

LOVE AND DESIRE: CONCEPTS, NARRATIVES AND PRACTICES  
OF SEX AMONGST YOUTHS IN MAPUTO CITY

By

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## Abstract

This study analyses the perceptions and practices of sexuality among young people in post-colonial and post socialist Maputo city. Using a combination of various methods, it compares sexuality in two different generations and deeply describes two diverse kinds of relationships: occasional and steady relationships. Occasional relationships tend to show a new pattern of condom use that corroborates with the discourse advocated in prevention HIV/AIDS campaigns. The study shows that young women are redefining the gender roles of the wider society through their sexual practices and identities. *Namoro* (steady) relationships where sex takes the form of unprotected sex are reciprocated by the exchange of the gift of love and the proposition of commitment on the part of the young men. Here, there are major possibilities for HIV/AIDS infection. In both kinds of relationships, sex, described by informants in terms of a model of heterosexual penetration, is perceived as a factor that permits transition from childhood to adulthood, bypassing parental and other senior kins peoples' control.

## **Declaration**

This work has not been previously submitted in whole, or in part, for the award of any degree. It is my own work. Each significant contribution to, and quotation in, this dissertation from the works of other people has been attributed and has been cited and referenced.

Signed by candidate

Date: 2004 - 09 - 17

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## Acronyms

AIDS -	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
FRELIMO -	Mozambican Liberation Front
HIV -	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
KAPB -	Knowledge, Attitudes, Perceptions and Behaviours
MZM -	Metical (Mozambican currency): 1MZM = 0.0000458 USD ( on <a href="http://www.xe.com">www.xe.com</a> 16-09-2004)
PSI -	Population Service International
STI -	Sexually Transmitted Infections

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## Chapter One

### Introduction

It is school holiday time and Maputo wakes up to a Friday morning. Maputo is the capital city of Mozambique and the extreme south of the country, near its borders with South Africa and Swaziland. The city is characterised by wide avenues lined with red acacia and lilac jacaranda flowering trees. It has a mixture of old colonial Portuguese buildings and modern constructions. With its almost two million inhabitants (INE 1999), the city is growing fast. The majority of the population in the city are young.

As it is holidays young people are relaxing on the balcony of their flats or just outside their buildings, chatting with friends. Because it is summer young women dress in very light clothes like shorts and dresses. They also dress sexy bell-bottom jeans with colourful small shirts. Young men wear T-shirts and shorts, or simply no T-shirts. But they also dress in large shirts and baggy trousers that resemble those worn by the North American rappers. One frequently sees groups of young men sitting together chatting and laughing loudly. Sometimes they are even drinking beer and have music playing from a car. Young women also group amongst themselves to chat while plaiting the hair of a friend or while having some cool drinks.

Walking in Maputo during the afternoon, one also notices young couples holding hands. *Miradouro* is one of their favourite places. It is has a beautiful view of the sea and the palm trees and has benches where they sit and talk, kiss, hug, exchange caresses, in sum, enjoy *namorar*. In *Miradouro* there are young sellers walking with boxes full of chocolates, and other sweet delicacies to sell. There one can also see adult couples.

As Friday night approaches, young couples visit the most affordable restaurants of the city and the movie theatres. Friday is considered to be "*dia dos homens*" (men's day) in the sense that men are free to enjoy themselves drinking, going out with friends. Some young women meet with their female friends.

However, during a night out in a Friday night, I observed young couples together. At the disco they tend to be together all the time and (mostly women) are likely to dance in a very sensual way and very close to their partners. Some female respondents say this is to demonstrate that their partner is not single.



In this environment it is common to see young women consuming alcohol. Some young men encourage this, in the belief that drunken women easily engage in sex. The majority of young men although having *namoradas* approach women and try their luck to have “*a cena*” (exchange kisses, caresses and/or sex) with her. Thus, they act as if they were single.

It is crucial to understand the (hetero)sexual<sup>1</sup> subjectivities of young people in the context of Mozambique, where the HIV/AIDS pandemic is rapidly spreading and affecting mostly the category of youth (UNDP 2002; INE 2000). At present, little is known about youth sexuality in the country. Insights will be valuable for informing the design of awareness strategies and preventive programmes against STIs and HIV/AIDS. If these programmes are to be relevant and engaging, they must understand how young people construct the meaning of their sexual selves. In this study, I trace young peoples’ meanings, perceptions and practices in relation to sex and sexuality and I argue that the agency-structure dichotomy is not a choice between one or the other but a dialectic process in which individual and societal factors are in constant communication.

The terrain for this investigation is the coastal city of Maputo, Mozambique. Here, youths’ expression of sexuality is mediated by notions of modernity, globalisation and the pressure of an expanding HIV/AIDS epidemic, as well as by local constructions of personhood and well-being. The question guiding this study is, how is sexuality perceived and practiced by young people?

Over the years, sexuality, in the social sciences and particular in the anthropological framework, has been read in a variety of ways. Early studies, during the “sexological” period (Gagnon and Parker 1995) had an essentialist reading of sexuality: it was regarded as a natural phenomenon outside the boundaries of the society and the culture. This perspective, which was influenced both by Christianity and medicine, viewed sex as a basic drive that needed to be thwarted through self-control and environmental purity, and that its correct manifestations resulted in sex between men

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<sup>1</sup> The informants of this study self-identified themselves as heterosexuals. ‘Hetero’ is in parentheses in an attempt to decentre the notion of (hetero)sexual experience as the norm.

and women in marriage for the purpose of reproduction (Gagnon and Parker 1995: 4). This approach created the view that “sexuality is the most natural thing about us, [that] our drives [are] fixed and inherited, our identities dictated by the nature of those drives, and a history of sexuality therefore no more than an account of reactions to those basic biological givens” (Weeks 1995: 33). This view is still very much present in young people’s everyday lives and sexual practices. Many studies show that notions of sexuality as “natural” and the sexual drive as uncontrollable persist (Moore and Rosenthal 1993; Holland and Thomson 1998; Holland 1998; Mapolisa 2001; Manuel 2002).

However, feminist scholarship and activist’s rethinking of gender, as well as lesbian and gay studies, and the theoretical challenges of Michel Foucault have had a revolutionary impact on notions of what is natural (Caplan 1993; Gagnon and Parker 1995; Weeks 1995; Vance 1999). Due to the influence of these studies, social constructionist models emerged. These models reject transhistorical and transcultural definitions of sexuality and discuss the phenomenon as a constructed one (Vance 1999: 43). In this sense sexuality is not taken as a universal given but as an aspect that results from and is produced through the conceptions and lives of each particular group.

Thus, in this study I will explore youth sexuality through a constructionist approach, problematising sexuality as an aspect mediated by historical and cultural factors. Margaret Mead’s sexual study (1973) is crucial point of departure to this work as her study demonstrates the significance of social and cultural factors in the development of youth’s sexual identities. Her approach is echoed in social constructionist perspectives.

Social constructionism constitutes an advantage, as it opens up a space for the acknowledgment of local and particular meanings of sexual acts that may be performed in different contexts. This perspective is relatively new and erases the negative impact of the times when western perceptions of sex were extrapolated to other groups in an ethnocentric manner by social scientists working in the area of sexuality. Such approaches tended to represent non-western peoples’ sexuality as promiscuous.

Such misrepresentations of sexuality of other groups could be explained by the fact that, until recently, sexuality has in general remained an unexamined construct and that there has been a lack of anthropological theoretical foundations with regard to the topic (Vance 1999: 44). Studies of sexuality in anthropology have been guided by 'cultural influence models' that emphasize the role of culture and learning in shaping sexual behaviour and attitudes, thus rejecting obvious forms of essentialism and universalizing theories (Vance 1999: 44). Although culture is thought to shape sexual expression and customs, the bedrock of sexuality is assumed to be universal and biologically determined (ibid), and anthropologists working within this framework accept without question the existence of universal categories, such as heterosexual and homosexual, male and female, sexuality and sex drive (Vance 1999: 44). The contradiction expressed in this perspective makes this framework problematic, because it opens up a space for biological essences that constitute an obstacle to readings of sexuality as a socio-cultural construct.

Moreover, the acceptance of universal categories blinds anthropologists to the particulars of the societies being studied. For example, both Herdt (1982), studying male initiation rites in Sambia, and Godelier (2003), analyzing the meanings of sexual intercourse for the Baruya in New Guinea, arrive at the conclusion that boys practicing fellatio on older men (Herdt 1983) or young men having intercourse with one another before marriage (Godelier 2003) has nothing to do with the emotional and intimate homosexual relationship found in the Western world, but rather with perceptions about the formation of maleness. Thus, although the practices are similar, the meanings are local, making it difficult to universalize the category of homosexual. The examples of the *fafafines* – men who perform female roles – of the Samoa islands, or gender blending (King 1996), disrupt any possible universalizing category of what constitutes a male.

Another theoretical framework prominent in the anthropological study of sexuality is the 'social construction model'. This perspective assumes that "it is deeply problematic to think of sexuality as a purely natural phenomenon outside the boundaries of society and culture" (Weeks 1995: 33). Consequently, it rejects transhistorical and transcultural definitions of sexuality and suggests that sexuality is

act does not carry a universal meaning; instead, cultures provide widely different categories, schema and labels for framing sexual and affective experiences (...) that influence individual subjectivity and behaviour as well as give meaning to collective sexual experiences" (Vance 1999: 43).

As mentioned earlier, this approach seems to be more applicable to my particular study, as it allows the context to speak for itself without imposing any universal categories. Moreover, I also argue that the same sexual practice with a different category of partner is given a completely different meaning by the individuals involved. Informants have differentiated "*sexo verdadeiro*" (real sex) from "sex". "Real sex" is intercourse practiced with the steady and loved partner, while "sex" refers to intercourse with an occasional partner. In the context of the HIV/AIDS pandemic, though, there is an essential difference between these two categories: the use of condoms. While in "real sex" condoms are disliked, in occasional "sex" they are the preferred method of protection (Karlyn 2003).

My study distances from constructions of Africans and African sexualities that depict them as something exotic. As Arnfred points out, African sexuality is often constructed as different from European/Western and portrayed as deviant (Arnfred 2004: 7). Thus, the analyses of sexuality here refuse pre-conceived ideas of Africans as promiscuous or oppressors of women. This study engages in critical perspective that embarks in the re-construction and rethinking of African sexualities (Arnfred 2004) taking into consideration the local socio-cultural dynamics.

More recent studies of sexuality in Mozambique tend to be informed by feminist methodology and to take women as the primary analytical focus (Santos and Arthur 1994; Osório 1998; Loforte 2000). These studies emphasise men's power in sexual and reproductive relations, arguing that as a result of patriarchal relations women have difficulties in controlling their own sexuality, and because polygamy is permitted, may run a higher risk of contracting HIV. For example, Santos and Arthur (1994) show how women and children have a higher risk of being infected with STDs and HIV/AIDS because of the patriarchal prominent values that place women in an inferior position in society (Santos and Arthur 1994). This framework also only caters for women's sexuality within the context of marriage and with the particular aim of

for women's sexuality within the context of marriage and with the particular aim of reproduction. Consequently, women find it difficult to take control of their own sexuality and sexual needs without being stigmatised. In addition, their risk of infection may increase, because men are allowed more than one wife (ibid) as well as access to one-night stands and prostitutes. Osório (1998) analyses how a double standard of socialisation – one for boys and another for girls – transmitted both by the family and the school, again puts women in an inferior position and denies them the possibilities to decide on socio-sexual issues that are relevant to them. My study confirms the presence of a double standard and the powerful self perceptions that men have, but, at the same time, challenges this discourse by showing young women not performing and challenging the patriarchal rules by accepting and revealing their status as sexual beings and engaging in multiple sexual relationships.

Other studies of sexuality in the country are based on Knowledge Attitudes Practices and Behaviour (KAPB) approaches which are effective for describing and recognising behaviour (Tillotson and Maharaj 2001). In Mozambique, those studies focus on the impact of HIV/AIDS on the country and social behaviour, while others focus on biomedical research, statistics and condom distribution. Some of these studies describe youth sexual practices in relation to condom use (Mussá 2000), the role of trust in sexual decision-making among the youth (Bila, Inhamussua and Bergantz 2001; Mussá and Inhamussua 2002), and social behaviour and HIV/AIDS (Karlyn and Mussá 2000; Mussá, Changane and Macave 2003). However, as KAPB reports, these studies lack the in-depth and holistic research that is vital for understanding the expressions of sexuality amongst young people. Such studies, for instance, fail to provide an appropriate examination of the behaviour in the context in which it occurs or to explain critical questions such as why risk behaviour persists (Tillotson and Maharaj 2001: 86) because they tend to picture the present without reference to the past.

Therefore, while trying to distance myself from the KAPB analysis done in Mozambique, as well as trying to fill the gap evinced by lack of socio-cultural analyses, I decided to explore the youth's meanings of sexuality using young peoples' understanding of sexuality and sexual practices. This approach has the advantage of giving detailed information that comes directly from those being studied. In addition,

“interactions among people through the meanings people share on the elements compounding their collective experience” (Blumer 1969). Symbolic interactionism is based on the idea that humans act toward things in accordance with the meanings, which these things have for them. Such meanings are either taken for granted and thus pushed aside as unimportant, or they are regarded as a merely neutral link between the factors responsible for human behaviour and this behaviour as the product of such factors (Blumer 1996: 2). By unpacking and highlighting the social, cultural and sexual meanings of young people in Maputo city, it will allow me to answer the basic question guiding this research, viz how sexuality is perceived and practiced by young people in Maputo city?

In this study, my point of departure is that sexuality and gender are two analytically distinct phenomena, which require separate explanatory frames even though they are interrelated in specific historical circumstances (Rubin in Vance 1999: 41). Thus, contrary to previous Mozambican studies that have gender - particularly women - as the primary analytical category, in this case that category is sexuality. Various writers have suggested that we are only likely to find a view of sexuality as a ‘thing in itself’ when there is a severance of sex from reproduction or when referring to one’s sexual orientation (Caplan 1993: 2). Following Caplan’s perspective, sexuality, in this study, is analysed as a category, though, because it appears here in the form of “plastic sexuality”<sup>2</sup> (Giddens 1992) and its meanings are perceived under different sexual orientations. It is noteworthy that even within so-called “plastic sexuality” amongst the youth in Maputo one finds gender dynamics that most of the times express the traditional patriarchal superiority of men over women (Santos and Arthur 1994; Osório 1998). However, it only represents the historical and cultural connection between the two categories and is not an imperative to study both categories as the same analytical category, or even to make gender the primary category of analysis here. Sexuality is therefore perceived in this study as the sexual act as well as the verbalized and not verbalized rules that guide intimate relationships.

This study is a contribution to the “insider” perspective in anthropology. As such, it focuses on local categories and classifications, bringing the “experience-near”

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<sup>2</sup> This refers to sexual expression with no intention of reproduction.

This study is a contribution to the “insider” perspective in anthropology. As such, it focuses on local categories and classifications, bringing the “experience-near” concepts that the members of specific cultures use to understand and interpret their own sexual realities (Geertz 1983 and Parker 1991, 1994 in Gagnon and Parker 1995: 12). The experience-near perspective is significant because today, in the context of HIV/AIDS pandemic, universalistic approaches do not have valuable application as they ignore the particular characteristics of specific contexts that make such milieu unique. As a consequence, the unique milieu need their own specific interventions that might not be extrapolated to different contexts and can only be achieved by applying the experience –near perspective of research.

### **The sample**

I worked intensively with fourteen young black urban dwellers aged between 17 and 22 years old. Eight were women and six were men. The majority of the participants are students in the final year of secondary school in a public school in the centre of Maputo city. Two of the informants have already finished their secondary studies but did not have enough marks to pass the admission exams to the public university in Maputo. They cannot afford to go to a private institution, as the costs are out of the reach of an average lower middle class citizen.

Portuguese is the first language for all of them. It is spoken very informally with the particular slang of young people of Maputo. Their language is very influenced by a set of three others languages: Brazilian Portuguese, English and the local languages from the South of the country: *Ronga* and *Changana*. The influence of the Brazilian Portuguese comes from Brazilian soap operas that are screened both on public and private television channels. Also, the widespread presence of the Brazilian church (originally *Igreja Universal do Reino de Deus* - Universal Church of God) contributes to the acquisition of different Brazilian terms and accents. One of my informants, Dalila, is a devoted follower of the church. The influence of English comes from the presence of a growing number of English-speaking tourists, as well as the country’s close relation to its neighbouring English-speaking countries (South Africa and Swaziland) and the influence of American video-clips of Hip-Hop, R & B and Rap music played on the radio and television, and at discos and parties. Finally, the local

These young people are part of the post-independence generation of the country, and belong to mixed social classes<sup>3</sup>. Although the majority, twelve of them, can be said to belong to a lower middle class, there are two of them who, although living in the city buildings, belong to a lower class. For the majority (ten) of those who belong to a lower middle class, both parents are still alive, and even if they are not living together, both work, mostly in the public sector, and have a regular income. The majority of these parents have a technical or an academic degree, which means that their regular salaries are sufficient for life in Maputo. Nonetheless, most of them simultaneously operate a “*negócio*” (business), such as making birthday and wedding cakes at home for sale, selling clothes and accessories brought from South Africa, or running a *barraca*<sup>4</sup>, where one sells cooked food and beverages.

