

Sexuality in Africa

M A G A Z I N E



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The Toilet Walls
Communication in
the University: A
Private Plea to
(Re-) Address
Sexuality
Education? Some
Reflections

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Don't Be There:
Discourses Of
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Confusing
Messages About
Sex For Young
People In The
Twenty First
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Stella Nyanzi

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Contestants during the Miss Health Kandara launch in the Kandara constituency of Kenya. Kandara is in the rural area of Central Province, a two hour drive from the capital city of Nairobi.

The pageant was part of an initiative by rural youth to crown health ambassadors who will advocate for prevention of drug use and HIV/AIDS. This initiative is sponsored by Reverend Peter Ngugi, a Kenyan church minister based in Indiana, U.S.A.

Credit: (c) 2006 Felix Masi/Voiceless Children, Courtesy of Photoshare

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Africa Regional Sexuality Resource Centre
P. O. Box 803, Sabo-Yaba
Lagos, Nigeria

Phone: (234) 1-7919307

Fax: (234)-1-3425470

Email: info@arsrc.org

Website: www.arsrc.org

Editorial Team

'Nike Esiet

Dr Richmond Tiemoko

Olunosen Louisa Ibhaze

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Safety, Sexuality and Wellness: Would Uncertainty Rather Than Risk Approach Serve Better?

By Richmond Tiemoko



A village woman uses a gong to announce the return of the village leader and the arrival of HIV/AIDS educators as part of a public awareness campaign against the HIV. Credit: (c) 2005 Germain Tabati, Courtesy of Photoshare

Here comes the last quarter of the (Gregorian) year with its characteristic heavy traffic not just on the highways, street and the skies but also sexually and emotionally. It is therefore a priority period to call for and promote safety and wellness. During this period the international community rightly marks three events related to safety and wellness: the international day of the elderly, the 16 days of activism against sexual and gender based violence and the international AIDS day.

Much of the discourses and actions are however embedded in the notion of risk (reduction) and violence. In this short article I call for a need to go beyond risk and address the broader concept of *uncertainty*. Uncertainty about how, when, where and the extent to which one can express and enjoy fulfilling sexuality. Uncertainty about how the society and the environment would safeguard our empowering and constructive difference.

Risk or Certainty?

In 2005 the ARSRC organized a public dialogue that explored the notion of risk and high-risk population. One of the conclusions of the dialogue was that in term of sexual health and well-being, everybody was at risk. This is confirmed by the increasing number of HIV infection among married persons. Consequently,

the notion of high risk population may not only be judgmental but it could also give a false sense of security.

'No safe heaven!' is the title and conclusion of the publication of Project Alert on Gender Based Violence, a Nigerian NGO, which monitored and analyzed sexual and gender based violence on women and the girl-child in Nigeria. The conclusion is certainly valid across Africa. The risk of being a victim or perpetrator of sexual and gender based violence is so high that people frame it and take it for granted..

Going Beyond Risk For The Promotion Of Safe Sexuality and Wellness.

Although risk is a helpful notion in addressing negative sexuality-related outcomes, it is still not enough. It is time to go back to the drawing board and use the distinction between risk and uncertainty as clarified by Frank Knight [1].

"Uncertainty must be taken in a sense radically distinct from the familiar notion of Risk, from which it has never been properly separated... It will appear that a measurable uncertainty, or "risk" proper, as we shall use the term, is so far different from an immeasurable one that it is not in effect an uncertainty at all. We ... accordingly restrict the term "uncertainty" to cases of the non-quantitative type".

Risk of course connotes hazard, danger. In economic, actuarial and epidemiologic works, risk has a known probability attached to the event or what Knight refers to as *measurable uncertainty*. But in sexuality and safety in many contexts, there is limited measured uncertainty. It is true that thanks to numerous critical research, it is quite safe to talk about risk of HIV transmission and even give the probability of transmission. And this body of research has certainly fed into the HIV/AIDS prevention discourse and . (It is assumed) that individuals know and

quantify the risk (and the expected major negative outcome) and they could therefore strategize their behavior around this probability. However, in the field of *expressed and lived sexuality*, decisions are hardly taken by a board of experts or by individuals with a sound knowledge of probability, but rather by ordinary human being, sexual being facing multiple challenges and opportunities in an uncertain environment. It therefore makes sense to talk of and use the concept of uncertainty and uncertain environment rather than risk if we are to promote responsibility and accountability in positive sexuality and wellness.

The limit of the risk approach is well known to experts and has led to the qualifier safer sex (and not safe sex) in HIV campaign. There is more to this limit. In sexuality and wellness, the concept of *bounded rationality* clearly shows the limit of risk and risk reduction approach. *Bounded rationality* refers to the situation where individuals get overloaded and they use a shortcut by ignoring an event (even with great negative consequence) with *low* probability or with *very high* probability (quasi-certain). For instance when non sexual satisfaction of women in long term relationship is widespread, current and future partners tend to ignore this need.

With regards to violence for instance, using "risk" approach, individuals who have been victims of intimate sexual violence (i.e. the violation of their sexual rights) tend to frame the risk and therefore ignore the fact that it is likely to happen again. Or as in the case of anti-HIV campaign, some young people rebel against safer sex because they minimize the risk or the consequence of this behavior.

Promoting safety, sexual health and wellness would be best served by using the uncertainty approach which is broader than risk. This is because the probability of the event with an important negative consequence is not only unknown but may

The Toilet Walls Communication in the University: A Private Plea to (Re-) Address Sexuality Education? Some Reflections

By Sara Jerop Ruth

Introduction

Current day society is characterised by strong institutions that have tended to usurp roles previously played by other agencies. The school has emerged as a formidable institution that has slowly assumed educational roles initially played by the family or community. Indeed, the school curriculum is seen as the perfect solution to address societal problems. There has been universal acceptance that one avenue of addressing the HIV and AIDS pandemic is by embracing preventive education. In all this, the school is viewed as the natural place to reach children in their formative years, with the hope that early awareness can offer information that will lead to the right attitudes. It is within this context that I examine the issue of toilet graffiti that is rampant in kenya university toilets [1]. So popular is it that the university administration has taken to repainting the toilet walls periodically to “clean” them up. Given that there was no graffiti in the female toilets, this paper will analyse what was documented in Male Toilets in Kenyatta University. Graffiti could be said to have two dimensions ; first as a way of expressing anonymously and safely an individual's sexuality and secondly a way of reinforcing conditions that affect or infringe on the realization of sexual rights in the privacy of the public toilet.

