade people of the idea of an antibiotic to prevent cholera. However docx probably went underground and continued circulating and being deployed for its other multiple uses as this case shows. In the case of these young women, she deduced from my description of the symptoms they related and questions they asked me that it was likely that they were being treated informally for STIs. These informal treatments are a concern for formal health care institutions and professionals. Because many such treatments are evidently underground and unidentified, they are difficult to counter while those who administer them are not accountable to any code of practice.

Sekuru Hanga attested to the prevalence of STIs among young people and young people's preference for alternative treatments including traditional/faith healers and black market medicines. He could not be persuaded to provide statistics, arguing the confidentiality of his practice. Of health conditions he treats he said

SH: Mostly STIs (Zhinji isiki)

RM: How do your clients say they got infected?

SH: They say they had sex and got infected...or that they were 'given' the infection by/contracted it from so-and-so. (...Ndapihwa siki nanhingi).

To Sekuru Hanga young people seem to tell the truth, at least confess that they had some sexual indiscretions and were infected. It could well be that there is fear that as traditional healer he has ability "to see" truth from lies, and also that with him one could ritually atone for one's misdeeds, get charms to protect oneself from powerful charms of competitors and prevent such afflictions. Thus people like Sekuru Hanga get detailed information. Sekuru Hanga says male youth refer to STIs as "women's diseases" or diseases associated with sex with women. They tell him about it in what seems to be solidarity talk about the inevitability of having sex with women, as an affirmation of masculinity whose pitfalls are the inevitability of such infections. Sekuru Hanga said while he understands the need for having sex, he has warned many of his male clients against having sex while drunk as it makes it hard for individuals to use protection. Thus according to Sekuru Hanga all it takes is a bit of money, say 5 ZAR, some alcohol and some male youth feel invincible, to end up with STIs.

Despite the foregoing discussion in which reproductive ailments were reduced to African ailments, the prevalence of STIs among young people became evident in another serendipitous moment in November 2009, when I visited booking house A for an FGD. I walked into the last minutes of an outreach workshop on STIs facilitated by trainers from a multilateral agency. As I walked in one of the two facilitators was emphasising that STIs must be treated early because if untreated they cause far-reaching damage to bodily function and wellbeing. He used the example of syphilis, which affects the central nervous system if untreated for a long time or when exacerbated by immune suppression because of an asymptomatic HIV infection. He mentioned that long-term infection with other STIs could cause difficulties with conception, to which a spontaneous wince of either fear or disgust emitted from participants in unison. At this point two participants asked questions and seemed to be in conversation with each other suggesting a familiar story to the speakers. One asked if a foul smelling, greenish vaginal discharge means that one's uterus is rotting?

A colleague interjected as if to clarify saying, a greenish discharge which is preceded by a foul smell from the vagina, followed by a discharge which becomes greenish with time (it was not clear how long). I got the sense from the conversation that this was a pressing issue, possibly an unfolding event. I could not ask for clarification as I was a guest and it was not my workshop. It has been observed that in general Zimbabwean women are anxious about vaginal secretions especially after first birth and invest some effort in herbal interventions to “modify” the vaginal canal and stem its discharges (Ruganga et al. 1992:1037). In addition, in traditional medicine and popular views, it seems the uterus is the locus of reproduction to the exclusion of other related organs, which are imperceptible. Infertility, in popular parlance, suggests something gone wrong in the uterus hence concern that a greenish discharge may mean uterine putrefaction, which obviously suggests diminished future reproductive capacity.

Meanwhile at the workshop a third participant asked whether warts/moles (*mhopo* in Shona)⁹ on a penis suggest an STI and whether or not having unprotected sex with such a person increases likelihood of infection with the same warts/moles. When the facilitators said warts/moles could be a communicable STI such as in genital warts, and that when untreated and co-infected with HIV, the moles/warts could grow to occlude the vulva and its surrounds,¹⁰ saying “the mole/wart grows cauliflower like...” there were further winces and grunts of disgust or fear from the group. The facilitators implored the young women to get checked if suspicious about anything in their genitalia.

The foregoing concern with the harm of STIs seemed to be focused on deleterious effects on fertility as the ultimate danger of unprotected sex, as well as aesthetic aspects of having “normal” genitalia such as not having growths and foul smelling discharges, rather than wellness *per se*. Given aspirations for married futures in which childbirth is important, damaged uteruses would be an impediment. The collective winces at hearing of impacts of STIs on childbearing possibilities suggest this to be the case. If growths and smells can be concealed then who is to say they exist? Thus genital growths, unlike culturally preferred modifications such as elongated minor labia, are seen as unattractive and many so afflicted would go to great lengths to hide them. In rare occasions when research participants talked candidly about such personal issues, they talked about hiding growths. A case in point is that of Nyarai, in her early 20s working in a retail outlet but augmenting her income clandestinely through paid sex with men she meets through her workplace. She has been treated on several occasions for STIs. At the time of the interview she said she had a growth on her genitalia, which she suspected to be a genital wart. She continued to have sex but made sure her growth was well concealed by having sex in the dark. She had a boyfriend

whom she hoped to marry. Rita too hid her pelvic bleeding by having sex in the dark and inserting absorbent materials (tissue paper and/or cotton wool) into her vagina to limit telltale evidence.

The foregoing reveals that unsafe sex is far more common than research participants let on. In the formality of the FGD, participants were keen to claim and to associate themselves with safe sex practices. They were of course concerned about their wellbeing, which they presented as related to undeclared occupational hazards inherent in their livelihoods instead of admitting that “multiple partnerships” were an indicator of risk to HIV and STIs. Thus there is an awareness of condemnation aimed at some livelihood strategies, and their practitioners feel duty bound to defend themselves against the onslaught of hegemonic health knowledge. Hegemonic knowledge articulates with local practices judging them as “risky” forcing practitioners either to discursively reconstruct the practices, or to discursively delete or discount the risk. This alignment to hegemonic knowledge and defence of livelihoods and practices seen as risky was observed elsewhere in Sub-Saharan Africa. In a study among the matrilineal riverine Tonga in Southern Zambia, researchers observed a shift in arguments about multiple partner survival sex in which women engaged (Merten and Haller 2007). Traditional norms which permitted married women to have lovers, and for lovers to publicly give gifts to acknowledge the relationship came to be seen as dangerous and irresponsible when extramarital relationships proliferated under economic austerity which coincided with the ascendancy of AIDS.¹¹ These relationships indexed multi-partner and transactional sex, two of some of the leading health risk indicators in Sub Saharan Africa. In the absence of alternative work opportunities, women’s extramarital relations with fishermen assured them, at no financial cost, access to fish for sale and for subsistence thereby enabling survival/coping with economic austerity (Merten and Haller 2007: 71). The fish were seen as traditional lovers’ gifts. Health messages put the women on the defensive, arguing preservation of traditional identities while also denying how risky these multi-partner and survival sex strategies were. This denial was aided by the fact that infected persons were not visible in fishing villages where extramarital affairs took place. Likewise respondents in this study rebutted personal responsibility for health risks by blaming the invisible forces of “African ailments”.

In other instances, people retain meanings attached to penetrative ritual sex but rather than engage in it, they replace it with stylised simulated sex because they heeded health messages (for instance Nyanzi et al. 2008). Thus arguments relating to elastic “African traditions” not only conjure up impenetrable mystery but are also used by ordinary people to resist and appropriate health messages. Social scientists too attribute social issues they

do not understand to African traditions such the Caldwellian argument about African sexualities fuelling the AIDS epidemic in Sub Saharan Africa (Caldwell et al. 1989: 195-201). The African ailments thesis shows we cannot shake off morality issues universally associated with human sexuality (Pigg 2005: 53-56). People have learnt to associate sexual research with checking for compliance in much publicised risk indicators such as condom use and number of life partners among others (Slaymaker 2004). Research respondents have no choice but to align themselves with desired aspects of the discourse. Thus these young women claimed to live by the “safe sex” practices of hegemonic discourses even going further to say they “check” condoms for breakages post-coitus, claiming to have sex in well-lit rooms which make such checking possible. They claimed to sometimes see from these checks discoloured seminal fluid suggesting STIs.¹² Reports of abdominal pains and possession of docx point to a more complicated reality I came to understand as the study unfolded.

The quest for accessible health care for young people: the paradox of bacossi clinics

Bacossi clinics although technically open to all needy persons were specified as for “vulnerable persons” such as the homeless, sex workers and/or in-transit persons in Beitbridge. All of these labels were stigmatising. The bacossi clinics were seen as specialising in treating STIs (including HIV). Treatment of STIs is complicated by deep-seated stigma associated with reproductive tract infections, and insensitivity on the part of many health care professionals because they too subscribe to cultural beliefs which moralise STIs. STIs are seen as evidence of inappropriate behaviour, illicit sex and non-conformity with health messages about safe sex. This moralises reproductive and sexual health (Pigg 2005: 56). Fear of being judged as irresponsible makes some patients seek alternative (traditional and faith healing) health care actors, whose approaches and understanding about how the body works are different and more sympathetic. The fact that some young people braved stigma to attend the clinics points to gaps in health care provision.

One afternoon in early October 2009, while waiting to meet a key informant at a healthcare facility which by night was the venue for one of the bacossi clinics, I caught a glimpse of the paradoxes of bacossi clinics and stigmatisation at public health facilities. On the day in question, when the sole male nurse asked seven women (three of them with babies) sitting in line if he could check them in for treatment (write names, addresses, dates of birth, collect payment, record body weight and temperature etc.), they declined preferring to wait for the bacossi clinic to open. He explained to them (as if they were not

aware) that the bacossi clinic is for “prostitutes”. The women stood their ground saying they *were* prostitutes hence sitting there. He left them sniggering to report to two female colleagues saying, “can you believe it these women say *they are* prostitutes”.¹³ The women stayed put. A nurse aid left the trio to lock up, loudly commenting on the women’s lack of shame albeit in a different language which I understand well (one which the women were not supposed to understand, perhaps). The staff’s relentless disparaging remarks were embarrassing. The same nurse aid had earlier challenged other clients within my hearing. One was a young man who wore colourful clothes, an elaborate earring in one earlobe and had shaved his hair. She asked him why he was “dressed like that” mentioning the dangling earring.¹⁴ He and his female companion did not respond. When another young man claimed to be homeless, the nurse aid demanded an address saying the young man came “from somewhere”. He mentioned Chivhu almost 400km from Beitbridge so that was the address she seemed to write in her book. I think the young man was lost; he meant to go to the bacossi clinic for “homeless people” but did not realise that the women outside were waiting for it too.

