

# A matter of difference?

Family planning and gendered discourses on sexuality  
and reproductive decision-making among Black and  
White Zimbabweans

Ph. D. Dissertation

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## A mysterious marriage

Once upon a time  
There was a boy and a girl  
Forced to leave their home by armed robbers.  
The boy was Independence  
The girl was Freedom.  
While fighting back, they got married.

After the big war they went back home.  
Everybody prepared for the wedding.  
Drinks and food abounded,  
Even the disabled felt able.  
The whole village gathered waiting.  
Freedom and Independence  
Were more popular than Jesus.

Independence came  
But Freedom was not there.  
An old woman saw Freedom's shadow passing,  
Walking through the crowd, Freedom to the gate.  
All the same, they celebrated for Independence.

Independence is now a senior bachelor  
Some people still talk about him  
Many others take no notice  
A lot still say it was a fake marriage.  
You can't be a husband without a wife.  
Fruitless and barren Independence staggers to old age,  
Since her shadow, Freedom hasn't come.

*Freedom Nyamubaya*



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# Introduction

*Family planning, an issue that is for the individual intimately private, yet for society inescapably public, cannot be sold or marketed like other services. It can only be offered with no guarantee of acceptance. (Clarke 1969: 18)*

*Family planning poses ethical considerations in virtually all societies. Professor Arthur S. Miller writes, 'population control whether for growth or reduction or the maintenance of an equilibrium involves deep seated instincts and arouses immediate emotional reactions. It is fraught with the most difficult questions of morals and religion, of personal freedom and natural rights, and touches the core of both individual and social well-being. (Clarke 1969: 18, quoting Miller 1960: 627)*

In March and April 1966 the Rhodesian Parliament discussed a motion on family planning, which had been posed before the Parliament by Owen-Smith and Hamilton-Ritchie, both members of the Rhodesian Front (RF). The RF had come into power in 1963 and had declared Rhodesia's unilateral independence from Great Britain on 25 November 1965. In many ways the RF government was a modern one, following the international trends closely despite present perceptions to the contrary. The RF was particularly modern regarding family planning issues, both in theory and in practice. The international discourse on overpopulation and on the measures to be taken to reduce it was adopted and translated to Rhodesian conditions, and the introduction of modern, technological contraceptives came early in Rhodesia. Also the reactions from the African nationalists to the family planning activities of the Family Planning Association of Rhodesia (FPAR) and the RF Government had international overtones.

When the RF declared Rhodesia independent the globalisation of development aid had started to take shape as a consequence of the international re-shuffling of geo-political and economic power after the Great Imperial War of the early and mid-1940s. A central issue of concern to one of the new post-war super-powers—the USA—was population control through family planning programmes. The discourse on overpopulation emanating from the USA during the 1950s and 60s soon found fertile grounds in Rhodesia, where the Whites were more than cautious about the red-black threat, i.e. the possible loss of land and property to Black, communist nationalists, or

as Rhodesians often described them; the terrorists (see Smith 1997, Godwin 1996 and Godwin and Hancock 1999 for instance). Black women's fertility became an important issue of control for both African and European nationalists. Hence, from the very beginning family planning (or fertility control) was perceived in terms of racial conflict by the two major population groups, i.e. the indigenous and colonised African and the foreign colonising European population.

## **The research problem**

This thesis was conceived and written within the conceptual framework of peace and development research, i.e. within a multi-disciplinary field of study, in which the relationship between peace/conflict and development is in focus. The theme of this thesis strikes at the core of this relationship as reproduction and population control – by now classical development issues – is its main theme, and because I have chosen to study it from a conflictual perspective, including the North/South relationship, colonial, gendered, class and generational conflicts. From the perspective of peace and development research the overarching research problem is of course to explore the relationship between development and peace/conflict, through a chosen developmental problem – “overpopulation”.

Overpopulation is a concept, which since the inception of development aid has been used to describe areas in the world defined as poor, under- or un-developed.<sup>1</sup> Population growth in the South has generally been perceived in the North as too high since the beginning of de-colonisation, when the 'US government began supporting population control policies overseas, and linked foreign aid with depopulation policies' (Ross 1994: 151). The problems connected with population growth in the South are most often defined in terms of environmental degradation, eroding food support systems, economic stagnation, growing poverty and international/national in/security. “Bomb” is probably the most well known metaphor of this view on population (popularised in the 1960s by Paul and Anne Erlich), focused as it is on the envisaged catastrophic dimensions of the “problem”, particularly as it was seen as a threat to the welfare democracies of the North. Many researchers, politicians and activists, though not all, perceived, and continue to perceive the current population growth rate in the South as too high, i.e. as a problem, while the opposite situation afflicts the North. In both cases, i.e. the over-population of the South and the under-population of the North women are those most often accused of contributing to either of these problems because they bear too many or too few children – or in other

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<sup>1</sup> Following Truman's inaugural speech in 1949, in which he defined both those who were “developed” – the democratic countries of the conceptual North – and those who were “underdeveloped” – the colonies (Esteva 1995).

words 'women are being seen as both the cause and therefore the potential solution' of the "problem" (Kabeer 2003: 187).<sup>2</sup> Mostly, those defining the problem are men with direct political and/or economic interests in continued economic growth, through what is by them defined as favourable policies. This has led to a situation in which population research and practice, whether in the South or in the North, has been focused on state and company interests, i.e. economic development and expansion, rather than the relations of power involved in reproductive decision-making and the other-than-economic reasons for bearing or not bearing children.

The critique of this focus on number of births per woman, rather than on how women's general life situation influence their childbearing, has been a driving force of many women's movements in the South from the 1970s onwards. To most feminists the problem is not generally one of overpopulation, but of skewed relations of power with far reaching political, social and economic consequences. Among those are unwanted pregnancies and high fertility. The dividing line between the "populationists" and the "feminists", i.e. between focus on numbers and focus on sexual-reproductive rights, and hierarchical intersections, form the main point of departure of this thesis. The different perspectives on population, frame my research problem quite precisely as one concerning the complexity of reproductive decision-making.

The feminist argument is that the problem is not so much one of filling the contraceptive gap (which is a rather easily solved question of infrastructure and technology), or of women's unwillingness to limit their childbearing per se. The problem lies rather in the social, economic and political materialisation and institutionalisation of discourses and practices, which effectively limit women's space and opportunities to negotiate and move beyond motherhood as an exclusive definition of womanhood. Feminist analyses of the population problem focus on the web of power relations of which women are a part, power relations within which women manoeuvre and within which they gain and loose power and opportunities depending mainly, but not exclusively, on reproductive and sexual performance and capacity (e.g. Dixon-Mueller 1993; Sen and Snow 1994; Correa 1994; Sen, Germain and Chen 1994; Ginsburg and Rapp 1995; Bandarage 1997; Silliman and King 1999; Kabeer 2003). From a feminist perspective, the problem is hence not one of "over/population", but of access to power and resources, foremost women's access to self-determination in relation to the reproductive

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<sup>2</sup> Kabeer writes on the issue of "over"- not under-population, but I think her argument is applicable also to the latter situation.

arena.<sup>3</sup> This has been central to feminist thought, at least from Mary Wollstonecraft to the present (see for instance Wollstonecraft 1792; Rowbotham 1973; Vock 1988; hooks 1990; Stoler 1995; Ginsburg & Rapp 1995; Silius & Wrede 1996; Nnaemeka 1998; McFadden 1998; Connell 1999).

The political economy of fertility school inspired me to focus not only on the contemporary situation in Zimbabwe. According to Susan Greenhalgh (1990 and 1995) the historical context is of great importance in understanding present reproductive decision-making. We need to situate reproductive decision-making locally, globally and historically. We also need to pay 'attention to the embeddedness of community institutions shaping fertility in structures and processes operating at regional, national and global levels, and to the historical roots of those macro-micro linkages' (Greenhalgh 1995: 13). It is similarly vital to understand that the consequences of the historical background are based in socially constructed discourses, transformed into very real locations and situated behaviours, through the political economic discourses and practices forming the global context. In other words, understanding reproductive decision-making and the processes, which alter it demand the inclusion of factors often left out by students of population. The argument raised by Greenhalgh (1990 and 1995), that it is central to understand the historical background is extremely important. Greenhalgh's suggestion of how one should understand fertility and fertility change guided me when I settled on research design, and theoretical and methodological approach. Exploring the historical aspects is therefore central to this thesis, not as a mere background to the contemporary scene, but as an important area of research in itself. Researching the historical formation of a settler colony and state from a population perspective is interesting as it lays masculine interests in control of women open. It also exposes the sexual aspects, not only of relationships and childbearing, but of colonial control and patriarchal interests.

In other words, the research problem is double in its concern with the complexity of reproductive decision-making. First of all, the discourses and theories, on which population policies and reproductive technology research are based, project themselves as culturally, racially, gender and class neutral. Secondly, research on reproductive decision-making tends to focus on individual women, as if socially isolated in time and space. In my view, this tendency is problematic. Therefore, the research problem is one both of theoretical and empirical dissatisfaction with studies on population and

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<sup>3</sup> Connell (1999) define the reproductive arena as being the sphere within which children are produced and raised (i.e. including not only reproductive but also re-creative sexuality). I return to this in chapter 1.



reproductive decision-making—and of finding ways of researching these issues from more critical and complex perspectives.

## **Objective and research questions**

The objective of this thesis is to understand contemporary reproductive decision-making in a modern African state, created and structured around an Imperial European diaspora. Such an understanding needs to take its point of departure both in large-scale, local and individual processes of change. This is always important, but particularly so in a society, formed by gendered and racial conflicts, with direct links to the international community and global political economic interests, defining “population” as a major development issue. Importantly, the gendered and racial conflicts also concerned the control of the racial purity of individuals and the body politic—of sexuality, reproduction and population control. Thence, the two main research questions to be dealt with are:

- How does reproductive decision-making relate to discourses of race, sexuality and gender?
- On what grounds do men and women make reproductive decisions?

In searching for an understanding of reproductive decision-making, I will explore how it, as a social phenomenon is formed by economic, political and historical circumstances, locally as well as internationally. This means that the more specific research questions concern not only local, contemporary contexts, but also their historical background, as well as the glocal political economic context. The research questions centre around three areas of interest in the thesis, i.e. historical roots of contemporary discourses; population politics (understood as both personal, local and global); and discourses on sexuality and reproductive decision-making.

- How were discourses on sexuality and reproduction in Zimbabwe (Southern/Rhodesia) constructed and influenced by settler colonialism?
- How has population control and reproductive decision-making been politicised locally and globally?
- Which are the contemporary discourses on sexuality and reproduction in Zimbabwe?

## **Outline of the thesis**

The theoretical aspects of the thesis are introduced in chapter 1, as is also the methodological considerations, and the methods applied. I have chosen to introduce the geo-political area of study with an examination of Zimbabwe’s colonial background (chapters 2-3). My focus in these chapters is on the centrality of racialised sexuality and reproduction to the political economy of the colony and the

independent republic of Zimbabwe. I also show how this focus is based in patriarchal social structures, and ultimately in a hybrid masculinity, in which male control of women's sexual-reproductive capacities are central. Thereafter (chapter 4) I turn to contemporary ways of organising the family, exploring in particular those relevant to this thesis. Getting the grips of how families are organised, and why they are organised that way, is central to the argument that the local and private context plays a significant role in reproductive decision-making. Understanding the reproductive arena necessitates also an understanding of how sexual discourses and practices are interlinked with reproduction and marriage through relations of dependency. Hence, chapter 5 concerns sexuality, not as behaviour but as discourse centred on familial and societal control of women's reproductive capacities. I then focus my attention on that which makes reproductive decision-making possible and therefore also perhaps sex more enjoyable, i.e. family planning and the discourses, devices and practices involved in it (chapter 6). I examine not only local perceptions of family planning and contraception, but also the historical background of technological contraception and the family planning discourse. The changing reproductive pattern in Zimbabwe is the focus of chapter 7, as is also the continuity of reproductive prerogatives, i.e. I explore the change and continuity of discourses and practices of reproduction and family planning. In chapter 8 I draw the final conclusions of the thesis, exploring the links between different aspects—social, economic, political and historical—of contemporary reproductive decision-making in Zimbabwe.

### **The context: Population policies as development intervention**

Since the 1950s the aid donor countries in the North have aimed at population reduction, i.e. fertility decline, in the South. According to Hodgson (1992), population policies as one aspect of development strategies became part of cold war politics. The argumentation implied that when population growth is higher than economic growth, the masses of poor people would grow, in time constituting a basis for communist revolutionary change. Growing numbers of poor people in the South became an issue of global security.

Politicians and planners foremost in the USA turned to demographers, who introduced them to the transition theory (Notestein 1945), a new theoretical school in population studies. Notestein's transition theory was based on his studies of fertility decline in 19<sup>th</sup> century Europe. The theory of transition argues that modernisation is the main factor leading to fertility decline. However, only one small part of his argument reached policy-makers and planners, i.e. his suggestion that health improvements, leading to declining mortality would also, in time lead to declining fertility. This part of his theory was mixed with the domino theory and a re-

interpretation of Malthus' theory (1798) of the interconnectedness of economic deprivation and population growth.<sup>4</sup> The result of this mix of theories and schools was population policies focused on fertility reduction through health programmes and later (in the 1960s) also through contraception. The idea was that declining population growth was to back up economic development.

While on a greater scale propagating economic development as part of the solution, population policies were operationalised in family planning programmes running parallel to mother and child health programmes and the main approach was to promote (or force) the use of contraceptives. The history of family planning is grim, maybe the worst examples being the providing of injectable contraceptives and pills telling women it was vitamins, the hushed tests of Norplant<sup>®</sup> (implanted hormonal contraceptive) in Bangladesh or the sterilization campaign in India, which resulted in popular revolts—and the general neglect of health and social consequences of sterilisation and technological contraceptives (Flores 1982; Hartmann and Boyce 1990; Sen, Germain and Chen, 1994; Yuval-Davis 2002).

The solution to the “population problem” seemed so simple from a family planning perspective; give people contraceptives and they will reduce their fertility. It was and is maintained by many family planners that there is an “unmet need” for contraceptives among women in the South, and that the main problem is to deliver the products. However, during the 1980s the effectiveness of contraceptive delivery was questioned, as well as the explanatory models on which population policies were grounded (see for instance Hartmann and Boyce 1990; Dixon-Mueller 1993; Sen, Germain and Chen, 1994; McFadden 1994; Ginsburg and Rapp 1995; Greenhalgh 1995; Bandarage 1997; Silliman and King 1999; Kabeer 2003).

Demographers, anthropologists and sociologists pointed out that fertility is not only about numbers, but also about linkages to local and global structures of dependency, power and discursive practices. This happened at a time when women's movements were growing in the South. These movements got engaged in the discussions on population policies but from a users perspective. Their critique was severe and concerned women's rights in population policies, i.e. women's right to say no to unsafe contraceptives and women's right to self-determination. In the 1990s, the women's movements from the South have more and more strongly also articulated women's sexual rights, the international climax being the 4<sup>th</sup> UN World Conference on Women in Beijing 1995 and the preceding Forum in Huairou, China.

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<sup>4</sup> In his *An Essay on the Principle of Population...* (1798) Malthus argued that it is not possible to limit population growth. Neo-Malthusianists, however, argue that this is possible.

In the 1980s it also became clear that fertility levels were dropping all over the world including Africa—but the number of people was growing. In the case of Africa, it is interesting to note that fertility dropped even in countries with very low contraceptive prevalence and despite the serious economic crisis faced by African countries. Simultaneously Africa is (still) described as a *difficult* continent where people are bound by their “cultural” and “religious” structures impeding the spread of ideas of limited fertility.<sup>5</sup>

During the 1990s, the doubts about the effectiveness of population policies reached planners and politicians. Women's movements mainly from the South made their voices heard at the international UN conferences in Rio, Vienna, Cairo and Beijing<sup>6</sup> and the donor community have opened up for dialogues with critics when formulating population policies. The focus of United Nations (UN) documents on population and development, is overpopulation rather than social and economic development, making women's reproduction the target while down-playing the need for global resource redistribution (Boland et al. 1994). Despite the human rights rhetoric, in policies women have been objectified, with policy makers focusing on the womb rather than on the social and economic realities in which women live, thus neglecting that as subjects they make their decisions in social settings where several others may be influential (Dixon-Mueller 1993; Correa and Petchesky 1994). Policy recommendations 'are directed towards lowering rates of population growth, not towards ensuring that individuals are free to determine their fertility' (Boland et al. 1994). Recommendations do not focus on social and economic problems as causes but rather as results of population growth:

For the poorest countries, development may not be possible at all, unless slower population growth can be achieved soon...in middle-income countries, a continuation of high fertility among poorer people could prolong indefinitely the period before development significantly affects their lives. (The World Bank 1984: 185)

The same sentiment was repeated by the USAID nine years later when the parastatal 'identified population growth as the key “strategic threat” that “consumes all other economic gains, drives environmental damage, exacerbates poverty, and impedes democratic governance”’ (Silliman 1999: x) The linkage made between high fertility and poverty in terms of defining high fertility as a root cause of poverty, is still very much part of policy formulations today, as

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<sup>5</sup> Criticising demographers Kertzer (1995) points at the lack of understanding in demographic models and theorising regarding what 'culture' and 'religion' is.

<sup>6</sup> The UN conferences on environment, human rights, population and development and women.

exemplified in the 2003 *State of the world population* (UNFPA 2003: 5): 'persistent high fertility in poor households undermines the prospects for development'. The Neo-Malthusian model of explanation is hence still dominating the common and popular perception of causes of poverty in the South as inherent to the poor themselves (Ross 1997). In other words, only they themselves can change their poverty through reducing their fertility and this change is made easier through the assistance of the North, through population control policies, family planning programmes and contraceptive delivery systems.

The top-down, fertility-reducing focus and design of population policies and family planning programmes have during the four last decades been promoted and supported by the international development and aid community, as well as by many of those engaged in the population debate (Dixon-Mueller 1993; Bandarage 1997; Ross 1998; Silliman and King 1999). Among these, a group of environmentalists argue that world population numbers must be reduced at any (human) cost if the earth is to be saved, as well as a category of populationists who perceive rapid population growth as endangering economic growth, leading to poverty and misery (Erich 1968; Brundtlandkommissionen 1988; Sen 1994). These views, rooted in the modernist development paradigm, do not leave much room for a discussion of women's sexual and reproductive rights, nor for an understanding of the constraints they face when attempting to make reproductive decisions, whether they do so alone or in co-operation with their husbands.

For years, population policies have been one-sided, technological and "cost-effective" in focussing on distribution of contraceptives. Women, as consumers of contraceptives were, and still are, forced and talked into using contraceptives or sterilisation. Typically women's reproductive and sexual rights are neglected when their concerns and complaints about side-effects are not taken seriously, when abortion is denied or forced, when economic incentives or disincentives are used to make them comply, or when they are not informed that they are given contraceptives or being sterilised. More often than not population policies and family planning programmes have one or several of the above-mentioned problems in relation to their clients (Sen 1994; Correa and Petchesky 1994; Tomasevski 1994).<sup>7</sup> The promotion of long-lasting, low-cost, and provider-dependent contraceptives (such as intra-uterine devices (IUD's) and injectables like Depo-Provera) may be efficient from the perspective of the aid community, but is hardly recommendable from a reproductive rights angle. Hormonal and mechanical contraceptives may be hazardous to women's health, either as a result of wrong use

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<sup>7</sup> As a reaction against this, women's health advocates formulated the Women's Declaration on Population Policies in 1992, in which women's reproductive rights and health are central.

or side effects (Floresman 1981; Hartmann and Boyce 1990; Correa and Petchesky 1994; Fathalla 1994). In many cases women have not been in control regarding if, and what kind of, contraceptive to use (Fathalla 1994). Because of unsatisfactory information women have not been in control of the time-span of the infertility caused by the contraceptives, and acceptance might be grounded on social, economic, or other kinds of pressures on women (Boland et. al. 1994). The treatment of women in population policies is thus similar to the treatment of other marginalized and silenced groups in the South.

Men and some women contest the issue of women's rights and choices both locally and internationally (the latter is evidenced by the fierce resistance against women's reproductive and sexual rights at UN conferences, e.g. at Vienna, Cairo and Beijing). It is also contested by the political economic situation in Southern countries, where colonial and post-colonial legislation and policies have ignored women's rights to land, education and public participation, i.e. their right to active citizenship (McFadden 2002).

New Reproductive Technologies (NRTs) may describe the racialised and class based differences with which reproduction is perceived. The understanding of what is meant by NRTs is highly stratified along global racial and class lines. To middle and upper class women in the North and to some degree in the South NRTs have meant possibilities to have children despite the infertility of one of the partners, or in cases when women live in homosexual relationships. In this context NRTs include In Vitro Fertilisation (IVF), surrogacy<sup>8</sup> and other means of having children with the help of technological interventions (McDaniel 1996). To poor and lower middle class women, however, NRTs means something completely different. In this context NRTs are the technologies, which aims at *contra*-ception, i.e. means by which technologies are used to block pregnancies (Sen and Snow 1994).