Early Schooling Years And Sexuality Education

Not all concerns have been welcome in the School, even when there was apparent need. Attempts to introduce Sex education, to schools in Kenya for example, faced unprecedented opposition mainly from the Church. Due to the historical expansion of

formal education, the missionaries were the first to establish schools and have since retained control of many learning institutions. The “voice” of the church could hardly be ignored. The Church has a huge stake on Schools and exercises this control jealously especially when it feels its moral conscience is at stake. The current scenario therefore for the child who goes through public schooling in Kenya is that sexuality education is received in a fragmented way, which is mainly through science related subjects that prefer the less

The Church has a huge stake on Schools and exercises this control jealously especially when it feels its moral conscience is at stake.

controversial subjects such as reproductive anatomy, physiology, STIs and religious education that adopt a moralistic stand. This is the pupil who is fed into the University.

The University And Sexuality

Dollimore explains censorship , knowledge and discovery based on Oscar Wilde's idea that “More than half of modern culture depends on what one shouldn't read” he felt the idea should have been, “More than half of modern culture depends on benign interpretations of what

one should read”. Entry into the University epitomises the pinnacle of academic success. There is a sense of freedom fed with the knowledge that one has satisfied the societal pressure to reach the highest institution of learning and attain professional training that will hopefully shape their future. Given this certainty and coupled with years of ignoring the self, young university students begin to rediscover their persons. The university often seems to be overflowing with self explorations and indulgences.

Relationships are as intense as they are brief. Young people seem to be in adventure with their bodies. A possible reason for this is that the lower levels of schooling are very restrictive. The fact that letter writing across friends or dating is prohibited in many schools (and a reason for suspension from school) and that there are hardly any forums to discuss the evolving bodies attests to sexuality being suppressed. Just like in a general society where sexuality has been tabooed for long in the last few years the censorship has emerged in higher institutions of learning where battle lines have been drawn between traditionalists and diverse others.[1] Perhaps due to such prohibitive and

restrictive school cultures, young people revert to private communication, in the toilets for example, as a way of initiating conversation.

Graffiti On Male Toilet walls

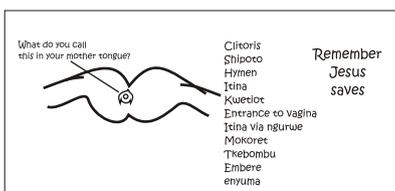
Graffiti is one of the way children and young persons express themselves. The drawing on the wall of the neighbour or the tables are all familiar facts. The drawing toilet in the university may be more than child play.

The nature of the graffiti in Male toilets

covers the whole spectrum. First, there is graffiti on the subject of “graffiti”. A statement such as “*Writing of graffiti has been known to be a neuro-psychotic condition where affected individuals strive to write their feelings on walls of toilets. Please if you are affected by this condition please see your shrink immediately. It has been known to degenerate into full madness*” seems to express both the desire to use the “toilet space” to express innermost feelings but acknowledges it as a problematic option, hence the advice to see a psychiatrist.

Janssen observes that [in western countries] 'girls produced more graffiti than boys, but boys produced twice as many graffiti with "sexual" content [2]. This is likely to be the case in Kenya as there was no graffiti in female toilet. The response “*Only ladies write graffiti though I am not saying that I am one of them*” other than showing how communication evolves on toilet walls introduces what appears to be the best subject in Male toilets which is , Women and sex. Also the graffiti on HIV/AIDs declares in Kiswahili “*Don't Fear Aids , ARVs are available!*” this to anti-HIV campaigners is a means of passing on the message of “Living Fast” and an open rebellion to safe sex. [3]

Graffiti On Women



Graffiti on women appears in two forms; statements and drawings. While the drawings cannot be claimed to be very creative given that they do not deviate much from the male and female organs as shown below, they elicit many responses. In the box below, for example, ten different people respond to the question and give versions of the “clitoris” in at least five different languages in Kenya.

One individual however has a contrary view and seeks salvation to save the authors. His view is a typical response instilled by overly religious societies and persons who prefer to ignore rather than address sexuality issues.

Graffiti Themes

The vast majority of the comments are preoccupied on the theme of sex. Some fantasise on sexual specifics about women such as positions of sex women prefer. Others seek answers to intricacies of intimate sexual relationships and ask “*If you sleep with a girl and she is just silent, what do you do?*” Yet other statements ponder on women's possible sexual partners. It is mainly in this instance that names of women are mentioned. For example one person lists down seven women who are top names in the media, politics and education in Kenya, and asks who sleeps with them. The response “*everybody*” seems to want to demean the said women's moral conduct perhaps as a way of undermining their “moral” authority. Another trend of comments names female peers in the

The university often seems to be overflowing with self explorations and indulgences.

the female one, denotes action. The writing borrows closely from a political slogan that reads “*kazi iendelee*” or “let work progress” and aptly introduces another abundant theme in the male toilets; Men, Sex and Power. While most of the comments focus on the male member in reference to top male politicians, there is an entry of women. For example one statement reads:

Question: “_____ cannot be a president because he is not circumcised. Discuss. (20 marks)”

Response: Bring your mother and sister so that he can fuck them.

The issue of circumcision, leadership and sexual performance are explored in the above statement but close female relatives (mother and sister) are thrown into the argument in an uncalled and demeaning way.

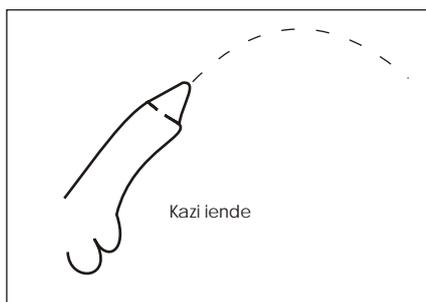
The third type of graffiti extol the pleasure of sex; “*Like it or not sex is good and very sweet*”. Others statements situate the essence of sex within known theory, perhaps as a way of justifying it; “*if Darwin's theory of use and disuse is still in place, then those who do not fuck are at risk*”. This trend of “wall conversation” in its simplistic way, is a new discourse that strongly contrasts with mainstream school education. For example HIV and AIDS messages in the school curriculum subtly associate sex with disease and death. Other models such as ABC

calls for abstinence. This graffiti however extols the beauty of sex and equates it to life.