Well-placed informants complained of some health care professionals in other public health facilities telling clients that as professionals they are “not responsible”¹⁵ for clients being HIV positive so the clients should not make too many demands. Ordinary people also taunt some nurses running bacossi clinics – whose popular image is that they solely treat STIs – as “STD nurses”. However some people reportedly approach the same nurses privately when they feel some discomfort they need checked. When they do this they want the discreetness of bacossi clinics rather than the publicity of the public health care centres (where people know where the STI clinics are located or when they are run).

The medical doctor from the humanitarian agency referred to above confirmed that negative attitudes to “sex workers”/ “sex work”, “STIs”, “HIV” and “rape” were prevalent among professionals as they are among ordinary people. Health care professionals approach rape as a crime rather than a medical emergency. Her arguments were supported by other key informants such as the coordinator of a deportee centre as well as the senior nurse for an NGO for sexually abused children. Reporting rape means one offers oneself as a witness, a source of incriminating oral and biomedical evidence including an HIV test as evidence against the accused. Many rape survivors are afraid of confronting authorities (health care, the police and judiciary system) for fear of being seen as low credibility witnesses, or having their characters and family backgrounds questioned as somehow complicit as is the case when sexual impropriety is at issue. When rape is seen as a medical emergency, the focus is foremost on the physical and psychological violation of the individual whose wellness is the

focus of attention and where the efficacy of mitigatory interventions is time bound. It means giving HIV counselling, Post Exposure Prophylaxis (PEP), pregnancy prevention treatments and others as necessary within 72 hours because after that they cease to be effective. In this case submitting criminal evidence is secondary but not subordinate or conditional on treatment. Many violated persons are afraid to come forward for fear that their treatment will drag them into other social issues. In this sense families often have no choice but not to report sexual assault. The stigma of HIV impinges on accessibility of PEP. PEP should be a judgement-free treatment to prevent HIV to individuals exposed to the virus in regular and in non-consensual sex. It requires presenting oneself at a clinic licensed to treat HIV, being counselled, tested for HIV, if negative being treated and tested afterwards. Like a lot of interventions associated with HIV, PEP has not escaped association with illicit sex. Given that it is effective only when taken within 72 hours of exposure, uptake is reportedly low despite the prevalence of rape. For rape survivors there are difficulties because many women are blamed for having provoked the rapist by being in the wrong place at the wrong time, wearing provocative clothes or spending a man's money and refusing sex afterwards (see also Shefer and Foster 2001, Varga 1997, Wocjicki 2002, Wood et al 2007). If they get treatment the survivors are likely to be stigmatised as socially damaged. PEP does not seem well advertised as a prevention strategy nor do communities understand it as a neutral life saving treatment. They see it as better used for "innocent victims" such as children.

The foregoing shows that at most public health care centres, there is a conservative climate which is not friendly to young people's reproductive needs lending support to the argument that these attitudes could be the reason why some people prefer to see alternative health care workers. The latter do not give lectures condemning clients. Because health care professionals' work includes educating and informing people about disease prevention and healthy habits, it seems some health workers go overboard and tell people off on social issues not directly related to health, such as clothing. Nurse aids are not ordinarily licensed to treat but to assist professionals. At this public health facility the nurse aid commenting on the young man's clothing and earring went beyond her call of duty, but none of her seniors were close by to tell her that she was out of line. Thus health care workers also seem to carry to work prevailing cultural notions of wellness such as conformity to social norms. As can be expected, this puts health care workers in powerful positions as definers of what is appropriate or permissible. To avoid embarrassment and being judged most people dress for the hospital/clinic like they dress for church. Clinic attendees have to feign ignorance, be humble and not respond to comments lest they are seen as challenging the status quo in the same way that juniors do not talk back to their seniors.

Furthermore, health care professionals seem insensitive to the real and appropriated labels of “prostitute” “sex worker” and “homeless” persons and services accessed through these labels. The fact that these labels speak to local political economy of access to healthcare where among other reasons professionals’ negative attitudes and indifference to clients’ circumstances send people to the bacossi clinic is lost on these professionals.

The disapproval encountered by clients may be the reason why PEP uptake is low. People are afraid of being judged or drawing attention to themselves for “illicit” sex (work) or stigmatised as violated. Furthermore, young people who are in search of better and (especially) free healthcare services, by taking on names and programming labels used by development agencies (such as “sex workers”, “homeless”, “in-transit persons”) find themselves labelled as immoral. In the wake of the spread of HIV and AIDS, giving youth friendly health care services became an inescapable need given the high HIV prevalence rates among young people. However, providing these services means admitting that young people have sexual and reproductive health needs which go against prevailing cultural sensitivities seen in abstinence only SBSE (see Marindo et al 2003, Betts et al 2003). It means admitting that youth have sex before marriage, something many Zimbabweans have difficulty admitting despite the reality of teenage pregnancies, HIV and STI infections among young people.¹⁰

Responding to HIV and AIDS risk

It has been argued by some researchers (for example Dover 2002, Weiss 1993) that addressing HIV risk is tantamount to addressing pressing local notions of sexual (im)propriety. With women as bearers of culture, gatekeepers of morality and sexual propriety, their mobility away from patriarchal control challenges these expectations making them deviant and therefore blameworthy for the spread of HIV. Epidemiologists also say mobility indexes risk, with the mobility of young women as particularly more risky than that of men; and that in terms of age and gender disaggregation of risk, older men and young women are at greater risk than young men (for instance Spark du Preez et al 2009). While scientific arguments do not seek to exonerate younger men, local explanations do so by blaming young women who are also the most vulnerable and most at risk. Infected young men are less visible in everyday discussions of HIV and AIDS. In this vein, it is not surprising that young people’s responses to HIV and AIDS are embedded in the local socio-cultural setting. Thus, notions of ideal femininities and masculinities are inevitably used to gauge

what is (in)appropriate behaviour, and in turn what is risky. Respondents pointed accusing fingers at mobile female youth as loose, to be avoided as sexual partners or friends as they spread AIDS because female mobility indexes risk (Dover 2002, Weiss 1993). Female youth who did not live with their families were seen as untrustworthy and of questionable morals, apparently an indication that they are least likely to be accountable to their partners (Dover 2002, Weiss 1993). Because a lot of young women in Beitbridge were “looking for money”, dating them was described in unfavourable terms as amounting to “*kutsvaka rufu*,” literally “looking for death” or “*kutenga rufu*”, that is “buying death” because of fear of infection with HIV. Such comments were targeted at any fashionably dressed young women. Fashionable clothes apparently indicate a propensity to materialistic pursuits thus meaning that the women were in search of money rather than meaningful relationships. Some male youth suggested that preventing HIV was about being wary of having relationships with women in the town although conceding to the inevitability of casual sex. Those who admitted to casual sex claimed that they use condoms all the time, thus distancing themselves from risk.

When these claims are refracted through male youth such as Taurai and Sam a different picture emerges. Taurai was hospitalised after having an unspecified STI, emanating from having unprotected sex with women who refuse to pay for his services as a people smuggler. Until the STI wake-up call, he said he did not use condoms at all. Now he claims to use them because he does not want to be re-infected with an STI. He said HIV is not that much of an issue, he is more worried about winning “the battle to get rich”, through smuggling activities. Sam, (22 years old) and HIV positive, lives in shame and regret at his health circumstances, feeling as if his life chances have been curtailed by the HIV diagnosis. At the time of the interview, he was attending the local public Opportunistic Infections (OI) clinic where he was getting cotrimoxazole to prevent HIV OIs. He admitted to having paid casual sex with women in the town. He said he could not date apparently because his form of work as a pushcart porter is not appealing to local women to be in a steady relationship with him. He was also a victim of ridicule as a “loser”, “tramp” or “a failure” (“*rombe*” in Shona) because his menial job forced him to use the town’s dusty foot trails – shortcuts to destinations where his deliveries were due. This did not allow him to be well turned out as some of his peers. Sam was conflicted by his circumstances, full of regret and shame that one so young could be HIV infected. His sense of regret emanates from the fact that he thinks that paid casual sex should be practiced by older men or labour migrants away from their regular partners, not young single men like him. He was of the idea that young people should avoid premarital sex as the key to HIV and STI prevention. He was contemplating going to South African farms perhaps to get a new start and to hide from people who know

him. Clearly hiding his deteriorating health is part of the plot. Thus young men are also vulnerable to HIV infection by virtue of their actions but the blame goes to young women.

In “a diseased place”: illness is inevitable regardless of personal action

Situational causes of vulnerability to infection rather than personal action were also a prominent argument. Here, risks to infection are seen as inherent in the unique environmental circumstances thus beyond individual choice and actions. In this vein, Beitbridge is seen as a “diseased place” or “deadly place”. By being in the town, respondents conceded considerable risk of illness including infection with HIV regardless of their individual actions. There were several strands to this argument. For example, Sekuru Hanga qualified this sentiment arguing that the problem is that youth are gullible and leave home on promises of easy fortune, only to be stranded in Beitbridge after being robbed, dodged by travel mates or otherwise rendered desperate. With no relatives to call on and no money, this initial despair becomes a foot-in-the-door into shady and risk prone activities. Thus being away from home, without money and social support is a risk factor.

Youth respondents expressed being in Beitbridge and its risks differently. For instance, this excerpt from a recorded FGD with female vendors shows one’s respondent’s argument:

RM: You said earlier that there are many diseases here. Please elaborate. Which diseases are you talking about?

Rudo: They include STIs (*siki*) and HIV. Also TB. In many cases people with TB are also HIV positive. Herpes too.¹⁷ *What scares me the most are the STIs.* STIs in this town are incurable. There are many different types of such STIs. (added emphasis).....

RM: How do these persons get the *siki*? Are they not informed about condom use?

Rudo: People know about condoms. However in illicit/immoral sex (*muchihure*) people pursue money so much that the possibility to earn more money from condomless sex overshadows potential risks. They gamble with their lives whatever the outcome. (“*Vanenge vapikira kufa nekurarama*”.)

RM: Do they not care about their lives?