Two of the informants – Dalila (aged nineteen) and Célio (aged twenty) – live in poorer conditions than the others and consequently have to work harder than the rest of the group. Both of them have also lost their fathers. Dalila and her other two brothers and a sister are supported by their mother who does not have a regular job but runs a *barraca*. The income from the *barraca* is very irregular, though, and her mother uses it to cover all the house and food expenses. Consequently, Dalila sells clothes and bakes cookies to sell at her school and relies on her steady partner who has a regular job to cover her own expenses. Célio lives with his mother, a brother, a sister and the one-year-old son of his sister. Célio’s mother has only completed her secondary studies and has a regular job that pays a very low salary. Thus, Célio offers “*explicações*” (after school lessons clarifications) at his house, of Chemistry and Mathematics, to students from the 8<sup>th</sup> to the 10<sup>th</sup> grade. He charges for these lessons, and uses this money to cover his personal expenses.

The following table summarises the demographic data concerning all the informants of this study:

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<sup>3</sup> Social class here is defined in relation to income earned by the family.

<sup>4</sup> *Barracas* are small outside kiosks around the city that serve both alcoholic and non-alcoholic drinks and also cook food that clients eat while having their drinks. These kiosks are often very colourful – painted with advertisements of Coca-Cola or beers. They are very popular because they serve hamburgers and *cachorros* (hot-dogs) and, mainly in the evening, the *barracas* play loud music that invites their clients to dance.



Table 1: The demographic data concerning all informants

Name	Age	Sex	Education Standard completed	Current sexual relationship	Household size	Average income <sup>5</sup>
Carla	18	F	11 Grade	<i>Namoro</i>	5	15-20 millions MZM
Dalila	19	F	11 Grade	<i>Namoro</i>	4	5-10 millions MZM
Deny	21	F	11 Grade	<i>Pito</i>	6	15-20 millions MZM
Iva	17	F	11 Grade	<i>Namoro</i>	5	15-20 millions MZM
Liliana	18	F	11 Grade	<i>Namoro</i>	4	15-20 millions MZM
Lucha	20	F	11 Grade	<i>Namoro + saca-cena<sup>6</sup></i>	4	15-20 millions MZM
Mara	18	F	11 Grade	<i>Namoro</i>	2	15-20 millions MZM
Tania	17	F	11 Grade	<i>Namoro</i>	4	15-20 millions MZM
Célio	21	M	10 Grade	<i>Pita</i>	5	5-10 millions MZM
Gildo	22	M	12 Grade	<i>Pita</i>	6	15-20 millions MZM
Mário	18	M	10 Grade	<i>Namoro</i>	5	15-20 millions MZM
Mitó	21	M	12 Grade	<i>Namoro</i>	5	15-20 millions MZM
Pedro	18	M	11 Grade	<i>Namoro</i>	4	15-20 millions MZM
Sérgio	19	M	11 Grade	<i>Namoro</i>	5	15-20 millions MZM

The participants live in different residential areas in the middle of Maputo city in households that are usually nuclear families, but with regular visits from relatives. For recreation, they go to discos and parties, to the beach, the cinema or the theatre. They listen to American, Brazilian, Angolan, South African and Mozambican commercial music and dance music. They follow the fashions and like to be fit and in “shape”.

The young people I worked with have a regular daily routine. Those who are studying go to school in the mornings and then return home to have lunch. During the afternoons, they spend some time studying alone or in groups, in physical education (two afternoons per week), and they spend time with their friends and boy/girlfriends. The evenings are spent at home watching TV, reading or chatting with friends. On the weekends, they usually go to friends’ lunches, evening parties, the theatre, the cinema

<sup>5</sup> The amounts in Meticaís (MZM) correspond to the following amounts in US dollars:  
 5-10 millions MZM = USD 229 - 458  
 15-20 millions MZM = USD 686 – 916 (source: [www.xe.com](http://www.xe.com) 16-07-2004)

<sup>6</sup> Lucha’s *namorado* is studying abroad, meanwhile she has occasional *saca-cenas* encounters in parties or when she goes out to discos.

(two afternoons per week), and they spend time with their friends and boy/girlfriends. The evenings are spent at home watching TV, reading or chatting with friends. On the weekends, they usually go to friends' lunches, evening parties, the theatre, the cinema and discos. They go out with their girl/boyfriend or friends and enjoy spending their weekend evenings drinking at bars, friends' houses or at *barracas*. On Sundays, some go to church, whereas others enjoy going to the beach or walking around the city.

They are all sexually active. However their sources of information on sexuality are limited. At school, in Biology classes in the 8<sup>th</sup> grade, they study the reproductive system in which they learn about the functioning of sex organs. They have received no information from school concerning relationships or social expectations but they mentioned have received a talk on HIV/AIDS by one of the institutions dealing with awareness of HIV/AIDS. At home most of them receive almost no information from their parents. However, the majority now go to *Geração Biz* – a counselling clinic for adolescents, specialising in sexuality, STIs and HIV/AIDS – where they receive information. Two young men and one young woman in the sample have had an STI and have been successfully treated. Two young women had abortions in a public hospital while teenagers and both now go to *Geração Biz* for contraception. In total, three female respondents use oral contraceptives. In Mozambican law, induced abortion is only legal in order to preserve the woman's physical or mental health. However, in spite of the law, the government has addressed the problem of complications from unsafe abortions, by allowing public hospitals to offer abortion care and allowing space for comparative studies on illegal and legal abortions to be carried out (Rasch 2002).

The respondents of this study are confronted with the difficulties of finding 'peaceful' space for sex because most parents do not allow them to entertain boy/girlfriends in their bedrooms – this is particularly the case with the parents of the young women. Moreover, the young men who have younger siblings said that do not feel comfortable having sex in their rooms, even when their parents were not at home. Gildo (aged 22) whose younger brother is 7 years old and shares his room, and Mário (aged 18), who has a 13-year-old sister, said that they were afraid that their younger siblings might enter the room, which would be embarrassing and also disrespectful to their family members. Thus, these young people try to find isolated spaces – like the back stairs of

their buildings, a terrace, a dark corner, an abandoned car or a broken elevator – to enjoy sex.

Most of these young men and women complained that there was a ‘distance’ between them and their parents, which does not enable them to talk about private issues related to relationships and sexual matters. They say they would rather not talk about these issues with their parents, because they would be misjudged or ignored. Parents have the (conservative) perception that youths are promiscuous, pleasure-seeking, irresponsible and short-sighted (Rivers and Aggleton in Karlyn 2003: 10), whereas youths see their parents as outmoded and unable to understand them or to talk openly about sexuality (Karlyn 2003: 10). In Chapter Two, I will discuss these dynamics between the sexuality of the youth and that of their parents. I will argue that the difference between these two lies in the meaning and degree of sex in the relationship.

Chapter Three will present the youths’ emic definitions, interpretations and experience of sex. It also describes the different kinds of relationships, and the manners and places where sex occurs. Young people distinguish between steady (*namorado/a*) partner and a variety of occasional partners (*pito/a*, *saca-cena*, *ficar*, *tio-catorzinha*) with whom the logics of interaction vary greatly. With steady partners, love and trust are the fundamental components of the relationship, allowing the practice of “real sex” (unprotected sex) that also signifies a proof of love. With occasional partners, on the other hand, desire, physical attraction and peer pressure (particularly for young men) are the forces that lead to sex – preferably with condoms. This is because the sexual past of the occasional partner is unknown and therefore there is a need to protect oneself against STIs, HIV/AIDS and unwanted pregnancies.

Chapter Four argues that sex is used as means of proving love. In a context in which, as popular discourse demonstrates, men are thought to conquer and women to accede, sex is seen as a return gift for the gift of being asked to be a steady partner. This occurs in a broader context in which there are increasingly few single men available for *namoro* relationships. The exchange of sexual fluids and warmth that characterises “unprotected sex” is perceived to be important in holding couples together and anticipated to have healthy outcomes such as preventing pimples in the face and bad moods.

Chapter Five rounds off by doing a retrospection of the main procedures, findings and arguments of the study. It also highlights the new contributions to this particular area of knowledge and highlights practical perspectives concerning HIV/AIDS awareness strategies.

## Methods

Data collection was based on the qualitative approach within the ethnographic tradition. This is the most useful tool for understanding “how individuals perceive, organise, give meaning to and express their understandings of themselves, their experiences and their worlds” (Mishler quoted in Macun and Posel 1998: 118). As stated by Frith, moreover, “recent commentators have advocated the greater use of qualitative method in sex research” (Frith 2000: 275).

However, the method of participant observation alone would be too limited for a study of this nature. That is why in this study, influenced by the methodological ideas of the anthropologist Harvey Russell Bernard (1988), I have also collected data by using a combination of different methods: focus group discussions, one-on-one semi-structured interviews, informal conversations, observation, and diaries. I also took notes in my field diary and recorded, transcribed and translated the focus group discussions from Portuguese – the language in which the discussions were conducted – into English. Each of these methods served a specific purpose and was designed to complement others as will be described next.

The central method for the research was *focus group discussions*. The decision to use this method as the main one flowed from the view that focus group discussions would allow the achievement of an “insight into the personal experience, beliefs, attitudes and feelings that underlie behaviour” (Frith 2000: 276). It would also “afford a less hierarchical, more enabling and supportive forum for discussions than in the case of individual interviews” (Macun and Posel 1998: 116). This proved to be the case in the research. I conducted a number of different focus groups discussions that were distinguished from each other by their themes, which included the definition of and the various expressions used to describe sex; reproduction; peer pressure; media

socialization; the different kinds of sexual and non-sexual partners; friendships and kinship relations. Such themes were relevant for understanding the social constructions of sex, body, masculinity and femininity as well as to explore the power dynamics and relations of intimacy in these young people's relationships.

Building up on earlier research conducted in the area it was relatively easy to get in contact with the respondents of my study. As mostly young women volunteered to participate in the focus groups at the school, the first three focus groups were carried out with six young women. In the fourth group discussion, two young men from the same school and in the same class as these young women also participated. In order to overcome the gender biases of the focus group discussions, I conducted a set of three other focus group discussions with men only. These were a group of five young men living in the same neighbourhood in Maputo. They do not know the previous respondents but the link between them comes from the fact that they all belonged to the same age and social group as the young students interviewed at the school, although two of them had already finished their secondary studies.

Although at the design level the desire was to have group discussions that would involve men and women, the gender divided discussions were ultimately a major advantage, as I was able to ascertain both groups' discourses and, on completion, compare them to gain deeper insight and to generate more broadly. As Morgan (in Frith 2000: 282) suggests, in order to encourage reciprocal sharing of information in discussing difficult or sensitive issues (such as sex in this particular case), groups should consist of people who share a set of common characteristics, such as age, occupation, gender and sexual orientation. This was the case in the focus group discussions coordinated in this study.

In comparison with the one-on-one interviews, the focus group discussions presented a wide range of advantages: they created a space for the discussion among the members to flow more freely with less direction and prompting from me; they allowed access to the language and vocabulary, which participants commonly use, and they invited participants to introduce their own themes and concerns. I avoided question-and-answer sessions in which the respondents would feel intimidated, uncertain or alienated (Macun and Posel 1998).

However, the focus group discussions limited my ability to access people's beliefs, as they influenced each other in their responses. In order to overcome this limitation I also used one-on-one semi-structured interviews and informal conversations. The interviews provided individual and confidential experiences that participants did not want the others to know about. The interviews were semi-structured with very open questions in order to allow the respondents to expand upon the topic and give their own views and interpretations. This method was also very fruitful when engaging with their parents or with other people in the same generation. Only a few parents were chosen for this study, as it was difficult to have access to the voices of all the participants' parents.

Moreover, I had numerous informal conversations with the informants, as we would hang out together on a daily basis. For example, I went to Dalila's house to help her with her French home work; Lucha would come with me to my aerobics classes, as she was interested in losing weight; I went to Liliana's house to chat for some hours before we went to a party together with Tania. I also went to *Mito's* house while I was waiting for the rest of the group to arrive, and I was present at Mara's eighteenth birthday party. We also socialized in environments that allowed me to both observe and participate in their social circle: parties, discos, afternoon study groups and barbecues at their homes, their friends' homes and public venues. In such a way, I became part of their circle of friends.

This friendship allowed me to become close to them. Dalila, Liliana, Mitó and Gildo became such close friends, that they would even come to me to talk about their life plans, problems, frustrations, the possibilities of work and opportunities to study in South Africa. Gildo even asked me if I did not want to become his *namorada*, which gave rise to some constraints related to ethical issues. I was aware that my research on sexuality might create a context for a date, and that I could be a target of sexual harassment since the issues discussed were of a sexual nature. In order to overcome this, I explained to Gildo that I was not interested in becoming his *namorada*, that I was doing research and that his approach could have a negative impact on my study. The rest of the young men' group thereupon chastised him and none such approaches happened again.

A further ethical issue is that I do not give the real names of my informants. Instead, I use pseudonyms to identify them. The names I chose are very common names in Maputo. Although their names are not real, their ages, gender and words are genuine. I have complied with the University of Cape Town/ Humanities faculty codes of ethics<sup>7</sup> and those that pertain to anthropological research.

The last method that I used was to give participants diaries in which to write about their life-stories and to make daily notes about the events of the day. This technique proved to be very helpful, as it gave insight into the background of these young people and brought to light certain aspects that they had written down for me as “secrets” or “confessions”.

Thus, the triangulation of all the qualitative methods discussed above – focus group discussions, interviews and diaries – helped to improve the level of reliability in this study, as all the methods complemented each other. In similar vein, Mishler (quoted in Macun and Posel 1998: 129) argues that, “it is appropriate to accept that each research method will produce data which has been shaped, in non-replicable ways, by the particular relationship it inaugurates between the researcher and the researched”. Triangulation made it possible to address the lacunae left by the focus group discussions by utilising the other methods as complementary techniques.

My data reveal both general themes that are, as I discuss, similar to those found in other studies and particular and unique aspects that are specific to this sample of young people. The uniqueness can partly be attributed to my close relationship with and peer-status among participants.

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<sup>7</sup> <http://web.uct.ac.za/depts/socialanth/dev/ethics/ethics.htm>

## Chapter Two

### **Contextualising sexual understanding and practices: youth and their parents**

One Monday morning, sitting at his office desk after finishing his first office duties and having a cup of tea with us, his colleagues, *Mr Salvador* (42 years old), a married father of five, was recounting the events of the weekend. He was visibly upset and annoyed when he started to tell us about the scene that his seventeen-year-old daughter had made on Saturday:

*"She asked me if she could go out to a party that would start at nine o'clock that evening. Obviously, I refused because the party would start too late... they know they can go to afternoon parties but not to late ones. I went to bed at about 8:00 pm but suddenly I got up to have some water and I opened my daughters' room just to check if everything was fine. My surprise... Leila (the 17-year-old daughter) was not there; she had gone to the party and made arrangements with the sisters to open the door when she got back. I waited till three am when she arrived and I ordered her to sleep outside. She went to the party with this guy she calls her boyfriend...Can you imagine that? What have they been doing till this late? Sex...I am sure! They only think about it! There is no more respect or consideration in today's times."*

*Mr Salvador's* reaction to his daughter's behaviour and his extension of her disrespect to all young people is widespread amongst adults in Maputo city. Many young people, for their part, see themselves as being innovative and active in relation to sex, whereas the older generation is viewed outmoded both in today's terms as well as when they were still young. However, based on an analysis of the discourses and practices of both generations as well as of bibliographic materials about sexuality in Maputo, this chapter argues that the most important difference between the sexuality of the youth and that of their parents lies in the meaning these two groups give to sex and in the importance placed on sex in relationships. The difference is not so much the fact that the younger generation's sexual practices are more active or innovative than that of the older generation. In order to support this argument, the chapter will compare both



comparison, though, it is crucial to present the two different historical periods in which these generations come of age, and their major characteristics.

The discourses and analyses that portray the youth as a problem are crucial to understanding the negative constructions of youth, such as those identified by *Mr Salvador*. Around the world and specifically on the African continent, various studies have identified the youth as a particularly problematic category. Some authors, working in the African context, have considered them “the silent other” or the “speechless *enfants terribles*”, because they have engaged in armed conflicts and participated actively in the killing of entire communities (Caputo 1995; Hirschfeld 1999). Others have regarded them as “lost generation” (Cruise O’Brien 1996) or a “problem” due to their involvement in high levels of criminality, problems related to drinking, unwanted and teenage pregnancies and lack of education (Sommers 2003).

Clearly, such assessments are overly negative. They focus on the actions and problems of some young people while overlooking the circumstances that influence them to behave in these ways. Problematic behaviour by some is reified and extended so that it is presumed to be characteristic of a category – “the youth” – which is seldom referred to positively. As Richards (1995 quoted in De Boeck and Honwana in press: 11) asks: “When and how have youngsters become ‘problems’ or a ‘lost generation’ on the African scene? When and how have conflict, social tension and rebellion become the signs of crisis of youth rather than that age-group’s normal condition reinforcing the societal order?” The answers to these questions can be found in the changes of classification processes, cognitive and values on the African continent.