Implications

The graffiti should not be ignored due to both its confirming and revealing nature. First, it confirms that sexist attitudes are still being replayed in young male students thought processes. The objectification of women is evident in a number of statements. Insults to women are resorted to in an unprovoked way. There is an apparent lack of respect for women. It is such a scenario that breeds gender based violence. On the other hand however, the graffiti reveals a need for more information on sex , sexuality , safety and other issues surrounding sexuality. Since matters

university; “*even yesterday, Sylvia slept with the Bio-Chemistry Lecturer*”. Such a statement could be sexual harassment or actually reflect a phenomenon of “sex for marks” that has been reported to be pervasive in the University. Which ever the case, it is the female, who has been named who will be the brunt of jokes.



In comparison, the male drawing, unlike

relating to sex are not directly discussed which as a result has created a vacuum in knowledge and expectation. Thus the yearning for basic information on dealing with relationships, especially those that involve sex.

Conclusion

Young people need to be equipped with adequate personal information for charting their transition to adulthood. At present, sexuality education to some extent is still either totally ignored or superficially clothed in different school subjects and offered by teachers who in most cases are ill-prepared, over-worked and underpaid. This education especially with the larger picture of HIV and AIDS has focussed on individual morality and self-restraint with obvious exclusion of the discourse of desire and safety. Teachers are often too busy trying to prevent students from doing drugs, getting pregnant or contracting AIDS. As a

consequence, learners with any questions on the self find it difficult to approach a teacher and school cultures do not give space for the discussion of sexuality issues. It is time space is given to young men and women to explore sexual issues in public forums as it can offer healthy communication.

Endnote

1 Amos Kaburu, a final year student in Kenyatta University documented the data from the Male toilets

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Sara Jerop Ruto teaches educational science at the Kenyatta University in Nairobi Kenya. She is active in UNICEF with a focus on child friendly schools in Uganda and is also an expert on international and comparative educational science.

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be neglected. At the same time, many changing factors and circumstances affect the very calculation of the probability that the event occurs.

Uncertainty also goes beyond individual act and behavior to address lived environment and indeed the life world. Many things that impinge on individual sexual health and wellbeing are not necessary in their control or they don't have prior knowledge of them.

As McMinn[2] said 'the desire for and possibility of engaging in some form of genital sexual expression calls to us from many outlets such as billboards, television commercials, and our computer screens' . And even the toilets or public rest rooms displays uncertainty about sexual safety

and wellbeing as indicated in Ruto's contribution. One would say that toilet is not necessarily one's time alone and for oneself.

The Challenges Of Being Socially Responsible Self

In both public and private spaces, women are not safe with regards to expressing their sexuality. 'Don't be sexy, don't be there' in Simidele Dosekun' article is just one of many statements in pervasive discourses on sexuality. Even in physically secured places like the correctional institution, the safety of sexual expression still remains an issue. All these clearly indicate that it is still challenging and to some extent (for some people) even unsafe to be oneself, to be just human with the

feeling of desire and emotion.

As we end this Gregorian year and usher in the year 2008, let's all work for safe, healthy, pleasurable and responsible sexuality.

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Richmond Tiemoko is the Director of the ARSRC.

Don't Be Sexy, Don't Be There: Discourses of Space, Danger and Women's Sexuality in South Africa

By Simidele Dosekun



[Djibouti] FGM represents a form of violence against women and is considered by various international and regional legal entities as a fundamental violation of human rights. Credit: IRIN

This article explores the fears and perceptions of rape amongst fifteen women studying or working at the University of Cape Town (UCT) in South Africa who claim to have never been raped.¹ It highlights the manner in which these women draw on common discourses of women's sexuality to construct certain spaces as potentially dangerous. Thus the article aims to show that spaces are discursively constructed and sexualised, and may become dangerous for women because of socially constituted ideas about what it means for them to be present within different spaces. The article draws on feminist literature concerning rape and women's sexuality and fear to make this argument.

Women's Sexuality in Public Space

It is popular and academic knowledge that women tend to greatly fear rape, and that this fear may inhibit their use of public space [1]. When asked what it meant to live in a country in which rape and other

forms of violence against women are said to be rife, Janet, a UCT student, replied: "You don't feel like you're in an environment where you can be safe. You don't feel like you're in an environment where you can be free to... demonstrate your sexuality." With these last words, Janet was referencing the popular notion that women encourage their rape if they appear sexy, and therefore sexually inviting, to men. Suzanne, another student, echoed this idea. She recalled that in the past, she had

sometimes dressed in an explicitly sexual manner in public to attract men's attention. Yet reflecting on this behaviour now, Suzanne felt that she had perhaps walked "a thin line. Maybe I was sort of tempting danger." In fact, because she had since gained weight, Suzanne reported feeling less at risk of sexual violence now: "I feel safer than I did because I feel I'm not as attractive anymore and. I'm sort of less of a sex object in a way. So I feel good, it keeps men away."

Many feminists critique the notion that women court danger, rape specifically, in their manner of dress and self-presentation [2]. They call this a "rape myth" because it naturalises rape as an outcome of stimulated or uncontrollable male sexual desire, ignoring its basis in social, gendered power inequalities. This myth has the effect of shifting blame for rape away from men on to women. As Janet and Suzanne's comments above suggest, a related effect is that it warns

women to mute their sexual expression in public, that is in spaces in which their bodies may be visible to all men. By positioning women as men's 'sex objects,' to recall Suzanne's expression, the discourse constructs public space as a domain in which women manifest their sexuality at their own peril. Conversely it implies that sexual modesty and respectability will render a woman safe from sexual violence.

Yet the daily experiences of the women I interviewed complicated this last notion. Despite many of the women's efforts to freely and discreetly inhabit public space, they reported being constantly sexually *objectified* by men they encountered. For instance, Sasha complained that the mere fact of being a "young attractive girl" made her the object of unwanted male sexual attention in public, even when she was simply going about her everyday business. When unknown men on the streets stared, called, whistled and so on, Sasha felt both self-conscious and sexually vulnerable. The sense of vulnerability came because it seemed to Sasha that if men "can shout those things at you, they have a sort of right to, or a right to you." In other words, Sasha felt that the men noticing her on the streets presumed to have the sexual right *to her* because she was a woman and because she was there, hence the audacity of their comments and gestures. Alex also experienced unsolicited sexual remarks from strange men on the streets as threatening, such as when one had said: "Nice legs! When do they open?" Such experiences were for Alex "the most common thing you get that reminds you of the fact that it is dangerous" to be a woman in South Africa. They were seemingly mundane yet poignant reminders that some men seemed to view her as always necessarily sexually available to them.