Rudo: If **they choose** to go to a *bhawa* to solicit for paid sex when **I choose** to sell cellphone cards then they do not care. Why do they not do other things like vending? No, they really do not care. (added emphasis)

In this excerpt, the research participant argues that there are many people infected with incurable diseases because of bad choices they make. She distances herself from the irresponsibility and riskiness of “immoral/illicit sex”, but also does not hide her anxiety

about incurable STIs. The impression she gives is that her good choices will be defeated by the real and imagined high prevalence of infectious STIs perpetuated by the bad practices of others, with whom she inevitably interacts judging from her concerns. Otherwise why else was she scared of being infected with an incurable STI, which she knows is not transmitted through regular social contact? The latter clearly shows her perceptiveness about inevitable interconnections between people in a given space and thus could make her as culpable she says others are. However she sees herself as helpless as her status is dependent on how others conduct themselves. The question is what stops her using condoms since she is not consumed by greed unlike women of questionable morals. The response to this question may be sexual naiveté discussed in preceding sections. During the FGD, Rudo and colleagues presented themselves as church-going women who do not wear trousers, are abstinent and dating to get married not for dating's sake. In this sense then, being in a space like Beitbridge where others are taking risks, exposes all to disease.

Another strand of the idea of Beitbridge as a diseased place cited three reasons: the cholera outbreak at the beginning of 2008/9 because of a lingering problem of filth (uncollected refuse and frequent sewage pipe bursts which take long to fix), the erratic supply of treated piped water and the prevalence of HIV is “high”. This was expressed by sex workers, for whom Beitbridge does not foster wellness no matter what individuals do. During fieldwork, the problem of uncollected refuse, heaps of which were in evidence along roads and forest foot trails; sewage pipe bursts and human faeces along the same bush trails (not to mention the unpleasant stench) made for a sense of susceptibility to illness in Beitbridge.¹⁸ As noted in chapter 3, when at the end of 2009 there were reports of cholera at the district hospital (which turned out to be false), the whole town became frantic with cleaning and disposing of uncollected rubbish in hastily made dumps in nearby forests. The young women also said men who offer higher fees for unprotected sex are themselves likely HIV positive and selfish because they do not care what happens to their partners. This heightened their senses of being at risk. Of course they claimed to decline such offers and to insist on condoms.

The inevitability of illness and misfortune befalling individuals who are otherwise apparently doing all in their power to be safe, was reiterated by Rita while still worried by her pelvic bleeding as shown in the excerpt below,

Rita: ...I really wish to go home. I fear that I might die here in Beitbridge for nothing (...lento [umuntu] ayifelayo engayazi)

RM: What could kill you here?

Rita: Beitbridge kills (iBeitbridge iyabulala)

RM: What kills? What could possibly get you? You said you use condoms, what is there to fear?

Rita: But I am sick, it has been quite a while too. I am bleeding daily and am losing weight. I was 70kgs and now 67kgs...

In the above excerpt Rita links her sexual and reproductive health to living in the “deadly place” without saying how Beitbridge’s presumed contagion was/is transmitted to her. She cites her pelvic bleeding and weight loss as evidence of illness and fear that perhaps worse is coming hence her reference to “dying for nothing”. When I first met her, when the pelvic bleeding seemed incurable, she seemed full of regret at the fact she had not done much by way of savings or sending remittances home. To make matters worse, she had run away from home with a view to make something of herself, only to end up with pelvic bleeding and no meaningful savings. She had been unable to remain a waitress where she first worked, leading to her losing her lodgings and moving into a booking house in despair. Later in the interview she extended these notions of vulnerability to cite specific experiences saying

Rita: ... Beitbridge is not a nice place. It is a place of pain only [...*ilobuhlungu kuphela*].

RM: What is the source of pain in this town?

Rita: Everything. I am sick as I said, I have no accommodation...it is all painful. ...

Among other things the police investigating a murder at Rita’s booking house in September 2009 had beaten her. Early one morning she was rounded up in an undercover operation by the police and marched to the river as bait for bandits in the forest who waylay irregular migrants. A handful of bandits were arrested. Meanwhile the unfolding crackdown also made it difficult for sex workers to meet clients and thus for Rita to make enough money to save for a trip home. Her vulnerability was heightened. She sensed that her helplessness and despair were behind her vulnerability to illness, beatings by the police, and being used as bait to catch thugs. This underlines the structural violence and injustice visited on people in her circumstances. Indeed structural violence and the injustice it entails increases susceptibility to infections (see Barnett and Whiteside 2000). With regards to cholera, during fieldwork most households took action to prevent a likely outbreak by drinking only pre-boiled water even when there was piped water. Rita and others in similar situations could not do so because they do not have access to cooking facilities so could not boil their drinking water. This is because booking houses do not allow cooking in their houses to keep electricity bills low. This leaves lodgers few alternatives to take to prevent a disease outbreak.

By contrast male youth such as Biggerz attributed “the deadly nature” of the place to individual action. While describing the hedonistic pursuits of his colleagues, which he condemned as lack of foresight, he said “...[*ukasachenjera*] *muno unofira mahara*” “[when not careful] in this town you could easily *die for nothing*...”. [added emphasis] (Conversation on 18 October 2009). To understand how people can easily “die for nothing” he invited me to see the town by night. He referred to the bus terminus which is a hive of activity by day and night, where overt soliciting for paid sex with strangers takes place at night. Although both Rita and Biggerz use the notion of “dying for nothing”, Biggerz associates it with lust which leads people to casual paid sex and fleeting moments of sexual satisfaction hence nothing. Rita associates it with residence where circumstances of people are incidental to residence. The antidote for Biggerz is being “clever” or “careful” hence “[*ku*]ngwara”. This point had been made by other male youth who said that men who ‘look’/‘stare’ at women soliciting for paid sex risk being dragged to dark corners for sex they may not be interested in thus being at risk. The solution is to avoid these places by night and not to stare or look at the women soliciting for paid sex.

The idea of “bad choices of others” as increasing risk to oneself accentuated the vulnerability of sex workers to verbal and other forms of abuse. For instance, Marita related how one of her clients, a young man in his 20s with whom she had had unprotected sex at his insistence, threatened to beat her after discovering that she had cohabited with Mr BigShot. The young man argued that by failing to disclose and insist on condoms Marita had endangered him. Marita said she had told him that it was condomless sex “at his own risk”. To me she explained that it was not her responsibility to describe all her past partners to current and future partners. She did not get beaten on this occasion. Marita’s colleagues explained that BigShot is known to be sexually rampant, but woe betides anyone who admits to having had sex with the man (and others like him) as she is likely to be shunned by future partners. Marita’s colleagues concurred that the likes of BigShot known not to use condoms are either infected and do not know, or know and are on ARVs and thus believed to be risking other people’s lives by demanding unprotected sex.¹⁹ While sex workers were cynical about the intentions of men who do not use condoms, the behaviour of this young man seems to suggest that men think that sexually rampant man like BigShot who do not use condoms threaten other men when they have sex with the same woman. This still begs the question that BigShot is no different from this young man, as they both seem not to like to use condoms. However, as explained above, young women are seen as conduits of transmitting diseases even when men’s actions such not using protection is at issue.

Other youth and informants expressed the sense of high morbidity as past agreeing that “*Muno maifiwa...*”, that is (“morbidity was high here”). The high morbidity was associated with mass deportations from South Africa and the cholera outbreak. Upper Sixth students referred specifically to the cholera outbreak as ‘the drama’ and more dangerous rather than HIV which because of growing use of ARVs, and its long incubation is visibly less dramatic than cholera. Other people concurred but observed that the presence of a humanitarian agency and NGO-run bacossi clinics had a huge impact on morbidity from STIs, HIV and other illnesses.

Young people’s arguments about societal and environmental risks underline a sense of helplessness and also points to risk as structural rather than individual (Barnett and Whiteside 2002, Chapman 2006, Mane and Aggleton 2001). Thus they embrace the notion of “risky environments” (Barnett and Whiteside 2002: 133-136) such as those where HIV is “generalised” and also characterised by survival strategies based on shady and illicit informal sector activities such as smuggling, mobility and fluid economic and sexual activities, income inequality between and men and women. When arguments about societal or environmental risks are juxtaposed with prevention messages which emphasise individual agency such as typical of HIV, it is clear that some individuals cannot respond as individuals because of their structural location. Young women like Rita, who as she explained, have no alternative forms of work, no accommodation and ended up making-do with pay-per-day accommodation which is associated with sex work find that they cannot make “rational” decisions in line with public health messages. Mane and Aggleton (2001:27) refer to “societal risks” to focus attention on the configuration of gender relations, norms and expectations as accentuating risk and rendering women as especially vulnerable. As shown in preceding sections, persistent contradictions and expectations of marriage to economically dominant males in conditions where the latter eludes many men make marriages unstable. They also fuel fluid, semi-permanent relations and casual paid sex. Men’s inability to provide creates grounds for women to look for other partners with resources (for instance Spark-du Preez et al. 2009). Given the economic crisis of the last decade in Zimbabwe, sources of marital instability have increased. Thus research participants saw themselves as defined more by their circumstances than by their own actions. As the discussion in preceding sections of this chapter show, arguments about spiritual warfare and possession creatively point to diminished personal responsibility.

HIV as survivable and a part of life

The foregoing narratives and strategies of dealing with HIV co-existed with acceptance of HIV as a part of life and survivable. This is because HIV is now generalised rather than concentrated in certain populations. Unlike the previous narrative of societal risks this one focuses on survivability. The acceptance of HIV ranged from those who believed that they were likely already infected to those whose confidence was buoyed by the wide availability of ARVs.

In a conversation about the prevalence of unprotected sex, I asked Marita whether she and her colleagues at booking house B were not afraid of HIV infection. She replied that she is "...waiting for symptoms of the onset of illness..." because of "what" she has "been" through. She did not give details. She cannot bring herself to be tested for HIV just yet. She admitted that she goes through many moments of panic. When after a night of drinking she feels unwell, she wonders if this is the moment when she will find out that she has AIDS. Later some colleagues said they live with the knowledge that they could be infected but do not worry as much because there are clinics which cater for them specifically, referring to bacossi clinics saying "*tine maclinics edu*" ("we have clinics dedicated to our care").

At booking house A when I asked about whether or not there are risks of HIV infection in their day-to-day work, the response was "It's obvious". The answer abruptly came from a young woman who looked high from alcohol and something else, and she was smoking throughout the discussion. Her response prevented further discussion in that not only did others stop, looked at her first and then seemed to agree, saying limply that risks were an accepted part of the trade. I did not know what to make of this interaction. The individual who initiated the discussion was otherwise quiet throughout the discussion. Perhaps the others' lukewarm response points to fears that she would declare some confidential information but she went back to her smoking.