The context of modernity may be helpful in this explanation, as the dynamics of the transitional process from old to new (i.e. from colonial to modern African states; from socialist to neo-liberal economies; from totalitarian to democratic regimes, and so on) are reflected in the actual behaviour of the youth. As Boubakar (1989) points out, “Modernity made youth a problem” because such transitions from the old to the new are a source of conflict, and influence the experiences of young Africans (Boubakar 1989). Boubakar argues that the African youth is living in a state of *anomie* that

produces a “discontented youth” because of existing contradictions in African societies:

*[D]evelopment is extolled as the fundamental social value but society cannot offer youth the positions that would enable it to participate in development; society offers youth numerous new models of consumption, but denies them the chance of actually sampling any; society presents youth with a system of values that is derived from other cultures and does not correspond to its own; this system of values is transmitted via the mass media, which open the minds of young people to the developed world whereas it is with the realities of the underdevelopment that they must live.*

(Boubakar 1989: 170)

Although these characteristics may indeed be relevant and useful for analysing the youth in Maputo city, I am nonetheless critical of Boubakar’s approach that only sees society exerting pressure over the youth as though the youth themselves were not part of that society and were not influencing its dynamics. Young people react in different ways to life’s opportunities and constrain being therefore complicated to include all such characteristics as a single category.

Before going any further, then, it is crucial to define the concept of youth in this study. Modern states generally define the youth as an age category that is distinguished from the categories of child, adult or elder. In anthropology, “attention to them [youth] has been sporadic and too often secondary” (Durham 2000: 114). Recent work (see e.g. Durham 2000; De Boeck and Honwana n.d.) demonstrates that in many African contexts adulthood is conceptualised not as a function of age but of responsibility, particularly regarding social reproduction. Other studies on the initiation rites of the Ehing described how age categories were associated with certain forms of knowledge, particularly with the gendered knowledge that gave (categorical) adults the ability to reproduce (Schloss in Durham 2000: 15). Schloss’ study also raised the problem of how age categories could run into contradictions when older men, not yet initiated into the rights of adulthood, have established a fair amount of economic interdependence (ibid). These definitions of adulthood are different to the chronological understanding promulgated in Western ways because they follow a set of rituals. In Mozambique, the different ethnic groups consider one to be adult once

he/she has performed the initiation ritual or after marriage and the birth of the first child.

The studies referred to above are critical of fixed and universal definitions of youth: they illustrate the long-held anthropological principle that social categories are culturally constructed, and that the category of the youth is not an exception.

In this study, the term youth (*jovem* or *juventude* in Portuguese) is used to refer to a particular group of young men and women, who are still dependent on their parents and families and are not yet married. This concept breaks with previous definitions of “the youth” that generally understood it to be masculine in gender. Like any other social category, they are here seen as both makers and breakers of society, while concurrently being made and broken by that same society. Thus, youth in this analysis can only be understood by grasping these four concepts (maker, breaker, made, broken) in relation to one another and never singularly. Thus, in terms of sexuality youth bring their agency to the context and shape the social environment at the same time facing constraints

When analysing the concept of sexuality in relation to the youth, one must pay attention to the transitional processes mentioned by Boubakar (see above). Not only are these processes by definition an integral part of the lives of the young people, but their parents, too as social transformation was and remains a remarkable characteristic of their lives. In addition, transitional processes are also operating on the socio-cultural and political level: Their parents have lived through the period of independence from colonialism and the coming to power of the Frelimo socialist system. Both generations have experienced the end of socialism, the rise of *capitalism* and the strengthening influence of globalization.

For young people, then, the end of colonialism created a possibility of living as citizens in a free country ruled by their own compatriots rather than by a foreign occupying power. This was what happened when Frelimo – the liberation party – took over power in the newly independent Mozambique. Guided by a Marxist Socialist ideology, the ideal of Frelimo was to create a popular democracy and the “*Homem Novo*” (New Man) – a phrase used to refer to an assertive worker building an

independent socialist nation. In order to promote this ideal of the “*Homem Novo*”, Frelimo forced new values to emerge in the society. The first rupture was with beliefs around gender socialisation and tradition. For example, Frelimo organised strong political campaigns against initiation rites, the cult of the ancestors, *lobolo*, speaking traditional languages and traditional rituals and ceremonies. At a later stage, the political changes of these years were referred to as “*the abaixo politics*” (the politics of “down with”): “‘down with *lobolo*’, ‘down with polygamy’, ‘down with initiation rites’ was shouted at every political meeting” (Arnfred 2002: 4).

Ironically, the previous Portuguese government also regarded most of these practices as negative. The main ideal of Portuguese colonization was “essentially to lift the indigenous populations to our level of civilisation by teaching them our religion, our language, our customs (...) it is our mentality that we want to transmit to the people of the colonies...” (Ministro das Cónias 1940 in Arnfred 2002: 2). Unlike Frelimo, though, the Portuguese colonial regime had a politics of assimilation that used Christianity and Western civilisation to transform the indigenous people into copies of the Portuguese people (a process referred to as Portugalisation) (Arnfred 2002: 2)

Consequently, the social transformations introduced by Frelimo’s socialism in a sense continued the colonial social transformation of indigenous social practices. The main difference was that Frelimo’s transformations were guided by a socialist ideology that implied a complete break with all ties with colonialism and its bourgeois life-style (Machel 1980). Among the bourgeois habits of the urban youth that Frelimo intended to abolish were “parties characterized by the presence of alcohol, drugs and sexual promiscuity, (...) the freak language and the extravagant fashion that included the ‘Beatles’ shoes, trousers till the chest, shirts that do not cover the navel and the jackets of the criminal forces of the U.S. Army and U.S. Air Force” (Machel 1980: 16).

In addition to the above, Frelimo understood sexual relations to happen only within marriage, defined as a monogamous civil union between a man and a woman<sup>8</sup> (Urdang 1989; Arnfred 2001). Contraceptives against pregnancy, for example, were

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<sup>8</sup> This definition of marriage was very problematic because the prevailing types of unions around the country were polygamous marriages, *lobolo* marriages and *pette* (a form of marriage characteristic of the matrilinear North of Mozambique: see Arnfred 2001: 26-27) – all of them were so-called traditional marriages.

only distributed during the family planning consultations that had been established in 1980 as part of a national program (Agadjanian 2001), and these were only available only to married women (Calado, Kortbeek and Manghezi 1986). Nonetheless, even in such conditions, young people engaged in sex, as Mrs. *Orlanda*, 38 years old, explained. She was still a young student at the time these directives were implemented:

*"I started my sexual life a bit late, when I was 23 years old (1989). But sex was a very popular thing in the female residence I was in. Long before I was sexually active, I had to lie to my friends saying that I was already having sex; otherwise they would think I was stupid. I did not use any kind of contraception because only married women were allowed to attend family planning... I was lucky I never got pregnant then."*

One of the ways Frelimo discouraged undesirable behaviour was by making it shameful. Thus, it was shameful to be a teenage and/or single mother. Ironically, given that socialism is generally opposed to religion, this approach reveals a Christian influence in Frelimo's ideology. Arnfred citing Weber's analysis of Protestantism in the rise of capitalism argues that Frelimo, too, followed a Christian morality in which "sexual intercourse is permitted, even within marriage, only as the means chosen by God for the increase of His Glory (Arnfred 2002: 6).

Those who were trapped in such situations (i.e. single mothers and teenage mothers) were publicly humiliated in the *barrio* meetings by the *chefe-do-quarteirão*<sup>9</sup> (the chief of the block). They were described as alienated youth, who had been corrupted by the bourgeois habits of the late Portuguese colonial regime. This kind of social pressure was thus brought to bear on those who did not comply with the desired patterns of behaviour. There was particularly strong pressure on women. For example, prostitutes were heavily ostracized, as is echoed by the words of Samora Machel: "(prostitutes) are women who transform their bodies into shops (...) A prostitute is a rotten person with a foul stench" (Machel 1982 in Arnfred 2002: 6). Ironically, though, no mention was made of the male clients of the prostitutes. Not surprisingly,

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<sup>9</sup> The *Chefe-do-quarteirão* was the individual responsible for each block in the city. He was usually a resident of the block and was in charge of solving problems that might destabilize the block. There were regular meetings with all residents of the block in which problems had been exposed and at these meetings various solutions would be advanced and discussed.

Ironically, though, no mention was made of the male clients of the prostitutes. Not surprisingly, then, Arnfred concludes that “Frelimo morals are strictly androcentric and even patriarchal” (Arnfred 2002: 6).

This was the social and political context of sexuality during the 1980s up to the early 1990s. Obviously, there was also not much expression of intimacy (kisses or hugs, for example) in the public arena. The most popular way of exchanging caresses and feelings – *namorar* – was, as explained by *Mr Salvador*, who seemed to have been a charming and romantic young man at the time, said “(...) the exchange of love letters inspired by Portuguese and Brazilian songs that were very popular in that time.” *Mrs Orlanda*, who came to Maputo as a young woman to study and who was living in a school residence, said similarly that love was expressed by “going to the afternoon movie sessions, walking around the city and chatting on a garden bench.”

Sex happened in *namoro* relationships, as well as with occasional partners – *pito/pita* (this category will be fully described in Chapter Three). Like today, *namoro* was a steady relationship in which partners are committed to each other and where there are the possibilities of future plans (like marriage). The informants used words such as “respect and seriousness” (*Mr Salvador*) to describe *namoro* relationships.

It was mainly men who admitted that they had sex in occasional relationships. Women mentioned that they only had sex with their *namorado*. This may be a consequence of the double standard applied to women and the two categories of women: those who were considered by men to be appropriate to be a steady girlfriend – *namorada* – , and those who were considered “*vivas*” (clever) and available for experimentation in new sexual adventures. Thus, in *namoro* relationships, sex was usually preceded by a dating period, in which the couple got to know each other and established a relationship that was fortified by regular walks, afternoon movie sessions and occasional meal “out”. Sex in such relationships, as two informants mentioned, was not very regular or very daring:

*“We did not have sex very often. It was once in a while because I did not enjoy it much... I used to feel pain. My boyfriend was very polite and he usually asked me if I was in the mood to have sex or not. Whatever my answer was, he would respect it.”*

Mrs Orlanda.

*"Sex with the namorada was based on respect. I could not ask her for nasty things like oral sex or audacious sexual positions because I respected her... those things I knew where I could get with pitas or other occasional partners"*

Mr Salvador.

In addition to their regular *namoradas*, men had other partners with whom they would experiment with bolder sexual practices as Mrs Orlanda commented:

*"I think my boyfriend possibly had other girls with whom he had sex, because most of the times when he asked me for sex I refused and he simply accepted. (...) Yes, there were porn movies but the acts there were an aberration thus, boys did not experience that with the namoradas (girlfriends) ... it maybe happened with the others, with the pitas."*

These statements clearly illustrate the two kinds of sexual partners - *namorada* and *pita* - and the meanings attached to each of them. Relationships with the *namorada*, the steady partner, were based on respect, and thus men respected women's decision not to have sex with their *namorado* during a date or their refusal to participate in certain sexual practices. Sexual encounters with the *pitas*, on the other hand, were characterised by experimentation with bold sexual practices because, as *Mr Salvador* said: "They were easy to conquer and were very open and ready to participate in any kind of sexual practice."

This setup essentially also portrays women as givers of pleasure and not necessarily as beings who demand pleasure. For example, *pitas* are not respected by either men or other women (the *namoradas*), because they are willing to try different sexual positions and practices and because they admit to enjoy sex. Another example is the fact that contraceptives are only given to married women. The logic behind this is that not all couples have enough resources to have many children and that they need to regulate the number of children by controlling pregnancies. At the same time, though, the husband must be sexually satisfied, and thus the wife must take contraception in order to still give pleasure to her husband but avoid an undesirable pregnancy.

More than before, sex today is becoming a bigger component of the day-to-day lives of the young people. As Lucha, a 20-year-old, said:

*"[W]e cannot be boyfriend and girlfriend (namorar) without sex. Today it does not exist anymore...(namorar) without sex ...it was once upon a time it does not happen anymore."*

Indeed, in the neo-liberal Mozambique of today, characterised by extensive development plans by international donor agencies, concerns related to youth sexuality are topical due to the context of HIV/AIDS. Women's initiation rites forbidden during the socialist period are now once again being implemented and the freedom of ritual practice is extending" (Arnfred 2002). In addition to religious/ritual revivalism, factors that are important in shaping young people's sexual morals and practices include the power of mass media in urban environments (Karlyn 2003: 8). Thus, the mass media can be considered as one of the social "makers" of today's youth sexuality.

The situation in the past assumed that the youth is not – or should not be – sexually active, and stigmatised them if they did indulge in sex. This has changed. In present-day Mozambique, sexuality is often associated with risk and danger, primarily because of the HIV/AIDS pandemic which is widespread in this country: statistics show that in 2002 an average of 500 people were infected with the disease every day (UNDP 2002). Given that the youth as a group is more prone to HIV-infection (INE 2000), largely because of its inherent nature, scholars and policy makers have been paying more attention to young people's sexuality. Among other things, this manifest in the appearance of clinics, which are specialized in adolescent and young people's sexuality. Those clinics, of which *Geração Biz*<sup>10</sup> is the one most cited by informants, not only deliver information on how to prevent STIs/HIV/AIDS infection, but also promote family planning in order to avoid undesired pregnancy. This is clearly an acknowledgement of the youth as a sexually active group.

The global trends, specifically with regard to the global HIV/AIDS pandemic, are opening a space for the youth to express their sexuality without being judged, as

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<sup>10</sup> *Geração Biz* is a group of clinics specializing in young people's sexuality. It works with both young men and women until the age of 18 and gives counselling on issues of puberty, STIs, HIV/AIDS and pregnancy.



would have happened in the previous generation. This is the case because in order to promote awareness to protection against the HIV/AIDS, sex is more openly talked about and it is not negatively judged. Other global trends that have influenced young people's sexuality today are the images and sounds of television and, more recently, cable TV. The different fashions, musical styles and lifestyles, as well as the values, kinds of relationships, sexual choices, sexual positions and demonstrations of intimacy broadcasted in these media are picked up by young people. After a sifting process, they will select some of them, sometimes transforming them in order to incorporate them into their lifestyle. An example of such influence can be seen in the way that young people freely exchange intimate acts (kisses in the mouth, hugs and caresses) in public spaces nowadays. This causes conflict with the older generation: "(We) would only kiss and caress in such a way in private..." (*Mr Salvador*).

A further contrast between the youth of today and the older generation is that amongst the former, sex, both for men and women, happens not only in steady relationships – *namoro* – but also in occasional ones. Not only do the young men admit that they have sexual encounters outside the *namoro* relationship, but the young women also admit that they sometimes have sex with men other than the *namorado*. For example, Lucha said "I like sex... it is nice and when I want, I want. When I want someone I go for him... even if I am in a steady relationship...I go because I desire him." Or, as Dalila (aged 19) commented:

*"I was in a namoro relationship with a guy who liked me much. I did not have many feelings for him. After a while I met this guy and one day we ended up in his auntie's apartment alone. He started to kiss me and touch me and I could not resist ...no one has ever touched me in such exciting way. We ended up having sex. (...) I did not feel bad about my boyfriend; it was so good that I would do it again if I was in that same situation."*

These statements are completely different to the voices of the women informants from the older generation, who stated that they had only experienced sex in their youth within a *namoro* relationship. These differences may indicate changing gender relations in the present, which have enabled women to manipulate the double standard that has always allowed men to be sexually freer and to have different sexual partners

without being stigmatised by society, whereas women were always expected to be more conservative and sexually reserved (Osório 1998).

Because of these new tendencies of young people today, they tend to look at the sexuality of their parents' generation as being outdated. Comparing their own sexual activities with those of their parents, they argue that their parents were less sexually active and thus had less fun. For example Iva (aged 17) commented "For example women had that thing of wanting to get married while still a virgin", while Deny (aged 21) said "We are a lot more sexually active and sexually innovative than our parents. We do things that they do not even imagine we can. That is why an older man looks for younger women to do such things." This is confirmed by Carla (aged 18) who stated that "In those times women use to wait for men to make the first move but now we can do it." And, also by Guido (aged 20):

*"For me (sex in our times) it is very different. I do not think in the era of our parents they had broche (fellatio) and minetes (cunnilingus). I remember when I was working part time we use to sit together at lunch and talk and one guy was describing how he did a minete to his girlfriend. There was an older man and he did not understand what we were talking about. When one 'clever' explained it to him he was in shock, he told he would never do such a thing. It is not in vain that today people talk about the "papa e mama" position (mum and daddy refers to the missionary position) because it characterizes their time."*  
Gildo, 20 years old

Despite these claims by the youth, the older generation revealed that they did in fact have "bold" sexual practices although these tended to be confined to occasional relationships.

The position of women has clearly changed, as women of today are more open to revealing their sexual desires and their sexual adventures outside a steady relationship. Perhaps this is a result of the influence of feminist discourses that affirm women's sexuality. Moreover, the discourse of HIV/AIDS prevention talks about the necessity of wearing a condom in order to protect oneself against AIDS, and recently it has been encouraging women themselves to carry condoms with them, rather than waiting for the male partner to provide one.