### **(Re-)presenting Zimbabwe and the locations of study**

Zimbabwe is a colonial construction, envisioned and violently created in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century by Cecil Rhodes, through his British South Africa Company (BSAC) and with the support of Queen Victoria. It is a landlocked country in Southern Africa, bordering to the Botswana/Kalahari in the west, to Zambia/Zambezi in the North,

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<sup>8</sup> Surrogacy usually means that a childless couple comes to an agreement with a woman who will carry the pregnancy of their child for them. Anyone who has a uterus can be a surrogate mother. However, class and race interacts even here, and in practice it is usually a poor, non-White woman who acts as surrogate mother for a rich couple. Hence, a woman who in one sense may be targeted by governmental family planning programmes (because she is Black/poor) may earn her living on carrying rich people's children.

Mozambique/the Highlands in the east, and finally to South Africa/Limpopo to the South. The country contains both a dry low veld suitable for intensive cattle farming, high plains with good agricultural soils, rain forests and mountainous areas—great for sporting and tourism.



Figure 1: Map of Zimbabwe with sites of research marked out (illustration: Silje Ørbø Kirkegaard)

Zimbabwe is a youthful country with 42% of its population being below 15 years of age in 1999 (CSO 2000). The trend is slowly towards an increase in the age group between 15–64 years (from 49% in 1982 to 53% in 1999—a change, which *might* have happened quicker without the HIV/Aids pandemic. Zimbabwe's ethnic composition is less heterogeneous than is common in most modern African states. The main languages in the country are Shona, Ndebele (or Sindebele), Tonga and English, also representing the main ethnic and ethno-economic groups. Shona, the linguistically and numerically dominant group in the country is further divided into smaller dialectical groups.

Blacks make up 99% of the population and the White minority was in 1992 less than 1% (no figure available for 1999),<sup>9</sup> presently it is most probably even less (*ibid*). In the 1992 census, the urban-rural ethnic distribution of the population was one in which the majority of the European population lived in cities (approximately 65.000, making up 2% of the urban population, i.e. more than double the country average), while only approximately 18.000 lived in a rural setting. Among Blacks, it was the opposite distribution where approximately 3 million lived in the cities and the majority lived in the rural areas (approximately 7 million). In 1992, Zimbabwe had a total population of just 10.4 million, of which the European's made up only close to 83.000 (CSO 1994a and 1995). By 1997 the country had 11.7 million inhabitants, a growth rate of 2.5%, a drop from the 3.5% growth rate of the 1980s and the 3.1% of the early 1990s (CSO 1994a and 2000). The falling growth rate might be explained by a combination of falling life expectancy (from 61 in 1992 to 57 in 1999 most probably due to Aids and rising poverty) and falling fertility rates, i.e. from the 4.39% of the 1992 census to the 3.96% in 1999 (*ibid*). The most recent numbers are not available, as the latest (2003) census has not yet been published.

Due to the post-referendum political conflict, it is difficult to determine both the number of Whites still living in the country (as an example one of the White families included in this research has emigrated), and how much they contribute to the economy as compared to the pre-2001 situation.

Zimbabwe differs from most Sub-Saharan African countries also because the country has a fairly large industrial sector and also a fairly large urban population (around 40%) and the country's infrastructure is rather well developed (CSO 2000). The Zimbabwean population growth is among the lower ones in Sub-Saharan Africa, and the use of contraceptives (mainly technological or 'modern') is among the highest on the continent—around 60% of the adult population has either used or is currently using a technological contraceptive (CSO 2000).

It is one of the last African countries to gain independence—after a violent war of freedom the Rhodesian regime gave up, having been confronted for more than 15 years with both military, political and diplomatic pressures. On April 18 1980, Rhodesia-Zimbabwe officially became the independent Republic of Zimbabwe. The legal and political system and structure of the country is, however, still the same as during colonialism, of which the wearing of wigs in court and the design of the parliament may be examples. Zimbabwe, as also Rhodesia seem always also to be a front-line state, not only in the sense meant in the period between Zimbabwean and South African independence (when Zimbabwe in fact fought a low intensive two-

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<sup>9</sup> There are no ethnically based statistics available for 1999.



front war on its southern and eastern borders), but in the sense of always, it seems, representing a sort of conflictual cutting-edge in the region.

When Southern Rhodesia gained responsible Government in 1921, it was an expression of British settlers wanting to distance the colony from South Africa. However, the racial separation policies in Southern Rhodesia pre-dated the apartheid system of the 1940s South Africa, and the unilateral declaration of independence (UDI) of late November 1965 was a demonstration against the de-colonisation of Africa, which flung the colony into isolation and in time repeated political conflicts with South Africa. The liberation war, which started in the mid-1960s was long, intensive, brutal and highly racialised and ended only as late as 1979. In the mid-1980s the political-military conflict between the two armies of liberation culminated in the massacre of Ndebele civilians in Matabeleland, followed by the fall of President Banana (who died in November 2003) and the unification of the two political parties connected to the armies of the liberation war. In 1987 Prime Minister Robert Mugabe also became the President of the country, with Joshua Nkomo as vice-president. In 1992 the Zimbabwean Government introduced their own variant of structural adjustment, the so-called Economic Structural Adjustment Programme (ESAP). The ESAP has been accused of causing growing poverty in the country and of being the reason that the condition both of the health and educational system, and of people in general have deteriorated. In the late 1990s, President Mugabe has faced growing opposition, both within civil society and in the formal political system with the establishment of an active opposition party (Movement for Democratic Change, MDC) and a lost referendum in 1998. At the core of the contemporary conflict in Zimbabwe is the issue of agricultural land and political power.

The areas chosen for field research in Zimbabwe are located in the northern and eastern parts of the country, i.e. the provinces of Manicaland (Buhera and Mutare), Mashonaland West (Karoï) and Harare (Highfield and Kuwadzana). The locations of fieldwork are divided between rural and urban, and are within these areas further divided between commercial (large-scale farms until recently mainly owned and run by White Zimbabweans) and communal farmers (small-scale Black farmers on previously Tribal Trust Land, i.e. land designated the indigenous population by the colonisers), and high-density areas in the capital, i.e. three socio-economic locations. In addition to this, there is also an ethnic division, since I focus on two major groups in Zimbabwe—the African segment, which comprises the majority population and the European segment, which until recently (pre-2001) made up an important economic force in the country.

Zimbabwe is a country in which several interlinked hierarchies of power determine the position of individuals and groups—and of those particularly patriarchal, racial and class hierarchies have been important to me when settling on research topic, design and when selecting research locations. First of all I chose to interview people living in two socio-economic rural locations, i.e. communal and commercial farmers. Adding the racial aspect to it I also chose to focus on White commercial farmers rather than Black commercial farmers.<sup>10</sup> However, socio-economic divisions are much more detailed and fine tuned, and hence there are great variations within these two main groups. The village in Buhera was basically divided into four socio-economic or class based groups, while the villagers would largely be defined as “poor” in a larger, general Zimbabwean context. The families included in the research represent all of these four groups, i.e. rich, middle, poor and very poor. The class formation of the village in Buhera is rather classical of peasantries peripheral to but still living in symbiosis with the urban sector (Moyo 2003, private communication). The four socio-economic groups, which my assistant, Nyaradzo Dzobo and I identified to exist in the village are represented both within each family and between them. The richest are those with access to money and assets, of which assets seem to be most important as assets may generate cash or kind from other people. Among the interviewees there is one such rich family who own land, farming equipment, cattle, goats, chickens and a nice and well furnished house. The grown children are well educated (secondary and beyond)—and the father of the house married only one wife, which had apparently been an economic strategy on his part. In exchange for the lending out of farming equipment to the poorer segments of the community, the rich access the labour power of the poor for tilling the land and harvesting the crops. The rich are thereby able to till and harvest before everybody else, which gives them an economic advantage. Being rich in the village context means having access to dairy products and poultry both for use and for sale; it means being able to sell off of the herds without becoming destitute; it means being able to send your children to school because you can always pay for them and even get poorer people in the village or poorer relatives to do the chores, which the children would otherwise have done. The middle class is made up of people with similar assets but in smaller quantities; some of these are also people with salaried jobs<sup>11</sup> in the urban sector (i.e. they have moved out temporarily or more or less permanently but retains close contacts, land and cattle in the village). Among those we have two families and one individual. The poor,

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<sup>10</sup> Both because African commercial farmers living on their farms are very few, and because White farmers are historically the main land owning group.

<sup>11</sup> E.g. as soldiers, teachers, factory workers etc.

who make up three of the families, have even less assets than the middle class, they often have to sell labour to the richer segments; some go to town to get jobs (which often do not pay as well as the jobs of those from richer segments of the village); they have few possibilities of selling anything in times of crisis, and if they do, they end up even poorer than before the crisis. The very poor are those without any assets at all; they might have a few chickens, but are otherwise dependent on relatives, neighbours and friends not only in times of crisis but on an everyday basis. The children often do bad in school (have no time to do homework, they eat and sleep badly) and also have to take on adult responsibilities at home at a young age. Among the interviewees we find two such families.

Concerning the commercial farming families, two were very affluent farmers, considering themselves thoroughly Zimbabwean with no plans to leave the country because of the political situation, while the third, less affluent farming family opted out of the situation shortly after I left in late 2000.<sup>12</sup> The differences between these families need some comments. The two families who have chosen to stay have larger and more developed farms, they have family ties which in one case stretches back to the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. They live on land they inherited from their family.<sup>13</sup> One of these two families also lived in a constellation similar to communal farmers, i.e. as an extended family three generations deep on commonly held land, working together under the leadership of the ageing *Pater Famiglia*. The poorer family, however, are farmers by choice, not inheritance. They “bought” their farm from the government in the early 1990s after having worked on other commercial farms for some years. They had strong ties to their urban families and often stayed with their parents in the capital over weekends and holidays. The two White, urbanised families may be placed in the upper middle range of the socio-economic hierarchy, one family running their own company, while in the other both were managers in private businesses.

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<sup>12</sup> By November 2003 at least one of the affluent farming families had been forced off the farm.

<sup>13</sup> The land issue is complex. Those who have inherited/own land, do so under the goodwill of the government, since all land is formally owned by the state, i.e. they in legal terms lease the land for very long stretches of time.

# Chapter 1

## Theoretical and methodological considerations

*If one starts asking questions about standard accounts of the growth of modern science, for example, from the lives of peoples who suffered from that growth and from the associated European expansion that made it possible and benefited from it...one – anyone – learns more than if such questions were not asked. (Harding 1997: 385)*

Six months after I gave birth to our second son I was happily back at work. The inquiring comment I almost unanimously received not only from colleagues (of whom some are dedicated feminists) but also from friends was: 'So, you are back at work... who takes care of Love?' Everyone seemed to have forgotten that this baby had more than one parent—or rather, we are so used to mothers being the only accountable parent during a child's first year that we tend to disregard the father. I found myself enmeshed in modern, Swedish "mothering" discourses. Of course, I could answer with a forgiving smile that the child was with his father and people felt ashamed for not having thought of this obvious arrangement in this, as official discourse will have it, most gender equal country in the world. Becoming a mother was probably one of the most important "eye-openers" I have had. It slowly made me realise what discourse "does". It constitutes thoughts, acts, policies, social change—it makes you, sometimes also into something/one you do not think you are. You might, as in Sweden, have a discourse of gender equality on the state level but as long as this discourse is embraced only by a few, change will take a long time to come about, if ever. In my private arrangements I run counter to practice, while my husband and I go along with the official Swedish gender equality discourse.

The first part of this chapter deals with the theoretical points of departure of the thesis, while the latter deals with the methodological aspects of fieldwork, the methods used and the research process. The theoretical underpinnings of it as they will be formulated below are the results of coming to insights about my own analytical applications throughout the empirical chapters. Reading my own analyses throughout the chapters to follow made me realise that what I have

done is a rather typical feminist work, based much more in feminist theory than I had imagined it would be at the start. Theoretically, I have been on a joyride, taking me from the early standpoint and empiricist feminism, over postmodernism, poststructuralism, postcolonialism, postfeminism, queer theory – and back to standpoint and Lerner’s classical theory of patriarchy. The looping has also meant that I have found, and want to keep holding on to two basic theoretical points of departure; that lived reality and experience is a consequence of location, and that this reality is always a matter of social construction.

### **The acrobatics of theoretical triangulation**

The objective in this first part of the chapter is partly to position myself as a feminist in feminist theory, and partly to show how this position can inform and be used to critically analyse the theoretical models with which other researchers have attempted to explain the “problem” of the non-white “female” giving birth to too many babies. The end result is a theoretical framework for understanding the data I have collected together with Nyaradzo Dzobo and Noah Nyongo.

My points of departure have been typical both of post-structural and queer feminism *as well* as standpoint feminism and the critique of White feminism by “Third World” and Black feminists, the latter often produced from the standpoint of being the “Other within”.<sup>1</sup> In addition I also critically discuss some of the most well-known and politically influential theories of population growth and change. In other words I triangulate not only feminist theories, which are often perceived as opposing each other, but also feminism and population theory.

The critique raised against what was defined by feminist outsiders as White, heterosexual, middleclass feminism have had many and diverse effects. One such effect has been what I prefer to call the opening up of a “speakers corner” for non-white feminists within White feminism. Lorde (1994: 38) described this situation the following way in 1984:

Whenever the need for some pretence of communication arises, those who profit from our oppression call upon us to share our knowledge

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<sup>1</sup> Patricia Hill Collins introduced this concept (which has caught on in the most diverse kinds of contexts, where the potent origins of it has gone lost in academic fog) in a 1986 article. The concept of the Other itself is problematic, however, as pointed out by bell hooks (1990: 54) because ‘race is always an issue of Otherness that is not white; it is black, brown, yellow, red, purple even’, i.e. the Other is always racialised in a way which obscures whiteness. Being White is not a matter of being an Other but of being a Self. In this thesis I have attempted to de-racialise ‘Other’, and I use it also denominating Rhodesians.

with them. In other words, it is the responsibility of the oppressed to teach the oppressors of their mistakes... Black and Third World people are expected to educate white people as to our humanity. Women are expected to educate men. Lesbians and gay men are expected to educate the heterosexual world. The oppressors maintain their position and evade responsibility for their own actions.

Another effect has been the tendency towards a mainstreaming within White feminism of in particular White queer feminism; and lastly and to me personally maybe most importantly, Third World and Black feminism (by theorists-of-colour) have become more accessible to White feminists with an interest in it. One of the main points of the feminist outsiders was (and still is) their claim that feminism need/ed to acknowledge difference,<sup>2</sup> its history and its consequences not only between woman and men but *also* significantly among women (see for instance Lorde 1982 and 1984; Collins 1986; Mohanty 1991; hooks 1990 and 1992; Ware 1992; Frankenberg 1993). This resulted roughly speaking in two lines of development within feminist theory, one in which difference has been theorised as constructions and meta-narratives, and the original one in which difference was/is theorised as very real and dependent on how you are positioned/situated/located in that reality. The post-modern and later post-structuralist and queer turn in feminist theory lean on the early standpoint notions of difference but have theorised location as one basically of choice. Butler's works (1989 and 1993) are some of the milestones of this direction and as a dream-catcher she plays an important role in feminist theory. It is, however, a feminist painkiller despite it being genuinely philosophised and incredibly important in contributing to the dreams of differently organised societies—reality is dreamed away, theorised as constructions rather than as reality in which love, pleasure, happiness, subjugation, oppression, abuse exists and are experienced in the everyday contexts of really lived lives. As it has been put by Hill Collins 'oppression is not a game, nor is it solely about language—for many of us, it still remains profoundly real' (1997: 381). In other words, feminist outsiders are more often confronted with their lack of privilege than are their inside counterparts. Their personal experiences feed into one of the major points in feminist theory, i.e. that it matters who you are and where you are coming from.<sup>3</sup>

Feminism is, in difference to most other schools of thought profoundly political. The political is inherent in all forms of theoretical

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<sup>2</sup> hooks (1990: 51, emphasis in original) is a bit at odds with the concept of difference, as she perceives it as a concept, which might just as well be exchanged with 'words deemed uncool or too simplistic, words like *oppression*, *exploitation* and *dominance*.'

<sup>3</sup> As so brilliantly described by Lorde (1982).

as well as in activist feminism. Feminist theory has a goal, which is not simply to “understand” lived realities and the assumptions/discourses/practices on which these realities are based, but also to transform them, since they are theorised and perceived, from feminist perspectives as oppressive. Feminist theory is hence, e.g. as is peace and development research, basically normative, preoccupied with change in the sense described by Marx (quoted in Hartsock 1997: 370): ‘The philosophers have only *interpreted* the world in various ways; the point is to *change* it’.<sup>4</sup> In prolongation of this it is essential ‘to understand power relations [and] to understand power relations is to change them’ (Hartsock 1997: 370). The understanding of relations of power implies the deconstruction of them. Unconstructed they will pass as natural givens—they will remain unseen. The understanding of power relations as constructed rather than as natural, and of location as determining specific conceptualisations—constructions—of relations of power is where the two streams of feminist theory meet, it is where they powerfully intersect.

The postmodern turn and its (sometimes exclusive) focus on social construction was viewed both with protest and fascination by feminists, since postmodern theorists claim that there is no “real” reality, but only a multiplicity of subject positions holding their own versions and claims to “truth” and “reality”. The feminist critique of postmodernism was basically, that the category “women” (as well as “men” one might add) dissolves during the deconstruction of sex as a social construction, as a product of particular discourses, which develop over time in very specific social, political, historical and economic contexts. The fascination, however, was based in its acknowledgement of the feminist standpoint claim, that knowledge production is never objective and neutral, but harbours the subject position of the “knower”. Generally, the “knower” in academic contexts is a White male (and increasingly female), middle- or upper class, heterosexual person, who has difficulties transgressing the discursive and physical boundaries of that particular position. The experiences of the qualified knower—the academician entering locations different from her own—is translated into her particular understanding and interpretation, her construction of the locations she studies, because ‘there is no description without a standpoint’ (Connell 1999: 69). The ultimate realisation of this would of course be that no research is worthwhile because it only reflects the standpoint of the “knower”, or the “viewer”. However, if the “knower” is willing to scrutinise the consequences of this process of translation in her description and analysis of the realities she encounters, though from her specific standpoint, she might also be able to bring new

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<sup>4</sup> Marx and Engels 1975: 8, emphasis in Hartsock 1997.

knowledge into the field of understanding social change. While on the one hand scrutinising her own position/situated-ness, she also has to recognise the locations of those among whom she carried out her research, and the ways in which these locations are intertwined with her own, *and* socially constructed in very particular as well as general ways. In other words the realisation of the constructed-ness of location is central, both methodologically and theoretically. It is to some extent an act of walking the tightrope theoretically.

### **Acknowledging the constructed-ness of reality**

It is difficult to decide where or with what to begin the process of constructing a theoretical framework. Maybe, one starting point might be the never-ending discussions I have had with my mother over the last decade, all of which have ended with her conclusion, that whether or not gender is a matter of social construction, women *do* give birth to babies, and they *do* breastfeed, both of which men cannot do. Accordingly there *is* an essential difference, and this difference is biologically/genetically and socially *meaningful*.

I cannot challenge the first conclusion reached by my mother (and most other people I know) in any meaningful sense—neither can Butler (1993) despite her claims that gender is performed rather than natural (nor could the fantasies of Hollywood presented by Schwarzenegger in the movie ‘Junior’)<sup>5</sup>. However, I am able to challenge the essence of the last claim that this difference between bodies is *biologically* meaningful in itself because meaning is socially constructed and changes over time and space (Butler 1993), i.e. meaningful-ness is ever changing and highly contextual. Hence, biological difference becomes meaningful only when socially constructed as such:

the body I am, is a social body that has taken meanings rather than conferred them [...] my body’s responses reflect back, like little mirrors on an Indian dress, a kaleidoscope of social meaning. The body, without ceasing to be the body, is taken in hand and transformed in social practice. (Connell 1998: 83).

Challenging the presupposition of gender/sex differences as biologically meaningful I will make use of the two streams of feminist theory outlined above, i.e. what has become known as the “posties” and standpoint theory. It is also through this that I will attempt to

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<sup>5</sup> In this movie he plays a scientist who in cooperation with a colleague develops and tests, on him-self, a reproductive technology by which men might “get” pregnant. Through his pregnancy he changes and become feminised both physically (he develops breasts and pregnancy related ailments) and psychologically (he develops interests and worries discursively ascribed pregnant women).



challenge the assumptions prevalent in late 20<sup>th</sup> century demographic theory on fertility decline in the South.

The discourse on the “facts” of gender difference referred to above is, however, important because our lived realities and experiences are defined through this discourse.<sup>6</sup> We experience the consequences of this gender difference every day and as such it is meaningful; it is referred to when you or somebody else define what you/they may do and what you/they may not do, as well as your/their opportunities and futures. This discourse is contemporarily based in patriarchal social organisation and its particular expression in masculinity, i.e. in discourses and practices, which can only be reproduced and re-constructed if people “buy into” the concept of sexual difference—and only as long as they are not challenged by an understanding based on the deconstruction of it. Understanding gender difference necessarily demands that you go beyond difference, searching out what difference means and how it is managed and deployed. Difference is at the core of hierarchies of any kind, as hierarchy is basically constructed around the ability and right of the able to sort out those considered un- or disabled—or in other words sorting the privileged from the un-privileged.