Upper Sixth students said AIDS is relatively scary. An HIV positive diagnosis was described as "shocking" but also "common" only that people do not disclose. They presented HIV and AIDS as "something which happens daily" in Shona they said "[HIV] *chinhu chinowanikwa*". They agreed that HIV is no longer cause for panic. One young man even suggested that a "lot of [school] girls are HIV positive". Girls in the mixed group did not challenge him. I did not press them for a reaction, as the only way this would have been confirmed would have been disclosure. I did not wish to expose infected persons or to put them under pressure to confirm or deny their HIV statuses. He elaborated that HIV "is not a disease but a condition" arguing that being HIV positive does not mean being sick if people take ARVs. When at the end of the FGD I asked the students for questions

and clarifications, they asked me if condoms are really effective in preventing HIV, citing a common refrain that they are “not 100%” effective if they tear and so on. I sheepishly said that they are effective if used properly. I was sheepish because the FGD had progressed rather well with participants who were very engaged, and seemed well aware of the nuances of what they were talking about. I did not think that these doubts would be found in this group. As already stated in the foregoing, they agreed that the recent cholera outbreak for them was scarier. In addition, female youth in tertiary education reiterated the same saying simply “...these days it [HIV] is survivable...” saying in Ndebele “*kuyaphileka kulezinsuku*”.

Treatment with ARVs is increasingly seen as a strategy in HIV prevention rather than just treating HIV or AIDS. There is growing evidence that if infected persons access ARVs and adhere to treatment and maintaining undetectable viral loads, transmissibility of the HIV virus even when not using condoms is low to negligible (HTPN 2011).²⁰ Universal access to treatment is a global approach to HIV and AIDS with governments and NGOs implored to enrol more people in treatment programs. The existence of bacossi clinics in Beitbridge has helped to augment access to treatment for individuals whose occupations would otherwise make it hard for them to approach public institutions where treatment normally takes place.

Some male youth were cynical about the use of ARVs arguing that they enable concealment of HIV infection thus allowing infected women to be active in sex work, duping men who are attracted to their beauty enhanced by cosmetics. They said women on ARVs look fat, skin lighteners clear skin blemishes and scars. Hitherto, scars were seen as signs of chronic skin breakouts and an indication of ill health, popularly associated with HIV. They said these days there is no telling who is infected and who is not. The male youth feared that they were likely at risk of contracting HIV from infected women who did not have the usual telltale signs. In the past wasting (gauntness), thinning hair and skin breakouts were immediately assumed to be evidence of having AIDS even if the gauntness could have been caused by other illnesses. Now with ARVs these ready schemata are not applicable.

Young women blamed for bearing children “without fathers”

The refrain of “children without fathers” refers to children born out of wedlock, a phenomenon for which invariably female youth is blamed, as male youth are prone to extricate themselves from impending responsibilities that they see as a hindrance to

crafting aspired-for adulthoods. Some male youth see unplanned pregnancy and out of wedlock childbirth as “a trap” sprung by cunning female youth who see marriage as an end in itself and a demonstration of adulthood. Children are born out-of-wedlock for a variety of intertwined reasons such as female sexual naiveté, which make it impossible for young women to use contraceptives and men’s heterosexual prerogatives to dominate women and sex. The premium placed on sexual pleasure, which for men means making women comply with their demands for sex when they want to have it and not using condoms if there is no perceived threat to themselves (for instance Oriel 2005) is juxtaposed with preferences for female sexual naiveté and implied compliance (Shefer and Foster 2001, Varga 1997).

The discussion in chapter 6 on the double bind of informal marriages and the quest for the elusive economically dominant male clearly shows some of the paradoxes of sexual naiveté. Experiences of Tsitsi, Nyasha and Tina show the delicate balance between the aspired for dignity of marriage and risks of ill-repute which female youth have to contend with while in relationships considered as “steady”, “regular” or “co-residential” but which turn out to be shortlived. These relationships are seen as a means to formal marriage but where rites for the latter are not forthcoming, thus increasing risks for out-of-wedlock pregnancy. In cases presented in chapter 6 ideals of femininity such sexual naiveté, compliance with men’s implicit and explicit desires and being a dependent female, expose some contradictions inherent in these notions. If men held their side of the bargain by rewarding women who are “good” and “compliant” through life long marriages thereby assuring them of economic security, women in steady relationships would benefit. Unfortunately these relationships expose women to diminishing returns such as risks of STIs, HIV and unplanned pregnancy. While the discussion in chapter 6 highlights dilemmas of young women when relationships flounder, in this section of the chapter, I focus on young women’s challenges vis-à-vis single parenting using the experiences of another trio of young women.

The first example is of Rita’s colleague Tatenda who had come to Beitbridge in search of wage work late in 2008. She tried domestic work and ended up in sex work because the earnings are “better”. She already had two children by the same man who did not follow through with marriage. She lived with her parents but had to care for her two children alone. She had left the children back home in rural Chivi. She fell pregnant for the third time in 2009 and returned to Chivi in December 2009 to deliver and to retire from sex work as she had reached a dead end again. Her attempt at getting ahead in life by seeking wage work had led to pregnancy with no prospects of marriage for the third time. However her brothers had also reached the end of their tethers, tired of her birth of a third child “without a father” to be raised in their family. They chased her from home and told her not to come

back without the father of the latest addition. Tatenda went back to Beitbridge, heading to her booking house as the only place she knew. She subsequently tried to get her regular boyfriend in Beitbridge to accept paternity as he had had sex with her regularly throughout the previous year. Without a paternity test such attempts were bound to be spurned because Tatenda also had sex with other men during the time in question. The young man denied responsibility. Tatenda had to plead with the “mother” of her former booking house to let her stay with the infant. Booking house owners do not like to deal with lodgers who bring infants or older children for a variety of reasons. Tatenda had arrived from Chivi with no clothes and no blankets for herself and baby yet she had gone there with what she thought were adequate supplies including several imported Chinese blankets. Her family seized her groceries and bed linen to give to the other two children. Her brothers promptly dispatched the children to their father’s in the same district as a public show of indignation at the bad reputation she brought to the family. Such drastic actions of parents and kin of young women are some of the least documented violations of human rights in patrilineal Sub Saharan Africa done in the name of preserving customs.

The stigma and economic burden of “children without fathers” does lead to critical thinking and action for some young women. Streetwise youth like Marita for example slip into South Africa where abortion is legal to terminate their pregnancies.²¹ Although hers was the only unsolicited report of an elective abortion, out-patient statistics from Beitbridge District Hospital show a lot of gynaecological outpatient cases but it is hard to tell the nature of the complaints. In Zimbabwe abortion is illegal and a sensitive issue. Abortion is permitted when there is proof that conception resulted from rape, incest or that the pregnancy threatens the life of the woman. “Backstreet” abortions do take place but remain hard to quantify because they are illegal and done clandestinely. Outpatient services such as typical aftercare are available to all who seek them. If there is no evidence of an induced miscarriage, there are no criminal proceedings. Where there is evidence of an induced miscarriage, the police are called and the treatment may be used as evidence of commission of an offence.²² In Marita’s case, the abortion precipitated the end of her relationship with Mr BigShot who saw the abortion as proof that she is intent on remaining a prostitute. To men like BigShot, prostitution is anathema to settling down, while domesticity associated with motherhood is preferred. Marita argued the contrary, saying that after two children born out of wedlock she would have preferred Mr BigShot to do the right thing first, and finalise marriage before she could have a baby with him. She admits that she did not use contraceptives, because BigShot would “not let her”. This shows a situation where young women cannot broach the subject of contraception lest they are seen as not committed

and transient (see Varga 1997:49) even when childbirth is not a preferred option. This disqualifies women from consideration for marriage. Clearly personal responsibility is fraught with many challenges for young women and incumbent on many factors they do not control. Thus while gambling for marriage, young women risk pregnancy out of wedlock. If the marriage falls through, the young women are blamed for poor judgement and flawed decision-making. If they terminate pregnancies they risk ostracism too. Expectations of discreetness also hold possibilities for naïve women to be manipulated through false information. If the young women carry their pregnancies to term, they endure lifelong stigma as “unmarriageable” or as being otherwise questionable. Future partners will be reluctant to commit citing their out-of-wedlock children as the reason (see Katapa 1998). Elsewhere Shefer and Foster (2001) show that men do not want to deal with evidence of a woman’s agentive sexual past such as childbirth in previous relationships. Men fear that if they raise children from previous relationships they will be seen as emasculated and cuckolded for living with the evidence of their partners’ past relationships. Men either refuse to live with the children or decline long-term relations with their mothers.

The third example is that of Rudo (23 years old) who, like Marita had two children with the same man who migrated to South Africa to look for work. He went incommunicado, so she and friends assume him deserted. Rudzo was left to fend for two children and an aging father. She clandestinely dated married men for gifts combined with earnings from vending. One of her children is reportedly sickly. She fell pregnant and delivered during my fieldwork. When she tried to move in with the man who got her pregnant, his wife came from the rural areas unannounced. An altercation ensued. Rudo had to move out of the man’s lodgings. It was not clear if the man had a hand in his wife “catching wind” of Rudo’s moving in, thereby creating the possibility for him to extricate himself from complications of a girlfriend with his baby and two children from a previous relationship. She is reportedly raising her newborn alone. This has obviously added more mouths to feed on top of the two she was previously struggling with. Rudo’s sexual naiveté failed to secure even the shortlived reprieve of an informal marriage. Sexual naiveté often means real or feigned ignorance of sex, reproduction, or the need for contraception and contraceptives thereby making unplanned pregnancy inevitable. There are structural issues at play too. Access to contraceptives is difficult for single young women. Locally contraception is called “family planning”²³ used for child spacing and seen as literally for people with families (that is married with children). Young women qualify to use contraception once they have had at least a first child and better still if married (Katapa 1998: 126). Contraceptives for child spacing are acceptable to local customs to allow children to develop well in between

pregnancies, but contraceptive technologies are seen as rather odd if not inappropriate for single women with no children.