Some informants were critical, though, about the way an older generation claimed limited sexual knowledge and constrained practices. Mitó, for example, a 21 year old, stated:

*“I think what have changed is the mind of the youth today. Now we talk about what we do publicly. Then, it was a shock to talk about broche (fellatio) and minete (cunnilingus) in a conversation. Everything happened in the private space, in the room between the four walls and what comes out is the clean and beautiful side. I think sex was always sex. We do not plan everything that happens in the room.. There are things that happen naturally. I think that broche and minete is something that comes from a long time ago, it is not something of today only. I think everybody has already done it... the difference is that today we have the courage to talk about it and previously people did not talk about it. We can just look at the movies from that time, we see movies from 1982/85 and the same things that we see in today's movies use to happen. Of course with some variations: for example the broche of those times was only licking while today it is more beautiful and innovative, for example in the girls one can add chocolate. Now it is only a matter of innovations but the base is the same. Sex is/was always sex.”*

Sérgio (aged 19) commented:

*“I have got some books at home from the 1980s with some questions from women who could not have sexual pleasure and the suggestions of the sexual positions given are the same positions of today.”*

And Mário (aged 19) suggested that old pornography was revealing:

*“For example, the movies... I am a good appreciator of porn movies and I see old movies. Everything that uses to happen there is the same thing that happens in the today's movies. In the old movies they were a lot more audacious: for example the 'Black Kiss', the licking of the women from behind used to be in all the movies while in today's movies it rarely happens.”*

However, it must be taken into consideration that although the porn movies that the informants refer to are called 'old', they could not have been accessible to their parents' generation, as Mozambique in those years (the 1980s) was undergoing a socio-economic crisis. Commodities, such as televisions or VCR's, which are easily available and affordable today, were rare, and movie theatres would not show porn movies anyway.

Their parents' behaviour around issues of sexuality creates and reinforces the opinions that most of the youngsters have about the sexual behaviour of their parents' generation. On the one hand, parents generally do not openly talk about sexuality with their children, mainly because parents do not traditionally play that role. Instead, that role was played by the extended family: "the function of this extended family was to counsel adolescents on issues and topics that were forbidden for mother and daughter; father and son to talk about, that is, within the nuclear family" (Kazilimani-Pale and Bilale 1999: 12). On the other hand, parents tend to portray a very correct and morality based image of sexuality in front of their children, which implies that they – the parents – have never done wrong things in the sexual sense, in order to be set a good example for their children.

In conclusion, then, as I have argued in this chapter, the main difference in sexuality and sexual activity between the two generations is not defined in terms of innovation or boldness of sexual practices. Rather, it is related to the fact that young people of today become sexually involved with a larger variety of sexual partners, which, among others, include *pito/a*, *saca-cenas*, *ficar* and prostitutes. In some of these relationships, the partners do not have any kind of previous knowledge about each other. The combination of these factors may put young people at a higher risk of STI/HIV/AIDS infection, in addition to increasing the risk of unwanted pregnancies, because sex is practised with a larger variety of partners and at a younger age, than was the case when their parents were young.

Also problematic is the fact that from the socialism times (emphasis on nuclear family) there was a transfer of the process of education of the youth (in this particular case in relation to sexual matters) from the extended family to the responsibility of parents (and at smaller dimension to schools). As it is was traditionally a role of parents, are having difficulties managing it; ended up by failing to give such information. As a consequence young people learn about sexual matters with their friends and through movies, magazines and television. This can be problematic as the sources do not have an educational mission. Such situation is, however, being tackled in part by the adolescent clinics (e.g. *Geração Biz*) that focus on educating and create awareness to sexual matters and HIV/AIDS among young people.

## Chapter Three

### Classification and Rules of Relationships

*"Sex is a relationship of two people who may or may not share 'feelings' for one another".*

Lucha, 20 years old

*"Sex is a good thing that happens between a man and a woman, it is an interaction and it should be only practiced by adults – people who are responsible. It should not be practiced as play. It is a good thing that (we) all should practice".*

Mitó, 21 years old

The young people interviewed in this study mainly described sex in terms of various kinds of relationship. Thus, in order to promote a better understanding of the sexual relationship in particular, this chapter will start by conceptualizing what sex means within their understanding of relationships in general. It will examine the different kinds of relationships that exist between young people and identify the differences between such relationships and a sexual relationship. Notably, among the informants of this study, sex is seen as one of the factors that might define the passage from childhood to adulthood. Other factors that categorize this transition include being economically self-supporting and independent from one's parents. The exercise embarked upon in this study of conceptualising sex and sexuality among the youth of Maputo City in Mozambique, is intended to illuminate some conclusions linked to the idea of adulthood.

A relationship is generally characterized by the presence of a certain degree of interdependence between its members (Kelley et al in McKinney and Sprecher 1991:2). In their life cycle, individuals relate to a large variety of persons with whom different kinds of relationships are established. Examples of such relationships are descendant, affine, friend, parent or neighbour. Inevitably, the youngsters in this study experience most of those relationships. For example, members of the group of young men who were informants in this research share a twofold kind of relationship with each other: both as friends and as neighbours. These two relationships are thus

intertwined. The fact that they are neighbours has helped their friendship to solidify, as they are all in the same age group and have in fact known each other from the time they were still pre-primary school pupils. The majority of the informants live in one building, which consisted of five floors with nine flats on each floor. The families that have lived there for a long time share a strong sense of community that allows a mother, for example, to leave the flat-keys in the neighbour's house so that her son can pick them up. I myself experienced this: some informants would leave messages for me with their neighbours, as did Célio when he had to rush off unexpectedly to pick up his younger sister's son at crèche at a time when we had arranged a meeting.

Thus, neighbours live almost as a family. If a neighbour needs help with fixing a bathroom tap, or needs some cocoa to finish decorating a chocolate cake, the other neighbours will usually assist. This, too, is the spirit that guides the friendship relationship among the informants. As friends, they share companionship, which is not limited to amusing or happy moments, such as parties, football games, drinking at the *barracas* or chatting about women and football while sitting at the corner of neighbourhood streets. They also get together for sad moments, such as the funerals of relatives, helping to take care of and visiting sick friends or relatives' friends. They also study together, not only by attending the same school and the same classes, but also outside of school, by forming study groups, or even just by helping a friend with his or her homework.

An important aspect to consider in this regard, though, is that these friendships are guided by certain rules. There is, for instance, a strict rule about dating a new girl: If one of the members of the group meets a girl in whom he is interested, he must inform the rest of the group of this. He then has a week to claim her and to show that his dating is "improving" – i.e. that the girl has started going out with him, that she goes to his place or looks for him in the neighbourhood. In order to evaluate the level of interest of the girl towards this particular member of the group, the other boys in the group must see at least one of the previous actions happening and then circulate this information amongst them. Consequently, the boy in charge will do everything to walk with the desired girl and thereby demonstrate to his friends that his dating is "improving".

If, within a period of a week, he does not show any progress in winning the girl's attentions for himself, then the rest of the members of the group are free to try their luck with the girl. This process follows a strict order: the second boy who has shown an interest in the particular girl is the second to try his luck, and so on. The focus group advised that there has never been a case in which more than three young men, in their friendship circle, were interested in the same girl. There was, however, a situation in which the young woman was not interested in either of the two boys - Gildo and Mário - who had been chasing her; instead, she was interested in a third young man who was also a member of the same group but who had not demonstrated any interest in her - Mitó. A conflict erupted when, during a party, she showed that she was after Mitó by sensually dancing with him and verbally declaring her interest over him, while Gildo was after her. Gildo became so upset when he saw her with Mitó that the following day the two young men had a fierce discussion that almost ended in a physical fight. Fortunately, the argument was terminated, when other members of the group brought them to reason by saying that their friendship was more important than a "pair of legs" (meaning a woman). This is an example that misogyny restores male friendship.

As the previous example shows, friendship bonds tend to be strong enough to overcome conflicts about a certain kind of partner: these are referred to as *pita* or *saca-cena* - occasional partners. In relation to steady partners, however, the rules are different: no friend is allowed to make advances to or rude comments about a friend's *namorada* - steady partner. There are also strict rules when one of the group wishes to date the sister of a friend. A friend's sister cannot be or be treated as a *pita* or *saca-cena*. With her, respect is the key word, manifested by the compliance with the rules negotiated in the relationship: no unfaithfulness or the hiding of unfaithfulness in the event that it happens.

These friends consider their relationship 'kin-like' and even call each other 'brother', using the English term and not its Portuguese equivalent *irmão*. Levi-Strauss (1969) describes the effects of 'blood brotherhood' as prohibiting marriage with a sister. While this does not apply in the present instance, nevertheless, there are strong sanctions on how to behave with a friend's sister. Dating a friend's sister is allowed, although respect and respectability are compulsory in such a relationship. Thus, the

full “blood-brotherhood” principle of Levi-Strauss (1969) only seems to happen in a marriage situation in those societies where a girl’s sexuality is supposed to be guarded and protected by her father, brother and other male relatives (Ashforth 1999). In such contexts, as happens in contemporary Soweto, a township in South Africa, “it is considered extremely bad form (...), for a man to propose love to his friend’s sister” (Ashforth 1999: 52). The difference seems to be that youth (and specifically female) sexuality in the context of urban Maputo is not forcefully controlled. The only circumstance mentioned by the young women who were interviewed during the course of this study was the fact that their mothers and other female figures who are part of their primary socialization were very concerned about possible pregnancies at this stage of their life, where they are still young and not yet married. Hence, in this milieu, the control of young women’s sexuality, if any, is in female hands and not male ones.

Moreover, the brotherhood referred to above prohibits young men of this group from becoming involved with a “brother’s” *namorada* (steady partner). As the next chapter will discuss, a *namoro* is taken seriously and there is love involved between the parties. Therefore, if a friend becomes involved with another friend’s *namorada*, he would be disrespecting and hurting that friend, and showing no consideration for his friend’s feelings neither for their brotherhood.

All of these rules are generally explicit, although they may be verbalized only after an incident has violated them. In terms of the relationship between one’s friend and his *namorada*, the rules seem to be widely applicable to the context of Maputo city. The rule concerning dating a new girl, though, appears to be specific to this group.

### **The web of social relations**

In addition to the relationship of brotherhood described above, the youth are linked to other members of their immediate surroundings by many other types of relationships. The second one I wish to discuss is their relationship with their parents and elders. As descendants, the youngsters described in this study engage in a relationship based on respect with their parents. This relationship is characterized by various strict rules, which are set down by the parents, as the youngsters are still their dependents. One of



these rules is education: going to school is a duty that all children have to perform. Although it may seem that this pattern only gives responsibility to one side of the relationship (the descendant), it does not work like that. Descendants on their part also expect parents to carry out their responsibilities to provide, care for and educate them.

Nonetheless, such responsibilities are not always carried out as desired. The case of Dalila is an example of her father's failure to carry out his responsibilities in the relationship. Her father has since passed away, and she is the younger sister of three other siblings. In order to earn money to buy her fashionable clothes, accessories and school materials, she sells clothes that her mother's sister brings from South Africa; she also bakes cookies, which she sells during the long break at school, and she counts on the help of her boyfriend who has a regular income. Her mother has a small *barraca*, which sells food and beverages, and the income earned from this is allocated to the house expenses. Even when Dalila's father was alive, however, he failed to comply with his responsibilities, as she describes:

*"We lived in poverty. My father did not support us; he was running away from the responsibility of fatherhood. (...) I remember when I was playing at my friends' house I could see that their parents loved them because they would buy them toys and clothes; they would sit with them and watch TV and talk and laugh... everything that I was missing".*

This example shows that descendants expect parents to cover both instrumental and emotional concerns. When this does not happen, the kinsperson who is not performing his/her role may not be respected and, moreover, may not be referred to with the category he/she represents. For instance, Dalila said, "that is not a father, I did not have a father". The example of Mara is also illustrative. Mara (18 years old) was raised only by her mother, as her father had abandoned her mother when she announced that she was pregnant at the time when they were still *namorados*. Consequently, Mara does not regard a complete nuclear family as being vital to the good development of descendants; she also maintains that she does not have a father, as all the social roles of the father are in fact played by her mother:

*"[F]or instance, my mother raised me alone, without a father and I do not miss him. I even say that I do not have a father. For me my mother*

*is father, mother, auntie, friend, she is everything. My father is not important to me, I do not need him"*

Hence, an individual's non-compliance with social responsibilities may disrupt his/her role, as "kinship only exists in human consciousness (...) as an arbitrary system of representations" (Levi-Strauss in Holy 1996: 15), which in this context is perceived to be the sum of biological and social roles.

Thus far, then, we have determined that friendship relationships provide companionship, distraction and compensation, in that its members can count on each other to receive support and appreciation in good times as well as in bad, for example, if there is a death in the family. Friends are also peers and can stimulate an individual by increasing his self-confidence and self-esteem. For instance, a boy may praise himself and show off his sexual prowess by telling the group that he has slept with the girl who is the most desired – because her physical features are unanimously considered to be very attractive – and the most difficult to get in the neighbourhood – if many men have tried to get her, but most of them have failed. This did actually happen with one of the informants in the group, who has since been looked upon positively, respected and admired by the rest of the group.

Descent/parenting relationships, in contrast, are based on consanguinity, and while parents nurture, care for and educate their descendants, the latter, for their part, are expected to follow the rules laid down by their parents. Therefore, "kin relationships have some significance in the way people organize and run their everyday lives" (Allan 1979: 1). It is noteworthy that the possibility of conflict exists in all these relationships, i.e. if one of the partners does not follow the prescribed rules. Nevertheless, these relationships exist because they answer certain needs and fulfil certain roles (Fox 1981).

Sex between friends is avoided. As Célio (21 years old) puts it, "true friendship tends to be between people of the same sex" and homosexuality is highly stigmatised in contemporary Maputo, where it is linked to prostitution. Also, sex between friends of opposite sexes is believed to spoil the friendship relationship, as it complicates the friends' interactions with one another because emotions and jealousies arise;

moreover, each friend's *namorado/a* would usually disapprove if friendships were to be maintained, as the friend would be regarded as a threat to their *namoro* relationship. In kinship relationships, having sex with kin (mainly the primarily kin) is incest, and is taboo.

Sexual relationships have different objectives and cover different kinds of needs from those met by friendship and kinship relationships. For both young men and women having sex is a matter of affection, intimacy and exploring their own and others' bodies; as Sérgio commented "sex allows us to feel real pleasure. That warmth, the feeling of the blood of your partner is an inexplicable sensation". Sex is an act that allows one to experience a unique kind of physical pleasure as a result of the "touching, rubbing, caressing" (Mara), which leads to vaginal penetration that might or not end with an orgasm. Young women revealed that they do not always achieve the climax although they feel generally happy because the couple usually spends time with preliminaries and when there is penetration young women are able to feel pleasure because they are lubricated. This is the case in long term *namoro* relationships where the partners are already used to each other and know how to give pleasure to one another, as Mara expressed:

*"If you stay 3 months with the person kissing and exchanging caress you get use to him, while if you have sex with someone who you just met it can be difficult because you have different ways of engaging in sex. I think pleasure also depends in the situation and the place where you are having sex. I think pleasure comes mostly from the staying together. If he is your boyfriend you feel comfortable, you have nothing to hide and everything is easy."*

Compared to other kinds of relationships, all women mentioned that they feel a lot more free in *namoro* relationships to express their sexuality and as a consequence they commented that when they have no enough pleasure they demand they *namorados* to have one more session of sex. Both young men and women expressed that men have pleasure and get to their climax more often as their climax is represented by ejaculation; and most of the times the sexual act ends when the man ejaculates.

Here, sex refers to penetrative heterosexual sex. Although Mitó mentioned that "*touch, contact with the hands are already sexual contact, even without penetration*",

the rest of the group perceived touching simply as caressing and/or preliminaries. Continuing, Mitó described kissing and touching a girl as not being sex: “*I stroked on her breast and thighs, but we did not have sex*”. Such a statement reveals that for young people sex is considered to be the act of vaginal or anal penetration.

For my respondents, sex is considered to be a heterosexual act between two individuals. In some cases, though, it can be a collective experience in which more than one couple is having sex in the same space, although without exchanging partners, or a group of men are taking turns penetrating the same woman. Both forms were reported by respondents<sup>11</sup>.

Multiple sexual engagements represent a very small proportion of young people’s sexual lives. They constitute the exception, the rule being sexual encounters between two people. Only three young men reported participating in multiple sexual engagements and in all cases these represented a minute portion of their sexual experiences. Thus, these facts show that it is not a sign of promiscuity but a matter of experimentation. It is important to highlight these kinds of sexual encounters in the context of HIV/AIDS in order to present the whole picture to policy makers and those engaged in the design of awareness and prevention campaigns.

Vaginal, penetrative heterosexual intercourse is what they consider “normal/natural sex”, and when it is practiced without condoms it is considered “real sex,” as the next chapter will discuss. For the majority of informants, anal sex is still something new that some of them have tried a few times but most find painful.

Thus, acts that do not include penetration – such as masturbation, fellatio, cunnilingus, stroking, holding a woman’s breasts or a man’s testicles – are not considered as sex acts but rather as foreplay or preliminaries to actual sex, defined as heterosexual penetrative sex acts.