According to Connell (1999: 72), gender relations is one of the ‘major structures of all documented societies’ and are based in the reproductive order of human biology—or, in the reproductive arena. The reproductive arena is ‘defined by the bodily structures and processes of human reproduction [and] includes sexual arousal and intercourse, childbirth and infant care, bodily sex difference and similarity’ (ibid: 71). Configurations of gender practice evolve from the particular organisation of the reproductive arena in a society. The manner in which societies and human beings elaborate on this reproductive arena is not a biological given, however, but is a matter of social construction. The organisation of gender relations is particular in time and space, and differs between societies. The rearing of children and the social structures within which children are raised (i.e. the reproductive arena), may be organised in different

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<sup>6</sup> No society exists, which is gender neutral. In this I differ especially from some African and Africanist scholars who claim that gender is a Western concept, which may not be applied when studying African societies (Amadiume 1987 and 1997; Oyéwùní 1997; Mikell 1997). According to these scholars African societies are based upon other hierarchies than gender, such as age and status. In my view, however, age and status *interact* with gender, creating specific structures of privilege. The romanticism involved in arguing otherwise ‘could so easily become an excuse for not facing up to the challenges posed by African patriarchy in the present context’ (McFadden 1998). The general argument often raised against feminists-of-colour, i.e. that they have been co-opted by western discourses, thereby becoming imperialists themselves, is of course countered by these theoreticians. Narayan (1997: 6) argues, as do all these feminists, that Third World feminist ‘consciousness is not a hot-house bloom grown in the alien atmosphere of “foreign” ideas, but has its roots much closer to home’.

ways, and in a large number of cases presently known to us these structures are patriarchal, including my own society and that of pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial Zimbabwe. The organisation of a society into patriarchal structures is not inevitable, nor obvious. Any other organising principle than patriarchal structures may develop from gender relations (Lerner 1986; Butler 1993; Laqueur 1995; Connell 1999).

Patriarchy may be understood differently, either in the narrow sense as the law of the father, or in a broader sense in which patriarchy

...means the manifestation and institutionalisation of male dominance over women and children in the family and the extension of male dominance over women in society in general. It implies that men hold power in all the important institutions of society and that women are deprived of access to such power. It does *not* imply that women are either totally powerless or totally deprived of rights, influence, and resources. (Lerner 1986: 239, emphasis in original)

The patriarchal organisation of societies is intrinsically hierarchical and within it certain groups of people are bestowed with privileges wrapped up in discourses and practices, which tend to naturalise hierarchical privilege,<sup>7</sup> as patriarchal social organisation necessarily differentiates between those defined as female and male in terms of male privileged access to resources. In later European history this differentiation has developed into a hegemonic masculinity. The concept of masculinity, as it is explained and used by gender theorist Robert Connell (1999), implies a specific kind of patriarchal social organisation of the reproductive arena, in which gender differences are constructed as biologically<sup>8</sup> *oppositional*, as mutually exclusive: what the one gender *is* the other is not; what one gender *does* the other does not; what is acceptable behaviour for one gender is not for the other etc. Connell (*ibid*: 68) refers to this as 'polarized character types'. The polarisation is necessary for the construction of masculinity, and its opposite *de rigueur*, femininity. Such character types are not immutable objects, which can be studied through time, but are expressions of continuous social change.

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<sup>7</sup> Including "privilege" bestowed women through discourses on motherhood, in which women are constructed as better nurturers, more emotional and family oriented, and less disruptive in their sexual orientation than men. It also includes privilege given women who bear children through whom she gain economically, politically or otherwise.

<sup>8</sup> In other words, your bodily appearance defines which gender—the masculine or the feminine—you belong to, hence what you *are* and what you (should) *do*. The refusal of playing the social game according to your ascribed gender often creates tensions and conflicts.

We need to focus on the processes and relationships through which men and women conduct their lives. 'Masculinity', to the extent the term can be briefly defined at all, is simultaneously a place in gender relations, the practices through which men and women engage that place in gender, and the effects of these practices in bodily experience. (Connell 1999: 71)

Hence, patriarchy and the particular expression of it in masculinity must be studied as process, both in terms of how persons become or appropriate a character type, and in terms of how these change, are challenged and dissolves through time and place. One might add that the development of what Laqueur called the two-sex-model<sup>9</sup> in European modernity, equates the development of European masculinity as defined by Connell. However, the development of masculinities as expressions of patriarchy is not particularly European, as polarisation of sex-gender based character types is a process found in many patriarchal societies, such as those of pre-colonial Zimbabwean kingdoms (see Beach 1990; Beach and Norhona 1980; Lan 1985; Bourdillon 1991; and Schmidt 1992 for historical/ethnographic accounts, which show that this was the case).

Through this kind of differentiation, where sex becomes oppositional genders, and through the development of particular masculinities and femininities, concomitant hierarchical structures of privilege—e.g. racial,<sup>10</sup> class,<sup>11</sup> age—also evolve. Hence, the social

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<sup>9</sup> Laqueur's work *Making sex* (1995) is interesting namely because he shows that the two-sex model we are used to take for granted is a historical construct, which is fairly new. The two-sex model refers to the construction of a system in which there are two incommensurable sexes, the male and its essential opposite. However, from (European) antiquity until the 18<sup>th</sup> century, he argues, a one-sex model was the norm. The one-sex model, or more correctly the andro-sex model (as the sex referred to is a hierarchically ordered male sex, of which the lesser version is the fe-male) is based in the idea that the fe-male is a lesser/inverted kind of man. Applying Connell's definition of masculinity, one might probably say that a mediaeval European masculinity did not exist, while the societies where definitely patriarchal. I will leave this discussion to historians, however.

<sup>10</sup> Memmi's attempt at understanding what racism is, is interesting, and his ideas resemble quite well the thinking on gender used in this thesis. To him 'racism is a generalizing definition and valuation of biological differences, whether real or imaginary, to the advantage of the one defining and deploying them, and to the detriment of the one subjected to the act of definition, to the end of justifying (social [economic and/] or physical) hostility and assault' (Memmi 2000: 184). Hence, 'the use of biological differences—once more real imaginary—to ground "(social or physical) hostility and assault"' is racist (Appiah in Memmi 2000: ix). To Memmi, racism is based in what he called raciology (biologically based theories on race), which 'rationalize... ethnophobia' (ibid). Ethnophobia in turn is 'only one instance of an even more general phenomenon, which he calls heterophobia, which covers all forms of domination based on real or imaginary differences between groups: men and women, gays and straights, natives and immigrants, and so on' (ibid). In other words Memmi understood race/ism as a (particular) expression of heterophobia, in much the same way as I understand masculinity and patriarchy as particular expressions of gender relations.

constructions of hierarchies and privilege produce profoundly real structures within which individual spaces of manoeuvre and negotiation is constrained and/or enhanced. The location (e.g. in terms of gender, racial, class and age) of the individual in patriarchal hierarchies determines to a large extent the opportunity structures open or closed to that individual through discursive strategies and practices, which define what is acceptable/possible and not.

As mentioned above patriarchy interacts with other hierarchical structures privileging specific individuals and groups over others, and among those, two of the most decisive contemporarily and historically have been racial and class hierarchies as the interaction between them, and their ability to accommodate to new circumstances have had profound influence on social change globally.<sup>12</sup> Social structures and hierarchies do not “act”, however—people do. People tend never to completely reproduce social structures and this means that social structures—in other words discursive practice and the materialisation of discourse—are always changing. Despite this, being an accepted member of a society generally means that you have to embody and live up to the expectations placed upon you in accordance with the definitions and categorisations of your person, i.e. your location. As Connell (1999), Butler (1993), Foucault (1981) and numerous other gender theorists and post-structuralists claim, one of the main features of a person on which categorisations are made is the genitalia of a newborn baby (‘the body is taken in hand’ as Connell (1998) says, or the baby is “girled” or “boyed” to paraphrase Butler 1993). This seems to be a more or less global phenomenon (whether it holds also in a long historical perspective is as yet impossible to know). In some societies the processes through which girls are ‘girled’ and boys are ‘boyed’ starts at birth, whereas in other societies it is set in motion at a later stage in a child’s life (Moore 1994). In no known society are people left to determine by themselves what category to belong to—their person has been categorised already before they may decide themselves (in some societies individuals are allowed to do gender travels if the given gender is unliveable to them, however).

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<sup>11</sup> I understand class as being institutionalised socio-economic stratification related to differential positions and identity formations in a society’s system of production. The crosscutting character of class, gender and racial differentiations has the effect that all of them interact simultaneously in forming hierarchies of oppression affecting people differently depending on location/position. Hence, the argument of the triple oppression experienced by poor, Black women who are more oppressed generally than any other single group of people.

<sup>12</sup> Lerner (1986: 213) claims that racism and sexism ‘preceded the formation of classes and class oppression’, as she traces the origin of patriarchy to the enslavement of ‘foreign’ women (for access to their sexual-reproductive capacities) by warring groups. She therefore also reaches the conclusion that ‘class is not a separate construction from gender; rather, class is expressed in genderic terms’.

The same is true also of racial and class based categorisations, however with the difference that the latter is more easily transgressed than the two other if the opportunity for, or risk of travelling the class hierarchy either way appears.<sup>13</sup>

A vast majority of people do not openly confront *expectations* of gendered, class or racial performance. They accept them and live more or less but *never* in full accordance with them. Hence people do practice an every day agency in relation to such expectations, as they constantly renegotiate, reformulate, challenge and discard expectations, which they for some reason do not want to comply with. Or as it has been put rather simply by Christine Obbo (1994: 161) 'people pragmatically change their activities and behavior to accommodate new circumstances. In this, they are sanctioned to varying degrees by the symbolic systems that support the dominant ideologies'. Thence, society, and its concomitant discourses and practices are constantly negotiated. In some cases such negotiations result in very rapid social change, while other structures and discourses change only very, or extremely slowly. All individuals are part of these processes of change as the bare existence of *you* represents slightly (and in some cases vastly) differing ways of perceiving and living than those around you, those whom you came from and those who will come after you. In other words, through history persons have and do engage with the constructed-ness of their lived realities, challenging discourses and practices, thereby also engaging in the constant crafting of new realities as they live their lives.

However, the basic structures of a society changes only slowly, and patriarchal ways of organising social structures seem to be extremely adaptable, some may even define it as opportunistic. In a sense, the way in which Foucault (1981: 93) talked of the omnipotence of power might also be applied when describing the adaptability of patriarchal structures: 'it is produced from one moment to the next, at every point, or rather in every relation from one point to another'. In other words, it is extremely flexible. The existence of gender relations is universal (at least as far as we know), as is also relations of power, while the manner in which such relations are organised is particular (e.g. patriarchy and specific constructions of masculinities). Below, I will explore, from a theoretical perspective the particular ways in which gender relations were and are organised in the context relevant

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<sup>13</sup> One might argue, as does Bourdieu (1995), that class shines through in the social capital (or lack thereof) and habitual behaviour of individuals doing a class travel, but it still remains that class is not a physical marker on the body, it may be embodied but it is not bodily. Again, this point is very precisely described by a number of non-White writers, activists and researchers, feminists or not (e.g. Lorde 1984; Collins 1986; hooks 1990 and 1992; Ware 1992; Brooks 1997; Maraire 1997; Weedon 1999).

to this thesis, i.e. the control of reproduction and sexuality in Zimbabwe.

### **It takes one to know one: The hybridisation of patriarchies**

Connell's (1999) claim, that all societies are gendered, should be extended into our understanding of the colonial situation. In his work on Lesotho women politicians during colonialism, Epprecht (2000: 212) concludes that

The colonial state manipulated gender ideologies and intervened in Basotho gender struggles in its efforts to foster a hierarchical class and racial structure that was beneficial to Britain's larger imperial and commercial interests in the region.

In other words, gendered struggles over power were central to the colonial political economy in Lesotho, and the Southern African region as such. These struggles centred on the processes of dispossession of resources, including sexual and reproductive resources – but it also involved processes of patriarchal recognition.

Seeing sexuality and reproduction as resources to be manipulated with necessitate a conceptualisation of them as social constructs involving power. Giddens claims that 'sexuality is a social construct, operating within fields of power, not merely a set of biological promptings, which either do or do not find direct release' (1992: 23). One might say the same of reproduction. The fields of power, in which sexuality and reproduction are constructed in Zimbabwe, are firmly rooted in what I call hybrid masculinity.<sup>14</sup> Colonial occupation necessarily creates conflicts between the occupier and the occupied. However, the colonial re-structuring of gender and household relations maybe less conflictual, and partly even marked by common interests between men of the opposing groups. In other words, a hybrid masculinity, based in mutual patriarchal interests in the control of women, developed in Rhodesia. Such a hybridisation was possible because the masculinities implicated in the colonisation process had similarities, which made them compatible. The racialised colonial re-construction of society was based on the re-structuring of existing (African and White) masculinities, which through the colonial project were forced to dance an uneven tango with one another. The result was a hybrid masculinity focussing most of its energies on the

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<sup>14</sup> Hybrid/ity/isation is a concept adopted into the social sciences from the natural sciences, via the humanities. It denominates a situation in which two or more species, traditions, discourses, social structures etc. are weaved into each other forming new species, traditions, discourses, social structures etc. See for instance Bhaba (1994) and Baaz (2001) on cultural hybridisation in the colonial context (or Mirza 1997 for feminist contributions on the issue of feminist hybridisation).

sexual-reproductive control of women from within, and of men from outside the exclusionary racial barriers of colonial politics. The similarities between the otherwise so different societies involved in the contested and contradictory process of colonisation are based in a patriarchal configuring of gender relations, extended also into class structures. The colonial condition, the very context making late European colonialism possible, however, implies also the discursive strategy of constructing or developing qualitative differences *apart* from gender, a process in which science and revolutionary change played important roles (Laqueur 1995; Foucault 1981).

At the core of hierarchy and the construction of difference is of course power (and the various forms of violations inherent in the use of it). Power as such is not the matter of theorisation in this thesis but rather *the application* of power in hierarchical social structures through discourse and discursive practices. However, a few words are needed on how I perceive of and understand power. Relations of power between individuals and social groups/categories are represented, reproduced and challenged in discourses and practices (Moore 1994; Butler 1993, 1999; see also the collection of essays in Anthias and Yuval-Davis 1996, and Zack 1997). Hence, power may be understood both as the ability to make others behave according to hegemonic or dominating discourses,<sup>15</sup> and the resistance towards or evasion of such attempts. Giddens (1992: 18) describes power as 'a mobilising phenomenon, not just one which sets limits'. Power is embedded, expressed and reflected in discourses, discursive strategies and in reflexive practices of oppression and resistance (Foucault 1981). Importantly, power is also at the very core of the process of patriarchal hybridisation in colonial Zimbabwe. In describing what he calls the rationality of power Foucault (1981: 95, my emphasis) outlined quite well how I perceive this process of hybridisation to work:

The rationality of power is characterized by tactics that are often quite explicit at the restricted level where they are inscribed (the local cynicism of power), *tactics which, becoming connected to one another, attracting and propagating one another, but finding their base of support and their condition elsewhere, end by forming comprehensive systems.*

Power is intertwined with discourse as 'discourse transmits and produces power' (ibid: 101), while also undermining and challenging

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<sup>15</sup> Foucault claimed that one can only talk of 'a multiplicity of discursive elements that can come into play in various strategies' (1981: 100), i.e. that it is impossible to talk of hegemonic or dominating discourses. In this I disagree with him, as I believe that we indeed may talk of hegemonic and dominating discourses. However, as discourse is intrinsically processual it is also always challenged by the strategic or tactical use of multiple discursive elements, of discursive imports, which destabilise it.

power. The discourse-power dyad frames not only how we think but also how we act, whether we do so in accordance or in resistance to hegemonic or dominating discourses (Foucault 1981; Butler 1993). It is the perpetuation and negotiation of, as well as resistance to racialised and sexualised patriarchal gender discourses, which are of central concern in this thesis, because it is in the interface between norms, as represented in discourses, and situated politics of individuals that we find the actual sexual and reproductive decision-making of individual women and men (Harding 1991; Abu-Lughod 1993; Moore 1994; Giddens 1995; Butler 1999). Power can only be understood as relational. The relations of power central to this thesis are those expressed and experienced through the interactions of gender, race and class hierarchies. Power also has a sweetness to it even to those refused it; if they behave as they are expected there are structures and institutions to reward you of your loyalty, such as for instance increased political and economic influence in old age, or an elevated status vis-à-vis those who were not so loyal.

To be very concrete, the moulding of patriarchal structures referred to above was in the Zimbabwean case both one of open conflict (the Chimurengas, or the 'local cynicism of power') and of common interests ('becoming connected to one another...'). The conflict centred on the violent oppression of indigenous peoples, through the alienation of land, cattle and to some extent also women's sexuality—i.e. the breaking down of indigenous political economic and social structures—by the British Empire through her settlers and administrators. Such violence was possible to legitimise within the colonising society with reference to racial and class discourses; the indigenous peoples colonised were defined as in need of the civilisation brought by the coloniser because they lacked the intellectual capacities necessary to "civilise" themselves.<sup>16</sup> However, it was also a process, which involved common patriarchal, or gender interests, which transgressed the otherwise strict racial and class boundaries. In other words men, who would clash on most issues, would agree on the basic patriarchal objective, i.e. that women were to stay under the control and supervision of men.<sup>17</sup> The control and supervision was foremost one focused on women's sexuality and reproductive capacities (which according to Lerner is the hallmark of patriarchy) within both groups. The sexual-reproductive control of

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<sup>16</sup> In my perception this view of the Other is still very much with us, but now transformed into development aid. See Baaz 2002 for a thorough discussion of racialised discourses among development aid workers in Tanzania.

<sup>17</sup> This may be described by the experience of many feminists: when you enter a room with men of very different racial and/or class backgrounds, fighting over resources, and you suggest they discuss feminist issues of patriarchal oppression, all the men will suddenly agree completely – on not discussing such matters (McFadden 2003, private communication).



women was depolyed by the coloniser as a technology of power over the indigenous male population. This was done in a double move, which on the one hand secured indigenous men access to land and children through the physical control of women in time and space, while this control was simultaneously *in-secured* through colonising men's continual deprivation of indigenous men's sexual access to Black women. The colonising man could sexually access any woman, while indigenous men could only access Black women—women were not supposed to have any rights of sexual access at all.

Dominated men are made powerless (i.e., impotent) over and over again as the women they would have had the right to possess, to control, to assert power over, to dominate, to fuck, are fucked and fucked over by the dominating victorious male group. (hooks 1990: 57)

In this quote hooks refers to what in the USA was seen as the 'right and rite of the white male dominating group' (ibid) over the enslaved, but it is also an appropriate description of the essence of the "white peril" —i.e. White men's sexual relations with Black women in highly racialised societies—and the contradicting and complex nature of power relations inherent in a society, where patriarchy and masculinity explicitly interact with race and class hierarchies.

The expressions of the hybrid masculinities, which developed in Zimbabwe during colonisation transgress racial and class boundaries, while simultaneously deploying race and class as very effective technologies of power, in particular regarding the policing of women's sexuality. The patriarchal structures of both groups favoured female monogamy and sexual restrictions particularly concerning women. These restrictions included the mutilation of female sexuality through fiddling with women's bodies and psyches, and focused also on the illegitimacy of sexual race and class transgressions. The social, political and economic control of sexuality—who has sex with whom under what circumstances and with what objective—is one of the most basic control mechanisms particularly in patriarchally organised societies, and often 'society's rules about pleasure seeking and procreating are enforced by norms about appropriate male and female behavior' (Schwartz and Rutter 1998: 19). Controlling people's sexuality means controlling society at large 'because [society] have a pragmatic interest in it' (ibid). This interest, Schwartz and Rutter claim (ibid: 72), are mostly 'not organized to help people have a good sex life' but rather 'concerned with fertility rates, reproduction, marriage, and divorce. Nations', they conclude 'benefit from predictable, orderly reproduction, so that they will have people to staff armies, to work in factories, and to raise the next generation to be similarly socially productive'. Schwartz and Rutter theorise sexuality in Western societies but their argument have

a significant bearing also on non-western societies such as Zimbabwe, particularly after 1945, when the world map was re-drawn and one of the keys to international development aid successively lay in population control (Bandarage 1997; Ross 1994).

### **The major theoretical schools of fertility change and their policy implications**

One of the main propositions of demographic theories is that high fertility is a marker of “pre-modern” (or “pre-historic”), “primitive” or “poor” groups of people, and the explanations are often formulated in terms of religious beliefs, cultural norms or lack of or a different (non-Western) kind of economic rationality. It follows from these theories that once “superstition” have waned, and/or the economic opportunity structures change, i.e. with the introduction of civilisation, modernisation and individualism, fertility will fall.<sup>18</sup> Notestein (1946), who formulated the influential transition theory, also embraced this theoretical proposition. Transition theory argues that industrialisation and urbanisation is a prerequisite of development, and the transformation from traditional society to modernity will necessarily lead to lower fertility.<sup>19</sup> However, some historians have contested the idea that Zimbabwean (and other) pre-colonial societies practiced the high fertility levels reported during colonisation, and argue that colonial fertility levels were a result of colonial policies, including colonialist pro-natalism<sup>20</sup> (Schmidt 1992; Bandarage 1999), and some of the influential demographers of the 1980s and 1990s have argued that high fertility in so called “traditional” societies are highly rational<sup>21</sup>, as does Caldwell when he writes ‘that achieved fertility everywhere comes close to being a rational response to the circumstances of the society’ (Caldwell 1982: 127).

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<sup>18</sup> All of these concepts include assumptions of the “primitive” or “poor” as changing their beliefs, customs and practices through better health, education, employment in the modern (formal) sector, rational religiousness etc., i.e. they embrace rationality and discard traditionalism.