Although pregnancy short-circuits marriage negotiations forcing compromises, it does not guarantee marriage. Pregnancy puts the woman's family on the offensive to salvage their honour and her reputation by accepting promises of marriage, with no bridewealth and no wedding. Often the bridewealth is expected after "admission of responsibility" by the offending young man. Pregnancy can also help young women to out-compete female competitors into marriage where a young man has several girlfriends. However, pregnancy-with-a-view-to-marry as a strategy holds no guarantees of attaining the ultimate goal. It depends on a young man's commitment to the plan. As the examples above show, there is no telling if the (young) man can or will hold his side of the bargain. He might cooperate by accepting responsibility, starting marriage negotiations, having the pregnant young woman move in with his family and subsequently abscond. Absconding is possible through migration, ostensibly to raise money to marry and to fend for young independent household (Chikovore et al 2002). Marita and Rudo's partners disappeared after migrating leaving the young women to care for two children each.

In neo-patrilineal societies of Southern Africa social fatherhood is customarily formalised through bridewealth and "damage" payments. Such payments allow children to take their father's surname, thus to belong to his patrilineage. This would ordinarily mean that the children live with and are cared for by the man or his relatives. Illegitimacy is not recognised in law. In day-to-day practices, illegitimacy is recognised as a sexual impropriety on the part of women, an inversion of patrilineal customs when children end up raised by their mothers' families as an economic burden. According to general law and international conventions on children's rights ratified in Zimbabwe, children regardless of circumstances of their birth, can not be discriminated against on grounds of cultural practices such as not having a social father. This technically allows women to confer identity to children. However, given patrilineal thinking and practices in administration of laws, it is fathers' particulars normally determine the registration of children (processing of birth certificates).

When paternity is disputed, courts can order paternity tests. The problem is that where courts have to order tests to prove biological paternity, the woman's character is being questioned because families should solve such matters. Without support of their families, few women proceed with paternity testing (unless a man wishes to prove that a particular child is his). When maternal relatives become social fathers and if the mother of the children is economically dependent, this could mean a life-long acrimony over

entitlements to care and economic support within the family. It is somewhat better if the mother attempted marriage and left because of economic neglect or violence by the father of the children. Such a woman is less likely to be insulted for failing to marry, and her children will likely not be seen as “without” a father. She is sympathised with as a victim of abuse. The latter does not do away with economic pressures.

Parents’ reactions to “children without fathers” add another dimension of blame and debasement of young women. In a study of teenagers in second out-of wedlock pregnancies in Dar-es-Salaam, (Tanzania), Katapa (1998:127-130) observed that the teenagers’ male relatives (fathers and brothers) faced disapproving public opinion which forced them to take drastic steps of chasing the young women from home. This is apparently done to force the young women to marry the men who got them pregnant or to elope with them. As heads of households, the men felt that if they forgave their daughters/sisters for the second time, they risked being seen as emasculated, unable to instil patriarchal authority on female members of their households or worse that the pregnancies were a result of incest involving the patriarchs hence not demanding to know the men responsible for sister/daughter’s pregnancy (Katapa 1998). The latter is a particularly stigmatised form of virility even if it may well take place in secret. Thus male relatives have to make a show of their disapproval; in the process pushing affected young women and children into deeper despair such as being homeless, without work and/or ending up in abusive relationships. Many are reduced to a life of social marginality. Female relatives such as mothers collude through silence and inaction. If they act in the interest of their daughters it pits them against their husbands/sons and stokes marital and household instability: the older women risk being stigmatised as the source of bad influence or as cuckolding their husbands. Women may be respected as wives and mother but they are not supposed to be domineering or to challenge patrilineal-cum-patriarchal interests in their households. Women who protest the ill-treatment of daughters pregnant out of wedlock risk being chased from their homes too. Unpalatable as it is, silence and inaction are the only option for women without resources of their own.

Clearly many men could also be taking advantage of the prevailing conditions in which many young women are desperately searching for possibilities to settle down and are therefore easily misled. Young women’s despair could underline their gullibility, as the examples above show. For instance, in June 2009, in public transport one day I overheard a conductor and driver talking saying that since the introduction of the multiple currencies system, proper marriage was difficult but that co-habitation was the way to go. Older male passengers challenged the young men saying that in fact these days it is easier to marry because for USD400, a young man could get a wife. In reality for many young men working

in the informal sector, USD400 is a huge sum of money to save after paying rent, transport and buying food. In chapter 5, the challenges of saving were explained. The despair of most fathers with daughters of marriageable age, desperate to salvage family honour, is apparently such that fathers would rather their daughters live (cohabit) with men who have agreed to pay bridewealth in small instalments than for their daughters to be in sex work, single parents or end up in informal marriages.

The foregoing shows that in some ways the “refutation of obligations” (Pattman 2005) is embedded in global economic restructuring produces widespread unemployment and renders outcomes of labour migration unpredictable. Many young men find that they cannot meet obligations back home. The problem is that often neither the woman’s nor her partner’s families can take care of young women and their babies, leaving the women to their own devices. Such women join the ranks of poor, single parents or the much-publicised impoverished female headed households (see Horrell and Krishman 2006). In this sense, children with “no fathers” are first and foremost an economic burden to single women and their wider circle of kin. The despair visited on single women without academic qualifications, with limited employment possibilities, and without family support and resources to fall back on is palpable. In some instances, male youth openly deny responsibility for a variety of reasons including cultural ones. If young men have evidence that their girlfriends had/have other partners, this is used as evidence of not being suitable to marry (as Tatenda’s example shows). Men’s ability to extricate themselves from unplanned parenthood makes it women’s burden. Locked in ideals of sexual naïveté, being compliant as a sign of commitment and beliefs in the provider male, many young women seem unable to factor men’s easy exit options as negative outcomes into the equation when dating or having sex.

The foregoing has tried to show multiple dimensions of the notion of personal responsibility in unplanned pregnancy and out-of-wedlock pregnancy and how young women end up being blamed where young men are not. Thus young women are held responsible for being gatekeepers of their sexualities and for the outcomes of reproductive choices. The foregoing has shown the follies of women’s sexual naïveté. While female naïveté underscores their desirability to men (Shefer and Foster 2001) and compliance with whims of men sustains heterosexual relationships (Oriell 2005:398), these expectations also lock young women into dead-end relationships where if they fall pregnant they are deserted and singularly blamed for being irresponsible. Oriell explains this compliance as the notion of what women “must” or “should” do to please partners and maintain relationships. These “musts” and “shoulds” are part of evolving practices constituting strong sanction

for women to comply in conditions where bargains are fast changing. Some researchers explain naiveté as the “male in the head”, where women internalise men’s needs and start to pre-empt demands by predicting needs before they are made explicit (Holland et al 1996). These issues also point to “partial paralysis” on the part of parents, who are immobilised by traditional expectations as seen in expectations, fears to recommend use of contraceptives and fears of what their peers will think if they forgive their daughters (Baylies and Bujra 1999: 330-331, Katapa 1998). Thus adults are also under pressure from their peers. Although illegitimacy is not legally recognised in Zimbabwe, the economic burden of raising children whose parents are not meaningfully economically active is a real concern as it affects the children’s life chances in as much as it burdens already struggling households. In many instances, poor households look forward to their daughters marrying well in the hope that relatively well off sons-in-law will get them out of poverty, instead they are getting extra mouths to feed in a vain search for sons-in-law.

Discussion: witchcraft and malevolent spirits versus personal responsibility

Youth narratives do not occur in a social vacuum as they incorporate both local cultural beliefs and evolving public health messages to explain and rationalise young people’s circumstances. Presentations in this chapter show that traditional beliefs are used creatively to produce narratives challenging the notion of personal responsibility as causes of sexual and reproductive ill health as implied in public health messages. Youth narratives allow them to seek help while attributing outcomes of their actions to situational causes. These attributions also point to an awareness of broken ties seem hard to restore while still in these circumstances. Beliefs in witchcraft and malevolent forces deployed by envious kin, colleagues and workmates point to broken or insecure relationships. These beliefs and the strategies they evince, suggest experiences of chronic vulnerability which research participants have been subjected to (see Harnischfeger 2006, Geschiere and Fisiy 1994). The discussion points to challenges of family ties in honouring ancestors because of economic crises forcing youth to seek convenient solutions at the behest of traditional and faith healers. Many families even if inclined to respect their ancestors are least likely to gather at the behest of youth already seen as deviant. For these families, deviant youth are to blame for difficult circumstances the families are in as ancestors are offended by descendant’s deviance. The problem is that these attributions neither allow analysis of structural causes

of individuals and social groups' circumstances nor allow activism of any sort as youth feel blamed and stigmatized for their activities.

While there is creativity in the ways young people use their agency, or refuse to acknowledge it, this creativity is ambiguous. The gullibility of youth dealing with self-styled traditional and faith healers who claim to have solutions to youth's problems only to recommend incoherent remedies such in Mandla's case, is palpable. Mandla is supposedly possessed by a benevolent spirit which forces him into exile from his family yet the spirit is supposed to be pro-kin and family. Logic demands that its host should be domesticated and stay with the family but this is not the case. Youth themselves seem persuaded by these incoherent explanations because they allow them to deal with the multi-layered dissonances of their circumstances. These incoherent explanations aid coping without changing much. Elsewhere de Boeck (2005) also observed a radical change in traditional religious beliefs in the DRC in the wake of economic crises and HIV and AIDS where some children were not only accused of witchcraft, but of using extremely perverted forms of witchcraft to cause their male kin impotence, infertility and general inability to play their patriarchal roles. Thus these beliefs allowed people to talk about the social and psychological effects of economic dislocation albeit blaming, in horrible ways, the most vulnerable members of society such as children. In either case, intractable economic dislocation as the cause of suffering is hard to explain in vernacular languages and belief systems. Thus structural causes such as in Mandla's case, his criminal past, and his current work as a people and goods smuggler privy to gruesome violations of travellers (although swearing that he is not responsible for any of them) makes him hard to endear to. However this is evaded through the language of spirit possession.

Youth's narratives of health and wellbeing vulnerability challenge ideological arguments underlining the neoliberal notion of "youth at risk" as attributable to individual choice and actions (Kelly 2001). These narratives force us to look beyond the individual, and look at family relations and individual-society relations. They reveal a state of flux because of challenges of neoliberal globalisation. Socio-cultural explanations of ill health are also creatively reinterpreted to allow young people to deal with their own challenges (Chapman 2006). Creativity is made possible by the fact that African traditional beliefs are elastic, relying as they do on the interpretations of diviners who can decode signs and indicators of spiritual causation (Kiernan 1982).