Jeffrey Weeks, in the historical study of sexuality, argues that early sexologists were concerned with “the study of sexual instincts (which) became an exploration both of

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<sup>11</sup> For ethical reasons I have excluded the details so as not to position the reader as voyeur.

the source of sexuality and of the relations between men and women” (Ellis in Weeks 1993: 35). Consequently,

*“just as homosexuality was defined as a sexual condition peculiar to some people but not for others, the concept of heterosexuality was invented to describe ‘normality’, a normality circumscribed by a founding belief in the sharp distinctions between the sexes and the assumption that gender identity (to be a man or a woman) and sexual identity were necessarily linked through the naturalness of the heterosexual object of choice. All else fell into the vaguely written but powerful catalogue of perversity.”*

(Weeks 1993: 35)

In this way, the legitimisation of the scientific sexological discourse of a body of knowledge had become a useful resource for the production of normative definitions that limit and demarcate erotic behaviour (Weeks 1993). Sexology itself had become intensely prescriptive, giving instructions on what we ought to be like, what makes us truly ourselves and what is ‘normal’ – in sum, sexological accounts of sexual identity can be seen as impositions, a power designated to obscure a real sexual diversity (Weeks 1993: 37–8; Foucault 1979).

The above were some of the conditions that allowed heterosexual sexuality to be considered the natural expression of sexuality at the time.

In contemporary Maputo, this perception is reinforced by the fact that socio-political ideologies subsequent to independence in 1975 have been deeply embedded in Christian values that prize reproduction and emphasize the role of the nuclear family (Arnfred 2002).

The primary sources of socialization of these young people are their family, and among urban families in the South of Mozambique with its patriarchal roots, the distinction between the two sexes is shown by the definition of particular roles, identities and values for each sex. This distinction is based upon a principle of extreme opposition and differentiation. Therefore, while males are socialized and conceived to be strong, noble and successful professionally, females are socialized as

weak, beautiful and active in the domain of domestic responsibilities (Osório 1998). That is the case among the individuals in my sample.

The family is not the only source of socialization. School, friends, media, the Internet and other sources also shape the identity of young people. Thus, there are many patterns of masculinity and femininity, not only the ones shaped by family. So we can talk about both masculinities and femininities as multiple and as different patterns of being socially a man or a woman (Melhuus 1998). Most young women from my sample are investing in their future by studying and doing other courses (as computer courses and English and/or French courses) to become independent and have their own financial independence in order to avoid being financially dependent on future husbands. That new pattern of femininity is different from the family socialization that they receive, it is a clear influence of the new gender roles passed by media and a result critical assessment that young women do of the position of their mothers.

In the different discourses of masculinity in Maputo's context we find a whole range of male types: the heterosexual, powerful husband as the breadwinner, the non-worker and the dependent man (dependant on his wife or her relatives), the irresponsible *mulherengo* (womaniser), and the homosexual, just to cite a few. The different kinds of femininity, conversely, include the worker, the wife and mother, the single and independent woman, usually without a steady partner, the lesbian and so on. And yet, exactly because of the huge influence of the patriarchal model in this part of the country, the model of masculinity and femininity that come from family socialisation is the hegemonic one described above. This model is the most honoured and influential representation of both masculinity and femininity (Flood 1995).

Because of this double standard of socialisation, the young women in this study mentioned that men are always asking for sex. Most of the times, young women refuse sex in order to adhere to the expected and proper social conduct: the hegemonic model of femininity states that women who are known to have many sexual partners are perceived as street women and are consequently less desirable for serious and steady relationships, such as *namoro* or marriage (Osório 1998). For young men, this

refusal is obviously normal and even desirable, as it distinguishes a decent woman from a *bandida* (bandit). The expression used by Sérgio clearly illustrates the typical behaviour of young men:

*"We throw our net and wait to see what we catch and until where she would go. If she comes easy and goes all the way (accepts sex) she is the easy type then, not good for serious stuff...but I would not lose the opportunity to have sex with her."*

Explaining the refusal by most women of men's sexual advances, Mitó opened up a discussion linked to the socio-cultural construction of the female and male that ultimately led to a feminist critique of the ideas of gender and sexuality. Here are Mitó's words:

*"I also think that the way we have been raised influences it. We are in a society a bit Machista (Machismo); thus, those who take all the initiatives are men. Therefore when there is one side which tries to get something there must always be the other side which always refuses. Thus, we men have the role of trying and women have the role of refusing (laughs)... but it could happen in the opposite manner. Indeed it happens in some cases: for example I have friends that when approached by a girl who asks to namorar with them, they simply refuse, because they do not see this approaching as a female role, they think they should be the ones taking such a step".*

This *Machista* society is based on gendered ideas in which the female sex should conform to the feminine role, i.e. being passive and confined to the domestic arena, whereas the male sex should conform to the masculine role by being more assertive and active and dominating the public sphere (Osório 1998). Such perceptions are strongly influenced by the patriarchal roots in this particular site of Mozambique that, as previously described, influences the socio-sexual socialization of men and women.

It is a widespread understanding in Mozambique that the South is particularly *Machista*. The following definition of Machismo is given by Sternberg:

*Machismo is a cult of the male; a heady mixture of paternalism, aggression, systematic subordination of women, fetishism of the woman's body, and idolisation of their reproductive and nurturing capacities, coupled with a rejection of homosexuality.*

(Sternberg, 2000: 91)

Contemporary Maputo seems to conform to this model. Homosexuality is highly stigmatised; the power of patriarchy gives rise to a model of subordination of women and simultaneous supremacy of men that can also be found in the language and meanings given to the sexual organs of both sexes. For example, among young people in Maputo, a finding which is echoed by Parker (1991) in respect of Brazil, “the man is characterized by his possession of a potential weapon (the penis), the woman is characterized in terms of fissure between her legs – the mysterious entrance (the vagina)” (Parker 1991: 39). A relation of dependency is established in which the weapon (penis) with its power matches the powerless and dependent fissure (vagina). These linguistic expressions clearly articulate the agency and power difference between men and women.

This discourse, moreover, is constructed in a way that creates gender imbalances. For example, the terminology that is used to describe the sexual act tends to give men an active role and women a passive one: the verbs (all meaning ‘to fuck’) are: *foder*, *quecar*, *batcher*, *pifar*, *tchovar*, *fufutar*. The verb is applied in its active form to men’s sexual acts and used in the passive to describe women’s experiences. These words are mostly used by young men when they are talking amongst themselves, as they carry an aggressive valence. As in English, *foder* is regarded as a swearword and, therefore, is mainly used by young men when they are in a group of male friends or when they are swearing at someone.

Young women seldom use these words preferring instead to speak of *fazer amor* (literally meaning ‘to make love’). This expression is most commonly used to refer to sex with someone towards whom you feel *amor* (love), usually the steady partner. Subtle words to describe occasional sex do not refer to sex in straightforward or direct terms; instead, young people would say: *fazer as cenas* (make the things), *chegar aos actos de facto* (to come to blows) or *consumar o acto* (fait accompli).

### **Sexual activity and adulthood**

A very important aspect of sexual relations among young people is that it is regarded as a transition or a passage to a new stage of life. Like a rite of initiation, sexual



relations open up possibilities both for young women and young men. In the same way that Herdt describes the Sambia rites of initiation for boys as a process of “masculinization” (Herdt 1982), I argue that sexual activity among the young men and women of my research group in Maputo marks the onset of adulthood.

Herdt explains that the “masculinization” of young boys occurs together with the separation of boys from the close relationship they have with their mothers (based on the argument that maternal attachment and female containment jeopardizes and pollutes the boys’ growth). It also involves engagement in homosexual<sup>12</sup> fellatio with older men in order to accumulate semen to form biological maleness and masculine comportment (Herdt 1982: 55).

Sexual relations among young people in Maputo define their transition to adulthood. Earlier ethnographic work in Mozambique posits that sexuality was intimately linked to social reproduction. Young men were considered to be fully adults when they had formed and could support their own households. To do so young men had to be initiated, to be married and be fathers, as well as able to support dependents (Junod 1927). The definition of adulthood for young women rested on successful completion of initiation, marriage and child birth (ibid). In this model the attainment of adulthood is a process.

In contemporary Maputo, young people attempt to short cut this process by defining adulthood in terms of sexual encounters. They argue that sexual activity creates a unique space that is controlled primarily by the individual (but also by his/her partner) and not by their parents or guardians as Tania (17 years old), who thinks her step-father puts too much pressure on her, reveals:

*“When you are with your man, mostly when you already have started having sex, you open a new and very good space that only belongs to the two of you. There are no parents’ questions. You feel that is*

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<sup>12</sup> Although Herdt uses the term homosexual to describe the practices of fellatio by boys on older men, he actually refers to this practice as a pedagogical experience. It does not carry the same meaning as homosexuality has in the Western world, which includes intimacy and emotions. In his later works, however, Herdt is even more careful in using the term, precisely because of its associations with deviance in the West, he refers to it as sex between two men.

*something you can do without following the 'do this' or 'do that' of your parents. You feel independent, you feel like a grown up..."*

Adulthood in contemporary Maputo is conceptualised in terms of one's independence from one's parents. That is why financial independence or marriage (which presupposes leaving the parents' home and creating one's own family) are other examples of situations that reveal the transition from childhood to adulthood. Sexual activity has the capacity to signify a transition to adulthood because it creates a private, intimate and secret space that the individual does not have to share. Adults (e.g. parents) also perceive it as a new stage in young people's lives as, by becoming sexually active, young people become responsible for their own bodies and acquire the capacity reproduce and control it.

In the specific case of women, sexual activity to some extent allows them to take control of their bodies personally, by choosing when to start taking contraception or not, and by gaining better control of their menstruation and, as a consequence, of their fertility. Yet, this independence for women is only partial. Indeed, they decide to control their bodies without parental supervision. Paradoxically, women's decisions about taking control of their bodies always result from a negotiation with the current steady partner. They negotiate about the kinds of contraceptives to be used because men usually do not appreciate using condoms with a steady partner as it disrupts their ideal of real sex. However with occasional partners, women are the ones who decide which contraceptive method or which kind of protection they are going to use, since there are no compromises in occasional relationships.

### **The diversity of sexual relationships**

The young people in Maputo city engage in a variety of sexual practices with different kinds of partners. Most of such relationships can be classified under the category of "plastic sexuality" (Giddens 1992) – which involves sexual expression with no intention of reproduction. In such sexual relationships, partners search for personal fulfilment and intimacy over and above the physical relationship of sex (Giddens 1992), but the relationship is still mediated by social constructions of gender and the expectations regarding notions of decency for men and women.

One finds a wide range of relationships from “steady” to “occasional” ones. The main steady relationship is *namoro*. The main characteristics of such a relationship cited by the youths (both male and female) are responsibility, respect and intimacy:

*“Namorado is that one that stays a long time with you. Sometimes he does not even stay a long time but you consider and respect him. It varies from person to person. For instances you can stay only three months with him but because you have entered his home frequently (many times), or if you have had an intense relationship that was outstanding to you... I mean if it had all the responsibilities of namoro then it is a namoro”.*

Mara

*My namorada goes out with me, she comes to my house, and my parents know her. I do not like that my friends talk about her in certain aspects, what happens between us is reserved to us. I do not know if she talks with her friends. It is a more mature relationship.*

Gildo

Another aspect that is prominent in their description of the *namoro* is the relationship that the partner has with one’s family. This may be important because “usually *namoro* is considered the period of preparation for marriage in which the partners deepen their mutual knowledge” (Calado, Kortbeek and Manghezi 1986: 16). This is also the case in Mead’s description of the life of a girl in Samoa. When she reaches adolescence, she engages in different kinds of sexual relationship. One of these forms is a courtship that is very similar to *namoro*. In such a relationship, the acceptance of a suitor’s gift by a girl’s family is recognised as acceptance of the relationship (Mead 1973: 81).

The difference between this and the *namoro* relationship is that it is the *young women* who enter the houses of the *namorados* and meet their family, and not the young men who go to the homes of their girlfriends. This aspect might be linked to the fact that in the South of Mozambique marriage is virilocal therefore the introduction and closeness of the young woman with the young man’s family is a symbol of the seriousness of their relationship. This is further underscored by the fact that the young man’s family has the right to tell him off if they see him with another young woman.

The relationship between the *namorada* and the *namorado's* family varies greatly, depending on the subjective issues that construct such relationships, such as the character of the individuals, whether the parents are still close to the previous *namorada*, or what the *namorado* allows the *namorada* to do in his house. For example, Dalila who has been with her *namorado* Toni (24 years old) for 5 years now, stated that she started going inside his house in the first week of *namoro*, as he would take her inside to chat and exchange caresses. She considers herself a very kind person and from the beginning she was greeting and talking with the *namorado's* mother. From then on she would also call her *tia* (auntie). The adoption of kinship terminology signals both respect and intimacy. She likes to bake; indeed, she even makes cookies and sells them at school in the long break. She began exchanging recipes with the *namorado's* mother and baking cakes together at the weekends. Now she feels so comfortable there, that she considers the *namorado's* mother to be a second mother to her.

The example of Liliana, 18 years old, is quite different. She and Ivan (21 years old) have been *namorados* for six months. She enters his house and knows his parents but they are not very close. They greet each other and, as she says, "*we talk basic things*" (Liliana). One of the possible reasons why the relationship between her and the parents of her *namorado* is not close may be that their relationship only started a few months ago.

One characteristic of a *namoro* relationship, then, is that it is anticipated to signal the establishment of close relations between a *namorada/o* and her/his partner's parents and wider kin circle. An intimate (sexual) relationship thus acts as the grounds for establishing other kinds of relations based on respect and possibly, as in Dalila's case, friendship between generations.

Depending on the duration or intensity of the relationship, as well as the personalities of the parties involved (i.e. the girl, her boyfriend and his family), the girl might establish a very close bond with her boyfriend's family. In some cases, such bonds may endure even after the relationship has ended, as happened in the case of Mitó. Mitó had a *namoro* relationship that lasted for a year and a few months with Judite, a 19-year-old student in Matric. During the relationship, Judite and Mitó's parents

established a close bond. The relationship between them thus endures, although eight months have passed since they broke up. A further reason for this is that Judite is a close friend of Mitó's sister, Marinela, who is 16 years old. Furthermore, Mitó and Judite established a great friendship after they broke up. In view of the above, Judite continues to visit Mitó's house to talk both with him and his sister and, on many occasions, she has conversations with Mitó's parents too.

Usually the bond between the girl and her ex-boyfriend's parents does not endure long after the break-up, primarily because she no longer pays frequent visits to the boy's home and secondly because the new girlfriend usually does not accept the presence of the ex-girlfriend. In Mitó's case, his new girlfriend, Catarina, an 18-year-old student, does not appreciate the situation although she tolerates it, as Mitó has explained that Judite is also a friend of his sister Marinela. Catarina also feels confident in herself and in her relationship with Mitó. She has a good relationship with Mitó's family, which allows her to chat easily with his mother. On Sundays, when the family have a late lunch, she sometimes helps his mother to prepare the food (although she does so a little timidly), and is invited to sit at the table with the rest of the family for lunch. Mitó's parents and sister are very kind to her, as she is Mitó's actual *namorada*. Clearly, then, the fact that Judite still visits *Mito's* home and has become a close friend of his sister Marinela is an example of the fact that the end of the *namoro* relationship does not necessarily signal the end of the relationships arising from it.

The characteristics of *namoro* fit perfectly into the definition of a close relationship, offered by Kelly *et al*:

*"A high degree of interdependence between two people is revealed in four properties of their interconnected activities: (1) the individuals have frequent impact on each other; (2) the degree of occurrence per each impact is strong; (3) the impact involves diverse kinds of activities for each person; and (4) all of these characteristics characterize the interconnected activity series for a relatively long duration of time".*

(Kelly *et al* in McKinney and Sprecher 1991: 2)

In *namoro*, as the passage suggests, individuals frequently impact on each other by bringing their values and opinions into the relationship, thereby influencing the other's behaviour in the relationship. Generally in *namoro* relationships there is a strong sense of sharing resources. This has been confirmed by the majority of my sample who are presently engaged in *namoro*. Mitó explained the sense of sharing in his *namoro* relationship:

*As I have told you my namorada comes to my house, therefore she must come and go back almost daily and she does not always have money to do it. The cost of transport may seem nothing for one day but for the month it is a lot of money. I am 21 and she is 18, she has an inferior monthly allowance to mine, then when she needs money I give to her. We need money to talk in the phone, now with cell phones we need airtime and basically I can say that I put airtime to talk to her. At weekends there are the costs of going out, etc... It is a lot. At the end of the month 70 to 80% of my monthly allowance I spent with/on her, I mean on us. But she suggests paying the bill sometimes but as a man I see that as my responsibility. But there are moments that I talk to her when I have no money and she gives me some. Together we manage all the money.*

Mitó

In a *namoro* relationship, sex is intertwined with several other aspects of the relationship such as love and emotions. This, associated with the seriousness of the *namoro*, means that the relationship is positively valued in a moral sense. Moreover, it allows young people to differentiate *namoro* from other kinds of relationships, such as the occasional partner or *pita/o*. Mitó, for instance, who had a *pita* three months ago although he has a *namorada*, drew the following distinction:

*"(...) but with a pita things are different, with her it is like... I was with her today, I managed to do something different with her then I go tell my friends and we all comment about it. I think it is dirty but that is what happens, I will not lie. We do not consider the girl. We do not walk in the streets holding hands; we do not take her home... maybe when there is no one at home, we do not go to public spaces, or if we do, there is no intimacy; there is no such bond as the one that exists with the namorada. I do not give her the value I give to a namorada. It is a relationship in which what counts is the time we spend together just the two of us. For example, me and a pita, we are in the stairs of my building and after that it is over, only if we meet again".*

And Mara described the male *pito* as “the one with whom you cheat on your *namorado*.”