<sup>19</sup> The idea that the world is divided into modern and traditional is old in development thinking. However, I would argue that Wallerstein (1985) and the dependency school analysis of modernity make an important point, i.e. that the “underdevelopment” of some parts of the world is in itself a feature of late modernity. That is, “traditionalism” is the necessary opposite of “modernity” (as femininity is the necessary opposite of masculinity), and hence a very *distinct part* of modernity, in fact it is modern to be “caught” in “traditionalism”.

<sup>20</sup> The pro-natal policies in the colonies were similar to the pro-natal policies directed towards the poor in England (Ross 1998; Bandarage 1999).

<sup>21</sup> This had been proposed already in the 1950s but did not catch on until later. Ideas regarding fertility rationality combined with modern development are still with us, however, one example being the model developed by Abernethy (2002) called the Economic Opportunity model.

John Caldwell is one of the most prominent and influential demographers of the late 20<sup>th</sup> century. Caldwell formulated the wealth-flow theory, based on his re-interpretation and development of the transition theory. Handwerker developed into some detail the effects of Caldwell's wealth-flow theory (Caldwell 1982, Handwerker 1990). The reason to focus on the work of these two demographers is that the theory and the model caught on so well in the international policy community, and therefore came to influence the policy discourse on population reduction in the South. Without the wealth-flow theory and Handwerker's claim that women are central development actors in general, politically as well as economically – i.e. that generalised gender equality is central to development and fertility decline – the opening up towards feminist arguments might not have been so great during the 1990's UN conferences, particularly the Cairo and the Beijing conferences, as it actually was. Below I will sketch the basics of the transition theory, and attend to the main propositions of the wealth-flow theory and its further development by Handwerker.

According to Notestein (1946) there were certain developments, which were decisive for setting a process of falling fertility in motion. In the popularised version of the transition theory his suggestion that increased health awareness and access to good quality health services was central to fertility transition.<sup>22</sup> However, Notestein as well as those who further developed his theory of transition (including Caldwell and Handwerker) did not primarily focus on health as such even if they regard health as very important (because of its tendency to decrease maternal and child mortality). Rather, focus is on economic, social and political development, i.e. on the transition, not only of fertility but also of society as such from 'primitive... traditional societies ...[and a] tribal situation' (to quote Caldwell's concepts of non-Western and non-modern societies) to one of "modern" rationality (Caldwell 1982: 154). Caldwell accepts the general propositions of the transition theory, but adds to it where he feels that it is incomplete. He operates with the Notesteinian concepts of pre- and post-transition societies but also adds to it the concepts of pre- and post-divide societies. As I read him he is of the opinion that to be able to understand what happens in the actual process of transition from high to low fertility one must focus on the pre- and post divide context, and not only on the pre- and post-transition society. Pre- and post-transition is a larger and longer

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<sup>22</sup> This became one of the major issues on which the donor community acted, as maternal and child health accompanied by family planning became one of the major foci in development aid. It also was, and is the only major (global) development policy, which directly and explicitly target women and children in the hope that declining maternal and child health morbidity and mortality will lead to lower fertility.

process of modernisation, i.e. a development in which economic, political and social relations change through industrialisation and urbanisation, than the pre-and post-divide context. In Notestein's theory the actual transformation of a society from agrarian to urban/industrial production is central. The post-transition situation signifies the end result of the transformation of a society from agrarian to urban/industrial, with all the concomitant changes in socio-economic and political structures, where general education, health and individual property regulations have been established. Caldwell, however claims that such a transition does not necessarily have to include a general and thorough urbanisation/industrialisation of the major segments of a population, but may be effectuated also through the travelling of values and norms associated with urbanisation/industrialisation. Such a travel of norms comes through a small number of members of agrarian societies, who have left the community and entered the "modern" sector, but who keep in touch with their natal rural community. Caldwell added to Notestein's theory of transition the concepts of pre- and post-divide, through the application of his wealth-flow theory.

Caldwell is interested in what actually goes on at the moment when transition occurs, and the immediate "before" and "after" of it, i.e. what one might call the small-scale processes of transition. Instead of focusing on large-scale statistical comparisons only, he suggests that researchers should look at the processes in individual families and couples, and he claims that

the statistical techniques are ever more impressive and are both needed and valuable in that they measure the true demographic position and the direction and speed of change. But in themselves they do not tell us anything about the nature of that change. (Caldwell 1982: 227)

To be able to say anything about the 'nature' of fertility transition he suggests qualitative studies of change, in addition to quantitative measurements on aggregate levels. What he proposes is that in pre-divide societies wealth-flows are from children to parents, whereas in post-divide societies wealth-flows are from parents to children, or as it is more clearly stated by Handwerker (1990), when children are an economic investment or asset, couples will bear more children than if children are perceived of as an economic liability, or when framed in a more market-oriented term, when children become objects of consumption. When children are perceived of as an economic liability instead of as an investment, a change to lower fertility will occur, and the process of transition has been set in motion. In Caldwell's theory this process relies on changes in the family structure based on the

most important social exports [from the West]... of the predominance of the nuclear family with its strong conjugal tie and the concept of concentrating concern and expenditure on one's children. The latter does not automatically follow from the former, although it is likely to follow continuing Westernization; but the latter *must* be preceded by the former. (Caldwell 1982: 153, my emphasis)

It has for some decades been a cornerstone of research and theory on population issues that the combination of economic modernisation, women's education and filling the contraceptive gap in the South would bring about falling fertility rates among women<sup>23</sup> (see Handwerker 1990; Dixon-Mueller 1993; Adepoju and Oppong 1994; Correa 1994; Ginsburg and Rapp 1995; Greenhalgh 1995; Bandarage 1997; Demeny and McNicoll 1998 for different views on this). Based on Caldwell's wealth-flow theory, W. Penn Handwerker (1990) constructed a model for the analysis of changed reproductive behaviour (i.e. from high to low fertility levels).<sup>24</sup> His model represents a compacted version of modern demographic thought—it contains all the most basic assumptions about reproductive behaviour determinants.

The basis of his model is development, understood as the extension of European modern/capitalist economic structures, in which health, general education, industrialisation and the nuclear, wage-earning family are central elements, to underdeveloped countries. Hence, Handwerker claims that the change from perceiving childbearing as investment to perceiving it as consumption will come about when general, gender neutral and cost free education is provided; when individualised ownership rights are secured for both women and men; and when the labour market and the possibilities of making a working career is open to women as well as to men.

The process, which he and most other researchers in the field of population, deem of greatest importance for setting falling fertility in motion is the opening up of the local and national economy for women, through general education<sup>25</sup> and a widened labour market—i.e. decreasing women's economic dependency on children. He

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<sup>23</sup> I emphasise women here because population policies in the South seem to be based on the assumption that women will always opt for *lower* fertility, and that they are the sole decision makers regarding reproduction, i.e. extending the Western perception that only women become active parents to people in the South, who might regard both women and men as active parents with reproductive interests.

<sup>24</sup> Handwerker, as most researchers in the field of "population" assumes that reproductive change is a change from high to low fertility levels. He therefore does not consider situations in which one might see changes to the opposite, or situations in which one might want the opposite effect, i.e. as in most countries in the North.

<sup>25</sup> Caldwell (1982) claims that compulsory schooling was one of the central factors in European fertility decline in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

maintains that without such changes fertility will remain on a high level. Handwerker, basing his argument on Caldwell's wealth-flow theory explains that high fertility is connected with access to resources thus:

parents have power over their children to the extent to which they can monopolize the channels by which their children can gain access to resources. If, simultaneously, children occupy positions as resource channel gatekeepers, childbearing will constitute an investment. Under these circumstances, parents can improve or maintain their material well-being *only* if they maximize fertility or completed family size. ... Fertility levels, consequently, will be "high". (Handwerker 1990: 20, my emphasis)

In contrast, 'childbearing becomes a consumption activity when children do not function as important resource channel gatekeepers' (ibid: 21). Hence, when children cease to be economically productive

parents can optimize resource access only if they sharply restrict their childbearing. Children do not function as resource channel gatekeepers when resource access opportunities increase and become a function of technical skills and competence ... Hence, we can expect that parents will come to believe that childbearing should not take precedence over other activities and that the obligations they have to their children should take precedence over the obligations that their children have to them. (ibid)

Handwerker also argues, based on historical European experiences, that a change from economic and political position being solely linked to heredity to meritocracy<sup>26</sup>—what I would refer to as the results of the development of an ambitious petit bourgeoisie—will result in limited reproduction since children become an investment activity through the need for higher education, which is initially non-productive. Further down the line meritocracy, according to Handwerker opens up widened possibilities to women who wish to pursue careers of their own, hence decreasing their economic and status dependency on husbands and increasing their need to limit (or even cease) their childbearing,<sup>27</sup> since childbearing restrict women's 'ability to work... or to secure a satisfactory level of economic well-

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<sup>26</sup> That is increased focus on education at the expense of non-educational or institutionalised experience.

<sup>27</sup> He bases this line of thought on the developments in Victorian and Edwardian Britain. He goes as far as to say that 'fertility transition comes about as one specific effect of a fundamental transformation of women's power relative to men, their parents and their children' (Handwerker 1990: 21). I believe that this is to simplify things a bit too much.

being from one's husband's income' (ibid: 23). However, there is ample evidence in feminist research on women and income that Handwerker's claim, that opening up the labour market for women does not necessarily—in fact seldom—lead to women becoming independent from their husbands. Salaries are generally much lower than a husband's (women are often paid what in colonial studies is called bachelor wages, and this pattern is similar in the North and the South), and often their salaries goes into maintaining the household while male wages are used for investments, which men retain ownership or control over (Jackson and Pearson 1998; Dixon-Mueller 1993; Sen 1999; Rai 2002; Blomqvist 2004). Women who have succeeded in crafting and controlling their income are often women who live without men, i.e. women who have chosen not to marry, to divorce or who have been divorced or widowed. For some poor and lower middle class women their economic survival has been freed from direct dependency on men through informal economic activities (Barnes 1999; Schlyter 2003).

Handwerker's understanding of gender relations and of patriarchal institutions is limited, and as Caldwell he tends to regard patriarchal structures in terms of the opposition of 'patriarchs' to women's emancipation hindering fertility transition, and as structures more or less removed in developed countries where fertility is low. In other words both he and Caldwell define patriarchy as a cultural trait arresting fertility transition, not as a structure, which pertain also to their own society or have influenced their perceptions of the object of their study. They are hence also unable to see how patriarchy interacts with other hierarchical discursive practices and strategies. This is problematic as they both work in geographical areas and academic fields where race and class interact/ed with patriarchal societies in ways, which influence reproductive decision-making globally. The chapters to follow will in different ways attend to the issue of intersectionality, i.e. how hierarchical structures influence and form the practices and discourses of reproduction in a particular society.

### **Some reflections on methodology**

I have in one sense chosen to study an issue for which there is a large body of theoretical literature, as well as an incredible amount of statistical data, presented in a vast number of journals, statistical yearbooks, development reports, Demographic and Health Surveys etc. The discipline within which some might want to place this study, i.e. demography, has a set number of quite well defined methods to be applied in the field, and also a set number of methods to interpret the data collected during field research. However, I am not a demographer, I have not applied demographic methods and I have not done a typical demographic study. Instead I have chosen to place

this study within a feminist development research framework. I am concerned with issues, which have for decades been of particular interest to feminists both as academicians and activists—the inseparability of sexuality from reproduction and political economic relations in a society. I have chosen *not* to exclude sexuality (as both re- and procreative) from my search for an understanding of reproduction, which is so common in demography (as demographers strictly speaking study only the latter including sexuality only when it is reproductive). My focus on sexuality and reproduction is as mentioned informed by political economy, which is the lens through which I study these phenomena as perceived from a feminist vantage point. This is not because demography has not been open to consider the effects of political economy on reproduction, but because demographers tend to understand political economy differently than critical development researchers and feminists. It is, of course, also a result of my schooling (or disciplining) as a student and researcher of applied anthropology, development studies, international relations and “third world” as well as “third wave” feminism. The issues at stake in this thesis have a long feminist tradition in the North, as declared feminists, as well as women maintaining their right of deciding over their bodies may be found throughout written, oral and embodied<sup>28</sup> history, including the histories of those enslaved and colonised by Northern pre-colonial and colonial powers. The feminist perspective is visible throughout the thesis, both in the way I interpret and present the results of my research.

One of the strategies I have chosen in my presentation of the results needs some explanation. Some of the chapters are introduced with—and I sometimes in the course of the text refer to—my own experiences. This is a strategy, which may disturb some and is welcomed by others. It is maybe most typical of standpoint feminism with its focus on location as formative of experiences and perceptions, and of the questions one asks. I do not consider myself a pure standpoint feminist but I do believe that the contribution it has made to feminist theory is important, in particular the contribution of the understanding and questioning of location, or as I mostly phrase it; position. Methodologically this means that I consider it important to show that I by no means or purpose have been the “fly on the wall”, I have been there and I know that I have made an impression, lasting or not on those I have met. The encounters with persons differently positioned than me have made impressions on me, have shaped my

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<sup>28</sup> By embodied history I in particular think of history remembered bodily; memories embodied in bodies, which did not themselves experience torture or slavery etc through constant re-telling of such memories within particular groups; and depreciating history ascribed certain kinds of bodies, e.g. the continual marginalisation of slave descendants by “Caucasian” members of US society.



perceptions and influenced my way of asking my questions to the data collected and analysed in this thesis. Furthermore, my experiences as they are presented in the openings are important to frame the contents of the chapters, they explain why I have gotten interested in certain issues, they explain how I have been positioned by others because of my particular position, they explain how my very private experiences sometimes coincide with experiences common to other persons all over the globe and with the main issues of this particular thesis. In a way one might say that by explicating myself I follow in the footsteps of standpoint mother, Dorothy Smith (1997: 393) who claimed and continues to claim that ‘women’s [my] standpoint [position/location] returns us [me and you, the reader] to the actualities of our lives as we live them in the local particularities of the everyday/everynight worlds in which our bodily being anchors us’. In this sense I perceive of this as *one* way of validating my data because I recognise myself as a part of it, including that which separates me from and connects me with those I study (Mbilinyi 1998; Ribbens and Edwards 1998; Bell 1999; Smith 1999).

### **Power and research**

The issue of power in the research context naturally enters the picture at this very instance as I admit to not having attempted to be the invisible researcher who enters and leaves the research scene without having been “seen”. I believe that feminist experiences in research have done much to bring the issue of power on the table. In particular feminist research has done much to openly discuss the practical and ethical dilemmas of doing field research, the problems involved in using standard methods of data collection and the inherent critique raised towards any researcher who do not follow the demarcation lines of what is good and bad method within their mother disciplines (Ribbens and Edwards 1998; Rönnblom 1999; Smith 1999).

Research is by definition saturated by relations of power, whether we consider the process of research itself, the conditions under which research is carried out, as well as the research institutions themselves as pointed out above. In the actual research process, however, it is of course the ultimate power of the researcher, which is the most glaring as the researcher controls both the questions to be asked and answered, as well as being the one who interpret answers and silences. The researcher-listener is the one who master the interview situation, despite her not knowing the answers to her questions (Foucault 1981). The speaking subject is always constructed as subordinate to the listener who judges both the speaker and the spoken. Foucault (ibid: 59) claims that the confession ‘became one of the West’s most highly valued techniques for producing truth’, first in the Catholic religious context, but with time also in research and other

relations between individuals differently positioned. According to Foucault (ibid: 61f) the confessional situation is 'a ritual that unfolds within a power relationship' because the one whom the speaker confesses to has authority 'to judge, punish, forgive, console, and reconcile' the speaker/confessor. In the research context I would argue that the interviewee is always more or less weary regarding the real objectives of the researcher. This leaves the researcher with the power over the spoken, but leaves a certain amount of power over that which will be said to the interviewee. However, I would also argue that even if and when interviewees retain some power through silence or over what will be spoken, the researcher is always able to master the situation as well as the end result, through interpreting these silences too, as I do myself regarding domestic violence in White homes on which there was a marked silence among the White interviewees. There are many suggestions to how one may try to avoid the aspects of power in research but one will never be able to completely go beyond it—there will always be those who are excluded, silenced or who choose not to share their knowledge or their views. Maybe the best solution yet suggested is, as a researcher to be open for discussing issues of power.

### **Text based and secondary data**

This thesis is based both on archival studies, readings and re-readings of ethnographic and historiographic works by other researchers, on novels and autobiographies of people who have lived or live in Southern Africa, and in particular in (Southern) Rhodesia, and on qualitative interviews with Zimbabweans of both European and African descent. The historical and ethnographic material I have made the most use of are classical in the field, i.e. D. N. Beach, acknowledged local historian and specialist on Shona history and M. F. C. Bourdillon, also an acknowledged local scholar of social anthropology working since the 1970s at the University of Zimbabwe, Harare. E. Schmidt's work on Shona women's history has also been of great importance to my work, as well as the work by T. Barnes, also in her work with E. Win, both of whom have contributed to our knowledge of African women's history in Zimbabwe—the works by Schmidt, Barnes and Win, and Barnes are also by now classical and essential reading concerning Black women in Zimbabwe. I have also made extensive use of A. K. Kaler's dissertation on family planning in Rhodesia. Her work is more or less the only thorough study of Rhodesian family planning. I have looked up some of the references she mentions but none of them are in any way as extensive as her research, spanning the 1950s to the late 1970s. In addition to her work I have also used Michael West's article covering the period 1957-1990 on the racialised and gendered politics on family planning in

Rhodesia and Zimbabwe—this article is detailed but not exhaustive. As mentioned I have also leaned on fiction and autobiographies to be able to puzzle together a picture of the racially divided Rhodesian society. The reason is that there is just about no research, apart from the very interesting study of late Rhodesian (White) society by P. Godwin and I. Hancock, which I have also used to some extent, concerning White Rhodesia, nor of White Zimbabwe. In particular White women are a neglected part of research on Rhodesia and Zimbabwe. The only material I was able to dig up was a very well founded and interesting article by L. Jacobs concerning the first woman parliamentarian in Southern Rhodesia, Ms. Ethel Tawse-Jollie. To get an image of White women's perceptions of everyday life in Rhodesia I have had to piece fictive and autobiographic works together, using both the works in particular of D. Lessing and P. Godwin (and many others). The novels by T. Dangarembga, S. Nzensa and J. N. Maraire have also been very important in providing an understanding of how Whites were perceived by those they occupied, and how colonialism is perceived by those colonised—what it does to people. I have also used Rhodesian Prime Minister I. D. Smith's political autobiography, in which most of the focus is on the years between 1965 and 1979 in my search for an understanding of the self image of White Rhodesians.

The documents analysed in the thesis were collected at archives both in Harare and in Oxford between 2000 and 2003, and consist of media reports, transcriptions of parliamentary debates, health policies/governmental reports, confidential ministerial letters, internal governmental letters and memos, confidential reports from committee meetings, reports ordered by or presented to the Rhodesian health committee, lectures (both public and private), and Rhodesian and Zimbabwean governmental/parliamentary (in some instances confidential) reports and evaluations. The collection and analysis of written primary and secondary data (parliamentary debates, policies, reports, mass media, archival material etc.) is of great importance as it reflects the discourses of the society in which the interviewees grew up and now live as adults. It also gives us a glimpse of the continuity and discontinuity of the discourses that form the ground on which popular discourses are based.

The choice of debates needs some clarification: I chose the 1966 debate referred to in the introduction as the central point for several reasons; first of all it was the only debate ever in the Rhodesian Parliament on the issue of family planning, secondly the main arguments raised on "both sides" during this debate became manifest in war- and post-war political discourses on the other, and thirdly the hostility with which family planning and its rejection was connected have had repercussions on post-liberation policies. The second debate of 1984 was chosen because it marks a turnaround of republican

Zimbabwean policies on family planning—and unfortunately it was the only debate specifically concerning family planning, which I was able to locate at the National Archives of Zimbabwe (NAZ). However, I chose to complement the 1984 debate with a debate on population and development and on the ICPD in 1995.<sup>29</sup> I have also made use of quantitative data produced by other researchers when appropriate, such as the DHS's and the census data produced and published by the Central Statistical Office (CSO), as well as statistical data produced for or published by the Rhodesian Ministry of Health between 1966 and 1979.

### **Selection of methods, interviewees and locations of fieldwork**

The thesis is based on qualitative methods of data gathering. Because this thesis is concerned with discourses rather than with the measuring of pre-defined variables regarding sexuality and reproduction (as is for example the Demographic and Health Surveys) I have deemed a qualitative approach more fruitful than a quantitative. According to Alvesson and Sköldberg (1998) it is unproductive to discuss which approach is better than the other, as the methodological choices are (should be) determined both by the nature of the research question at hand, and by the inclination of the researcher. This means that the ontological and epistemological perspectives of the researcher are more central to the research, than the methodological choices per se, however important because these choices are guided by the researcher's ontological and epistemological points of departure.

In some parts of the thesis I use discourse analysis as the main method of interpretation of the collected data, in other parts my approach is more ethnographic, i.e. both empirically and in the sense of doing "arm-chair" ethnography, while always retaining a feminist and discourse analytic perspective. The thesis is based on individual qualitative interviews and analysis of news items, policy material and parliamentary debates. The geographical area is Zimbabwe (Southern Rhodesia/Rhodesia), and the issues at stake are sexuality and reproductive decision making among communal farmers (Zimbabweans of African origin) and some of their grown children who have moved and settled in the capital, Harare, and commercial farmers (in this study limited to Zimbabweans of European origin).