Feminist scholars have long argued that multiple ideologies and discourses of public space construct it as a masculine

domain, a place for male bodies, while the private sphere is feminised [3]. One result is that public space is for women strongly associated with danger, vulnerability and fear. The above examples from my interviewees suggest the ways in which dominant ideas of women's sexuality may participate in such constructions of public space: in discourse and in practice, women in public were often positioned as the objects of men's sexual gaze and power.

Women's Sexuality in Private Space

Whereas women may tend to fear sexual violence from unknown men in public, research has extensively shown that most experience this violence from known men within intimate spaces [4]. The personal experiences and secondhand accounts of the women I interviewed are suggestive of the discourses of women's sexuality which may render them vulnerable in such spaces. One student, Violet, shared that she had chosen to be sexually abstinent. However, she discovered that some men did not take this choice seriously. Violet recalled a conversation she had once had with a man who was interested in her who dismissed her assertion of abstinence by saying: "if you were in my room, I'd show you... please you're a woman at the end of the day, and if we were in my room... you would be telling me something different."

This man was drawing a distinction between women's public and private sexual identities. Embedded in this distinction is the notion that a woman, especially if young and unmarried, is disreputable if she is known to be sexually active [5]. With this comes the idea, evident in the quote above, that a woman may publicly say one thing about sex but mean and do quite another in private. Thus she may 'play hard to get,' she may 'say no but really mean yes.' These are common claims about women's sexual behaviour yet, again, feminists have denounced them as myths which encourage and excuse rape [6]. These myths exacerbate women's vulnerability to rape because they may encourage men to disbelieve them when they say no to sex. This may be all the more so if women have willingly

entered private spaces with men because the mere fact of being there might be interpreted as a further, though unstated, sign of a woman's 'real' desire for sex.

Indeed a number of the women I spoke with told of incidents in which visiting or being alone with male friends in closed spaces had been incorrectly read as sexual invitations. Tumi knew of two women students who had been forced to "scuffle" with their male friends to fight off their sexual advances while visiting them in their campus rooms. What had happened, she explained, was that the women were "chilling" with their male friends but "the guy seems to get the impression that this is going somewhere. And when [the women]

women court danger, rape specifically, in their manner of dress and self-presentation

say 'no, wait, what are you talking about, I'm going home,' then [the guys] act all rough." The "impression" such men allegedly had was that the women, by virtue of simply being in their rooms, had signaled their sexual availability. Physical struggle apparently ensued when the women had made it clear that this was not the case, frustrating the men's expectations.

Neo, another student I interviewed, recounted a similar personal experience. Finding herself alone in a locked room with a male friend, she feared that she had unwittingly walked into a rape scenario. This fear was heightened because she had already shown her romantic and sexual interest in the man. Neo recalled that when

she realised he had locked the door:

I freaked, I was like frozen... [I thought] what if he decides to force himself on me? I mean look we'd been flirting or what have you, like kisses here and there like the whole week, but nothing substantial... So that's why I froze you know, because I had no idea what this man was gonna do.

In Neo's immediate reading of the situation, the fact that she had previously kissed and flirted with the man made it more likely that he now expected and intended to have sex with her. She imagined that he had read her mere flirting, "nothing substantial" to her, as a sign that she was necessarily game for more. Neo was invoking here the common discourse that women are at once sexually manipulative and passive, that is, subjects who flirt, play games, drop hints, but do not initiate or explicitly state their desire for sex [7]. Knowing of this discourse directly shaped Neo's imagination and fear that she was about to be raped in the locked room. The discourse shaped and sexualised the meanings of the space, in short.

Conclusion

This brief article has aimed to show how social ideas about women's sexuality may affect their fears and experiences of certain spaces as sexually dangerous. The examples from the women I interviewed have suggested that women may in fact have or perceive no real haven from sexual danger in either public or private space. If this may be linked to a discourse of women's sexuality, I would argue that the discourse is, quite simply, that *women's bodies are ultimately available and subordinate to men*. It is this idea that is fundamentally in play in the examples and experiences of fear and danger we heard from the women above. If so, the work of reconstructing safe spaces for women requires that we challenge this discourse.

Endnotes

The article is based upon my master's research thesis which aimed to explore the imagination and fear of rape in South

Africa amongst women who have not experienced rape.

All names are pseudonyms to protect the women's identities.

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Simidele Dosekun has just completed a research Master's degree at the African Gender Institute, University of Cape Town, upon which this article is based.

By Mzikazi Nduna & Maseko Vella



Members of a magnet theater group perform a drama with HIV prevention messages for residents of the Shikusa Juvenile Detention Center in Kakamega, Kenya. Four hundred boys between the ages of 15-18 live at the center, mostly because of arrests for petty theft, truancy, and drugs. Credit: (c) 2006 Mike Wang/PATH, Courtesy of Photoshare

resources and limited professional capacity. This remains an appropriate intervention for addressing an array of issues affecting young people such as alcohol and drug use, sexual and physical violence, addressing intergroup relations and sexuality issues. In light of strengthened safer sex messages through these and increases in self-reported condom use, teenage unintentional pregnancy rates do not show a decline. On the 5th March 2007 a Gauteng-based Star newspaper reported that the number of Gauteng schoolgirls who fell pregnant in 2006 doubles that of the previous year: 2 336 schoolgirls were pregnant last year - up from 2004 when 1 373 and 2005 when 1 169 schoolgirls were reported pregnant. This study aims to explore what follows this experience in terms of ensuring that young people's well being is not endangered by such an experience.

Teenage unintended pregnancies comprise one third of all births in South Africa (National Social Development Report, 1995). Dilger (2003) reported from a sexuality study conducted in the rural Tanzania that young men rarely feel responsible for a pregnant girlfriend or the child and that in the majority of cases they leave their girlfriends. The implications associated with desertion and neglected paternal responsibility has not been explored at all.