Another kind of occasional relation is the *saca-cena* (literally translated as ‘taking the scene’), which is equivalent to a one-night stand:

*“Saca-cena is that neighbour or friend or guy you meet at a party and you think he is very attractive and you may even like him but you do not want him for a namorado because he is a womanizer. He has something that does not make him fit as a namorado: a womanizer or any other thing. He is someone who you meet and if the occasion is right, it all happens: mostly kisses, but some people go further (have sex).”*

So, said Liliana who believed that a *saca-cena* relationship does not necessarily include penetrative sex. However, another study also carried out in Maputo amongst slightly older young people has found that “the practice consists of casual sex with an unknown partner met at a public venue such as bar, disco, or party or even a chance encounter on the street” (Karlyn 2003: 16). Some of my respondents claimed to have had sex during a *saca-cena* encounter. This indicates the different expressions that the *saca-cena* relationship can acquire, but also alerts us to the fact that women are still constrained by social expectations to be decent and not *bandidas*. Thus, if a woman denies or does not admit that sexual intercourse is involved in a *saca-cena* relationship, it may indicate that she is avoiding to be viewed in a negative light.

The main difference between *pito/a* and *saca-cena* is that with *pito/a* the relationship can usually last for years in parallel (or not) with either party or just one of the parties being involved in a *namoro* relationship. The relationship has parallels with a lover/mistress relationship in the West. In contrast, a *saca-cena* usually happens just once. “It happens with someone one desires; it is a kind of sin because you want to taste the prohibited fruit” (*Iva*). Both of these occasional relationships are morally valued as negative by the respondents and more broadly, because they entail cheating and unfaithfulness.

*Pito/a* and *saca-cena* relationships are characterised by desire and overwhelming passion, unlike *namoro* relationship, which rests more on respect and affection. Another relationship that is predicated in affection is *ficar*.

A new concept of relationship borrowed from the Brazilian soap operas on the television; *ficar* (literally meaning 'to stay'). Essentially, it means spending time together with no responsibilities, in the sense that it is not a serious relationship; one can live one's life as if one were single because there is no one demanding explanations. But it is different from friendship, in that caresses, kisses on the mouth and sex can sometimes occur. Amongst the informants in Maputo, *ficar* takes the same form as in Brazilian soaps. Such relationships, most of the time, begin as a companionship relationship in which there initially is no commitment, but it usually evolves into a *namoro* relationship.

*"When you have a ficar relationship with someone it is, most of the time, because you do not want to stay alone and that person is okay for you, he pleases you. You do not want any compromise, but you stay and stay (for a while) that the person becomes your boyfriend."*

Tania

*Ficar* is, then, an extended friendship between people of opposite sexes that may involve physical intimacy although not necessarily "real sex". Usually, in this relationship, both parties are single, and it has a positive moral value, as most of the time it does evolve into a *namoro* relationship. At the time of conducting the study, none of my informants was in a *ficar* relationship, but Mara, Dalila and Tania told me that they had been involved in such relationships.

It is noteworthy that sex does not happen in all kinds of relationships. It has already been mentioned that even in *saca-cenas* relations, sex is not always present. In *ficar* relationships, due to the fact that there is usually not much attraction, the desire (by one or both of the partners) to be intimate is also not always there. Some times one of the partners has the desire to engage in sexual activity and expects the other part to reciprocate such desire as a way to thank and show appreciation to the fact that they are having a relationship. But this is problematic as Mara explained:



*"Having sex to be grateful, I never did. I had someone who was very good to me and helped me a lot as I was coming from a big disillusion. I had a fícar relationship with him for a couple of months. Sometimes I use to feel that I had the obligation to have sex with him because he was good to me...but I never did, because I did not feel the desire to do that."*

In *namoro*, however, sex is obligatory. Usually, partners enter into a sexual relationship after a couple of months of "going out" (*sair juntos*), when they have established a solid relationship – although sometimes it can be immediately at the beginning of the relationship as Lucha expresses:

*"Heh... there are moments when sex is necessary, do you understand me? For example we cannot be boyfriend and girlfriend (namorar) without sex. Today it does not exist anymore... (namorar) without sex ...it was once upon a time, it does not happen anymore"*

The only reason given that may delay the beginning of sexual activity and its regular practice is the virginity of the young women, as illustrated here by Iva:

*"You see ... you started a relationship with him, you were involved for a long time without sex, then you lost your virginity and sex is a routine."*

Other kinds of relationships where sex is the basic component are those relationships where sex is treated as a commodity. Examples of this are sex with prostitutes and sex with older men in exchange for luxury goods and money. The majority of young men in this study have had an experience with a street prostitute. Their motivations in this regard are linked to peer pressure and a desire to experiment: "I have gone to prostitutes, moved by curiosity and friends. I might go back to them but I really would like to avoid it, not because of diseases but because I see no need to do it", said Mário, while Sérgio commented that "[W]e got there, we negotiated the price and we went to an abandoned building, one of the floors, the three of us were there with three prostitutes. The idea was to have group sex. We did not exchange the partners but we were all in the same room, having sex. For me it was strange".

Sex with older men or with rich and famous youngsters in exchange for money or other material and luxury goods was also described by my informants, although none of them admitted to having ever been involved in such a sexual relationship. The partners in relationships that involve older men and younger women are called *tio* (uncle) and *catorzinha* (literal translation – small fourteen year old girl; teenager). One informant described how she used to accept a lift from an older man who was promising to give her a cell phone and used to give her public phone cards in order for her to call him, amongst other things:

*“This guy use to hoot at me and my girlfriend on our way to school. Once we decided to accept his lift and since that day he started to come and pick us up to school. He used to give us chocolates and public phone cards for me to call him... but I never did... instead I would call my boyfriend. After some weeks, as I was sat in the front seat he tried to touch my leg and smiled at me. Since that day I never took his lift anymore. I think he thought I was a catorzinha... he was wrong, I am not cheap girl. I would not give sex because a man gave me a lift, chocolates or airtime... that is cheap! ”*

As the last part of the passage shows, this practice is negatively judged morally because it implies “selling sex” for money or other material goods. Also, as the terminology suggests and also because of the age difference, the individuals involved have a relationship that is comparable to a kin relation between an uncle and a niece. Thus, it can be read as an incestuous relationship and, as a consequence, it is negatively perceived. Paradoxically, though, most informants do not condemn the young women who do become involved in such relationships because they are in need. As Mara has stated:

*It is easy for us to judge because we have parents who can buy things for us. I do not condemn girls who do that because they may be in real need; but in other cases she can be extremely ambitious. I think if I do something like that my mom would be very disappointed because she tries to give everything that she could. You may not have your wardrobe packed but you have the basics. But there are some people who do it because they want more than the basic, they want to be seen. For example, if I ask my mother for a tracksuit that is very expensive she can make me wait three months or more. She can make me wait but she will buy it for me. If she does not buy it is because she could not.*

Bagnol and Chamo (2003), in their study of “sugar daddies” in Zambézia province in Mozambique, show that intergenerational compensatory sexual relationships are very common and are becoming less condemned in society. In some cases parents even allow their girls to become involved with older men, as they also stand to benefit from such transactions (Bagnol and Chamo 2003).

Table 2 traces out the characteristics of these various relationships in terms of their duration, moral value and emotional valences; it also identifies the probable risk of HIV infection and the strength of a consequential relationship with the respondents group.

Table 2: Characteristics of the different relationships

Relationship	Characteristics					Emotions		Implications of normative practice to HIV infection
	Status	Duration	Link with parents	Safe sex	Moral value	Trust	Intimacy	
<i>Namoro</i>	steady	long term	strong	unprotected	Positive	High	yes	positive
<i>Pito/pita</i>	occasional	short and long term	None	Varies	Negative	Low	yes	varies
<i>Saca-cena</i>	occasional	one night stand	None	protected	Negative	Low	varies	negative
<i>Ficar</i>	occasional	short and long term	None	Varies	Positive	varies	varies	varies
Tio-catorzinha	occasional or steady	short and long term	might/might not have	Varies	Negative	varies	yes	varies
Prostitutes	occasional	short term	None	protected	Negative	Low	yes	negative

Table 3 explores these materials further in relation to each respondent, documenting the kinds and numbers of relationships in which they had engaged. As the data reveal, young women are more likely to have long lasting relationships than men in the sample. Men and women both reported *pito/a* and *saca-cena* relationships but men did not report *ficar* relationships and none of the respondents records *tio-catorzinha*

relationship: this figures may be underreported because of the stigma attached to *tio-catorzinha* relationship.

Only men reported making use of the services of prostitutes. As the table shows, young women's sexual activities begin early: the earliest reported was age 13 (Dalila) and the latest, age 17 (Carla). I was unable to collect information on the onset of men's sexual activities.

Table 3: The distribution of the relationships of the respondents

Respondent	Age	Age of sexual debut	Namoro		Pito/a	Saca-cena	Ficar	Tio-catorzinha	Prostitute
			N° of partners	N° of months					
Carla	18	17	3		4	1	none	none	none
Dalila	19	13	2	36 60	2	none	1	none	none
Deny	21	not available	2	8 48	3	1	1	none	none
Iva	17	15	2	not available 18	1	not available	not available	not available	not available
Liliana	18	16		22 6	1	none	none	none	none
Lucha	20	15	3	not available	4	4	none	none	none
Mara	18	14	2	not available	3	none	2	none	none
Tania	17	15	1	15	2	none	1	none	none
Célio	21	not available	2	not available	not available	not available	not available	not available	not available
Gildo	22	not available	2	not available	2	3	not available	not available	none
Mário	18	not available	none	not available	8	6	not available	not available	3
Mitó	21	not available	3	not available 13 8	4	4	none	none	1
Pedro	18	not available	1	not available	not available	not available	not available	not available	not available
Sérgio	19	not available	3	not available	5	3	none	none	2

In conclusion, then, this chapter has attempted to discuss the notions of sex and the different relationships in which sex can be a component. Sexual activity opens up a new space of intimacy that is not shared with or controlled by parents. This space presupposes self-responsibility and is consequently perceived as one of the signs of the transition from childhood (a state of total dependence and control of the parents) to adulthood (a state of self control).

From the description of the different kinds of relationships it is possible to acknowledge how the youth, mainly young women, are challenging dichotomist vision of gender roles that are still present in the double standard of socialization. They are admitting that they betray their boyfriends when they feel very attracted to another man, and thus engaging in some *saca-cena* and/or *pito* relationship while having a *namorado*. The next chapter will focus on one specific kind of relationship – *namoro* – showing its particular dynamics and meanings, and how it influences the youth in contemporary Maputo.

## Chapter Four

### Sex to prove love

This chapter focuses on steady relationships – *namoro* – whose main characteristics are love and trust. Moreover, in such relationships sex is used to demonstrate love. During the text I use the terms ‘demonstrate’, ‘prove’, ‘show’ and ‘express love’ interchangeably, because it is locally accepted that love needs to be proven and such proof is offered in sexual relationships. In support of this argument, I will describe how my informants have defined love and how they perceive and show love; I will differentiate sex in *namoro* relationships from others relationships where, although sex happens, it does not have the same meaning.

As indicated in the previous chapter, *namoro* is a particularly intense relationship in which the girlfriend frequently visits the boyfriend’s home and knows his family. Two factors define a relationship as one of *namoro*: the social exposure of the relationship and the strong sentimental ties and feelings that link the couple. Firstly, then, the two partners in a *namoro* relationship demonstrate their status in the public sphere by exchanging caresses, kisses (in the mouth<sup>13</sup>), hugs, holding hands and other forms of intimacy in public. They will also introduce themselves to their peers and family as *namorados*. In this regard, the *namorado* will usually take the *namorada* home, for his family to meet her as his “formal” *namorada*, not just as a girl, colleague or friend. With regard to the *namorada*’s family, in contrast, the process is not as quick. Even though there might be an acknowledgment of the relationship, it is possible that there is no formal knowledge about it. The usual procedure is that the boyfriend is only received at his girlfriend’s home after a long period of time or when there is an officialization (*oficialização*) of the relationship: this is a ceremony at which some of the *namorado*’s relatives (usually an uncle, an aunt or older brothers and sisters)

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<sup>13</sup> Kisses in the mouth, or wet kisses as they are also called amongst the youth – *beijo na boca/beijo molhado* have a different meaning than the two kisses on both cheeks, which are a form of greeting between two women or between a woman and a man of any age. Two men greet each other by shaking their hands.

introduce themselves to the *namorada*'s family and express the desire of the boyfriend to consolidate the relationship into a serious one that will finalize in marriage.

Mitó, who has been going out with Catarina for 8 months, describes his *namoro* relationship as follows:

*“My namorada goes out with me; (...) we go to the movies, to have a dinner or to have a juice or to the disco together. She comes to my house, and my parents know her (...) we hold hands when we walk in the streets...”*

Secondly, in order for the relationship to be considered a *namoro* relationship, there must be a strong sentimental bond between the two partners. The main word used by informants to refer to this bond is *amor* (love), which is further described as eliciting feelings of closeness and intimacy. As Dalila said:

*“I say we love each other because we are like friends, and at the same time like brother and sister and namorados ...we care a lot about each other, we are everything to each other.”*

And Gildo offered:

*“When I love I like and I trust the person. I feel very good around her. When you love you do any and everything for the person you are in love with.”*

As illustrated by these statements, love is regarded as a deep feeling that means *being everything for one another* as well as *doing everything to each other*. Love also uplifts the spirit: *“your heart suddenly starts to beat very strongly when you see or hear the voice of the person that you love”* as Dalila puts it, or as Gildo described it, one feels as though one has ‘seen the green bird’: *“after staying with the person you love you wake up feeling great, it is like you have ‘seen the green bird’ – you feel in a state of peace so much so that even people at your home start to ask what is happening with you...”* ‘To see the green bird’ – *‘ver passarinho verde’* – is an expression used in Maputo to refer to someone who looks and acts as though he or she is in love: happy and always in a good mood – smiling, singing, dancing, greeting everyone, being kind

and so on. It is a very common expression in urban Maputo and seems to have been borrowed from the Brazilian Portuguese introduced in the context of Maputo through the Brazilian soap operas, which are regularly shown on television. In the Brazilian context, moreover, *passarinho* (bird) is a slang word that refers to the man's penis. Thus, this expression may be linked to the happiness experienced after having had sex.

Another important component of the *namoro* relationship is trust. Moore and Rosenthal (1993) have found a similar pattern amongst the youth in Australia, who described love in terms of intimacy, faithfulness, trust and care (Moore and Rosenthal 1993). For the young people in my study, love is a relationship built over time that allows the establishment of trust between the two partners. Initially, a love relationship may start with a physical attraction due to the good looks or charming behaviour of the partner. Over time, though, it develops to a stage of seriousness characterized by the definitions of certain behavioural limits within the relationship: these limits relate to dress codes, nights out, friendships and other aspects. Once the partners have established these parameters and actually obey them, a feeling of trust is created between them. Originally, these behavioural patterns will have been defined by the parents of the two individuals. Gradually, though, as the children grow up, they will learn and establish their own expectations and rules (of which parents may not be aware), a process of particular relevance to *namoro* relationships. The rules are given overt by men but young women are able to impose their own rules too.

In relation to dress codes, for instance, some young men in this study objected to their *namoradas* wearing very revealing clothes, such as mini-skirts or transparent clothes, when they were unaccompanied by their *namorados*. A couple of young men even declared that they did not allow their partners to wear such clothes. The reason for this is simply that clothes are closely associated with morality, and thus that other men may regard girls who wear revealing clothes as exposing themselves or as "easy girls". Thus, through a negotiation and/or threaten to finish the relationship they were able to prevent their *namoradas* from wearing such clothes.

The young women, for their part, objected to their boyfriends having many nights out with their friends, as alcohol consumption is high and as there is thus a high risk of



involvement with other women. Similarly, the young men in the group were concerned about their girlfriends having nights out, in particular with regard to the place and behaviour they might adopt. Most young men did not like their girlfriends going out to discos or parties regularly and without them, as this might lead to them being perceived as “night girls”.<sup>14</sup> They would thus lose respect and consideration. They also mentioned that the very sensual dancing styles that are in vogue (*Kuduru*<sup>15</sup> and *Passada*<sup>16</sup>, for example) make girls look very desirable and attractive, and that they would not like their *namoradas* being desired by other men.

These mechanisms of control differentiate a *namoro* relationship from one that is based on passion or desire. In the latter, the partners come together because they are physically attracted to each other, or because they have a “crazy and consuming need to be with the person because one feels crazy when one sees her, because she is a “*gostosona*” (gorgeous) or she is “*muito boa*” (has a very nice body)<sup>17</sup>”, as Mário commented. Desire and passion are usually the basis of *pito/pita* or *ficar* rather than *namoro* relationships.