Buhera and Mutare were chosen because Buhera in 1992 (and probably still, numbers not available for 1999) had the highest TFR in the country, i.e. 7.59% in Buhera as compared to 6.66% in Manicaland and the country median of 4.43%. Manicaland still has a high TFR, i.e.

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<sup>29</sup> There was a problem of finding all the documents at the archives. Hence, I have only had access to parts of the 1984 and the 1995 debates.

4.68% and the third highest in the country. Manicaland was also one of the popular settler areas, and is still popular. Hence, Manicaland (and Mutare and Buhera as well) host(ed) many commercial farmers. Because of the political instability beginning in the late 1990s, I could not get in touch with farmers through the CFU—they were busy with issues of greater importance to them, than Swedish research on sex and reproduction. In the end I therefore included commercial farmers from Karoi in Mashonaland West Province,<sup>30</sup> as I could not get in touch with more than two White commercial farming families (whom I had met the first time in 1998) in Manicaland.

The selection of interviewees has not been done according to a structured method of selection. To make a strategic selection I have used the following criteria: The interviewees were located within rural virilocal families in which elderly parents and their sons and daughters-in-law were selected (since Zimbabwe is largely a virilocal<sup>31</sup> society). Since I wanted to find out whether there is a tendency or not of changed perceptions of childbearing depending on the distance to parents, I decided that at least one of the grown children should be staying in an urban environment with her/his partner, while the rest should stay with or in the same village as or close to their parents. My aim was to interview a similar number of men and women. However, the gender composition within families varied to some extent. The balance is nearly 50/50, i.e. 34 women and 31 men. However, I only managed to locate one White family of that kind, whereas all the Black families are virilocal. The remaining White interviewees lived either on a bought farm or on a farm inherited by the wife, while those who were not farmers lived in self-owned houses.

It is necessary to explain my focus on virilocal families. Surely, Zimbabwe as well as (Southern) Rhodesia and the pre-colonial kingdoms and communities showed a wealth of other familial forms and organisation (such as voluntarily single mothers; uxorilocal<sup>32</sup> families; nuclear families etc.). However, the virilocal family has through known history, both pre-colonial and thereafter generally been the norm both among the settlers and the colonised. Breaking up from the virilocal family organisation has through Zimbabwean history been a painful and in many ways also dangerous experience for women, as both social norms and legislation has been against the individual women who have chosen other forms of family organisations (Barnes and Win 1992; Barnes 1999; Lessing 1994). This is true for all women in Zimbabwe (and (Southern) Rhodesia) no matter which racial or class location she was positioned in. However,

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<sup>30</sup> Located through personal contacts.

<sup>31</sup> The married couple resides with husband's kin. Many of the couples interviewed live in viripatrilocal (residing with husband's parents) constellations.

<sup>32</sup> The married couple reside with the wife's kin.

Black women's strategies to evade patriarchal control in the virilocal family setting have been documented (see for instance Barnes and Win 1992; Schmidt 1992; Barnes 1999). In contrast, White women's strategies in this area have barely been documented, much due probably to the silence demanded by "White Unity". By this I hope to have answered the critique, which I know will come on this point.

Communal farmers were selected among women and men who volunteered and who otherwise fit the categories. The project has received benediction from the Headman of the village who has also introduced us (Nyaradzo Dzobo and myself) to the village residents in 1998. The urban-based interviewees were located through their families in the rural areas. The commercial farmers chosen were located through local contacts (in mid-2000) and through the Regional Office of the Zimbabwe Commercial Farmers Union (in early 1998), which organises most of the Zimbabwean commercial farmers. Going through the CFU gives the project a kind of legitimacy similar to that of going through the Headman in a village.

### **Research techniques and instruments**

A triangulation of research techniques has been chosen. The objective of researching how contemporary Zimbabwean discourses on sexuality and reproduction has been shaped by hybrid patriarchal masculinity through racialised sexuality and reproduction means that I necessarily had to triangulate. The methods used in fieldwork may not be used when approaching textual data, and vice versa. These methods are on the one hand, semi-structured individual interviews and on the other hand an analysis of secondary data and documents, and tertiary material such as the work of other researchers (e.g. Michael Bourdillon, Elisabeth Schmidt, David Beach and Amy Kaler). These techniques have been chosen because they are complementary, and because I needed different methods in my approach to different kinds of data. It is important to realise that a triangulation of this kind is useful as a kind of validation of the data—it will be easier to understand and explain where from certain discourses, practices and strategies derive. By making use of historical documents *as data* (and not only as "background") one is also able to elucidate the issues at hand from more than just contemporary perspectives. This means that I have attempted to throw light on the issue of sexuality and reproduction from different angles, i.e. historical (analysis of archival data), fiction (autobiographies, novels describing societies gone by etc), ethnographic and historiographic research, as well as through contemporary interviews.

The main method used during fieldwork was semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions. Semi-structured interviewing means that the researcher plans what questions to ask during an

interview, while allowing the interview (or in some cases conversation-like situation) and to some extent the interviewee to determine how the information wanted is obtained (Reinhartz 1992; Bernard 1994).

I find the use of semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions to be the best way to approach the issues at stake considering both my discourse analytic approach, and the number of interviewees included (Bernard 1994; Jørgensen and Phillips 2000). Of course, a more deep and profound understanding of individual experiences and perceptions would be possible if limiting the number of interviewees and conducting deep interviews or collecting life histories. However, one of the main ideas of this thesis is to inquire into the similarities and differences between people in different socio-economic and ethnic locations, while getting some good glimpses of the interviewees' experiences, perceptions and the discourses she applies. According to Reinhartz (1992) feminist researchers seem to more often opt for semi- or unstructured interview methods than do mainstream researchers. I deemed semi-structured interviews appropriate from two particular angles, i.e. it would allow space for the interviewees to express themselves in their own words at their own pace, while I could keep track of the issues I wanted to cover during an interview; and it was efficient from a time/cost perspective as I could not spend very long, continuous periods of time fieldwork.<sup>33</sup> Apart from the gains of semi-structured interviews described by Reinhartz (*ibid*), another reason to use the method rather than more open-ended interview methods is that semi-structured interviewing is the best option 'in situations where you won't get more than one chance to interview someone' as it is prosaically expressed by Bernard (1994: 209). It is also preferable if you want to interview a larger number of people than what is possible if you are doing open-ended, deep interviews or life histories (*ibid*).

I have 65 individual interviews, with a marked bias towards communal farmers (13 individual from three commercial farming families/31 individuals from 5 communal farmer families and 21 individuals outside of these 5 families). The Black interviewees live mainly in two villages in Buhera, i.e. the 'plains' village and the 'mountain' village. Those from the mountain village (mainly men) were included on Nyaradzo Dzobo's suggestion. She and many in the research area believe that there is a significant difference between the 'plains' and the 'mountain' villagers because of the remoteness of the mountain village—these villagers are perceived of as being more "traditional". In the analysis of the material I could not find any significant differences however, and therefore I have not

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<sup>33</sup> I had a family back home in Sweden, which for different reasons—such as work—could not go with me for longer periods of time.

discriminated between these two villages in the thesis. Those of the Black interviewees who do not live in the villages live in high-density areas in Harare. They are some of the grown sons of the communal farmers in the 'plains' village in Buhera, and they all except for one stay in the capital with their wives.

The commercial farmers live/d in two different provinces, i.e. Manicaland and Mashonaland West, two of the families on very large commercial farm lands, and one on a smaller farm. These families represent two strata within the white commercial farming community in Zimbabwe, from the two very affluent on large farms to a family on a smaller farm and with lower (but still a high) income.

I have chosen to record and transcribe<sup>34</sup> all interviews.<sup>35</sup> Those, which were conducted in Shona were carefully translated into English by Charles Shayenewako in cooperation with Nyaradzo. In this way I have attempted to minimise the inherent inequality between interviews conducted in English with English speaking interviewer and interviewees and Shona interviews with Shona speaking interviewer and interviewees but where the one doing the analysis is not Shona speaking. The process of finding a reliable translator involved a test-text developed by Nyaradzo and me, which was handed out to four persons who had/said they had the required language and dialectal skills, choosing the one who did the best translation. A young man who has experience in typing for other researchers typed (on computer) the handwritten translations. Some interviews got lost in this technologising process as I have been unable to open some of the documents on my computer after receiving them in typed form. However, I still have the handwritten version of the interviews as both Nyaradzo and Noah made translations of their very detailed interview notes after every interview.

I have decided to remove all kinds of personal identification marks on quotes from the quotes. I have numbered them according to gender, i.e. all women start with the number 1, all men with the number 2, followed by a number between 1 and 29. A list of all interviews is found in appendix 1, grouped according to age (from 20-29 up to 80-89).

The anonymity required for some of the interviewees has meant that I have been unable to follow through with the initial idea of explicitly analysing the interviews in family groups. Instead I have only done this explicitly in a few cases and dispersed throughout the

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<sup>34</sup> I am grateful to Grace Msipa at SARIPS for her work in doing the transcription of the African interviews. I transcribed the European interviews myself.

<sup>35</sup> Except two. One interviewee did not want to be recorded and another interview was lost due to technical problems. However, I have notes from these two interviews as from all other interviews.



thesis, i.e. where I have deemed it possible without jeopardizing the security of the interviewees. However, as I know the family relations of the interviewees I have implicitly analysed many more in terms of family relations than what is obvious from the text. The idea of analysing the interviews in a family context was that I wanted to show how significant others, i.e. parents/-in-law, influence a couple of reproductive age, through direct pressures and/or through discourses aiming at control of adult children. One objective was also to “follow” a few young adults who had moved into Harare and how this might have affected their views on childbearing. This latter objective was easier to follow up in the thesis as will be seen in chapters 6 and 7. Even if this idea of analysing the families as well as the individuals has only been possible to apply to a small selection of the interviews, the other interviews have contributed as well to this as such influences are clearly spelt out by many of the interviewees.

The research instrument for both the semi-structured interviews and the focus group discussions are open-ended thematic interview guides, which are divided in two parts. The introductory part is common to all interviewees and focus on four main themes, which form the backbone of the interviews (sexual and reproductive history of the interview person's (IP's) family and the IP her/himself). The second part consists of questions concerning the relations between the IP, her/his partner and parents/-in-law and for the older generation the relations between the IP and their children and children's partners.

There is one issue, which I have to bring up in relation to the interview guides. I have as is clear from the paragraph above, not mentioned HIV/Aids at all. During the interviews my assistants and I did not, except in a very few cases, mention HIV/Aids because I wanted to detect to what degree or *whether* HIV/Aids is considered a problem by the interviewees.<sup>36</sup> One might suspect that interviewing people on issues of sexuality and reproduction would reflect the HIV/Aids crisis. However, I chose not to ask directly –if I had asked explicitly about HIV/Aids I, rather than the interviewee, would determine under which circumstances it is important and *that* it is important. In this way the interviewees defined HIV/Aids in their own terms, in case they chose to talk of it at all. Not everybody did (which is why the question was raised by the interviewer in a few of those cases). The HIV/Aids issue will be apparent foremost in chapter

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<sup>36</sup> I am grateful to Patricia McFadden for giving me this idea. I believe she wanted to make me interested in the Aids issue, through solving my resistance against it (I thought of it as messing up my objectives, I found it confusing and too big an issue to cope with at that particular stage of research) by saying I did not really need to ask. She suggested my silence on the topic as a methodological strategy. It worked out quite nicely; I did get a lot of answers bringing up HIV/Aids and I did get very interested in it.

5 on sexuality, and less in chapter 7 on reproduction, thus reflecting the common understanding of Aids as a sexual disease.

### **Assistants and interviews**

Since I am not at all fluent in Shona I had to rely on assistants for the Shona interviews. Furthermore, the Black interviewees talk a dialect different from standard Shona<sup>37</sup> (Zezuru, the dialect spoken in the area from where the President originates) so I settled on an assistant who was from the same area as the interviewees and who does not carry an aura of educated distance with her into the interview situation. I was particularly keen on finding an assistant with whom I got along well, who was respectful, inquisitive, curious and humble. Through my local supervisor Patricia McFadden, I got in touch with Nyaradzo Dzobo. She had worked with a number of researchers before (and after) me, she knows quite well what an interview situation is like, she is very inquisitive, and sometimes tend to loop around other issues than those stipulated in the guides she is working with if she thinks the researcher might have some use of it (such as for instance the issue of genital mutilation discussed in chapter 5).

In 1998 Nyaradzo Dzobo and I travelled together to Buhera to meet the headman of the village and to do the initial interviews. My intention was to also follow her out to the village in 2000, but the political situation deteriorated to such a degree that I might have risked my life if I did.<sup>38</sup> As I had also received some critique from colleagues at my home department<sup>39</sup> I decided that a male assistant might be a good idea. Through a colleague at Lund University I met Noah Nyongo. Nyaradzo Dzobo and Noah Nyongo had worked together before and knew each other.

The interviews were generally conducted in settings where the interviewees felt comfortable. A few of the interviews were conducted in pairs, either because a friend of the interviewee came by and joined in or because the interviewee had visitors at the time when the interviewer knocked on the door. No one of those approached for an interview refused, in fact most people found it amusing and

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<sup>37</sup> I am grateful to Leo Mandiki at CONNECT (Zimbabwe Institute of Systemic Therapy) in Harare for informing me of the small but important linguistic differences in dialects when it comes to talking sexuality in particular.

<sup>38</sup> 2000 was the year of killings (of White farmers). Buhera was one of the more unstable areas in the country, as there are many big farms (including wineries) in the district. What was more, I was very visibly pregnant, a condition, which in itself might have been highly provoking in a political situation in which the continual presence of whiteness, e.g. through the bearing of White children, as such was by some perceived as incriminating.

<sup>39</sup> I do not necessarily agree with this critique; a professional woman assistant might in some circumstances actually be the best option. In other words the professionalism of an assistant is in most contexts more important than gender.

interesting, and among the White interviewees many expressed a satisfaction over being interesting to research for something else than the land issue.

There is one striking difference (the length of the interviews) between my own and their interviews and it is difficult to pinpoint what the reason for this difference is. One reason might be that I more intuitively know what I am after. However, there might be a difference, which has to do with location. The colonial condition, fraught as it was with racism, may have created a scepticism towards talking and revealing too much to outsiders, especially if this outsider represents oppression, as I no doubt do, being situated as I am. They might also be cautious of the particular ways in which they present their thoughts and for what purpose I am interested in them (explaining the objectives might not always be perceived as satisfactory). In addition, the way in which I (through the construction of the interview guides) discuss the issues might be unfamiliar to the Black interviewees. Leaning on Foucault's claim that the Western has 'become a singularly confessing society', and that confession, i.e. 'telling, with the greatest precision, whatever is most difficult to tell', both in private and in research might play a significant role in the difference between the interviewees (Foucault 1981: 59). Or in other words the White interviewees may be used to 'confess' even (or maybe mainly) to people whom they do not know, while the Black interviewees may not be (and may even—understandably really—regard such confession as strange or dangerous).

### **Interpreting data**

I have chosen to do discourse analysis rather than other forms of analyses of my data, because I regard discourse analysis as most appropriate in dealing with my data, considering the objective of this thesis. First of all discourse analysis is, from a critical-practical point of view, an efficient tool in deconstructing 'the different kinds of discourses...emanating from the state...and from oppositional locations challenging dominant discourses' (Mbilinyi 1998: 38). Secondly, I am also at issue with scientific truth. I believe that it is not possible to go out and find "the" truth when studying people's perceptions of their realities. As Jørgensen and Phillips (2000: 29) write: 'All knowledge ... is a representation of the world among other possible representations'.<sup>40</sup> What people tell you when you do research reflect what their reality/ies or truth/s look like from their particular point of view, through their particular experiences. This is the case whether you use quantitative or qualitative methods. Also,

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<sup>40</sup> In Swedish it reads 'all kunskap ... är en representation av världen bland andra möjliga representationer' (my translation).

the questions you ask as a researcher reflect your particular points of view, your conscious or unconscious objectives, and your experiences (ibid). This means that I would be uncomfortable if I worked with methods of analysis of which the objective is to explore reality as if there is one such reality to find out there. Instead I believe that it is possible to find common-ness in the realities people present you with, common-ness's which are the result of the situated-ness of individuals and groups, expressed in discourses. Discourse hence re-presents realities, they are intersubjective, generalised constructions based on localised and particular realities, which generate common experiences. In a sense reality *is* discourse. If discourses were different, realities would be different and vice versa. As a feminist I find this especially exiting as this means that if we, as feminists are successful in re-constructing or re-configuring the gendered discourses we live by, we are also able to change the realities we live in.

Understanding why people reason and act as they do (or do not do) is important and in searching for such an understanding I am of the opinion that it is valuable to look into discourse and discursive practices. This means that I am concerned with how and why discourses are re/produced and negotiated, as well as with the historical development of them, i.e. I am concerned with mapping them out and explaining them rather than with a deep analysis of them. In a sense I create discourses because I define a strategic set of discourses (Jørgensen and Phillips 2000), which I am looking for, but in another sense I would argue that I could not have created the discourses I analyse if they had not already been there in different forms. The interviewees may not experience the discourses *as* discourses, but they nevertheless react upon them, as they are expressed and materialised in strategies, practices, language and social and economic structures, all of which form the interviewees' perceptions of the world, of what is possible and impossible. It shapes also implicitly the "un-thinkable", which may become "thinkable" through discursive changes (Jørgensen and Phillips 2000; Butler 1993).

The parliamentary<sup>41</sup> debates are collected in neat books in which the transcripts of MP's speeches are readily accessible—the form is easier to work with than interviews are, e.g. they are more text-like than are interviews,<sup>42</sup> which are transcribed from live recordings. Hence, I ended up doing the parliamentary debates and other

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<sup>41</sup> The parliamentary debates and the policy material were collected at the National Archives of Zimbabwe (NAZ) and the Zimbabwe Central Statistical Office (CSO), Harare and at the Rhodes House Archives (RHA), Oxford.

<sup>42</sup> Probably I perceive of them as more text-like because I am at a distance in time from them, unlike the interview carried out with people I have met and talked to on a personal level.

previously written material (reports, letters etc.) in one way, and the interviews in another. Both ways are, I believe, acceptable and recognised forms of discourse analysis, whereas the former variant is more in-depth. Below I will first focus on the practicalities of doing the discourse analysis of chapter 3, and thereafter I will deal with the material used for the other chapters of the thesis.

The practical side of “doing” discourse analysis is not always straightforward. According to Bergström and Boréus (2000) discourse analyses, which have been carried out within different parts of the social sciences do not follow any specific methodological course. They also claim that there are simply no pre-constructed models to follow when doing a discourse analysis. This is frustrating when you intend to do a discourse analysis of your material as it takes time figuring out how you want to do it. Therefore I want to raise this issue by describing my way of doing it. This is the only way in which we may openly and critically engage with the “doing” of discourse and other forms of analyses.

So, then how did I go about it? I started by defining, or constructing, a discursive order (“population”) in which different discourses (e.g. Malthusianist, African authenticity, feminist, nationalist) compete for recognition and claims to representation of “reality”.<sup>43</sup> Thereafter I created sets of discourses, which I wanted to focus on when analysing parliamentary debates, policy documents and the remaining textual data (newspaper- and academic articles, ministerial letters, confidential and conference reports etc). Finally, I constructed sets of questions I wanted to ask the texts under analysis (following Jørgensen and Phillips 2000). So far so good as this is described quite well in the academic literature on discourse analysis as method (Bergström and Boréus 2000).

After having defined what I was looking for and where, I still had the problem of how to most *practically* conduct the analysis. How do you deal with the actual pieces of paper with text laying before you to extract the discourses and the quotes illustrating them? As pointed out by Bergström and Boréus (2000), there are no “models” on which to lean. Everyone seemingly invent their own models. The manner in which I decided to deal with my research material was as follows: Concerning the parliamentary debates I started by making a number of copies of the debate. Every copy was then used to 1) mark out the discourses I was looking for, and 2) to mark out instances where these discourses interacted with each other and also with other discourses, i.e. I looked for discourses, which I had defined<sup>44</sup> prior to reading the

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<sup>43</sup> According to Jørgensen and Phillips (2000) the process of defining a discursive order is in a sense to construct it.

<sup>44</sup> The research problem, objective, research questions and the theoretical approach to the issue of population guided my selection of which kind of discourses to look for in

debate (Malthusianist, sexualised, racialised and gendered), and also discourses, which turned out to be important to those who participated in it (e.g. African authenticity, medical).<sup>45</sup> By doing it this way I was able to dig through the very thick, or multi-layered discourses expressed in the debate on family planning of the Rhodesian parliament in 1966. It also turned out to equip me with a technique to deal with an unexpected problem during the analysis of the debate. I felt more and more uneasy while analysing the inter-discursive borrowings,<sup>46</sup> the instances where the discourses overlapped and where they contradicted each other. There were, when analysing the quotes I had chosen, of which most did not end up in the final version of the chapter, similarities underneath the surface of difference; it was like a sea in which islands and continents popped up, looking different but being dependent on the same water, both to sustain their difference and their co-operation. The re-reading of the quotes, of theory and of my notes during the analysing process, brought me to the conclusion that I was actually dealing with a double layer of discourses. One of basic difference and one of basic similarity both of which are expressed in the debates. The realisation made during the analysis of the debates was important because it made me look for the same double-ness in the interview material.<sup>47</sup>

As a result of this realisation I was also able to show how discourses, which portray themselves as (racially, gender or otherwise) “neutral” are linked up with wider discourses on race, gender and class. I have also been able to show how discourses on population in Rhodesia and Zimbabwe on a deeper level are also

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the debate. I believe that it is better to make clear to one self and others what one is looking for, and then add those that are apparently important in the text under analysis.