This study conducted by Maseko and Nduna explored the experiences of adolescent girls who got pregnant whilst at high school at a time when they are making strides in realising their identity through advancing educational aspirations. According to the eightstage theory of human development as championed by Erick Erickson emotional intimacy, achieved through among other things partnerships in sex, is an important aspect of young people's lives [3]. At the

Background

Attachments of emotional intimacy characterised by early sexual exploration in the South African communities is not new; researchers have acknowledged that at about one year after puberty both males and females start engaging in sex, sometimes even younger [1]. Safety is a concept that is understood to mean among other things not being at risk but dangers associated with love relationships that involve sexual expression continue. In Jewkes et al South African study [2]

sexual risk taking among young men and women aged 16-23 has been reported in terms of having three or more partners in the past year, inconsistent condom use, higher number of partners, casual and multiple partnering and transactional sex. Most of these were school going people.

Either formal or informal, peer education is recognized as a means of connecting young people with preventive education, services, as well as psychological support more so in communities with scarce

same time according to Erickson adolescence would not be a convenient time to have a child as this interferes with a positive healthy identity. Due to the fact that they themselves are trying to achieve independence this is not a time conducive to prioritising developing human life.

Government interventions provide social support grants for qualifying young unemployed mothers. Debates countrywide continue around the allowance of maternity leave for pregnant girls and providing post-partum support from schools as interventions to normalise their lives post delivery. This study then becomes particularly pertinent in light of current trends to review legislation around the treatment of pregnant learners in schools, in South Africa. This paper shares findings on relationship experiences of teenage girls who went back to school after childbirth.

Objectives

- To describe the experiences of adolescent girls who got pregnant whilst at high school
- To explore the presence of the compounded crisis faced by the adolescent mothers

Methodology

The study setting was in Soweto, a township in Johannesburg. Ethical approval for the study was obtained from the University of Witwatersrand non-medical committee. Access to schools was given by the Gauteng Provincial Department of Education. A qualitative design was employed with the application of content analysis to allow for rich understanding of the material gleaned through the five semi-structured interviews that were used in data collection. Only school going adolescents who had babies one year or younger at the time of recruitment were sampled for the study. Data was analysed inductively. Names used here are pseudo names and the age reported is the actual age of the girl at the time of the interview.

Findings and discussion

Involvement in sexual relationships by these young people was entirely consensual. This is with age-mates at school or with older working men. In the midst of reported feelings of self-

disablement and changed family relationships there was support from significant others that have enabled the young girls to come back to school. In instances where there were pre-existing difficulties with parents the news of the pregnancy exacerbated the problems. Siblings, parents and grandparents seem to play an important role in supporting young girls to go back to school. This support was in terms of looking after the child during the day to allow the young mother to go to school, paying for crèche which costs about R100 (\$14) per month, buying necessities for the baby and friends who give words of advice and encouragement.

Unintended pregnancies affect dating relationships negatively; this study shows that young women meet with challenges ranging from dealing with partner desertion, denied paternity trying out termination of pregnancy, and frustration resulting from discovery of concurrent partnering of other partners. The adolescent fathers were either surprised or disappointed at the news of the pregnancy. The following is an example of the reaction

“...when I told him that I was pregnant he said we will see when the baby is born. Since then he never came to see me, when we meet in the streets its just 'hello...hello, no talking...” [4]

This finding is consistent with anecdotal evidence that the first expression of the quotation above is not uncommon as young boys' first reaction, even if they sometimes later change. This is the first point of denying taking responsibility. On the other hand one may start off by responding positively and later twist around, example below;

“...when I told him that I was pregnant he accepted because he knew I was not on contraception and after all I was his girlfriend...” [5]

This young girl, who has been involved with her boyfriend for just over two years before she fell pregnant, was later met with disappointment as

“...then after that he did not want come to see me and did not allow me to visit him...he asked me to have an abortion...” “...I later heard that he was in jail...and when he came he told

me that he was in jail...we never got back together...” [6]

Discontinued intimacy at the time when it is mostly needed may have negative repercussions of the girls' ability to form reciprocal dating relationships based on trust honesty and positive expression of love. The girl may continue to harbour feelings of hope that things will get back to normal between her and her estranged partner

“...I wish we could have the kind of a relationship that we had before. I had someone I could talk to. He understood me and never wanted to see me cry or hurt...” [7]

The finding regarding partner desertion confirms anecdotal evidence from here and published work from Tanzania (Dilger, 2003). This is not a smooth break up as one of them describe confrontations with their estranged boyfriends.

“...he does not care about me anymore...we fight all the time...” [8]

This is an important factor as it speaks to a probable risk factor for psychological distress for not only the pregnant girl but her child later in life. A vicious cycle of lack of love from the man who ran away might spill over to children to affect positive expressions of intimacy in their own lives. The scenario described here resulting in internal stigma and self loathing on the young girls.

Fending for the individual's needs, acceptance back into peers and practical logistics of looking for a child are some of these dilemmas. Also most importantly is the impact that this life changing experience has on the adolescent's identity crisis as a result of pregnancy. They do not appropriately fit in Erick Erickson's psychological theory of development. Surprising is that there was no mention of post-partum counselling on contraceptive use at the clinics and this is a missed opportunity for preventive counselling. None of the girls reported any direct reproach, exclusion or isolation by their teachers. This is in agreement with the Department of Education stance to promote girl education. Learning to be responsible for ones actions is one important lesson that these girls learnt but we do not know about the impact that this

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Addressing Sexual Harassment and Promoting Women's Safety: The Experience From The Egyptian Women's Centre For Women's Rights

By Dr. Nyokabi Kamau, Susan Chebet, Jane Godia and Bilhah Om'bang'o Hagembe



Introduction

ECWR is an independent non-governmental organization committed to improving women's status in Egypt and the Arab Region. It was founded in 1996 by six young women in Dar el Salam with the aim of improving the political and legal status of women and at the same time confronting all forms of discrimination associated to gender. Their success made them the winner of the World Bank's 2000 Development Marketplace and one of the World's 10 Best Development Programs in 2002. *ECWR is an NGO in Special Consultative Status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations*

This report highlight ECWR commendable effort to promote safety and sexuality ECWR designed a special multi-faceted strategy to address sexual harassment and sexual assault in Egypt. .

Main Activities

- A sustained campaign against sexual harassment in Egyptian streets and raising awareness about sexual harassment incidents that occurred during the Eid el Fitr holiday in 2006..
- Radio and TV programme in collaboration with some Media houses and kindred NGOs.

- Self defense classes for women.

“Working with the media is an important part of our rapidly growing effort to raise awareness about harassment and help make our streets safer for everyone” said Nehad Abul Komsan chair of ECWR.

Progress And Achievements.