Notes

1. The difference between traditional and faith healers is increasingly fuzzy. The former ideally use divination and herbs to treat their clients; they are guided by ancestral spirits that possess them thus firmly based in African Traditional Religions. The latter claim to use the power of the Holy Spirit to foretell events, diagnose and treat ailments, thus is embedded on Christianity. The latter use water, oil, milk, stones and other innocuous objects to treat illnesses and protect from malevolent forces.
2. During fieldwork, Beitbridge Town Council closed healing shrines. Some healers moved to houses as places of initial contact by placing plaques advertising services on gates and fences. Rituals were still performed in the forest. Many others simply relocated to the forest with their shrines marked by green, red, and white cotton flags which flew on long sticks. The town council could not follow them there.
3. For instance, the classifieds in *The Daily Sun* of 6 October 2009 carried an advert by “an international *sangoma*” (Zulu for traditional healer) whose services included “...protection of homes, removing *tokoloshes* [goblins], returning stolen goods, returning lovers [sic] and opening [sic] good luck”. The same paper carried another advert for ‘miracle water’ which heals a wide range of pains and aches from head to toe, skin conditions, allergies and others, with claims that “it gives the body energy, strengthens the immune system, cleanses the liver, bladder and kidneys, rejuvenates the skin, hair, nails and works immediately”. The water is available in three provinces in South Africa namely Gauteng, Kwa-Zulu-Natal and Limpopo, the latter adjacent to Beitbridge.
4. With family structures changing rapidly, the term “husband” might not apply to all women as an increasing number of women have children out of wedlock. In the case of breastfed babies, a woman whose partner has sexual contact with other partners who do not observe these taboos might cause his baby to fall ill when he has sex with its mother. In this vein, women who share these beliefs may be advised to completely “abstain” from sex for the health of their babies if they cannot control who their partners have sex with.
5. In hindsight, these young women could not ask medical professionals about the tablets they had without incriminating the vendor and themselves as witnesses.
6. I was not able to verify whether this includes repeat visits or reflects number of new clients. Similarly I was not able to access more statistics on trends seen at this clinic.
7. Officials who had been asked to facilitate access to the data dragged their feet until I gave up.
8. I heard of individuals who sought this antibiotic for their households. They took it for five days expecting to prevent cholera. None of them were infected leaving them open to persuasion that the drug works.
9. The Shona term *mhopo* for both moles and warts does not ordinarily suggest illness. Thus in daily usage there is no sense that *mhopo* as warts could point to a viral infection or that some moles, if malignant, could point to impending illness. Because of differences implied in the English terms “warts” and “moles”, I use a stroke between them to show that it could be either.
10. The facilitators did not mention that these growths could be linked to cancers, but simply that early screening and treatment are important.
11. These practices had declined or gone underground in the colonial era following alarm by colonial administrators about “female promiscuity”. Subsequent male biased development such as Christianisation, wage work and schooling bolstered male domination and control of women’s sexuality hence the controversy of women’s extramarital affairs.

12. They cited bloodstains and greenish discharges. I checked with health care professionals who said the observations could point to STIs.
13. There were several occasions when women openly confronted officials with the statement that they are sex workers. For instance, at the police charge office in 12 October 2009, when several young women were rounded up for loitering (presumed soliciting for paid sex), some refused to pay fines challenging the police that “we had not met any clients yet so if you let us go we will bring you the money for fines later”. I overheard this while at the police station to get crime statistics. From the hospital, I heard from my key informants that young women who had been referred by one bacossi clinic would tell health care workers there that they are “non-paying clients”; a code that they are with the bacossi clinic. Many professionals seemed stunned and annoyed by these disclosures.
14. At face value, my perspective on the earring was that it was urban fashion typical of male migrants who had been to Johannesburg (South Africa). It could be a rendition of traditional fashion because some ethnic groups in Zimbabwe and South Africa allow(ed) men to pierce their earlobes as a mark of manliness.
15. Statements like “I was not there when you got yourself infected”, or “I did not give you AIDS...”.
16. In 2011, a proposal by the National AIDS Council (NAC) to put condoms in all public schools raised such an uproar from parents, teachers, the media and government officials that the proposal was shelved. The proposal was later supported by the Ministry of Health and Child Welfare (MOHCW) then under MDC. NAC and MOHCW argued that this would help to prevent unplanned pregnancy, avoid backstreet abortions and prevent HIV and STIs. Parents maintain that the condoms would give license to those students who were not keen on experimentation with sex. The moot point though is how to enable the apparent minority who are sexually active access to life saving contraceptives. For instance, *The Standard*, 18 June 2011, ‘NAC wants permission to put condoms in schools’, *The Standard* 22 September 2012, ‘Ministry wants condoms distributed in schools’ and *New Zimbabwe* 14 April 2012 ‘Teachers refuse to distribute condoms in schools’.
17. She used the word “herpes”. Later I was not sure if she meant herpes zoster which has become common because of HIV. It tends to affect specific parts of the body, either half of the face, the upper body or one arm following nerves manifesting as a line of burn-like blisters. She could have been referring to genital herpes, which though less amenable to observation is more in line with the idea of untreatable STIs.
18. Some people relieved themselves in the forest because of water shortages in some sections of the town so waterborne sanitation was not usable. At the start of fieldwork treated water was trucked in from Musina. In due course, many boreholes were sunk, but it seems some people could not fetch water for a variety of reason. Given the prevalence of rooming, it is likely that people who did not fetch water would end up using the bush because they could not flush their toilets.
19. Recent studies show that adhering to treatment with ARVs reduces transmissibility of HIV on account of reduced viral loads. However information and education campaigns typically lag behind hence the belief that persons infected with HIV, even if using ARVs may spread a mythical “super strain” of different strains of HIV and resistant to treatment thereby disadvantaging their unwary partners. Studies that refute the notion of a super strain of HIV resistant to treatment include the ground breaking Swiss study in 2008 and the HTPN study. Both were based on discordant couples in Switzerland and 13 sites Latin America, Asia and Sub Saharan Africa. These findings are not applicable for other STIs.
20. Findings apply to monogamous relationships, not casual relations such as these circumstances suggest. This has not changed enterprising individuals experimenting with casual relations.

21. On trips to Musina, I noticed that adverts for outpatient abortions were everywhere so it is also possible that Zimbabwean women quietly slipped into South Africa to have abortions.
22. Here and there reports of abandoned new-borns appear in the media showing that some women carry unplanned pregnancies to term and commit infanticide as a last resort. Infanticide is a crime unless women argue mental illness such as postnatal depression.
23. Whereas “the pill” in English is understood to mean contraceptive pills, in Zimbabwe, they are specifically called “*mapiritsi e-family planning*” or “*amaphilisi e-family planning*” Shona and Ndebele respectively, that is “family planning pills” to differentiate them from other pills such ARVs.

Chapter 8

Emerging adulthoods: Struggles of growing up in conditions of socio-economic uncertainty

Introduction

This study set out to document, describe and analyse experiences of being young and coming of age in conditions of uncertainty. It uses interpretivist and constructivist approaches to rebut essentialist notions that young people are deficient and problem bearing because of hormonal changes and being young *per se*. The main argument is that intractable challenges of economic decline in the last two decades in Zimbabwe have had a huge impact on how young people transition into adulthoods. Effects of economic instability force young people to strive for adulthoods in ways that adults do not approve of. By using the concept of “emerging adulthoods”, the thesis shows that agreed markers of transition into adulthoods are increasingly scrambled and forcing young people to chart individual paths as a result (Arnett 2000, 2007, Arnett and Taber 1994, Berzin and de Marco 2010, Hartmann and Swartz 2007). Although Zimbabwe has experienced considerable stability since the introduction of multiple currencies (USD and ZAR) in February 2009, the effects of chronic structural challenges visited on the economy in the last two decades linger and many young people’s lives have been impacted deeply. Researchers have noted that chronic instability transforms the worldviews of those who have to survive it (S. Jackson 2010, Vigh 2008). Thus chronic instability “...corrodes the constructions of meanings by which different spheres of our existence are interwoven...” (Vigh 2008:15). These changing meanings have not only unmoored the means by which young people become adults, they have weakened

their bonds with significant others. Given limited opportunities for wage work, many young people are resorting to the informal sector where they survive by their wits. These livelihoods challenge prevailing norms of law and order and social responsibility. Cultural norms lag behind social change; hence expectations that young people pay bridewealth still persist while young people are blamed for failure to comply. In Zimbabwe, like elsewhere, these blame-the-victim approaches allow commentators not to critique the underlying structural causes of change (Maira and Soep 2004, Mizen 2004). Thus evolving young people are buffeted by volatility and are learning to adapt to rapid changes without role models and guidance as adult authority is also challenged by the same circumstances too (Scheld 2007).

Theoretically, this study uses symbolic interactionism to show that young people not only have to contend with multiple and competing perspectives of life, but continuously weigh their options and choose what is most practicable given their circumstances and social contexts (Prus 1996, Mitszal 2001, Callero 2003). Furthermore this theoretical perspective makes it possible for us to appreciate the pressure visited on research respondents to look compliant, to look like they are managing under immense challenges or like they are in control under conditions of unpredictability (Mitszal 2001: 316). This pressure is seen not only in “reflected appraisals” by others (Kaufman and Johnson 2004), but also in how respondents deal with the reflected appraisals. While this theoretical perspective allows us to see youth practices as a pragmatic response to circumstances and to see young people’s experiences as shaped by the socio-economic context, it is precisely the pragmatism of the young which is criticised by adult observers and which is seen as unbecoming and anathema to rationalities of prevailing customs and moral codes.

Youth subjectivities and narratives in conditions of economic uncertainty

Structural constraints in young people’s lives are reflected in individual conduct and narratives, explanations and rationalisations of their circumstances (see Brickell 2001:419, Scheld 2007:236, Waage 2006). Youth narratives show an acute awareness of structural constraints which texture their experiences. It is also clear that young people manage these constraints by trying not to antagonize adults: by attending school even when it holds no hope for meaningful work; by marrying informally in order to conform to neighbours’ expectations or in the hope of formalising the unions in due course, by sending remittances home and so on. Young people talk about their dealing with adults’ interdicts restricting them from doing certain things. These interdicts are encapsulated in rules, regulations, customs, policies and laws about how to deal with young people. Thus being young is

experienced conspicuously as living under rules and regulations at home, school, church and neighbourhood. There are social sanctions attached to deviance from rules. Some of these interdicts such as the age of sexual consent are statutory. Compliance is seen as better by some youth while others get by on pretence arguing that adults would never concede anyway. In this sense, youth take risks – risking delinquency, including arrest.