<sup>45</sup> To avoid total confusion during the reading and re-readings of the debates I used highlighters of different colours demarcating different discourses and because there were often several discourses at work simultaneously I used a copy for each of the discourses I was looking for (as the first copy in which I attempted to use all the colour demarcations became a complete colour-mess).

<sup>46</sup> As when European MPs talked about African women’s status. At this instance the European MPs “borrowed” concepts and understandings from early feminist discourses, while using the language of the discourse to mask racial arguments as social policy. The feminist discourse on rights is rooted in a larger feminist discursive order, which has a long academic/intellectual and written history. However, the development of alternative feminist discourses on race, class and sexuality especially has widened the feminist discursive field and has also been the fertile ground on which the feminist rights discourse grows. It thereby differs radically from the Neo-Malthusian discourse of White MPs in the Rhodesian Parliament.

<sup>47</sup> This realisation played a significant role both theoretically and methodologically. Theoretically it meant that I turned back to theories, which have been overshadowed by “postisms” for some years searching for explanations of this similarity. Methodologically the consequence was that the analysis of the interviews (done after the debate) became more focused on similarities and discursive undercurrents than it would otherwise have been.

interconnected with discourses otherwise defined as vastly different. The debate of 1966 very clearly connected to international discourses on overpopulation, and had a certain resemblance particularly with the racialised discourses on socio-economic development and population in the USA. The US demanded of newly independent development countries that they include population reduction programmes if they wanted development aid, and Southern Rhodesia was a target country of US population activists (Ross 1994; West 1994; Ross 1998;).

Concerning the interviews I was unable to keep on to the method I had used for the textual data. Having a general overview over the large number of pages (more than 60 interviews of varying length, some more than 30 pages long), and the number of discourses to handle for the various chapters of the thesis became too much.<sup>48</sup> I read the interviews once, consulting the notes taken during and after the interviews, while taking notes as I read the data. Equipped with my fresh notes I then turned to my computer and used the search function to locate issues in every interview, which were central to the particular chapter I was working on. I then chose the most appropriate quotations, copied them into a new document, one for each chapter. For every chapter I went through every single interview in this manner. I also returned to the paper-versions of the interviews to check whether something hid behind the quotes I had chosen during the computerised search. Had I chosen to do it paper wise, which I think is actually preferable from a methodological point of view, I would probably still be sitting with my highlighters. The writing up of the empirical chapters became an interesting intellectual and physical exercise in flapping between computer and paper documents, between quotes and the analysis of them. The chapters virtually grew out of the quotes.

## Doing fieldwork

I attempt to research the issues at hand from what one might call an “inside” (not to be confused with emic) perspective. I have the ambition to *convey* the words of women and men as they describe their thoughts, strategies and wishes, i.e. discourses and discursive practises, and to analyse their answers respectfully in a broader context. I am in no way trying to speak for anyone (I believe that that is unethical, as people are often quite capable of speaking for themselves when they get the opportunity)—I can only speak for myself, and the analysis presented in this thesis is purely based on my interpretation of their words.

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<sup>48</sup> I actually prepared for doing it this way, resulting in 50 kg's or more of paper and a couple of hours by the copying machine! My solution seems to be one chosen by many given the time/paper problematique of doing it with highlighters and paper.

I would not argue that I in depth know all the problems faced by people in Zimbabwe, neither all their ways of solving problems nor all their moments of joy and happiness. I was especially uneducated when it comes to the White minority of the country. Very little has been written on Whites' living conditions both before and after the liberation of Zimbabwe, even less if anything has been written about White women's living conditions. What has become clear to me, however, is that there is a wide gulf between rich and poor Whites. If not as wide as among the African population (so called 'white trash' has only appeared in later years in Zimbabwe), but to the extent that you will find White people in most of the poor, and lower middle income southern suburbs of Harare and other towns and cities. They manage economically in the same manner as most Zimbabweans, i.e. by means of a diversified private economy.

Fieldwork is never devoid of problems. There are problems of making one self understood both in the interview situation and in situations when you rely on assistants (as discussed above); there is the problem of silence, of covering up, of refusing to talk on specific issues; all the questions you realise you did not ask when you look through the data after having returned home; the things you never found the time to do at the archives; the refusal of officials to hand out data to you at various kinds of offices; wrong pages copied and/or microfilmed by the clerks at the archives; national politics and violent national conflicts. All of the above have to some degree constrained my fieldwork. However, among the most determining constraints I experienced was that of Zimbabwe's violent political conflict, which had been on the way since the early 1990s and which erupted after the referendum in February 1998. The conflict made it impossible for me to go out to the village in Buhera and to the high-density areas in Harare in 2000 to conduct the Black interviews with Nyaradzo Dzobo and Noah Nyongo, and it made it nearly impossible to get in touch with White commercial farmers—the CFU simply refused all contacts with people they found suspicious (as I was because I was connected with SAPES Trust, whom the CFU regards as being on the wrong side in the conflict over land). This sharply limited the number of commercial farming families I could get in touch with and I managed only to locate one new family in 2000.<sup>49</sup> In total I interviewed 13 Whites. The other two families had been contacted already in 1998, and were among those who accepted to meet me again for a new round of interviews.

Of some concern to the thesis was also the problems related to getting the table 3 of the 1992 census and some essential documents,

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<sup>49</sup> This family was located not through the CFU but through contacts at the Swedish embassy in Harare of which I am grateful. One of the best European interviews included in this thesis was conducted with a member of this family.



which have gone missing at the NAZ. I will bring up the story concerning one of these documents as an illustration of how politicised race and fertility control still is in Zimbabwe. In Rhodesia, population (control) was a big issue especially during the period following the Unilateral Declaration of Independence in 1965. It has continued to be a central issue even after independence (from 1979/80). When I asked for table 3 of the 1992 Census at CSO in Harare, showing the fertility rates in different ethnic groups in Zimbabwe (including European descendants) I was told that it was not for sale. The clerk at CSO looked a bit unsettled when I asked why this particular table was not to reach the general public. He did not really answer my question but probably this pertains to the history of racialised demography in Rhodesia/Zimbabwe, issues which are still highly provocative. Similarly, when I asked at NAZ why the document, which I suspect will prove that the RF government in 1973/74 launched (or prepared to launch) an African population reduction policy, was not in the file where it should be, I was told that it might have been relegated to the confidential part of the archives. This particular document—a confidential report requested by the Prime Minister (I. D. Smith) looking into the possibilities for such a policy to be launched—is simply not to be found in the file where it should be at NAZ. The whispered answer I got when I inquired further was that this issue, i.e. African population reduction during the RF and the war years is still a ‘hot potato’—and that’s where the personnel left me.

## Chapter 2

### **Practicing a whiter shade of pale: The political economy of race, sexuality and reproduction in colonial Zimbabwe**

*There is academic concern about 'Rhodesianness' and attempts to deny it. But anyone who lived his or her life there knows its reality. Whatever the origin of the white Rhodesians, they were simply not South Africans, nor were they the British abroad, talking of 'home'.<sup>1</sup>*

'Oh, you've been waiting a long time for this haven't you,' the old White lady behind the counter said as I prepared to pay for Ian Smith's autobiography, *The Great Betrayal*. I must have looked a bit confused because she explained that the book had been out of stock for a long time and people had continuously come in to make orders from the second print, which had, as it turned out, just arrived. The sentiments expressed by the old lady behind the counter contained not only the joy of being able to sell a long awaited and popular autobiography, but a whole range of political and ideological emotions related to the 'lost' country of White Rhodesia. Apparently, to her any White person buying Smith's autobiography must be one who misses his ruling days, the heyday of White Rhodesia. Her reaction, as well as the many homepages on the Internet dedicated to the memorabilia and even the wished-for return of White Rhodesia indicates that 'Rhodesia' was not simply a colony among others but also a White "nation" exiled by the new republic of Zimbabwe under majority rule. 'Rhodesia' may thus by Anderson's much adopted concept be defined as an imagined community of people who like(d) to say of themselves that they were more British than the British (Smith 1997), or as it was put by Mrs. Ethel Tawse Jollie nearly a century ago, they were the ones who put "Great" into Great Britain (Lowry 1997). In this chapter I will write a history of Rhodesia from somewhat different perspectives than is usual as the main focus will be on the importance of the political economy of race, sexuality and

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<sup>1</sup> Smith 1997, the quote is from the introduction, which is written by Professor J. R. T. Wood, Durban 1997.

reproduction to the creation of the unilaterally declared independent Rhodesia.

### ***King Solomon's Mines or the creation of a settler colony***

The political economy and the geopolitical structures in the area that became Southern Rhodesia in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century had changed many times from the beginning of contact with the Whites, of whom Portuguese traders (and local traders contracted by the Portuguese) were the first to appear (Beach and Noronha 1980; Beach 1990). In Portuguese accounts of the societies and kingdoms approached between the 15<sup>th</sup> century until British colonisation in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century are described as hierarchical and patriarchal societies, i.e. based on androcentric class structures—the Portuguese seem to have recognised the social structure from their own society. Sexual behaviour and marriage patterns however, seem to have puzzled them somewhat. They found that '*chastity* is not considered a virtue' among unmarried women in some of these societies, while others were described as 'the most *civilized* people' among whom 'the women are *chaste*, and the men marry only one woman' (Beach and Noronha 1980,<sup>2</sup> italics added). The Portuguese also described the position of power accorded women in central positions within some of the monarchies as the wives of the King were those who selected the successor upon the King's death. In some cases the senior wife of the king also held a position of direct and explicit political, economic and military power, and in yet other cases (such as in Manyika) women were sometimes considered the rightful heirs of and successors on the throne (ibid). The Portuguese, in contrast to the British, had only mercantile interests in the area and they never attempted to colonise it.

What was to become Rhodesia and subsequently Zimbabwe was invaded by the Pioneer Column<sup>3</sup> under Cecil Rhodes in 1890 and subdued by violent massacres of Ndebele soldiers and civilians in 1893 and the defeat of the First Chimurenga<sup>4</sup> in 1897. In 1890 the

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<sup>2</sup> Cited in Nestvogel 1985, p. 48-49. The collection of Portuguese historical accounts from Zimbabwe by Beach and Noronha are most difficult to get a hold of. Therefore I have had to rely on Nestvogel.

<sup>3</sup> The Pioneer Column was a unit aimed for occupation of Matabeleland and Mashonaland, British protectorates from 1888. It consisted of policemen and soldiers, who under Cecil Rhodes' leadership entered and colonised Zimbabwe.

<sup>4</sup> Chimurenga (or *zvimurenga*—the Sindebele equivalent to *chimurenga* is *umvukela*.) is the Shona concept most commonly used to describe the uprising of 1896-97 and the Liberation War (the Second Chimurenga) of the 1960s and 70s. In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century President R. Mugabe declared a Third Chimurenga to take "back" agricultural land from White Zimbabweans. Ironically Maya Cawthorne (1999) used the expression Third Chimurenga to denominate Zimbabwean women's "war" of liberation. She thereby

Pioneer Column entered the lands north of the Limpopo River. Cecil Rhodes, the leading figure of the British South Africa Company (BSAC) headed the Pioneer Column. There were two main reasons for entering the areas north of the Limpopo River. The more popularly known was the rumours that the area hosted large quantities of gold. Spinning on this rumour Henry Rider Haggard wrote *King Solomon's Mines* after having served as a colonial administrator in South Africa in the 1880s (McClintock 1995). The second reason was one of imperial politics, as Rhodes believed that Mashonaland was the key to the control of Southern Africa and indeed the African continent (Bond 1998). Particularly, the 'competition to establish a sphere of influence in Lobengula's [Ndebele king during the mid-1800s] kingdom' was an important factor in the colonisation of Zimbabwe (Loney 1975: 29); i.e. the colonial conflict over land and resources in South Africa between the British and the Boers was extended across the Limpopo River. Rhodes apparently also had a queer social pathos regarding Great Britain, as he saw in the colonisation of Mashonaland a solution to the economic crisis of the late 1800s (Rhodes (1895) quoted in Mandaza 1997: vi):

My cherished idea is a solution of the social problem, i.e. in order to save the 40,000,000 inhabitants of the United Kingdom from a bloody civil war, we colonial statesmen must acquire new lands to settle the surplus population, to provide new markets for the goods produced in the factories and mines. The Empire, as I have always said, is a bread and butter question. If you want to avoid civil war, you must become imperialists.<sup>5</sup>

The gold-hunt turned out not to deliver what was expected. Whatever gold there were was only in small quantities. Instead the focus was turned to the agricultural possibilities, which of course fell well in line with the concerns, which Rhodes expressed in 1895. Especially the highlands of the area entered by the Pioneers were promising. The people living in this area, which were ordered under smaller and larger kingdoms, were of less concern to the Pioneers than the natural resources, which they found interesting.

The British colonisation was brutal and resulted in a far-reaching uprising in 1896-97 (the First Chimurenga) spread among the colonised. People joined the uprising for different reasons but among the most prominent were the theft of cattle and land by the colonisers. Another, subsequently less acknowledged 'theft' was that of women

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suggests taking the Chimurenga inwards, whereas President Mugabe once more suggests fighting an enemy which in his present terminology is defined as "external".

<sup>5</sup> This thought was provoked by a workers meeting which Rhodes attended where he had listened to 'the wild speeches, which were just a cry for 'bread! bread!' (Mandaza 1997: vi).

(Hyam 1990; Schmidt 1992; Bond 1998). According to Stoler (1995:45) 'concubinage was the dominant domestic arrangement through the early twentieth century among subaltern Europeans, as well as many of the elite'. In other words, the European colonisers who crossed the Limpopo river brought with them a household pattern in which it was not uncommon that Black women were partners (either married or not) in the male colonial household. The 'concubinage' as Stoler calls it was by Black men experienced as a "theft" of "their" women. What women thought of this system is lesser known.

The colonisation and incorporation into the economic structures of the British South Africa Company (BSAC) and the British Empire was extremely speedy. Under the rule of Rhodes the new colony developed rapidly from being a mix of imperial politics and an adventurous search for gold, into a settler colony with its own economy and a stock market, which in as early as 1894-95 'registered an astonishing £15 million worth of shares' (Bond 1998:45).

The re-organisation of the colonised societies and kingdoms to suit the needs of the colonising BSAC, their Pioneers and the British Empire was also quick, as they were moved around in the area and uprooted from their homes, taken away from fertile to less fertile soils.<sup>6</sup> Agricultural gains dropped but were still a threat to settler agriculture, and in the end also to the labour demands from settler farmers and miners. Hence, different kinds of bans were put on African agricultural production (number of cattle pr. family, which crops to grow, amounts allowed to come out on the market etc.) in support of settler agriculture (Schmidt 1987). As a result Black families, who had been able to gain by (e.g. paying different kinds of taxes, marriage payments etc.), through intensified agricultural production now had to send their young men (as women and children were not wanted) out as labourers in settler homes, on settler farms and in settler mines.

Not only was the political economic developments of forced internal migration and establishment of new White farms, mines and towns in the new colony rapid but also the development of a specific *Rhodesian* identity among the settlers who were mainly of British and British-South African decent (Lowry 1997; Bond 1998). One force behind the creation of a specific Rhodesian (White/British) identity was probably the South African war between the Boers and the British between 1899-1902. This war created among British settlers a wish to distance themselves from the Boers and to create a colony based on,

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<sup>6</sup> Several accounts of the effects of this are referred to in the academic and other literature concerning Zimbabwe, e.g. Godwin 1996, Lan 1985, Bourdillon 1991, Werbner 1991.

yet differing from, the so-called Cape model<sup>7</sup> – in Southern Rhodesia the Cape Model was transformed to apartheid, via the idea of separate development.<sup>8</sup>

Antagonism towards South Africa was a pronounced part of “Rhodesian-ness” (even under the UDI period despite the remarkably – but in this time of White unity necessarily – “Afrikaner-friendly” Rhodesian Front)<sup>9</sup> (Jacobs 1995). Another, more decisive force was the ‘BSAC overestimation of the region’s gold reserves’ (Bond 1998:41). This led to a shift in focus from mineral extraction to agricultural settler policies creating a larger European population with other and wider aims for the future than would otherwise have been the case (Tranberg Hansen 1989; Jacobs 1995; Mandaza 1997; Bond 1998). Between 1908 and 1914 the BSAC introduced a “white agricultural policy”...to recoup some return on its investments through the encouragement of white immigration and the development of a rural settler bourgeoisie’ (Bond 1997:42). In this political economic environment the Rhodesian “nation” developed. Less than 35 years after the arrival of the Pioneer Column it had separated itself from South Africa and obtained so-called Responsible Government. Responsible Government was by the settlers and later by many Rhodesians perceived as different from being a colony – it was a status between colony and independent state while strictly a part of the British Empire. In a sense they were right, as ‘self-government gave the European settlers in Rhodesia full political control...racial policy would not be decided by civil servants and politicians in London, but by the white electorate’ (Loney 1975: 18). Smith (1997:50) for one writes that ‘after all, we had possessed ‘responsible government’, quasi-dominion status or independence, for forty years’ at the time of the Unilateral Declaration of Independence (UDI) in 1965.

The making of a White Rhodesian identity was, however, also dependent on other factors, which might at first glance seem less military and political economic in character. The social climate of the home country played a great role in the formation of a White, as opposed to Black or African, identity based on British “civilisation” –

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<sup>7</sup> The Cape model consisted of British colonial structures as they had developed in the Cape colony and which differed from the Boer (Dutch) modes and structures of colonisation. According to Mandaza (1997) the Cape model regulated, on a so-called “liberal” or “colour-blind” basis (according to the *colonisers* of course), ‘the social, political and economic relationships among the European settlers themselves on the one hand and, on the other, between them and the mass of indigenous people’ (ibid: 7).

<sup>8</sup> The expression *community* as in *the European community* is connected to the idea of separate development, as each racial group made up a *community* (Mandaza 1997). I have, however, only come across the expression in European literature and among White interviewees.

<sup>9</sup> Rhodesian Front (RF) was the political party of the UDI Governments, from 1964-1978. The Prime minister during all these years was Ian Smith.

cleanliness, strict gender and class divisions, racialised and sexualised discourses on the perversion and inferiority of the Other—Blacks, women, low-class and low-caste (Foucault 1981; McClintock 1995; Laqueur 1995; Connell 1999). Rhodesia/Zimbabwe came into being during the hey-day of Spencerist social-Darwinism and the belief that the degeneration of the “European”, or even the “British race” was coupled not only to the “danger” of racial but also to class mixing (McClintock 1995).

It was a time of social upheaval in Britain—the working classes as well as middle-class women demanded the right to participate in national politics, while British imperialism became violently manifest on the African continent after the Berlin Conference in 1885. It was in this climate the Pioneer Column set out to colonise the kingdoms between the Limpopo and the Zambezi.

### **Women of the Empire and the political economy of colonial reproduction**

This was also the socio-political environment within which Ethel Tawse Jollie arrived in Rhodesia/Zimbabwe just a few years after the First Chimurenga of 1896-97. She arrived as the wife of Archibald Ross Colquhoun (first Administrator of Mashonaland) whom she had married in 1900. A year after Colquhoun’s death in 1914 she married John Tawse Jollie an unfortunate Melsetter farmer.<sup>10</sup> Ethel Tawse Jollie became one of the front figures in the campaign for Rhodesian self rule, or Responsible Government, between 1917-1922 and the first and for many decades only, woman parliamentarian in Rhodesia and the Commonwealth (Lowry 1997).

Many regard her as one of the main founders of the distinctly White and conservative “Rhodesian identity” based on conservative ideas. Basically what she propagated was what has later been called “separate development” as ‘her thought [was] informed by a romantic Toryism, which idealised customary, ‘legitimate’, indigenous structures of authority that had been formed by “historical experience”’ (ibid: 262). She was a fierce opponent of the suffragettes and of Irish home rule supporting the Ulster Unionists.<sup>11</sup> She disliked the developments pointing in the direction of Rhodesia/Zimbabwe becoming the 5<sup>th</sup> province of South Africa, and thus became involved in the campaign for self-rule, which ended with the referendum in favour of Responsible Government in 1922. The love for Rhodesia as a jewel of Britishness in Africa and the Empire, preached by Tawse Jollie afforded the following comment in 1923:

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<sup>10</sup> Melsetter was renamed Chimanimani after independence.

<sup>11</sup> Much of the views expressed by Mrs. Tawse Jollie are identical to those voiced by Ian Smith in his autobiography of the mid 1990s.

Mrs. Jollie brings home to us...You cherish the very ground that you tread on, warning the whole world off and taking a deep delight in the goodly heritage the Pioneers have handed on. That is what it is to be a Rhodesian...The only condition laid down beyond the Limpopo is that you are loyal. (quoted in Lowry 1997:259)<sup>12</sup>

She was involved in a campaign aimed at larger female emigration to the colonies, 'emphasising the freedoms which colonies would afford, including electoral and property rights, improved educational facilities, and greater marriage opportunities for women' (ibid: 263).<sup>13</sup> The rationale behind such a campaign was to secure Rhodesia/Zimbabwe as not merely a colony but a new White country in black Africa, and obviously 'female migration was necessary for White men to become settlers rather than simply colonists' (Jacobs 1997:248). Hence, Mrs. Tawse Jollie emphasised the marriage opportunities since increased female migration and White marriages would 'boost the birth-rate at a critical time' in the colony's history (Lowry 1997:263). Mrs. Tawse Jollie's emphasis on the immigration to Rhodesia/Zimbabwe of British women also had racialist motives of which an important factor was the 'Englishwoman' who was perceived of as 'an invincible global civilising agent' (Hammerton quoted in Lowry 1997:263).