An important aspect is the fact that ‘love’ is used ONLY to describe the intimate relationship between the couple. In other words, the feelings and sentiments that one has for parents, relatives or friends are described with the words *gosto* (like), *respeito* (respect), *protecção* (protection) and *cuidado* (care), but not with the word *amor* (love). Thus, while one would say to a *namorado* or *namorada* (mainly in private) “*eu amo-te*” (I love you), one would instead say “*não deixarei nada acontecer, vou te*

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<sup>14</sup> “Night girls” (also “night women”) was an expression used by some informants to describe women who visit all the nighttime events: parties, discos, shows, etc. They are usually considered cheap and are not looked at with respect and with serious intentions.

<sup>15</sup> *Kuduru* is an Angolan style of dance that came to Mozambique through the media and has been easily assimilated and marketed. In this dance people are constantly shaking the buttocks and making sensual gyrations. Although people do not dance together as a pair, a girl can from time to time go down shaking her buttocks, while the man behind her moves his body and hands as if he were touching and rubbing her buttocks.

<sup>16</sup> *Passada* is a slow dance in which people dance in pairs, holding each other very closely with both arms / holding each other in a close embrace. Whereas the men hold the women’s waist, the women hold the men around the shoulders or the neck. During the dance, they will also make very sensual movements.

<sup>17</sup> *Gostosona* / *muito boa* / *boazuda* are terms that young men use to describe women with nice bodies. Although their notions of nice bodies may vary depending on their personal taste (some prefer thin women while others prefer women with “more meat”), all agreed that round and slightly prominent buttocks, a thin waist, defined legs and breasts corresponding to the rest of the body characterize a *gostosa*. All of them referred to the R&B American singer Beyonce Knowles as a symbol / example of a *gostosona*.

*proteger*” (I will never allow anything to happen, I will protect you) to a sibling or to friends with whom one has a ‘like-kin’ relationship. Moreover, these feelings are not usually expressed verbally, unless there is a moment of crisis. Between *namorados*, for instance, those feelings may be publicly expressed if one of the partners feels threatened or if he/she has done something wrong and he/she is trying to apologise. Between siblings and friends, similarly, those feelings are verbalised when someone threatens or make jokes about a friend or a sibling.

Nonetheless, informants did admit that there were some *namoro* relationships, in which one of the partners feels love for the other, but the other just stays with him/her because he/she feels sorry for him/her or is too proud to admit that he/she also loves the partner. This sense of pride happens mostly on the part of young men, as peers might laugh at him if he were to admit that he is in love with the young woman with whom he is going out. This happens because young men perceive being in love as being controlled and having to accept everything that the girl does or says. There is a popular saying that captures this: – “*estar a apaixonado é como estar engarrafado: fazes tudo o que ela quer*” (being in love is like being bottled: you do everything that she wants you to do).

The example of Dalila with her first boyfriend is a typical illustration of this. Dalila was in love and even obsessed with *Ladinho*. But *Ladinho* was very proud because he saw himself as a very handsome and charming guy; consequently, he was very cold to Dalila and never expressed any care for Dalila, unless he was interested in something that she could give him. Thus, when he asked her for sex, she would give it to him because she was in love with him. He was her first man (in other words, he took her virginity), although she complained that he was very aggressive when they had sex the first time: “*He was not careful the first time we had sex, we did not even have foreplay. I could only feel pain and I was screaming like a crazy woman...*” (Dalila). Their relationship ended five years later when Dalila met her current *namorado*, whom she regards as the man of her life.

This notion of love goes together with the notion of “real sex”. For the informants of this study, “real sex” is exclusively vaginal penetrative sex in which one is able to have “that (physical) contact and feel the warmth of the partner, and feel her blood” as

Sérgio said. “Real sex” is idealised as sex without any barriers in order to allow both partners to experience each other’s warmth and blood. This of course means that it is unprotected sex, i.e. without a condom. Blood is used here symbolically to refer the deepest contact that sex without protection allows between *namorados*. It is what Flood refers to as “natural sex”, in which penetrative heterosexual intercourse and unprotected sex signify intimacy (Flood 1995: 1-3). The young people in my study argue that “real sex” is supposed to happen in *namoro* relationships, where partners trust each other and can thus have sex without a condom. As they are in love, both of them trust that their partner will not give them any sexually transmitted infections, as the partner will not “cheat” on him/her. “Cheating” in a *namoro* relationship means the involvement (sexual or not) of one of the partners with a third individual. In contrast to a *pito/a* or *ficar* relationship, in which there are no compromises and “cheating” is allowed, in *namoro* relationships, certain kinds of “cheating” – like the existence of a long-term relationship with a third person and a public acknowledgement of such relationship – may lead to the dissolution of a *namoro* relationship. Despite the risk of cheating, “real sex” is still preferred in *namoro* relationships because young people believe that in the event of unfaithfulness the partner will protect him- or herself (and as a consequence their relationship) from STI’s by using a condom during sex (Manuel 2002).

Quite apart from the risks associated with unprotected sex (pregnancy as well as the transmission of STI’s), this notion of “natural sex” (Flood 1995) is very problematic because it represents a vision of sexuality based on hetero-normative penetrative sex. This contributes to the widespread perception that other forms of sexuality, such as homosexuality or non-penetrative sex, are considered aberrations and unnatural expressions of sexuality, and that oral sex is not sex. This inevitably contributes to the negative view and even stigmatisation of homosexuals, a perception that I observed among the informants of this study. Indeed, most of the informants, although referring to cunnilingus and fellatio as oral sex did not consider these to be a sexual end in themselves, but rather a kind of preliminary or foreplay that would create excitement and prepare the environment for the consolidation of sex – meaning penile-vaginal penetrative sex.

“Real sex” is a particular characteristic of *namoro* relationships, which are idealised by the presence of love –a shared sentiment that enhances the well-being and

happiness of those involved, and creates a climate of trust, care and companionship. In other kinds of relationships (*pito/pita*, *ficar*, *saca-cena*, and so on), sex should preferably happen with the use of protection (condoms), because there are no guarantees that the partner has used a condom (and therefore protected him/herself against STI's) in previous sexual encounters.

This pattern of condom use (or rather, non-condom use) in steady relationships corroborates much of the anthropological literature on youth sexuality around the world. For example, Moore and Rosenthal (1993) show that in Australia at the beginning of the relationship young people do use condoms when having sex, but after some time and the establishment of trust, condoms are progressively replaced by contraceptive pills. Levine and Ross (2001) show that university students in Cape Town, South Africa, believe that in a relationship based on love and trust the partners are protected, and that there is thus no need to use condoms to protect oneself against STI's/ HIV/AIDS. Although such literature corroborates some of the findings of my study, it does not explain how and why sex is considered to prove a particular sentiment – love. Thus, the next section of the chapter reviews the literature that examines different sexual encounters in which at least one of the partners is a young individual. The objective of this review is to shed light on this issue, and to find possible avenues to explain why sex is used to prove love for the partner.

### **Sexual Discourses**

Different social scientists analysing the socio-cultural dynamics of the HIV/AIDS pandemic have focused specifically on youth sexual behaviour on the African continent. They have concluded that young women offer sex in exchange for money (Schoeph 1992; McGrath et al 1993; Varga 1996; Bagnol and Chamo 2003) or for other commodities that constitute more 'wants' than 'needs' (Hunter 2002; Bagnol and Chamo 2003; Leclerc- Madlala 2003). They have further concluded that this places women in particular and their communities in general at greater risk of exposure to STI's and, even more dangerously, to AIDS.

Although the studies mentioned above have found that young people (and in particular young women) participate in sex in exchange for money or other material

goods, it is the intention of the following literature review to investigate whether young people may also be engaging in sex in order to prove their love for their partner.

Leclerc-Madlala (2003) argues that young women in Durban, South Africa, engage in sex with multiple partners (mainly older men and taxi drivers) in order to gain access to “expensive commodities such as jewellery, mobile phones, fashionable clothing and opportunities to be seen in luxury automobiles” (Leclerc-Madlala 2003: 2). Thus, sex in that context is used as a commodity in exchange for material goods and services that constitute women’s wants.

Although such a pattern may be useful in explaining the sexual relationships described by the students of my case study group in Maputo, i.e. with regard to “*catorzinhas*” and “*tios*” (intergenerational and compensatory sexual relations), it does not explain a situation in which sex is used to prove love for the partner. Moreover, Leclerc-Madlala’s article tends to reinforce negative perceptions in respect of the sexuality of black and poor women, which contributes to stigmatisation, as she makes claims about “Zulu women” as though ethnicity were at stake. These versions of black and female sexuality clearly strengthen the myth that AIDS is a “black” disease and a disease of the poor. Such myths are very dangerous because they may engender a sense of immunity to AIDS among those who do not belong to such stigmatised groups. In addition, this adds to the negative view that blacks are inherently promiscuous, and that they thus spread STI’s and in particular AIDS<sup>18</sup>.

Leclerc-Madlala’s analysis is blind to the fact that in Western cultures it is also expected of the male partner to be sexually intimate with a young woman after paying for her dinner or after offering her a diamond ring. Thus, having sex in return for material goods can be understood within “the logic of the gift” (Mauss 1969) and not only in cultural terms, as Leclerc-Madlala’s approach tends to emphasize.

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<sup>18</sup> Similarly, in this regard, we can refer to Farmer’s study, which shows that North Americans blame black Haitians for spreading HIV/AIDS (Farmer 1992). Farmer argues against this interpretation by providing evidence that the syndrome was in fact new to Haiti and that sexual transmission and contaminated blood transfusions accounted for the majority of the early cases (Farmer 1992: 222). Thus, American interpretations are simply manifestations of racism and discrimination that ultimately lead to blaming the victims (Farmer 1992).

The logic of the gift is useful to consider in relation to sex's appearance as proof of love in *namoro* relationships among young people in Maputo city. Mauss (1969) describes such gifts as "prestations" which are in theory voluntary, disinterested and spontaneous, but are in fact obligatory and interested" (Mauss 1969: 1). Using such an approach, I argue that when a young man approaches a young woman and reveals his interest in having a *namoro* relationship with her by declaring his feelings for her and proposing a relationship with her, he assumes that he does have deep feelings for, and serious intentions towards, her. Most of the young women interviewed in this study regarded it as an honour to be asked to become a *namorada*. Part of the reason may also be that the numbers of single men in the city are decreasing,<sup>19</sup> whereas the number of women is increasing. Indeed, the statistics show that in Mozambique in general and in Maputo in particular, there are more women than men (INE 1999). One of the factors that might contribute to such disparity in the case of Maputo city is the traditional legacy of male migration in the South of Mozambique. Thus, as Gagnon and Parker state: "[T]he very way in which the sexual partnering is organized in the society and the investments that are made in such partners shape the opportunity to acquire or change sexual partners" (Gagnon and Parker 1995: 15). In the context of the United States, these authors show, that three quarters of persons between eighteen and fifty-nine years of age are already in affection and sexual relationships, there is a very limited market for easily available partners (Gagnon and Parker 1995: 15). This has been corroborated by my own findings in Maputo city.

Moreover, the majority of men tend to prefer casual or occasional relationships with women, which "most of the times are translated in men taking [sexual] advantage of women" as Iva claimed, being asked to enter into a *namoro* relationship is particularly desirable primarily because it is socially perceived as a relationship enriched with deep feeling and endowed with a serious character. It implies respect on the part of the man towards the woman, and on the part of society towards the couple; it also involves meeting the partner's parents, and the possibility of making plans for the future that may include marriage or having children. It is imbued with great social significance.

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<sup>19</sup> The reason why the numbers of men in this particular social group are declining is that many of them further their studies outside the country, whereas others are already in *namoro* relationships.

Usually, though, such proposition to embark on a *namoro* relationship only happens when the young man in question has known the young woman for a period of time. They may already be friends or have friends in common, or they may be school- or class-mates or even neighbours. Thus, they have spent time together chatting, partying, studying or playing. In some cases, the young man might have been *investigar* (investigate) the young woman for a while beforehand, although not in a close relationship with her. In such cases, the young man would usually approach the young woman in order for them to become friends, and only later he would show his interest in having a *namoro* relationship with her.

Conventionally, then, a man would ask a young woman to be his *namorada* after having known her for a while. Most commonly, the men approach the women in order to initiate any kind of relationship. This is perceived to be the man's role, and in fact, some men may rudely refuse and even get angry when asked by a woman to enter into a *namoro* relationship.

Despite this clear convention, there may be exceptions: in the case of *Tania*, for instance, things did not happen quite in that way. She met her actual *namorado* on a Saturday morning at the beach. She was with some friends enjoying the bright sun at Costa do Sol beach, when a group of three young men approached them. One of the young men was a friend of *Tania*'s friend. They introduced themselves and sat with them for quite a while chatting. *Tania* was enjoying chatting with Nuno, one of the boys from the group. Before they said goodbye to each other, the boys invited the girls to a party that evening. All the girls went to the party, and *Tania* spent most of the time chatting with Nuno. When the party ended, Nuno, who had a car, offered the girls a lift home. *Tania* was the last one left in the car. When they arrived at her home, they remained in the car chatting and after a while, they were kissing each other and ended up having sex.

When *Tania* left the car, she was desperately anxious about what he would think of her, because the encounter had had all the characteristics of a *saca-cena* encounter. The next morning, however, Nuno rang the bell at her house, handed her a red rose, and asked her if she did not want to be his girlfriend, as he had never had such an

exiting experience with a woman before. She accepted, and they have now been together for three months as *namorados*. This example shows that there are no strict rules in the way a proposition of *namoro* may happen, or that there may be exceptions depending on the specific situations.

It can thus be argued that when a young man approaches a young woman and proposes to have a *namoro* relationship with her, he is in fact offering her a “gift” – the gift of his feelings and the commitment he is ready to establish with her. Such commitment involves respect, fidelity (or at least its intention by both partners) and sharing. One of the characteristics of the gift, however, is that it “carries with it the obligation to repay gifts received” (Mauss 1969: 10). If the young woman were to accept the proposal, the young man would clearly expect her to recognize his feelings and intentions by being sexually intimate with him.

‘Real sex’ is the one essential aspect that defines a *namoro* relationship, because it gives the possibility of the intimacy of being “inside” each other and feeling each other’s “bodies, blood and liquids” as Gildo commented. This notion of sex corroborates Taylor’s (1990) study on the fractal person<sup>20</sup> in Rwanda. Taylor (1990) shows that the prevailing logic of the gift in Rwanda means that health is perceived in the flow of fluids – blood, semen, maternal milk, as well as liquids involved in social exchanges, such as sorghum beer, cow’s milk and honey – through the body and from one body to the other. Niehaus (2002) also demonstrates that in the South African Lowveld the conception of the body as unbounded and therefore transmitting substances to and incorporating substances from the bodies of others underlies an extremely pervasive and elaborate system of taboos associated with sex, pregnancy and death (Niehaus 2002: 191).

As mentioned before, “real sex” is the most desirable kind of sex, because it allows the exchange of warmth and “flows” (Thornton 2002: 3) of bodily substances that go both ways in the sexual encounter. In other words, both the man and the woman absorb the sexual fluids of each other in the sexual encounter, thereby establishing a

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<sup>20</sup> Taylor talks about the Fractal person: it is a notion borrowed from the mathematical concept of fractality - a dimensionality that cannot be expressed in whole numbers (Taylor 1990: 1024). Thus, the person is fractal because he/she is “perennially incomplete, ever involved in the process of being added to, built upon and produced by gifts of others” (Taylor 1990: 1024).



stronger bond between them, in such a way that they refer to each other as being incomplete if they are not with the partner. The following passage demonstrates Sérgio's opinion:

*"When I am with my namorada I have to feel her completely. I want to feel her inside me and I want to be inside her (...) there must be that physical contact, the warmth, the blood, I need to feel that to confirm that we belong to one another and that without her I am incomplete."*

"Real sex" is thus the repayment of the gift, as it establishes that the couple now belong to each other. Unprotected sex not only allows one to feel the warmth of the other's body, but also gives a strong sense of possession. In contrast, protected sex is considered cold, as it presumes distance and a lack of trust between the partners.

The reciprocal exchange of sex for love continues for the duration of the *namoro* relationship. This means that there is a constant need to prove love in situations of jealousy or insecurity by one of the partners. In addition, there is also the belief that a couple must keep on exchanging fluids and warmth, as is it good for their health. Prolonged celibacy is perceived to have negative consequences for one's health (see also Niehaus 2002: 194), as it creates depression and may have physical consequences. Lucha said: "When you do not have sex for a long period of time you become very depressed, bored with everything in life and always in a bad mood" (Lucha, 20 years old). In addition Mário commented that "you must have sex regularly, otherwise you will have lots of pimples in your face... it means a lack of sex". Mood and appearance are linked to sexual activity in a model that suggests some transfer from school lessons about the effects of various hormones.

Presents are also perceived as symbols of love, and one of the possible ways of responding to a present is by giving back another present, which can be sex. For example, young women frequently say that on Valentine's Day they would buy a sexy piece of lingerie and offer themselves to their *namorados* in a special "session of love". Apart from that, sexual intimacy in the context of *namoro* creates a space where one can explore and get to know one's own and one's partner's body, while learning the tricks of a sexual encounter in preparation for marriage.