Sexual Harassment: 1 Year of Discussion Within the Public Sphere

Sexual harassment had been a taboo topic in Egypt until the notorious act which took place in October 2006 during Eid el Fitr which was brought to the limelight by private citizens and bloggers. Finally women feel free to speak out and use their right to defend themselves and walk the streets of their country without fear. A year ago there was an absence of real dialogue and it effects on women in Egypt. The recent realization of the gravity of such an act by both men and women is a great victory for everyone. ECWR were featured on Nogoom FM a popular radio station that sponsored the campaign's effort by featuring a discussion on sexual harassment. in Egypt. They also worked with a modern TV station to air a 2 day program about sexual harassment and rape as well as many other TV shows on various popular channels.

Today, the efforts and bravery of thousands of women and men, coming forward with their stories, time, efforts and ideas have forced the issue of sexual harassment to be addressed by the Egyptian society. Media houses across the country are now host to the infighting attitudes and opinions on the subject and

feeble attempts to ignore the problem. Sexual harassment and the controversy surrounding it is now part of public vocabulary. A constant verbalization of the wide spread maltreatment and sexual degradation of women in the streets of Cairo has served to raise awareness and unify women from all walks of life. The ECWR and volunteers across Egypt are continuing to raise awareness and engage community interest to end sexual harassment and gender inequality.

Choosing Segregation

In the last few years, Cairo has experienced an increase in the segregation of social venues. By tradition, men have enjoyed supremacy over the social sphere with female social activities limited to areas like the hairdressers and the first car in the metro train. Of Recent there has been a increase of women's only socialization scenes, ranging from private gyms and beaches to the more recent ideas about possible women only cafes and restaurants with a women only salad bar due to open soon in Maadi !

This subject time and again fuels controversy and debate. How does one commend these places for offering women a safe haven from sexual harassment or scrutiny without also commenting on the social crisis that has made such place necessary? Only the benefits of such places after recognizing the choice of the Egyptian woman to be sheltered and protected in social situations is gaining popularity. Part of this trend can be linked to the increased need to segregate in order to allow women to feel comfortable and safe. This trend is also indicative of the constant shift towards moral conservatism that calls for the separation of the sexes. The past couple of years have witnessed an increase of female involvement in public protests. In 2005 , women openly protested the sexual harassment and degradation they faced at the hands of

Confusing Messages About Sex For Young People In The Twenty First Century

Stella Nyanzi



Youth peer educators dance in "Dapre Nou" ("From Our Eyes"), a documentary film about the work of Club ABC and what it is like to grow up in Haiti during the age of AIDS.

Credit: Amelia Shaw/Agence des Jeunes Producteurs, Courtesy of Photoshare

Growing up as a youth within the HIV/AIDS era must be tougher than it was before the advent of the epidemic. What with watching your friends get ill, suffer through bodily pain, social stigma, or self-induced shame and isolation? Feelings of despair and frustration as the body succumbs to different opportunistic infections, must induce a fear in the observers whether from a distance, or nearby as carers. The mockery of looking too old, or too thin to be one's own age stares adolescents infected with HIV as they progress on to AIDS. Missing school due to illness can sometimes lead to failing examinations. Whispers, gossip, rumours, bad-mouthing, back-biting and banter from other ignorant young people must hurt, especially if they were formerly one's chat-mates. If one is not a sufferer, they can learn a lot from the experiences of youths who have gone through the processes of having HIV and AIDS.

Explaining to society: adults, moralists, health workers, religious leaders, policy makers, etc how 'one so young' got the HIV can be a daunting task in itself. 'How dare you have illicit sex?' they seem to demand, because to many of them, sex is supposed to be only consumed within

marriage. They forget very fast the passion of youth, when desire and experimentation drove them along the path that sexually active youths trudge. They say, 'Don't do it!' And yet they themselves do it left, right and centre. They say, 'Thou shalt not c o m m i t fornication!' And yet they themselves

are adulterers. They say, 'Africans are not gay!' And yet the kings and royalty in our lands have been known to be homoerotic. They say, 'Be wise, use condoms!' And yet they have unplanned pregnancies which they later abort. Teachers teach us to abstain from sex until marriage. And yet these same teachers pressure their students to offer sexual services as a bargain for good grades in exams. Fathers tell us to be exemplary and keep away from premarital sexual activity. But huh, our fathers have sex with housemaids, who are among the long list of outside wives. Policemen tell us to keep the law. But they force themselves on sex workers rounded up in the nightclubs. They even take bribes to drop charges against sugar daddies who pursue sexual encounters with younger partners. Doctors deal with AIDS patients, but they also sleep with their nurses. The conflicting messages that youths receive today cause more chaos than give guidance. 'Practice what I preach, not what I do,' adults who should be at the helm of passing on social knowledge seem to say.

Policy makers and programme implementers are not any better. First they say, 'Abstain!' As youths try hard to keep

aware from the allure of the forbidden fruit of sex, the same leaders say, 'Have a condom, be wise!' So youths hear, 'Abstain,' and 'Use condoms!' And then they hear 'Be faithful to your partner!' 'Disclose your status and be faithful!' Admittedly it is presented as choices, that progress in linear fashion: A for Abstain, B for Be faithful, C for condom use, and D for Disclose your sero-status. However these policy and programme developers ignore the irrational thrill of youth, the erratic character of the erotic, and the pure bliss of sex especially when it is enjoyed against all odds! Many youths get confused by these mixed messages, prefer not to work within the model of options, or choose to dwell on the opposing messages aimed at them.

Financing of sexual health initiatives can also be confusing for young people. After one has abstained for a long virginal period, they become sexually active and resort to using available condoms. Suddenly, a change in the politics of provisioning for reproductive health programmes means a sharp cut in financing condom production or importation. Suddenly, the condoms are either too expensive to afford, or no longer available in the outlets and shops. Meanwhile, the new sexual relationship does not die a similar death, but bursts into a new bud. The young lovers notice they need more sexual fulfilment. And yet there are no condoms in the shops! Or in some countries of Africa, when the big men like presidents, chiefs, and bishops play politics, they play it dirty: when Clinton says, 'Condoms, they sign a treaty for mass provision of condoms.' And then when Bush says, 'No, no more condoms!' They sign another treaty for 'No condoms.' Puppets of global politics of health who do not really think about the consequences for the youths they rule over.