### Searching for work in the Empire

A newly established settler colony is necessarily dependent on the influx of new members as well as the reproduction of those who are already settled. Hence, the imperial diaspora (Cohen 1997; 2003)<sup>14</sup> was

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<sup>12</sup> Quotation cited in Lowry (1997) from a review in *South Africa*, 29 February 1924 of E. Tawse Jollie's *The Real Rhodesia*.

<sup>13</sup> Her support of women's involvement in colonial parliaments was based on the anti-suffragette idea of a separation between male and female 'spheres', i.e. that it was perfectly in order for women to be involved in local, 'domestic' politics but not in national and imperial politics. Hence, being an active woman politician and parliamentarian in the colonies did not contradict anti-suffragettism since colonial parliaments were considered to belong to the 'domestic rather than the imperial 'sphere'' (Lowry 1997:264).

<sup>14</sup> According to Cohen (1997) the settlers who colonised Rhodesia/Zimbabwe were a British imperial diaspora. In Cohen's typology (1997:67) an imperial diaspora results from the 'settlement for colonial or military purposes by one power'. According to Cohen 'an imperial diaspora...is marked by a continuing connection with the homeland, a deference to and imitation of its social and political institutions and a sense of forming part of a grand imperial design – whereby the group concerned assumes the self-image of a "chosen race" with a global mission' (ibid). Cohen discusses the British imperial diaspora rather than those of other European imperial powers, because he perceives of the British as the most effective in establishing such a diaspora. The countries, which he points out as, the "'colonies of settlement" [are] New Zealand, Canada, Australia, former Rhodesia and South Africa' (ibid: 68). He maintains that there are two major similarities between these five countries. Firstly, they all 'became



dependent not only on a 'thin white line' of (male) 'administrators, merchants, soldiers and missionaries' which was usual in 'colonies of exploitation' (Stasiulis & Yuval-Davies 1995:3), but also on the immigration of settler women and men who would marry and create families and homes in the colony. These people came in search of work and career opportunities (including the career of many women, i.e. homemaking).

It is well known that the British Isles were haunted by social and economic upheaval as the society was slowly transformed from agrarian to industrial production (Malthus 1798; Wolf 1990; McClintock 1995). It was not only the conditions of the peasants and the working poor, which changed but also that of the landed aristocracy and the bourgeoisie (McClintock 1995). In the late 18<sup>th</sup> century Britain some debaters called for socio-political and economic change (Wollstonecraft 1792; Woodcock 1946 and 1993), while others warned of the effects of 'overpopulation' (Malthus 1798). The problems might better be described as a population surplus created by the political economic changes in the system of production and trade, effected by imperial colonisation (Wolf 1990; McClintock 1995). One of the solutions to the problem of too many Britons on the Isles was to ship some of them overseas alternatively to make emigration easier. The major immigrant destination from the 17<sup>th</sup> century onwards was the colonies in North America. However, from the late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries even South Africa and New Zealand slowly gained interest as immigrant destinations, while Australia became a colony of what might be labelled forced immigration. In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century East Africa and especially Rhodesia/Zimbabwe became popular destinations of British imperial settler immigration.

Furthermore, "exporting" redundant British middle- and upper class women<sup>15</sup> to the colonies was based on the beliefs that the English gentlewoman 'would favourably affect the dubious manners and morals of the colonialists, spread religion and avoid being condemned to a reluctant barren spinsterhood' (Cohen 1997:72), i.e. making 'European activity in Africa more respectable and ordered' (Ranger 1983: 215). It also helped solve the problem of race-mixing going on in

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"dominions" in a formal, legal sense between the two world wars', e.g. Rhodesian Responsible Government, and secondly, the 'superordination the settlers and their metropolitan backers sought to assert over the indigenous populations' (ibid).

<sup>15</sup> Of course it was not only a case of "shipping" spinsters overseas but most probably also a wish by (at least some) single women to re-create their lives, i.e. seeing a chance to make themselves a "proper" living through a possible marriage in the colonies. Life as a spinster was not easy as Handwerker (1990: 5) points out, citing Slater's (1984) and Lewis' research (1984): 'Spinsters were a drain on family resources and, family affections notwithstanding, they received from their brothers and fathers as little as the law allowed...English women continued to equate spinsterhood and social failure as recently as the early twentieth century'. One might argue that this is still the case, also in Zimbabwe.

the colonies; cross-racial sexual relations was during the 1880's the focus of 'a fanatical Purity Campaign' (Hyam 1990:1), which had the result that by 1914 (and in contrast to other European colonial systems) 'outside the fighting services, almost no sexual interaction between rulers and ruled occurred' (ibid). Of course, it is impossible to be certain that 'almost no sexual interaction' occurred, and certainly the situation in Southern Rhodesia points in another direction as the petition written by Rhodesian women against *any* cross-racial sexual relations was dismissed in the Rhodesian parliament in 1916. This shows that Rhodesian women perceived the "white peril" to be a major problem and threat to "decent" and "civilised" family life, while the fact that it was turned down by an all-male parliament makes it rather obvious that cross-racial sexual relations between Rhodesian men and colonised women/girls (and men/boys most probably) was not eradicated in Southern Rhodesia after 1914. However, the public recognition and sanctioning of such relations might have changed as an effect of the Purity Campaign, hence functioning as a prohibition on the public recognition of its existence from the mid-1920's onward (hence barring Rhodesian women from bringing the issue up in Parliament once more). In stead the focus on the "black peril" grew from then on (the "white" and "black" perils will be discussed below).

### **The Empire within**

The emigration had positive effects on the British State and empire—it functioned as a destination for (in particular male) Britons (mainly middle- and upper class) who had few career opportunities at home (Ranger 1983)<sup>16</sup> and it served Imperial political and economic interests well. Hence, the emigration to the British colonies was not only of interest to the individual settler but to the greater political economic scheme of the British Empire. Importantly for the Imperial project British settlers bore the Empire with them, many in heart and soul. According to Cohen (1997: 75) 'a "British" identity became hegemonic' in all the British dominions as 'English and Welsh law, the English language, the Anglican Church, English sporting traditions, and Westminster-style political institutions either became paramount or were accorded a high status' (ibid). This is recognised also by Godwin and Hancock (1999: 38) who write about Rhodesia in the early 1970s that 'probably no other transplanted English-speakers had

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<sup>16</sup> Due to the agrarian and other socio-economic reforms in 19<sup>th</sup> century Britain many members of the upper- and upper-middleclass as well as a few within the nobility did not have many career opportunities within Britain. They were either recruited for state or company service (as Raider Haggard who wrote *King Solomon's Mines*) in the British colonies or went out by themselves and became "adventurers" searching for riches as well as adventure (McClintock 1995).

done more—with similar resources—to reproduce and practise the parent culture'.

The "Empire within" might be described not only in explicit terms, however, but also implicitly in the societal values they carried with them. These values might be put under a common heading by the concept of "civilisation", more specifically Christian Western civilisation in its particular Victorian-Edwardian version, i.e. with a focus on restrained sexual conduct of which any kind of "unnatural mixing"—class, race, same-sex—was perceived of as perverse and a threat to society.

As the gap between Rhodesia/Zimbabwe and the "mother country" widened in the mid-1900s, Rhodesians developed a civilisational discourse in which Rhodesia was hailed for defending 'Western civilisation from the evils of communism and [preserving] civilised standards from the anarchy and corruption of Black Africa' (Godwin and Hancock 1999:3). They saw themselves 'as a people who stood up for the basic Western and Christian values which the British had abandoned, the communists were trying to undermine, and the Black Rhodesians were not yet ready to inherit' (ibid:15). Not only did Rhodesians perceive of themselves as the defenders against communism and the Africanisation of Africa, but also of the original British civilisation, which they believed had become more or less corrupted since the Second World War.<sup>17</sup> Describing his disappointment with the British after the Unilateral Declaration of Independence of 1965 Smith (1997:150) refers to Kenneth Young (the writer of *Rhodesia and Independence*) who declared that 'the spirit and courage that made Britain great were not extinct; they had emigrated' to Rhodesia. Practising "civilisation" meant, among other things, the establishment of an 'impeccable... model of efficiency, correct constitutional behaviour and economic viability' (ibid: 50).

According to Stasiulis and Yuval-Davis (1995:20) colonial settlers 'kept Europe as their myth of origin and as a signifier of superiority even when formal political ties and/or dependency with European colonial powers had been abandoned'. This is exactly what happened in Rhodesia/Zimbabwe, and this process started I would argue, soon after the death of Cecil Rhodes in 1904 as White settlers became increasingly impatient with the rule of the BSAC.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> A particularly interesting example of this is sited in Godwin's (1997) autobiography as he describes how the English mother school (the Jesuit College Stoneyhurst) of St George's School in Harare called on the rector of St George's because they wanted him to 'come over and restore some of the discipline of the old version' (ibid: 178). The only place where they could find this 'perfectly preserved' (ibid) was at the sister-school in Harare.

<sup>18</sup> Cecil Rhodes had until the early 1900s more or less ruled the colony through the BSAC (Bond 1998).

## Ethnic consciousness among the settlers

Ethnic consciousness is not only based on what might be termed 'collective memory and the myth of origin' (Cohen 1997). In fact it might be more a case of "common destiny" rather than 'common origin' (Yuval-Davis 2002: 27). The Rhodesians were not, and White Zimbabweans are still not, "a" White community but several.<sup>19</sup> The first very clear ethnic division among Europeans was that between British and Afrikaner settlers. The latter were deemed "undesirable", as they were perceived of as inferior and disloyal to the British colonial authorities (Jacobs 1995). Peter Godwin aptly describes the exclusionism practised towards Afrikaners in his autobiography (1996); they are poor, have many children, their names and language is strange and they are generally people whom you do not socialise with. This is not untypical of settler societies in which the settlers attempt at building a sustainable nation on colonised territory, as there will be 'an implicit, if not explicit, hierarchy of desirability of 'origin' and culture which would underlie the nation building processes, including immigration and natal policies' (Yuval-Davis 2002: 27).

However, not only Afrikaners were despised during the very early phase of colonialism in Rhodesia/Zimbabwe. Many Jews also took part in the early occupation. The second largest European settler group was Jewish (Jacobs 1995). According to Jacobs (ibid: 252) the first "Rhodesian" Jews were British and German whilst the 'second wave' were poor Eastern European Jews and this 'national difference...their poverty, the growing normalization of settler life, and [the] general anti-alien feeling during World War I all contributed to a rise in anti-Jewish racism'. Anti-Semitism and general British xenophobia grew prior to World War II as fascist and populist labour politicians in Rhodesia/Zimbabwe 'campaign against European immigration, especially from "commercial races"' (ibid).

In the racial hierarchy constructed by imperialist European scientists and debaters not only Afrikaners and Jews were despised and considered inferior to the British, or more precisely English gentry (the Scots, Welsh and Irish as well as the working classes in Great Britain were considered inferior "races") (McClintock 1995). Greeks were by the Rhodesian British considered 'lowly' (Jacobs

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<sup>19</sup> There is still a highly visible ethnic division between Zimbabwean Europeans. In Harare older Italians tend to go and have their coffee and *Grappa* in the afternoon at Italian bars and restaurants, where Greeks generally do not come, while among cricket players you seldom see Italian, Greek or other non-British or non-African names. Members of all the ethnic groups have retained their language of origin and many still have close contacts with their family "back home". One of the positive effects of this is that Harare especially is a very cosmopolitan city with British, Greek, Italian, Portuguese and French restaurants and bars in addition to the non-European cuisine consisting of Mexican, Indian, Pakistani, Chinese, Mongolian and Jewish restaurants.

1995). Italians, who started to arrive in larger numbers during (as prisoners of war) and after the Second World War were also, considered inferior by the British dominated administration (Jacobs 1995; Cohen 1997). Keeping Rhodesia/Zimbabwe British was considered of such a great importance by the Rhodesian Britons that

Anti-Semitism and xenophobia survived the [Second World War] intact and culminated in the 1946 Alien Act, which established that British citizens were to make up 90 per cent of immigrants, with no other country providing more than *one per cent* of all entries. (Jacobs 1995: 252, emphasis in original)

It is interesting to note that among the various cabinet ministers during Ian Smith's reign, very few bore non-British names (Smith 1997). This is naturally partly due to the general dominance in Rhodesia/Zimbabwe by the British, but it is also remarkable as Ian Smith himself and the Rhodesian Front (his party) were not as hostile towards Afrikaners for example as other British Rhodesians (Jacobs 1995; Smith 1997). Only in times of severe threat to White supremacy in Rhodesia/Zimbabwe have the various European ethnicities become united as "a" White community (Jacobs 1995). However, by African people of Rhodesia/Zimbabwe, as well as in the donor and international community, ethnic Europeans in Rhodesia/Zimbabwe have most often been described as "the whites", "the white community" or "the Europeans". During the social, political and economic unrest of the late 20<sup>th</sup> and early 21<sup>st</sup> century, however, the concept of "the whites" changed somewhat and "the British" became the main denomination in official political rhetoric for Zimbabweans of European descent.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> This of course bears on contemporary internal politics of land-redistribution and its links to the history of Rhodesia and the Lancaster House agreement. Partly it is due to the favouring of British immigrants during the 1940s and 50s with the explicit aim of boosting the *British* population in Southern Rhodesia (Jacobs 1995). It is also a consequence of the contempt with which the British government was seen by the RF government of the 1960s and 70s for its "betrayal" of the European minority in Southern Rhodesia and their aspirations for independence (Smith 1997). A contempt which in the end led the British government to go to great lengths to secure the protection of the landed (and other) Whites of Southern Rhodesia as it was transformed into majority led Zimbabwe in 1980. The Lancaster House agreement hence secured European seats in parliament for 10 years after independence and it also secured White landowner's property rights and good pay in the case they were going to sell farms to the government for land-redistribution. The British government has been perceived, by both sides of Rhodesian and Zimbabwean official politics as untrustworthy – and is accused by both sides for letting them down. The choice to call all Whites "British" – by many White *Zimbabweans* regarded as an insult – is therefore grounded in the political history of the creation and dismantling of the British Empire and the building of an African nation-state.

## The self-image of Rhodesian-ness

A Rhodesian self-image of being a young but righteous 'nation' had slowly been constructed during the early and mid-1900's despite the high turnover in the population and few or no substantial national symbols or traditions to cling on to (Godwin and Hancock 1999; Cohen 1997). Of course, whether a community has any substantial national symbols and traditions are always a matter of interpretation. In Rhodesia there existed what might be labelled a myth of creation and a devotion to the memory of the "founding father"<sup>21</sup> of the country (colony), as well as a distinct *feeling* of common traditions. To Rhodesians the "nation" was built on values that were perceived as indisputable to the creation of great nations:

...we had the reward of being part of a small nation which not only believed in but put into practice those old-fashioned ideals and principles which throughout history had created great nations. They were built on the indestructible foundations of courage, integrity, loyalty and a determination to put into practice the philosophy of: 'Do unto others as you would have them do unto you'.<sup>22</sup> (Smith 1997: 210)

However, this particular narrative of what the Rhodesian nation and Rhodesian-ness consisted of was based on British-Rhodesians' social, political, cultural and religious imports—i.e. on the dominant British imperial diaspora's mission of creating a new British homeland. To Smith, Rhodesians had done an incredibly good job: 'over a period of eighty-eight years, a small band of people, mainly of British stock, had turned a piece of African bush into a classical example of modern Western civilisation' (ibid: 255).

According to Godwin and Hancock (1999: 28ff) the 'Rhodesian way of life'<sup>23</sup> as presented by Rhodesians consisted of the good climate (which was 'probably the constant factor in all eulogies about living in Rhodesia'), the standard of living (which 'varied considerably according to income, social status, and gender'), the quality of the health service and the education system—of course this way of life

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<sup>21</sup> In the face of growing conflicts of interests between the settlers and the company after his death in 1904, a 'cult of Rhodes and his Pioneers' became 'essential to the white Rhodesian ethos' (Lowry 1997: 265).

<sup>22</sup> This philosophy was also applied when talking of the African population which

<sup>23</sup> One of the interviewees reflected to some extent on 'the way of life' in these terms, saying that 'having a drink in this part of the world is definitely a way of life. You, it's something that happens automatically. You don't ever not get offered a drink... you know on a Sunday... Sundays lunchtime, you know the beers will come out and that sort of thing. And in the evenings any night of the week it's, if anybody comes, you know the first thing I will say is "Will you have a drink?" And it could be beers, it could be a glass of wine, a beer, spirit... but it's definitely a way of life' (IK5).

was reserved for Rhodesians,<sup>24</sup> i.e. the European minority. The African population lived under very different conditions with split families, lesser education, less health care, much lower incomes, worse housing and agricultural and home technology. However, the idea of separate development led the European minority to believe that Blacks either did not need, did not want or were not yet ready to adopt the “blessings” of western civilisation, and they were in many instances unable to analyse the unwillingness to send children to school for example in terms of the political economy of Rhodesia (ibid). Instead this unwillingness was analysed as a matter of culture: ‘Their history, way of life and traditions were far removed from those of our Western civilisation, and people of character and consequence do not lightly jettison their culture’ (Smith 1997: 55). Hence, the “you” referred to in Smith’s biblical principle quoted above is a White and not a Black person.

Smith (ibid: 27) describes the basics of the Rhodesian way of life as being the family and the (White) community. To him it was

always a good feeling [to come back home], but even better when one is a member of a close-knit family built around worthwhile traditions. It is worth repeating: great nations are built on the foundation of great families. There was also the advantage of being part of a small rural community, where people were interested in one another, and prepared to lend each other a helping hand. That communal spirit, turning out to support your local team, making your contribution to the social life of the community, is the bedrock of civilised life.

However, more importantly the state apparatus and labour relations were framed in gendered, class and racial terms reserving good jobs and good pay for skilled and landed White men who formed the colonial elite (Godwin and Hancock 1999; Jacobs 1995). Issues, which were not brought up by Rhodesians as marks of Rhodesian-ness, were the “white peril”, racial discrimination, divorce, abortion and class tensions. Even though Rhodesians interacted across class boundaries with more ease than in Britain there were still divisions along strictly gendered class lines (Jacobs 1995). This is not surprising as Whites were, as in South Africa holding different positions in almost all sectors of production. Some were large-scale farmers with good incomes, while others were small-scale farmers who were constantly fighting to keep their economy together and trying desperately to keep up a nice façade, such as Doris Lessing’s parents, in particular

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<sup>24</sup> Godwin and Hancock (1999:8) claim that ‘when most Whites referred to ‘Rhodesia’ they meant ‘White Rhodesia’, and when they referred to ‘Rhodesians’ they meant themselves.’ I have decided to do the same, hence, when the terms Rhodesian and Rhodesians are used in this text it refers to White rule, White society and White persons.

her mother to whom appearance was essential (Lessing 1994). According to Stasiulus and Yuval-Davis (1995: 14)

settler women in the early phase of colonization were burdened not only with involvement in various forms of agrarian and household production, the arduous and specific forms of which varied by class, but also with the breeding and ideological tasks of reproducing 'the nation'.

Some were plantation and mine directors with good educational backgrounds and hence high salaries, while others were contracted as artisans and skilled labour of various kinds and lesser incomes (in all these cases, men)—as the difference described by Peter Godwin (1996) between his educated parents and other White people working under his father. In the early days of colonialism, White single women worked as 'barmaids, nurses, teachers and nannies—the last so that white children would not be under the tutelage of Africans' (Jacobs 1995: 249). By 1946 only 10% of White women worked (ibid) however, suggesting that the domestication of White women had become almost all encompassing.

Rhodesian state policies were based on *separate development* (according to Ian Smith (1997) *separate development* must not be confused with *apartheid*, which is in his opinion inhumane). The idea (or in Sylvester's (1991:35f) words 'myth') of separate development was that

there were two separate but equal pyramids of development. The black pyramid allowed a (male) person to become "his own lawyer, doctor, builder, journalist or priest...protected from white competition in his own area". Within the white pyramid it was understood that "the black man will be welcomed when, tempted by wages, he offers his services as a labourer, but it will be on the understanding that he shall merely assist, and not compete with, the white man...The interest of each race will be paramount in its own sphere".<sup>25</sup>

Separate development implied the "recognition" that European society had developed much more than African society, and thus naturally Whites had different and more sophisticated needs than Blacks, e.g. for higher education (or education at all), for better pay and better jobs, and a higher standard of living. Or as Sylvester (ibid: 36) points out: 'This doctrine united whites around the Reform Party [in the 1920's and 30's] and set conditions for further exploitation of non-white labour and for segregation in housing, services, and farmlands'. Smith is at pains in explaining this "fact" to Whites who have never

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<sup>25</sup> Both of Sylvester's quotes are from the Bulawayo Chronicle, March 31, 1938.



been to or lived in sub-Saharan Africa and who therefore do not have the 'knowledge of our local people, and the understanding of their beliefs and customs', which he has (Smith 1997: 56):

We were, after all, living in different worlds, and they were not all that enthusiastic over the white man's calendar and watch and the importance he attached to time. Their lives were governed by the sun... The indigenous population needed time to adapt to the rapidly changing world surrounding them. (ibid)

Separate development is, however, a British form of apartheid (which is a Dutch concept). One difference, which is the one which Smith lifts up and uses as the legitimisation of separate development and the delegitimisation of apartheid, is that in the latter Blacks are perceived as never being *able* to catch up. In such a perspective separate development seems more humane despite the fact that in this discourse too, Blacks are forever excluded, as they will always lag behind.