Youth are citizens in the making, given rights incrementally, as they grow older. The assumption is that age denotes decision-making ability. This is supported by notions of “child protection” according to which this vulnerability is ameliorated through cooperation between parents and the community. The scientific arguments behind some of these restrictions are never talked about in everyday interactions yet increasingly seen as part of social norms. In this sense, an individual below 16 years of age having sex is deviant; if she is a girl her partner faces arrest and a mandatory prison term. Even if a girl risks pregnancy for consenting to sex, she will have a hard time accessing contraceptives. As social norms, these interdicts cannot be discussed without stoking anger of adults who would rather children comply with norms, to protect the idea of children’s innocence.

The research has shown that some young people feel marginalized because of their social circumstances, such as survivors of structural violence, teenage mothers-to-be, or young men in banditry who now live in regret, shame and alienated from kin. These individuals have internalised stigmatising discourses of being blamed, even though some feel let down by more powerful significant others such as relatives. Youth in difficult circumstances remain invisible and at best pitiable. When one considers Mandla’s case, bandits are feared as well as admired for their outlaw status, the money they make and women they attract. However it seems relatives are also afraid of embracing them. Youth so stigmatised are the subject of gossip and presented as epitomising the downside of some forms of being young. While secrecy/confidentiality at one level helps young people cope with their circumstances, it also perpetuates shame.

Emerging adulthoods and the pragmatics of situational living

The economic uncertainty wrought by neoliberal reforms discussed in chapters 1 and 3, forces young people across Sub Saharan Africa to be practical and make do by improvising and being flexible (Waage 2006, Scheld 2007, S. Jackson 2010, Vigh 2008 among others). Young people are propelled by the need to demonstrate maturity, responsibility, and invincibility in the face of adversity and the need to muster resources to be autonomous. Sadly, in Beitbridge and Zimbabwe as whole, most youth survival strategies as discussed in this research are illicit as they entail breaking the law: sex work, goods and people smuggling,

vending in undesignated spaces, ambulant trade, scams, hustling at the border and so on. These activities entail survival on one's wits or "playing games" as respondents stated. In these games peers and other residents could be exploited or abused. Residents, police and other agencies blame young people for many of Beitbridge's woes including petty and violent crime, insecurity, relatively expensive residential rentals and so on. Young people are objects of crackdowns by the police and army with many routinely arrested and fined for miscellaneous offences such as loitering – assumed to be "with intent to commit crime"; not having fixed abodes within the town, vending in undesignated places, not having identity cards, on suspicions of harbouring criminals and therefore being complicit in criminal behaviour and so on. However the selectivity of police operations leads to cynicism because of how they are executed, (usually at the end of the month and on weekends when young people have accumulated money from the week's work) as well as losses through fines and damaged/confiscated goods that targeted persons incur. The cynicism leads to youth lying and cheating to get back on the police leading to a self-fulfilling prophecy about "impossible" or otherwise deficient youths. The situation in Beitbridge creates cynical, streetwise youth who ride roughshod on peers or unwary officials and members of the public. It speaks to the despair of marginalised persons, often not well acknowledged, or planned for by technocrats.

Exploitation is further seen in the ways in which adults quietly cash in on youth despair in many services. Adults argue that they are doing legitimate business whether keeping booking houses which in their argument is merely renting out rooms to needy lodgers, running nightclubs which require the presence of female youth to attract male patrons with money or selling food in the informal sector, fly-by-night healing shrines which perpetually manipulate and exaggerate attributions of misfortune and ill-health to spirit possession and witchcraft. In addition the-ask-no-questions culture makes it difficult to challenge those who capitalise from young people's supposedly illicit activities. In other words, structural relations in Beitbridge are such that the exclusion of youth renders them unable to get by, unless in patron-client relations with adult residents; they are exploited in this way, and also take the blame for unruly survival strategies and the insecurity they entail. These observations are generalizable for other parts of Zimbabwe as well where young people's visibility on the streets has increased. Thus respondents' experiences of being young depend on social circumstances beyond their own making.

The strictures encountered by young people go beyond adults cashing in on their predicaments. They extend to laws and policies which define youth in a particular way, assuming certain capabilities to which youth have to conform in order not to put their

families and households in trouble with the law and to stigmatise them as bad. Thus young people walk a tight rope of balancing their own needs, aspirations and circumstances and social norms, policies and laws. In schools for instance, uniforms are used as a tool for attenuating individualism and self-expression including sexual identity and awareness. The design of uniforms has not changed since their introduction in Zimbabwe in the colonial era. Uniforms are supposed to protect school going youths not only because they mark them as students, assumed underage and out of bounds as objects of sexual desire, but also because they are designed in such a way as to be unflattering. Churches also teach about decent dressing in a bid not to sexualise young people's bodies. Youth go along in a bid to maintain the status quo and not to be labelled as deviant. The latter is very costly as it is seen as predicting the marriageability of female youth, as well as a predictor of academic achievement. Deviating from prescribed clothing leads to punishment.

For youth, clothes, cellphones, school meals, toiletries and cosmetics communicate wellness and success in one's economic activities, thus also pointing to one's aspirations as someone going places. If the commodities in question are particularly well appraised, they mark fashion conscious individuals as of higher status. Clothes, electronic gadgets and deportment also communicate the desirability of individual youth as prospective partners who are in good health or successful at what they are doing. However the need to portray wellness/success/upward mobility through mustering commodities also pushes some young people into transactional sex and criminal activities in order to meet escalating personal demands and those of partners and peers (see V.K. Nguyen 2005, Longfield 2004 among others). Success in these strategies foments notoriety of their practitioners and could lead to trouble at school. Youth fashion and mobility is the first line of concerns about sexualisation and impropriety. Adults are alarmed at clothes that youth prefer, especially female youth. These clothes are seen as not amenable to respectability (Ogden 1996, Campbell 1998). Furthermore lack of respectability is seen in female youths' increased mobility to what adults see as spaces dominated by men such as beer-drinking and recreational spaces. The presence of women in such spaces has historically been seen as socially disruptive and prone to immorality (West 1997). Thus once in these spaces young women interact with older men, shrinking social distance between the ages and genders through intimate relations.

This thesis has further shown that paid sex is paradoxical for both male and female youth. The two genders explain their participation in paid casual sex differently. For male youth, episodic paid sex is convenient, there is no commitment beyond the transaction, there are small fees involved and it satisfies sexual desire while one is transient or until one

has enough saved to settle down. For female youth, episodic paid and transactional sex is for survival, economic independence, recompense for degeneration and devaluation of their bodies and it helps them meet family obligations to send remittances. Both genders experience losses in the form of bad reputations for young women and a perpetual sense of inadequacy for young men out-competed by fellow males with more resources and having to live with the knowledge that their partners (might) cheat on them when approached by a better resourced man. Thus both genders feel short-changed, and hence exploited, by paid casual sex and both seem unable to abandon it. Clearly this confirms the idea that situational pragmatics are inherently exploitative (Waage 2006).

Given the disapproval associated with paid casual sex, some youths see informal marriages as a halfway house to decent relations and formal marriage. These unions allow them to live by prevailing norms of a patriarchal household but do not escape stigmatisation especially because of failure to respect core aspects of paying homage to gerontocratic tenets of marriage such as those entailed in bridewealth negotiations and payments. Failure of these relationships is seen as proof that without elders none of them last, instead of pointing at structural limitations as explained by Giddens' (1992) notion of "changing intimacy" and Bauman's (2003) "liquid love" which point to the fragility of human relations in general and love and marriage in particular. Cultural norms no longer hold sway because of changes undermining institutions which support them. Failure of any union stigmatises women. However the failure of informal marriages condemns female youth to a life of marginalization and alienation by their natal families and communities. Paradoxically, the search for economic security, as epitomised by the desire to get married well by marrying a man of means, also forces some female youth to keep trying to meet that ideal partner including through sex work. Sadly many female youth who do not live with their families are in a zero-sum game by virtue of being seen as having bucked patriarchal and gerontocratic controls in their families and likely to do so in their future husbands' families. They are seen as unmarriageable especially if they have children from previous relationships. The name calling that female youth endure also shows that women seeking economic security are distrusted for their mobility and understanding of economic independence which is seen as antithetical to naïveté and innocence both requisite traits in marriageable women (Shefer and Foster 2001).

Individual or social responsibility: are young people to blame for their circumstances?

The foregoing shows that adults are ordinarily exonerated while youth are vilified for their circumstances. Individual responsibility has come to typify neoliberal development, disembedding people's actions from interconnections with others and from incapacitated institutions, thus exonerating the latter (Kelly 2001, Bauman 2003, Vigh 2008). By using the "African ailments" thesis, young people rebut any notion that they are individually responsible for their circumstances. Attributions of misfortune and illness to "African ailments", including possession by benevolent and/or malevolent spirits and witchcraft by competitors point to an awareness of embeddedness in social relations, albeit relations whose tenor is not favourable to the young. Furthermore this thesis allows youth to explain away their circumstances, to resist labelling as irresponsible given widespread awareness campaigns which talk about individual responsibility in infection with STIs and HIV, poverty and unemployment. The African ailments thesis allows individuals to seek fetishes to protect themselves, to embolden themselves against adversity and hopefully perform better in their pursuits. It reflects the pervasive vulnerability as well as broken ties and relations with others, consequent suspicion that the latter are the cause of ill-health and misfortune. It shows the deep-seated stigma of infection with STIs and HIV, so that rather than face these issues head-on many youth hide behind the "African ailments". These narratives show young people pointing a finger back at adults whose greed; neglect, malice and envy are implicated.

The African ailments thesis is a stubborn yet accessible and usable framework for any sense of unwellness and despair – unlike referring to chance or mathematical probability as biomedical and other explanations do – to explain risk, susceptibility to infection and so on. It is a code for the "inexplicable" and complex; but also speaks to alienation in kinship and other relations. Even though youth innocence is supposedly antithetical to the possession of knowledges related to African medicines and magical powers, (as stated for instance by Burke 2000), the proliferation of faith and traditional healers who promise cures and to solve all manner of problems while profiting from the gullibility and despair of youth promotes awareness and knowledge about magic and herbal medicines. Youth too desire this supernatural empowerment to fight ubiquitous uncertainty. The African ailments thesis allows individuals to play down their own agency vis-à-vis unknown forces, thus blame others in proximal relations as responsible for misfortunes. Consequently this thesis foregrounds social relations and social support as important not just for youth but for all who subscribe to it. It also points to limited understanding of biomedical approaches in

explaining illness and treatments and/or limited access to health care not least because of unavailability of services and also because of attitudes of health care professionals towards young people.