Socialisation is a process of learning

about the way one's society makes meaning of life, the things they value, the way they perform daily rituals and the meanings they attach to them. It is about learning what is right and what is wrong, according to the society that one lives in. Sometimes it is overt instruction. Other times it is learning by induction or emulating the example of others. It can also be through rewards and punishments. When one does good, they are acclaimed. When they transgress, they are punished. HIV and AIDS have become vehicles of socialisation, both as metaphors and realities. Young people in Africa today learn a lot about sex by attending burial ceremonies, seeing sick people in hospitals, attending mass education campaigns, listening to different media preach about good or bad sex usually in relation to HIV and AIDS. Long before a child has reached the grade in school where the reproductive system is taught,

they have had numerous opportunities to hear about sex from friends, siblings, parents, village leaders, health workers, community educators, the media, etc. While HIV/AIDS freed up the conversations and education about sex and sexuality in many spaces, it also introduced an over-emphasis on the relationship between the sexual terrain and health or illness. It is difficult for many youths to dissociate their understandings of sexuality from the local conversations about disease and health. And many times it is confusing for them because the messages can be contradictory, meaningless, or fear-inducing. It is important to take stock of these factors and the implications they might have on the sexual behaviour of young people.

Stella Nyanzi is a Research student at the Health Policy Unit, London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine.

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Discontinued Intimacy, Denied Paternity

has on males.

One of the important emerging support is that offered through peer support from other mothering learners; they often stick together and share about their experiences supporting one another. This could be seen as a school proving a safety net for the girl's social development. Apart from this, there was not professional support reported to be received by these girls.

Conclusions

Findings from this study agree with previous research that young people's engagement in intimate sexual relationships is typically voluntary. These findings speak to the ease of getting basic levels of support that is necessary for the young learners to realise their right to education notwithstanding the challenges. One most important area of consideration coming from this study is the consistency neglected area of denied paternity coincides with partner desertion after learning about the pregnancy. This becomes of utmost importance because acceptance of paternity is a gateway to access to maintenance by the father of the baby. Clearly failure to provide paternity testing in public hospitals still remains a missed opportunity to respond to the challenge of making sure that sexual

expressions among young people do not entrap them in the circle of poverty.

This research has produced a provocative piece of work which highlights the crisis faced by many adolescent girls who fall pregnant whilst at school. Erick Erickson's theory recognises that young people's development requires a sense of 'selfsameness and continuity in time, to be safe [9]. Experiences such as these shatter that sense of one's capacity 'to do well' according to both her standards and the standards of those who are significant to her. She not only failed to look after herself but also failed to keep her relationships.

Even though pregnancy is an obvious sign of failure to use a condom, these findings are however salient about the role of the male partner in taking responsibility for failure to use condoms by supporting their children both financially and in making a contribution to parenting. The limitation of this study is that those who had to leave school or made a decision to leave school as a result of the pregnancy were not included in the sample. This issue, which should clearly be there often, is missing in interventions advocating for male involvement in the fight against gender-based violence.

Studies of the impact of denied paternity on the girls' future expressions of sexuality need to be done. There is a need to conduct studies on acceptability, accessibility and costs of providing this service at a wider scale.

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Mzikazi Nduna lecturers in the Department of Psychology, University of Witwatersrand. She is a member of the AIDS consortium, a board member of GenderDynamix and collaborates with the Medical Research Council's Gender and Health Unit. She is also a Fellow at the ARSRC.

At the time of conducting this research Ms Vela Maseko was a Masters in Clinical Psychology student at the Department of Psychology, School of Human and Community Development, University of Witwatersrand.

Addressing Sexual Harassment and Promoting Women's Safety: The Experience From The Egyptian Women's Centre For Women's Rights

under cover national security police during the constitutional amendment demonstrations.

In 2006, women took part in demonstrations rallying against the mass incidence of sexual violation that took place in Eid of November 2006. These women have also protested other issues and more recently in March 2007, the women in Qalat El Kabash, an area deemed by the government as a slum in Sayedda Zeinab stood their ground before parliament demanding compensation after their homes were razed to the ground.

Conclusion

Women remain largely under

represented in the political arena and their participation in effecting public policy is negligible. Although providing a safe environment for socialization may offer the illusion of social mobility, the reality remains that the voice of the Egyptian women is barely more than tolerated, assembling in small groups to protest against injustice and returning home to pray for change.

At the moment self defense classes are being organized for women as part of the strategy to break the silence.

For further information contact;

The Egyptian Center for Women's

Rights

135 Misr Helwan El-Zeraay

2nd floor, Suite 3

El Maadi, Cairo, Egypt

Tel: +202 527-1397 / 528-2176 Fax: +202 528-2175

E-mail: ecwr@link.net

Website: <http://www.ecwronline.org>

Text culled from ECWR Monthly Update October 2007

NOTES TO CONTRIBUTORS GUIDELINES FOR SUBMISSIONS

The editors welcome submissions related to future issues of the Magazine and also other areas of sexuality, sexual health and rights in Africa. These articles or poems should be objective, analytical and reflect current issues and debates i.e. taking a broader approach to sexuality and taking the sexuality discourse beyond health to integrate the expression of sexuality without guilt or fear.

Priority would be given to previously unpublished articles while already published material might be considered based on the relevance of the subject area to ARSRC's work, accompanied by details of where to seek permission for its reprint. Presently we are seeking articles on:

'Unusual Marriage' And Sexual Health And Rights In Africa (Volume 5 Issue 1)

Undoubtedly, marriage remains an important and valued social institution as well as the main location of 'approved' sexuality. For many stakeholders, marriage appears as a control mechanism of 'socially acceptable' sexuality. Interestingly, the values attached to and the centrality of marriage have recently revitalized the politics of the institution. What is marriage? Who should be married? To whom? When? And where? Have therefore become major contentious issues in the politics of the marriage institution. What is however clear, is that marriage is evolving especially among the youths.

Urfi (or Secret Marriage) in Egypt, *Vat-en sit* in South Africa, *Come we stay* (Kenya), *informal marriage* (West Africa) and same-sex relationship are just some of the emerging forms of long-term relationships that will be the focus of the magazine. Contributions will address, amongst others, the following questions: the prevalence, meaning and sexual health implications of these hitherto unusual marriages/unions.