Sex is used to prove love, because it represents intimacy – one of the characteristics through which love is manifested and reinforced. The case of Dalila is a good example of the power of sex in a love relationship. About eight months ago, Dalila and her *namorado* Toni, aged 24, converted to the Universal Church of God. One of the rules of this Church is to remain virgins until marriage. Because Dalila and Toni had already lost their virginity, they made a compromise with the priest and with God, that they would stop having sex until they had married, as they were intending to marry as soon as Dalila had completed her secondary studies and found a job as Toni is already employed. Nonetheless, their sexual urges were far stronger than the religious commitment that they have made. She, for instance, described an episode when they were in his room and he started kissing her. In order to avoid the temptation of sex, she refused his kisses. After that, he left her and went to sit in a chair far from the bed with a sad look on his face:

*“I did not want to see him like that, so I got closer to him, I caressed him and we got very excited. We ended up having sex without a condom because he had thrown away all the condoms to guarantee that we would never sin but ... I ask God to forgive me, but I do not feel guilty because I know we have not done that to prostitute ourselves or to cheat. We love each other and we only did it because it is part of a relationship of love (...) it is a very pleasant proof of love (...). It has been very hard to fight against it (...) because when our bodies touch each other we feel like we have been made for each other.”*

Dalila

Clearly, this ideal of sex to prove love for the partner and as an integral part of a *namoro* relationship is so strong that it even surpasses Dalila’s and Toni’s religious beliefs.

In this way, an emotional relationship – involving intimacy, trust and love – and an urge – desire and lust – are combined in a *namoro* relationship, resulting in the male partner’s call for penetrative sex that is not protected by a condom. This is the symbolic meaning of sex as proof of love. This practice is extremely dangerous, however, as it puts young people at risk of being infected with STIs and HIV/AIDS. Nonetheless, sex to prove one’s love for one’s partner also has a pragmatic dimension, as I demonstrate below.

### **Symbolic and pragmatic dimension of sex to prove love**

The use of sex to prove one's love for the partner has two different dimensions. At the symbolic level, it is concerned with the meaning of sex in a steady relationship. At the pragmatic level, in accordance with gender norms, young men use love – by demonstrating this feeling to the *namorada*, showing that they trust and care about her – to try to make women engage more quickly in sex with them.

Firstly, then, as mentioned previously, sex in *namoro* creates a powerful bond between two people, confirming that their relationship is indeed based on love. Furthermore, “real sex” is far more powerful, as it permits the exchange of bodily fluids between the partners, which creates a sense of unity between them. The fact that “real sex” is unprotected sex also allows the couple to feel each other's bodily warmth on a very physical level, confirming that they have each other. It is not by accident that some of my informants made statements like the following: “When you love each other – care, trust, protect, respect, share sex in a way that allows you to feel the depth of your partner – the two of you become a whole one” (Liliana).

Another dimension of this type of sex operates at the pragmatic level. For instance, *namorados* tend to pressure their *namoradas* to start engaging in sex with them as soon as possible, precisely because they are aware that young women usually wait a certain period before they are willing to have sex. This gender-based pressure results from the fact that women, even when in love, tend to preserve themselves sexually in the first three to six months of the relationship in order to make sure that their partners really share the same kind of feeling as they do. Apart from that, young women do not want to be confused with women who too easily engage in sex with a new partner. They would rather wait until they have established a “solid” relationship before engaging in sex. Effectively, then, it seems as though young women share the same expectations as young men of the eventual sexual intimacy in the relationship, but their time-scales are different. Only when they regard the relationship as “solid”, in other words, when their *namorados* have waited for some time before pressuring them to have sex with them, will they take the next step. They may also wait until they are sure that they share the same rules in the relationship in terms of what is allowed and

what is not allowed in the relationship. In general, the phrase used by the informants to describe a “solid” relationship was “when I feel comfortable”. Mara, who had just turned 18 and who was in her second *namoro* relationship, illustrates this point:

*“For me, in order for sex to happen I must start liking him and feel secure. (...) I have sex after a while when I can see that the person has some kind of interest in me that surpasses sex. For example, that he started liking me the way I am and not the way he wants. Three months are quite enough to see that and also to see that the person respects you. (...) At least it was like that in all the relations that I got sexually involved till today. They were namorados and it was natural to have sex with them.”*

Although women see sex in *namoro* relationships as something “natural” in the sense that it is normal and the rule of any such relationship, the majority still wait a while before having sex. Most young men, however, are not willing to wait for such a long time before they want to have sex with the young women they have chosen to *namorada*. They will thus pressure the *namorada* to prove that she is really in love with him by having sexual intercourse with him. Eighteen-year-old *Pedro* explained what he would say to the *namorada* in order to pressure her to engage in sex: “I ask her: why are you refusing? Do you want me to go look at other women? Are you not mine? Then what? ... I am here in need...”. His words demonstrate the forms of social pressure brought to bear on young women who are socialised into caring relationships that sometimes undermine their own sense of self or their own desires.

Young women also complained that their boyfriends would emotionally blackmail them in order to have sex with them. Mara, for example said::

*“After trying [to have sex] for some days, he comes to me with a serious talk, like: ‘what is happening with you? No, it is not working anymore’ ... and you explain your reasons: ‘because it is too early, we know each other for a short time yet’. He usually responds back saying ‘that is nothing’ and that ‘we have been together for quite a while’ and because I am refusing sex, I am pushing him into cheating on me. Then he starts with that emotional blackmail: ‘I like you, I do not want anyone else, but you are forcing me to go and look for it outside because you are not giving me’.”*

Mara pinpointed the forms of blackmail: her refusal is pushing him into the arms of another woman. Tania concludes

*“If a woman has just arrived and the boyfriend asks for sex she better accept, because if she refuses he will start asking where she has come from, what was she doing, and if she was having sex there where she was. The woman cannot reply but has to accept having sex with him.”*

Young women regard this type of blackmail as quite normal and in fact expected of men, because “men cannot control their sexual drives” as expressed by Pedro:

*“The desire of the man is different from the desire of the woman. When a man wants [sex] he really wants. (...) It is not a matter of respect... ahh you... your boyfriend can respect you a lot but when you find him in a situation that he really wants [sex] you will see that he will insist till he gets what he wants.”*

As a result, most young women do end up having sex with their boyfriends when they feel they cannot argue against their boyfriends’ emotional blackmail. This does not mean, however, that young women are physically forced to have sex, as none of the women mentioned this. They merely explained that they would eventually ‘*ficar sem palavras*’ (running out of words) which signals that their arguments would have no more power. Sometimes, their boyfriend would put her in a situation of “check-mate,” by asking her to choose between having sex and ending the relationship. Moreover, when young women perceive their boyfriends’ threats that they are looking for another girl are real, then they will usually engage in sex with them. When this happens, however, the girls may feel frustrated and disappointed, especially if they did not yet want to have sex with them, or because they did not feel that the relationship was “solid” enough. Some of the girls did not feel disappointed, though, as their final objective was in fact to have sex. In addition to this, women are also pressured by other women to behave in a manner that is appropriate for a serious relationship. These contradictions create confusion both among young men and women, and, as I will argue later, it makes some of the approaches of HIV/AIDS awareness campaigns very problematic.

Clearly, then, the young men’s strategy of blackmailing their girlfriends seems to work, as, after insisting for a while, they eventually have sex with their girlfriend. I

refer to the young men's strategy as blackmail rather than coercing or sweet talk because they do actually force women to choose between having sex or breaking up with their boyfriend. The female informants in my study have admitted that, after they have had sex with their partners under such circumstances, even though they did not want to, they felt disgusted and frustrated with themselves. Dalila declared: "I felt frustrated because I did not want it. I did it because I felt for him, but I did not want it." Her friend, Mara,, concurred: "I had that experience once and it was very frustrating. I even had tears after that. It was very frustrating. I felt weak." For Mara, this sense of weakness is also a moral feeling because she was not able to fulfil her own intentions of not having sex with her partner.

Young men, on the other hand, tend to become very confused about young women's responses when asking them for sex. Young women may say 'No' to sex while actually meaning 'Yes'. The woman's strategy seems to be to avoid being seen as cheap, vulgar or easy, i.e. as sexually available. Thus, even when a young woman does want sex, she may say 'No', and only after the partner has exerted pressure on her, will she agree to have sex with him. Inevitably, this creates a problem for young men who are not able to identify which 'No' really does mean 'No', and which 'No' means 'Yes' or maybe. Consequently, young men tend to generalize the situation and assume that when young women say 'No', they are actually interested in having sex with them. They thus call women false and say that they just like to *gingar* (pretend that they do not want sex). Young men's confusion arises from the conflicts between desire and women socially sanctioned behaviour.

All the female informants agreed that only they know when 'No' really means 'Yes' and when it means 'No'. They thus feel that they hold the power to control a situation depending on their objectives and intentions, but, in some ways, this is false confidence because, as the above descriptions of Dalila and Mara show, they often do acquiesce to their partners' insistent demands for sex.

Nevertheless, Mara maintained that she had been successful on other occasions, when she said 'No' to her partner's demand for sex. She explained that the meanings of 'No' and 'Yes' can be perceived from her facial expression. Thus, when she says 'No' but actually means 'Yes', she will be smiling and showing an interest in her partner's

suggestion. On the other hand, if she really means 'No', she will look very serious. Iva elaborated on this issue by saying that if a woman really did not want to have sex, she should not be with her *namorado* in contexts that might easily be linked to sex. For example, she said, "never go to his room or up the stairs with him if you do not want sex". Clearly, context is very important in interpreting the meanings of 'No' and 'Yes' and, as Iva said further, "even men can understand what you really mean if you give him such contextual tips". From my group discussions with the male informants, it indeed emerged that most of them were not able to distinguish which 'Yes' meant 'No', and which meant 'Yes'. It is thus the context, which helps them to understand what women really mean. When a woman thus accepts his invitation to go into spaces that are commonly known to allow and create intimacy – like his room, up the stairs, onto a terrace or in a hidden or dark corner – then he would conclude that she is interested in having sex with him.

Men (and women) rely on body language and context to give clues about meaning and desire while still appearing to conform to social ideals. Implication of the context may mean that men over-ride verbal refusals in that context (i.e. that context takes precedence over verbal clues even where latter do in fact signal refusal).

Some HIV/AIDS awareness campaigns attempt to instil a direct relation between word and intentions. For example, a billboard from the South African LoveLife campaign asks "Since when does 'no' mean 'yes'?". This implies that 'No' means 'No'. This is difficult in young people's everyday practices and lives as those terms are not used literally. During sexual negotiations, the context and other factors such as blackmail on the part of the men may have a crucial influence on the decision to have sex, even when the women are refusing. Thus, such HIV/AIDS campaigns should be very careful in exploring the relation of language to emotion and the material outcome that it generates. Such campaigns should also carefully tackle the different kinds of relationships because, as I will argue in the next section, the *namoro* relationship puts both partners at higher risk of HIV/AIDS infection despite young people's protestations that it, unlike other casual relationships, is "safe".

### **HIV/AIDS: A threat**

Given the high rate of HIV/AIDS infections in most African countries, as well as in Mozambique, the “real” (unprotected) sex of *namoro* relationships is very problematic and puts young people at major risk of becoming infected with STIs and HIV/AIDS.

Given the above, it is interesting that the majority of the young people interviewed in study cannot imagine the possibility that they might be or become infected by HIV/AIDS. Only Gildo and Iva mentioned that they had done an HIV/AIDS test. Gildo said that he did the test because, a few years ago, he was losing a lot of weight and people speculated that he might have AIDS. He asked his mother about the test and they both went to the doctor. He says the result was negative and he felt very relieved. Iva, who lost a relative to an AIDS-related illness, says that she and her *namorado* went to do the AIDS test and the result was negative. She does plan to have herself tested again after three months as the procedures of the testing recommend, though, as she think that it is better to know one’s status as soon as possible in order to have a better chance of staying alive.

The other participants of my study did not want to do the test, as they maintained that they could not be infected. Most of them stated that they did use condoms in their occasional sexual encounters; 19-year-old *Sérgio* said: “In the adventures I always use condoms, always. There cannot be a mistake. We do not know where she is coming from, so there are no chances.” However, real sex within *namoro* relationships does not secure them against risk.

Young people, frequently change partners, leading to a type of serial monogamy: although a steady relationship is established with each new partner, they will practice “real sex”, which means that they will not use condoms. This reduces their chances of protection against STI’s and HIV/AIDS.

Trust, one of the very positive aspects of the *namoro* relationship, in conjunction with the ideal of “real sex” that allows the *namorados* to be bound to each other as a couple due to the exchange of fluids and bodily warmth, ironically become factors that



prevent the use of condoms by young people in a *namoro* relationship. Their love relationships inadequately protect them against STI and HIV/AIDS.

In conclusion, then, this chapter has focused on *namoro* relationships. Using Mauss's model of the logic of the gift, it has described how a reciprocal relationship is established between sex and love. This reciprocity happens within the context of local perceptions of love and health and it is emphasized by the way that sex is fetishised in urban Maputo, mainly due to the power of the media. There are also symbolic and pragmatic dimensions of sexual, love relationships which are accompanied by a set of expectations, contradictions and pressures, all guided by gender norms that reveal different dynamics of a *namoro* relationship.

Sex in *namoro* is unprotected and it thus regarded as "real sex". The risks of such practice are under-acknowledged by young people. The logic of *namoro*, described and analysed in this chapter suggests that the institution is complex and that, unwittingly, love renders sexual partners vulnerable to disease.

## Chapter Five

### Conclusion

This study has questioned how the young people in Maputo city perceive and practice sexuality. Working with a small group of adolescents and young adults and using a variety of methods, I explored how young people in an urban, post-colonial and post-socialist context understand sexual relationship.

As appears from the findings presented in this study, sex is understood as heterosexual penetration of the vagina by the penis. Oral sex, although referred to sometimes with the same terminology, is not considered to be sex as such. It is part of the foreplay and a preliminary to actual sex. Sex amongst today's youth in Maputo city happens more frequently and with a large variety of partners compared to the period when their parents were young. This is the case because, due to the power of media, sex is everywhere and it is now a fetish. In addition, sex today happens in a variety of relationships – *namorado*, *pito/a*, *saca-cena*, *ficar* – some of which did not exist for the previous generation (the last two for example) although only two basic definitions are still applied: “real sex” and just “sex”.

Both kinds of sex allow the formation of a new sphere in the lives of young people which they control totally, without the inference of parents or other adult relatives: that is the intimacy that they share with their partners and the responsibility to control sexual reproduction that comes with it. These factors contribute to make sex one of the symbols of the transition from childhood to adulthood as the latter is conceptualised in Maputo's context in terms of one's independence from one's parents.

“Real sex” is characteristic of steady relationships – *namoro* – where partners establish a close relationship based on love and trust. “Real sex”, moreover, means sex without condoms, as it allows the exchange of warmth and therefore the possibility for partners to deeply feel each other's bodies, thereby reinforcing their

belonging and contributing to the strengthening of the love and trust that they feel for each other.

Sex in occasional relationships, on the other hand, is protected sex (i.e. with the use of condoms), because the partners do not have any reliable knowledge about the sex life of their occasional partners, and would therefore use condoms to protect themselves against STIs, HIV/AIDS and unwanted pregnancies. This result confirms previous analyses, which show an association between risk perception of occasional partners and condom use (Karlyn 2003). Moreover, most of occasional relationships are generally negatively valued as they imply unfaithfulness and lack of commitment or the exchange of sex for money or material goods.

*Namoro* relationship is positively valued as it implies commitment and the possibility to marriage plans. In such relationship, I argue that sex is a gift that reciprocates a declaration of love. When a young man asks a young woman to become his *namorada*, in other words, he is offering her a gift because he is declaring his feelings to her and showing the desire for a committed relationship with her. In a society where men conquer and women cede their sexual parts, “real sex” is returned to the *namorado* in repayment of the gift in a form that allows for the experience of “inside”. There is an interesting congruence here: a man renders himself vulnerable by declaring his affection, a woman responds in recognition, by the material act of giving sex. In a machista society, vulnerability in language is reciprocated with bodily vulnerability. The reciprocity of sex continues throughout the relationship, not only because it is part of the couple’s intimacy, but also because local beliefs maintain that prolonged celibacy has negative consequences for one’s health. This perspective is new in the analyses of sexuality in the context of Mozambique.

This gifting process constitutes a new contribution to the field of sexuality in the context of Mozambique. It is characterized by constant pressure from young men to have sex with their *namoradas*. The pressure is usually translated into emotional blackmail and results from the different time-scales of young men and women in relation to the commencement of sexual activity. In other words, men generally take a short-term view, whereas women prefer a longer-term perspective. The gender dynamics of the patriarchal environment of Maputo, which demand of women

(mainly when they have a steady partner) to be obedient and to accept their partner's demands, contribute to redefining women's time-scale of sex and shorten the time-span which she may resist her partner's sexual advances.

However, there is evidence that young women are redefining their roles in this gender unequal context, by, for example, publicly declaring that they have had a range of different sexual partners or that they have been unfaithful to their boyfriends by engaging in sexual activity with occasional partners. These facts show that gender dynamics are changing, whereas in previous studies (Santos and Arthur 1994; Osório 1998), they have been described as fixed.

While the dynamics of sex with occasional partners increases the risk of sexually transmitted infections, the patterns of "real sex" are very problematic because they expose young people to STIs and to HIV/AIDS. It is thus essential that institutions who design awareness and prevention programmes to grasp these characteristics and to tackle them in ways that incorporate the socio-cultural meanings of the different kinds of relationships while integrating prevention and protection measures.

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