Likewise, respondents attributed infection with HIV to structural and societal sources of vulnerability to infection as well as the recklessness of others, but never to their own actions. Most respondents portrayed themselves as responsible and careful, thus discursively blaming others for the danger they were likely to encounter. In this vein, prevention of HIV is dealt with by way of popular gendered risk calculi. Male youth see female peers who live alone as surviving on paid sex even when not self-identified as sex workers, and therefore “risky”. Female youth on the other hand see cash inducements not to use condoms as a source of vulnerability and trickery by men with money. These risk calculi speak to prevailing notions of morality where propriety is equated to safe sex and therefore not risky. Both genders claimed to be able to follow through on their risk calculi by avoiding partners defined as high risk. In general, HIV stigma still persists although awareness of treatment is also considerable. Some research participants argue that growing access to treatment allows infected persons to conceal HIV infections. Hitherto, people could tell (or speculate) who is infected from skin breakouts, severe weight loss, thinning hair and so on, now no longer possible. Thus African ailments thesis, like the narrative of HIV and AIDS, allow denial of personal agency, renders invisible the intractable structural dislocation and point to critiques of the cumulative effects of incapacitated institutions.

What is the importance of these narratives and practices they imply?

There is no denying that chronic uncertainty has changed young people’s worldviews of themselves, of significant others’ roles in their lives and how they grow up. This change is due to structural dislocation in Zimbabwe and beyond, leading to changes in ways of life. Young people’s struggles are paradoxical; they create new ways of life but are also ambiguous in the impacts on individual social actors. As researchers cited in this study also note, the despair of young social actors is conspicuous (Makhulu et al 2010, Vigh 2008), while solutions to the despair are fleeting.

Youth narratives and the practices they imply show that young people are actively producing gender and generational norms and identities and living with some of their contradictions. They do not produce these identities by radically challenging patriarchy and gerontocracy but work within their confines, reproducing them. For instance, while sexual naiveté is idealised for women in heterosexual relationships, it leaves many female youth unable to use contraceptives especially when in relationships assumed to be based

on commitment, such as informal marriages. When the relationships come undone usually following a pregnancy, the young women are left with children they cannot provide for economically. Although pregnancy is used as a strategy to expedite marriage or to show long-term commitment on the part of women, and an affirmation of virility for men, it works for some youth who live with their families; not for youth migrants who are away from their families such as respondents of this study. Many female youth are left in a downward spiral such as single parenting with no resources, ostracised by their families for having children with no fathers and seen as unfavourable for marriage by future partners. The increase in single parenting is part of an outcry about errant youth. Clearly, it is important for activists/advocates and policy makers to critically engage with these contradictions and provide appropriate services. Young people need comprehensive sexual and reproductive health services. The presence of and preference for bacossi clinics whose staff are trained to be more sensitive to marginalised groups helps address this gap in appropriate services. Without these services, young people have to deal with negative effects of unplanned pregnancy, STIs and HIV and AIDS. STIs are still seen, by adults and young people alike, as diseases of impropriety such as sex work, intergenerational sex and others.

Given the intractable structural challenges, youth creativity in survival has focused attention on new attitudes and uses of the body including through sex. Sexuality is an area vested with patriarchal and gerontocratic interests and power thus leading young people into arguments with adults who prefer sexual practices the outcomes of which they can control, such as marriage. The danger of HIV and AIDS has sharpened the concerns of adults; its prevention messages have retooled gerontocratic and patriarchal controls. The apparent loss of control impacts on young people more than the danger of HIV and AIDS *per se*, as seen in abstinence-only SBSE and the controversy over teenage access to contraceptives.

Related to the above point is the disavowal of the neoliberal concept of individual responsibility for young people's circumstances including dropping out of school, poverty, unemployment, bad/violent relationships, low wages and so on. Female youth are subjected to harassment, verbal and physical abuse by peers and clients, marginalisation by relatives displeased by reproductive outcomes. Many manage this through silence and/or traditional medicine believing it to be bad luck, possession by malevolent spirits or a sign of the anger of neglected benevolent spirits. This mystifies gender and age relations making it impossible to make amends and use prevailing global campaigns on sexual and reproductive health for instance. This study has shown that the African ailments thesis points to young people's need to reset social relations with kin and shed some of their personal responsibilities.

In sum, this research has shown young people and their struggles and actions as socially produced by the social, economic, (geo) political and cultural context of local-global dynamics, and not due to biological factors such as innate deficiency because of age or hormones. The latter seems to be a well-trodden assumption in Zimbabwe as elsewhere in Sub Saharan Africa. As other researchers have argued, youth is socially created, in crises of reproduction such as Zimbabwe's challenges in the last two decades. The social and economic crisis, in this country as in many others, accentuated the breakdown of family and relations of dependence unmooring many young people to fend for themselves and relatives by unspecified means. It is their independence and ability to live without adult support which challenges dominant age and gender relations.

In Zimbabwe there is a paucity of research on young people's lives outside of HIV and AIDS epidemiology. There is a need for more research, especially longitudinal studies on young single mothers, on informal sector workers, sex workers, smugglers and other marginalised groups of youth to see how they embrace adulthood, found independent households and raise families. Such studies would better inform policymaking and possibly ease fears and generate more understanding among adults about "the future", when the young engage in a variety of illicit, semi-licit and informal activities, in order to secure their (and their family's) livelihoods in the context of intractable challenges of neoliberal globalisation.

Appendix I

Brief description youth respondents mentioned by name

Name	Sex	Age	Personal and Family Circumstances
Biggerz	Male	26	Father late, mother alive. Father worked, had 2 houses in 2 towns. Biggerz is a cellphone recharge card vendor also trades currency. Has some O Level subjects
Jane	Female	20	Both parents deceased, fostered by married sister until brother-in-law could not cope hence sending her off to South Africa to look for work in order to help with expenses. Journey ended in Beitbridge after being robbed of her fares. She is a fruit vendor. She was a domestic worker before that.
Mandla	Male	27	Both parents late. Had 2 wives, one died and the other deserted. Self-confessed goods and people smuggler. No O Levels.
Marita	Female	25	Father late, he had 2 wives. Mother was dispossessed of her share of inheritance by first wife and her children. She remarried. Marita and sibling endured harsh regimen of stepfather. Marita herself has 2 children out of wedlock. She is drifting between places and lifestyles; in and out of sex work. Has some O level subjects. Her children live with her mother in another town.
Martin	Male	18	Both parents deceased, after divorce, mother had remarried. Part-time vendor wants to be a commercial truck driver. No O Levels.
Melusi	Male	32	Both parents deceased, after divorce/separation. In dispute with half siblings over inheritance of late father's house. He is a vendor, runs a shebeen and also disc jockeys at functions. No O Levels
Nyarai	Female	early 20s	She works at in retail outlet but augments her wages with clandestine paid sex. She has had recurring STIs. She is single, has no children. She has some O levels. Her parents are in rural areas in neighbouring districts.

Name	Sex	Age	Personal and Family Circumstances
Nyasha	Female	21	Single mother to a sickly baby. Father of the baby deserted when she fell pregnant after cohabitation for some months. Makes ends meet through paid sex with strangers. Used to be a domestic worker but the wages were too low. Her parents are nearby rural areas but she is scared to go there with the baby without a father.
Rudo	Female	23	Mother late, father remarried; she has 3 children with two men. No O Levels. She is a vendor
Rita	Female	18	Both parents alive, ran away from home. No O Levels. Gets by on sex work.
Sam	Male	22	Self-employed as a cart pusher. Orphaned in his teens. No O levels.
Simba	Male	21	Ambulant vendor, sells boiled eggs. He buys the eggs in bulk (uncooked) from Musina. His parents are small-scale farmers in rural areas.
Tambudzani	Female	15	Orphaned and living with grandparents. Employed as a shopkeeper. No O levels. Stopped school in primary school.
Tatenda	Female	26	She is a mother of 3 children by 2 men. She does not know the identity of the father of her youngest child. She makes ends meet on sex work. She was chased away from home for having children out of wedlock.
Taurai	Male	Early 20s	A self-confessed people and goods smuggler but also robs undocumented travellers. He has sex with female undocumented travellers who refuse to or cannot pay his fees 50 Euro per person. It is not clear if the sex is consensual. He spends most of his time in the forest but his father lives in the town. People call him names “thug”, “rapist”, “killer”. His mother is in rural areas. He does not have O levels.
Tina	Female	16	Mother dead, father unknown. Gave birth during fieldwork, no known income generating activity. No known relatives, no siblings. No O levels. She is forced to stay at home by her partner.
Tsitsi	Female	19	Pregnant, lives with partner notorious for deserting his live-in lovers. No bridewealth paid yet. He is a self-styled clearing agent. Her parents are alive and live in rural areas of a distant northern district. They expect remittances or decent marriage (a son-in-law who pays bridewealth and lends support). She has primary level education.

All names are pseudonyms

Appendix II

Schedule of fines for miscellaneous offences

Gambling	10USD
Rioting	5USD
Indecent conduct	5USD
Possession of prohibited weapons incl. knives	20USD
Threatening language	10USD
Obstructing passages, pavements sidewalks	10USD
Drunk and violent behaviour in licensed venues	10USD
Failure to display a liquor license	15USD
Selling liquor to drunk persons	5USD
Selling liquor without a license	20USD
Selling liquor after hours	20USD
Illegal food vending	5 USD
Illegal fishing (poaching)	5USD
Motor vehicle offences*	10-20 USD

*(Such as not having safety devices, not displaying license plates and highway code violations)

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Curriculum Vitae

Education

- a) Doctorate in Development Studies specializing in youth studies, (from Nov 2007-2014)
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Sociology of the Family

Introduction to Social Anthropology

Anthropology of Childhood

Manhood and Masculinity

Special Issues in Development

Publications

a) Chapters in books

Mate, R-2014- “Encountering *rokesheni* masculinities: music and lyrics in informal urban transport vehicles in Harare” in Gandy, Matthew and B J Nielsen (eds) *Acoustic city* Jovis: Germany pp 115-123.

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