Technology, Sexuality And Reproductive

Rights In Africa: (Volume 5 Issue 2)

Technology is fast affecting ways of life in Africa even though the level of technology penetration in the continent is quite limited when compared with the level in other parts of the world. Yet access to Global services for mobile communication (GSM) and the Internet is growing at one of the fastest rates in the world. Another technological development likely to affect sexual life and relationships in Africa is the availability of sex toys/aids and drugs for sexual dysfunction.

Contributions to this edition of the magazine will explore and analyze the effects of these technological developments on sexuality in Africa. One of the questions an attempt would be made to resolve is how and the extent to which technology could foster sexual pleasure and health within the social, legal and religious framework of the society.

Transactional And Commercial Sex: Facts, Issues And Policy Implications (Volume 5 Issue 3)

This edition of the magazine will explore and analyze facts and controversies on transactional and commercial sex. Some of the key questions for consideration are: What are the levels, forms and factors of these practices? What policies and programmes are needed to address the issues of sexual health and well-being related to the practice of transactional sex, commercial sex and sex tourism?

Food, Body And Sexual Well-being (Volume 5 Issue 4)

This issue of the magazine will explore the relationship between food, the body and sexual well-being. Contributions will look at the sexualization of the body and food, and the extent to which this process contributes to individual sexual well-being in contemporary Africa. Issues around

femininity, masculinity and nutrition will also be explored.

Region Watch: Topical Issues with a country or sub regional focus.

Programme Feature: Best practices from programme implementers.

Research Notes: Focus on research and methodologies

Viewpoint:: Reactions to previous magazine issues or subject areas that a reader wishes to express very strong opinions about.

Length:

Feature article : 1,000 - 1,500 words

Research issues: 800 - 1,000 words

Opinion articles: 400 - 500 words

Pictures:

Pictures are welcome with or without articles and appropriate credit would be given if the picture is used.

Presentation:

An abstract with your name, contact address, phone number, email address and short personal bio as you would like it to appear on the list of contributors should also be submitted.

References:

*** It is important to note that references should be from the last five years.

*** All contributors would be sent a copy of the issue with their published articles.

All correspondence should be addressed to: The Editor, *Sexuality in Africa* Africa Regional Sexuality Resource Centre,

17 Lawal St., off Oweh St., Jibowu,

PO Box 803, Yaba, Lagos, Nigeria.

E-mail L.IBHAZE@ARSRC.ORG

Please visit our website - www.arsrc.org - for more information and to access online editions of the magazine. Hard copies of the magazine will be made available on request and subscribers will however be required to pay the cost of postage.

Sexuality Resources

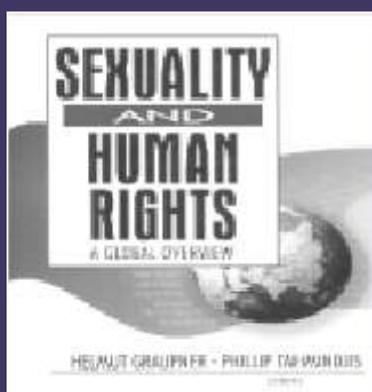
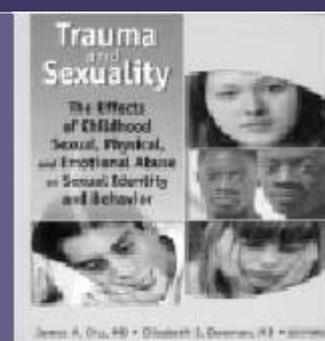
Trauma and Sexuality: The Effects of Childhood Sexual, Physical, and Emotional Abuse on Sexual Identity and Behaviour

Author: James A. Chu & Elizabeth S. Bowman (Eds)

Publisher: The Haworth Medical Press

ISBN: 0789020432

This book examines the effects of childhood trauma. By examining the profound effects of long standing early abuse on the sexual identities, orientation, behaviours and fantasies of those affected.



Sexuality and Human Rights: A Global Overview

Author: Helmut Graupner & Philip Tahmindjis (Eds)

Publisher: Harrington Park Press, 2005

ISBN: 1560235543

This book focuses on the controversial issues of human sexuality and the legal challenges that LGBT individuals face. Internationally recognized legal experts scrupulously discuss the status of important sexuality and human rights laws around the world. Carefully reviewing its development from historical foundations and changing public opinions through to the most recent landmark legal cases.

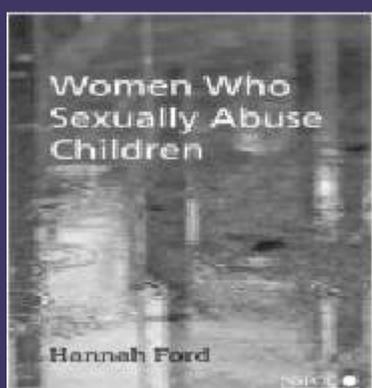
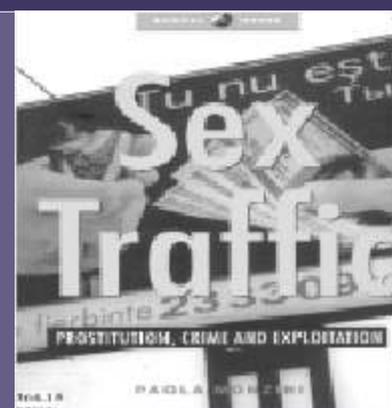
Sex Traffic : Prostitution, Crime And Exploitation

Author: Paola Monzini

Publisher: Zed Books, 2005

ISBN: 1842776258

The trafficking of women and girls for prostitution is one of the most lucrative industries in the world, especially since the explosion of the sex industry since 1990. This book critically addresses global gender relationships carefully linking sexual exploitation, prostitution and human trafficking. At the same time also responding to gender violence with new awareness.



Women Who Sexually Abuse Children

Author: Hannah Ford

Publisher: John Wiley & Sons, Ltd, 2006

ISBN: 0470015748

Sexual abuse on children by women is an area which until now has not suitably been acknowledged by professionals in the sexual offending field. Over the recent years, the number of studies of such women has been growing steadily, this book begins by considering the societal and professional understanding of sexual abuse by women and the reasons they commit such acts. The book further provides a general picture of our understanding of this issue and suggests where research efforts and practice developments could go next.

Aids Safety, Sexuality And Risk

Author: Peter Aggleton, Peter Davies & Graham Hart (Eds)

Publisher: Taylor & Francis, 2007

ISBN: 0203362535

This book reflects on the contributions of the social and behavioural research to the development of interventions for prevention of AIDS by bringing together key papers from three major conferences which took place in 1994.