### **The domestication of African women**

Separate development was highly gendered as Black women in particular were excluded from any kind of higher education of academic character. Black women's perceived inferiority to Black men became *the* reason for their exclusion. A mission priest maintained that 'the implanting [in Black girls] of habits of industry will be most painfully slow' (quoted in Schmidt 1992: 166). Equally, the colonial perception of Blacks, and then especially Black women, as incompetent in agricultural matters was "confirmed", as women were reluctant to make use of new farming technologies, if they implied an increased work load (fertilisers meant more weeding for example).

'...to any observer of the native, it is immediately apparent that their women are extraordinarily inferior to the men'. While men were 'remarkably receptive of European ideas'... women turned a deaf ear, 'cling[ing] to old superstitions, the old customs and the old methods.' (Schmidt 1992: 99)

Women's unwillingness to change must be understood in terms of the political economy of the colony. Taxes forced men to labour migrate, and trying to keep social stability in the local communities Blacks intensified and diversified agricultural production, some also increased land under cultivation. This resulted in a growing workload on women and children (Schmidt 1992). By the 1930s wage labour had, by tax and racial land and trade policies, to many become a necessity. Migrant labour brought in more income than agricultural

production, rendering women's subsistence agriculture less valued (ibid). Bourdillon (1993: 57) puts it this way:

If men had always had authority over women, this was to some extent tempered by the fact that, in the traditional setting, men depended on the women for the production and preparation of food...Although men had the authority, women were able to exercise considerable influence over their men...In the change from subsistence farming to cash-crop farming the power of women is diminished.

As a consequence of the economic situation it had also become more usual for women to take wage labour by the 1930s, but they received only the poorest paid jobs, and their income could not compete with men's (Barnes and Win 1992). Hence, a perception of women's work as less valuable, though necessary, was established, and new ideas of sexual labour division took root (Schmidt 1992; Bourdillon 1993).

The political economy of Southern Rhodesia was dependent on a steady flow of cheap labour, thus a controlled and not too low reproduction of the labour force was necessary, as well as the maintenance and care of sick and old workers, which was cost-free for the colonial authorities, but put extra burdens on women (Wallerstein 1985; Schmidt 1992; West 1994 1994; Gaidzanwa 1998).<sup>26</sup> Furthermore, it was important to make sure that women stayed in the rural areas, so as to keep up subsistence production since men were only paid bachelor wages (Schmidt 1992). Colonial control of women was followed up by Black men's need to keep wives tied to their assigned plots of land, so as to have security when their working career was over (Bourdillon 1991), and by the need perceived by elders to hold on to their control over sons' children and income. Hence, the control of daughters-in-law became increasingly important (Schmidt 1992).

Missionaries had an ambition of training young Black women in domestic matters, and 'were intent upon transforming Black women into model Christian housewives' and, as it was put by a Reverend at Epworth Mission: 'making them into better mothers' (Schmidt 1992: 155, 161; such training was also popular in Northern Rhodesia, see Tranberg Hansen 1989). The "housewifisation"<sup>27</sup> of Black women was

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<sup>26</sup> Gaidzanwa (1994: 109) has an interesting point when she claims that in Zimbabwe this process of female domestication, was also followed by opposite processes, which increased the rural work load on women: 'The black peasant woman might have aspired to realise the role of housewife but the combination of her increasing agricultural and domestic work militated against the realisation of this role', as she had to take on agricultural work previously assigned to the men, who in the colonial economic system had to labour migrate.

<sup>27</sup> The concept of housewifisation was developed by Mies, Bennholt-Thomsen and von Werlhof (1988) who claimed that the state through the institutionalisation of female

of course part of a hoped-for "civilisation" of the Blacks, but it also educated young women who in turn could join the labour force as "domestics". This functioned in time to release Black men, who had been the preferred "domestics" in Southern Rhodesia much longer than in other African colonies (Tranberg Hansen 1989), for service in settler agriculture and mining. And so, social, reproductive and productive relations in African communities changed. Work had become more rigidly sexed, men (and some women) left the community to get paid jobs, male control of women was strengthened (e.g. through pass laws and economic favouritism of men) and sexual relations regulated by legislation. Furthermore, Black women increasingly lost political and economic influence,<sup>28</sup> and their rights and obligations became more and more domesticated, as the 'European political and religious institutions did not recognize authority in the forms exercised by women in pre-colonial Shona society' (Schmidt 1992: 7). As discussed in chapter 1, the hybridisation of masculinities, which developed during colonialism, effectively altered Black women's possibilities and aspirations to become anything else than mother-wives or "loose" women.

### **The political economy of racialised sexuality**

The exalting of and focus on White women's sexuality and reproduction as an Imperial concern depended on the influx of White women in the colony, which enlarged the range of marriageable (sexual) partners of White men to include women who were considered appropriate in terms of race and class belonging. Jacobs (1995:248) sites the following statistics to show how quickly the colony became a domain also of European female immigration: in 1911 the White male/female ratio was 100 to 51, and in 1941 it was 100 to 88. This means that as early as the 1910's White women made up one third of the European population. This may be due to the changed rules applied when settlers were trekking into new colonial territories, i.e. from 1891 women were allowed to trek with men (ibid). With the growing number of white women in the colony the need for a racialised control of their sexuality and reproduction increased, as is

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domesticity in particular within marriage (i.e. housewifisation) exploited women's labour power.

<sup>28</sup> If women had previously had "back-stage" political influence and in some cases overt political power and economic, as well as military authority, they in large lost this under colonialism (Beach and Noronha 1980; Beach 1990; Bourdillon 1991; Schmidt 1992). The British colonial authority did not recognise official female power and leadership, however, and legislated it away through laws prohibiting female ownership, defining females as legal minors etc. Religiously women continued to hold some central positions (the most well-known being Ambuya Nehanda during the 1896-97 uprising), and in religious ceremonies women often perform essential roles (Jacobsson Widding 19).

often the case when nationalist projects intersect with racism (Yuval-Davis 2002). Hence, as the nationalist Rhodesian discourse heralded racial exclusionism and whiteness, racial purity became essential, and as a consequence the authorities, as well as the settlers themselves became preoccupied with policing White women's sexuality and reproduction:

controlling women's sexuality, exalting maternity and breeding a virile race of empire-builders were widely perceived as the paramount means for controlling the health and wealth of the male imperial body politic, so that, by the turn of the century, sexual purity emerged as a controlling metaphor for racial, economic and political power. (McClintock 1995: 47)

As from the 1910's intermarriage between colonising men and colonised women were brought to an end in legal terms in Southern Rhodesia, while a similar ban on pre- or extra-marital sexual relations between colonising men and colonised women were not enforced (Schmidt 1992; Jacobs 1995).

The racial "purity" of White women's reproduction and sexuality was of paramount importance, as the whole discourse of purity was grounded in the idea of mixing leading to degeneration, i.e. racial, class and sexual degeneration (McClintock 1995). Allowing White women to bear "black" children would jeopardise the whole imperial project as it would "degenerate" the British "race" – as would also a class mixing within the British population (*ibid.*).

This logic also applied of course to the colonised population but was not in any way implemented strictly; children with White fathers and Black mothers were born continuously, while babies with Black fathers and White mothers were either not born or did not make it to public knowledge. Hence, as McClintock argues 'the idea of racial "purity" ...depends on the rigorous policing of women's sexuality' (*ibid.*: 61) – a policing which of course depended on a discourse of racialised sexuality and reproduction making sexual relations between White women and Black men illegal (Stasiulis and Yuval-Davis 1995) – while the opposite was never criminalised. In securing White men sexual access to Black women, White men had to make concessions to Black men by the introduction of stricter laws forbidding married Black women to have any kind of extra-marital sexual relations. The *Adultery Punishment Ordinance* of 1916 made Black women's adulterous behaviour criminal, and had both moralist and economic motives, i.e. the advancement of sexual moral in Black women, securing Black men's control of "their" women and thus encouraging Black men's labour migration (Schmidt 1992). Men, i.e. the labour force, had to be sure that their wives did not run away

committing adultery and other offences while husbands were away working:

...if adultery were made a criminal offence, and men could be assured of their wives fidelity in their absence, the official concluded, "there would be a marked improvement in the number of males turning out to work" (Schmidt 1992: 103)

Of course, this "concession" also had to do with securing Black male labour in White homes and on White owned farms and in the mines (Schmidt 1992). Thus, the policing of women's sexuality, whether Black or White, was important to the creation of both "state" (the political economic backbone of the colony-cum-independent country) and "nation" (a European imagined community based on separate development and civilisational hierarchy).

Central to the racialised discourse on sexuality, which functioned to control in particular women members of both European and African communities was the so-called "black peril"; i.e. sexual relations between White women and Black men. The "black peril" was, especially during times of unrest and insecurity in the European community highly publicised in Southern Rhodesia (Schmidt 1992). There are several explanations as to why the "black peril" became so widely feared. Of course the fundamental problem was that of maintaining the racial boundaries in Southern Rhodesia by controlling especially White women's and Black men's sexuality through racialised discourses and legislation, which also functioned to curtail White women's otherwise relative freedom of movement (a freedom which deeply separated them from Black women).

Black men's sexual potency—and hence attractiveness to White women—and perceived "hunger" for White women was feared, and in 1903 the *Immorality Suppression Ordinance* was passed making sexual relations between *White women* and *Black men* a criminal offence. As early as 1911, i.e. less than fifteen years after the First Chimurenga, the Purity League (of White women) opposed sexual relations of any kind between Blacks and Whites (Schmidt 1992).<sup>29</sup> Legislative double standards on this matter was attacked by the league, since sexual relations between Black women and White men had 'been intentionally excluded from the legislation' (ibid:176).

However, the "black peril" also 'served to distract from the "white peril"' (Jacobs 1995: 250), while simultaneously being dependent on the labour relations in settler homes and in the European community,

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<sup>29</sup> The importance of White women to the creation of racial segregation as well as the continuance and further development of racial discourses should thereby be obvious.

in which Black men were favoured as domestic servants<sup>30</sup> while initially unmarried White women were favoured as nannies (Jacobs 1995). The “white peril”, which was far more widespread than the “black peril” was perceived to be such a problem by White women that in 1921 'over half of the European female population signed a petition' to ban the sexual relations between White men and Black women (Jacobs 1995: 250). Also this second attempt by White women to make White men's sexual relations with Black women criminal was unsuccessful in terms of legal action, but Jacobs (*ibid*) suggests that

the continued presence of male domestics not only reflected settlers' true fears as to which 'peril' was the greatest, but also represented a victory for white women in keeping the 'temptation' of black women away from—or at a greater distance from—husbands and other male relatives.

The discourse surrounding the issue of the “white peril” was similar to the rest of colonial Africa, especially in British settler colonies:

Young African girls were considered dangerous in colonial households for they were assumed to be sexually precocious, and married African women were suspected of adulterous sexual assignations... In the view of white women householders, African women were less controllable than men; they were less submissive and caused more problems in the running of the household. ... white women held that African women were nowhere near capable of taking over from men in domestic service... Their discourse comes close to depicting African women as a different species—certainly from themselves—and more primitive even than African men. The image was charged with sexuality, the African woman as “easy” temptress and—although it was not made explicit—a dangerous element in the white house. (*ibid*: 136)

Hence, White women's perceived threat of Black women's sexuality to White colonial and imperial order was masked by the claim that they were inferior to Black men, as naming sexuality in itself was problematic: it involved (White) men who were supposed to be superior to the colonised Blacks. Worries about the negative

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<sup>30</sup>This is obvious when reading through the brochure “Southern Rhodesia's welcome to women” from the second half of the 1940s. The domestic ‘labour’ is men: ‘to find or train a good houseboy’; ‘when engaging a new servant, always have him examined at the nearest clinic’; ‘show the native boy how to cook’ etc., all exemplified by pictures of (smiling) ‘boys’ at work or at the clinic (Government of Rhodesia (n.d.)—the brochure was received at Rhodes House in Oxford on May 14 1948)

“civilising” effects<sup>31</sup> such relations would have on Black women also masked the fear of their sexual attractiveness to White men (ibid).

Hence, it was practically a “sexual apartheid” for indigenous men and settler women, but not for settler men and indigenous women’ (Stasiulis and Yuval-Davies 1995:8). This apartheid was also expressed in legal terms as early as 1903 in Southern Rhodesia as ‘the death penalty was introduced...for attempted rape of white women by black men while permitting white men to “rape black women with impunity”’ (Mandaza 1997:138). Here one might note also that sexual relations based on love between Black men and White women in Rhodesian discourses were considered impossible, hence all such sexual relations ought to be considered rape or attempted rape. Adding Imperial labour politics to the issue of the “perils” show that sexual politics had repercussions on the political economy of the colony as a whole. By favouring male domestic servants<sup>32</sup> over female the administration of course lost labour who would otherwise have been contracted by the mining companies and on farms (as women were not considered to belong to the pool of “labour” but rather as those who would maintain and reproduce it). However, they won some sort of support and hence stability in the male African community (and maybe, as suggested by Jacobs in their own homes) through the domestication of Black women in the reserves—through pass-laws and laws which prohibited Black women from moving as freely as Black men (Schmidt 1992).

Of course, in settler colonies, especially those, which had Responsible Government such as Southern Rhodesia, the perception of almost-independence was fostered among the colonisers. Being close to but not legally independent from the “mother” country also resulted in a growing importance of creating a sustainable European population, i.e. to secure its growth and survival on the basis of which a viable “nation” could be established.<sup>33</sup> Jacobs (1995:249) puts it quite explicitly: ‘White women were seen predominantly as wives whose destiny was to support men and as mothers whose duties were to increase the settler population and raise young Rhodesians’. This was also one of the dreams of Cecil Rhodes, i.e. to create a ‘vast new country stretching from Cape Point to Lake Tanganyika, a country the

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<sup>31</sup> Such as the violence with which some settlers “took” Black women and the human costs of such behaviour, but also worries of how it would affect African moral standards to witness White, i.e. civilised standards “drop” (Tranberg-Hansen 1989; Mandaza 1997).

<sup>32</sup> As late as 1948 Black men made up 86% domestic servants in Southern Rhodesia (Jacobs 1995:248). Today the picture is the opposite, as domestic service has become a typical (Black) woman’s job on which a meagre income may be earned.

<sup>33</sup> A viable “state” in terms of a well functioning political economic basis had been established quite early and was strengthened during UDI (Godwin and Hancock 1999; Bond 1998).

size of Europe...where white men and women can live, where children can be raised in health and vigour' (quoted by Mandaza 1997: vi). They were to reproduce so as to produce a White nation in Africa. Reproduction is central to any nationalist project as pointed out by Yuval-Davis (2002) and expressed in different kinds of population related policies. The first signs of population interests in Rhodesia are of course the policy of attracting settler women who would reproduce and enlarge the European population, and the policies of increased African reproduction to enlarge the labour force.

Hence, the control of women's sexuality and fertility, whether Black or White, turned out to be of importance to the political economy of Southern Rhodesia. Controlling Black women's rather than White men's sexuality was primarily an issue for White women. The British perception of *proper* women, i.e. 'the 'virginal' European woman...bound firmly to her pedestal' (Schmidt 1992: 158), was Victorian and deeply racist. Black women *could* not behave properly, since 'their passions are stronger...they have more of the animal about them in sex matters and they have not the *restraint* and *control* that white women have' (Wilson quoted in Schmidt 1992: 174, my emphasis).

The focus on the "black peril" must be understood as an expression of racialised patriarchal masculinity in which men's sexuality is perceived of as a nearly uncontrollable "natural drive" directed towards all women regardless of "race". In contexts where men's sexual access to women are defined as a battle over rights to this access, such as in colonial Zimbabwe, the group of the most powerful men will be able to define such rights. Hence, Black men were banned through the death penalty to access White women.

The creation of "white" supremacy in Southern Rhodesia, as in other colonised societies was dependent on the creation of the opposite Other. Through the discourse of racial differentiation "white" identity was constructed along lines of what "white" society and behaviour *was* as in contrast to what it was *not* (i.e. that which characterised African society and behaviour). In British settler colonialism the Portuguese dichotomy of chastity/promiscuity among Black women<sup>34</sup> was exchanged with an emphasis on the latter as opposed to the chaste colonising Self, especially as the number of

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<sup>34</sup> The ambitions of the Portuguese were mercantile and thus they had limited interests in controlling and changing social organisation. Their interest was good trade relations, while the British wanted to control both production and trade. Coming from the Christian Europe the Portuguese seems to have viewed the people they met not only from a purely political economic perspective. According to Nestvogel (1985) they were more interested in women's sexual behaviour and women as signs of male wealth, than in women's political economic positions and interests. The Portuguese traders mainly described women from different Shona peoples in sexualising terms, i.e. as chaste or promiscuous.



White women grew in the colony. Furthermore, Black men were also sexualised, as the European settlers feared the so-called "black peril", i.e. Black men's sexual assaults on White women and ultimately on the colonial order. Black women were 'deemed immoral in sexual matters' while 'black men were like animals, unable to contain their sexual passions' especially regarding White women (Schmidt 1992: 161, 171).

### **Change by colonialism: The political economy of racialised sexuality**

The historical account above shows how the African population was in European perceptions sexualised, i.e. women were viewed as promiscuous while men's perceived uncontrolled desire for White women was described as a "black peril". Black women's sexuality was indecent and immoral, while men's was violent. Both threatened White/Settler family stability and the colonial power hierarchies, because of White men's desire for Black women and Black men's desire for White women.

The image of Black women's promiscuity and the "black peril" were important instruments in the deployment of colonial power, through discourses of White purity, and a colonial economy based on racially separated reproduction. Black women's pre- or extra-marital sexual relations with Black and White men differed in large parts, but both changed and was influenced by the political economic changes in the colony. In the early days of colonialism, for instance, White men came in larger numbers than White women, and some took Black women as wives and had accepted children by them (Tranberg Hansen 1989; Schmidt 1992; Mandaza 1997). However, 'most White men took Black women in the same way they had taken everything else, land and labor, and when it was not forthcoming, then by force'<sup>35</sup> (Tranberg Hansen 1989:96). With the steady growing number of White women in the colony and new colonial regulations, Black women became mistresses rather than wives or partners, and the relationships with White men thereby changed (Hyam 1990).

As the colony was transformed from a kind of settler frontier into a colonial settler state, the relationship between Black women and White men as well as the relations between Black women and Black

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<sup>35</sup> Tranberg Hansen (1989:97) sites Zambian historical documentation to demonstrate this, documentation which also show how sexuality became monetised: 'As African men were coerced into wage labor by the tax nexus, so many African women were taken from their local groups at white men's behest and against their own wishes. ...Glimpses of how white men got their "game" exist among the evidence in the MacNamara and Harrison cases in 1910. Men servants would be dispatched to a village to find a woman. Sometimes a chief or a headman would be asked if he had a young woman to spare; at other times servants would procure women, using their powers of persuasion or coercion. Presents, such as a shawl or money, might pass hands as well.'

men changed. At the heart of the changes were changes in African marital and familial relations as men had to leave communities and villages in search of paid work. This had consequences upon the perception of sexual relations as some Black women, who managed to slip through the colonial control system,<sup>36</sup> saw a chance of illegally earning some extra (or subsist) on trading sexual services and/or vegetables, staple foods and beer with Black men in the cities and at the mines – women on the move as well as economically independent women became the epitome of “bad” women (Barnes and Win 1992; Schmidt 1992; Bourdillon 1993; Barnes 1999). This negative image – which is also connected to the perception of African authenticity – of the self-sustained woman has in full survived colonialism and presents contemporary hindrances both to women’s self-realisation, and in marriage and love relations:

When a woman acquire an independent income, through professional training or business skill, she is not so economically dependent on men for her livelihood. Consequently, no man has much power over her. *A woman who asserts such independence may be accused of being sexually loose.* Men try to assert their authority by appealing to traditional authority: they try to suggest that someone who defies this authority defy all the traditional norms of society. (Bourdillon 1993: 58, my emphasis)

The “black peril” on the other hand was a different kind of problem, because it was defined as a threat to domestic, and ultimately to Euro-Christian civilisational stability and growth. “It” was assumed to happen in the settler household, i.e. behind the otherwise safe walls of home, which was, *simultaneously* the smallest nexus of the European imperial communities and the domain of the White Madam and Black domestic workers (gardeners, cook boys etc.), *and* a cornerstone of the imperial enterprise.

Black men’s violent sexual desire for White women was a European fantasy, based on racialised European perceptions and discourses of the desirability of the chaste (de-sexualised), clean and Madonna-like White woman. Of course it was also based on White men’s fear of Black men’s desirability (potency) to White women who were then implicitly accorded some kind of dormant sexuality (Schmidt 1992). The darkness with which sexuality was connected in Victorian-Edwardian discourses on masculinity, femininity, race and sexuality is thence revealed both in the political sphere where White women demanded stricter racial regulations of sexuality, and in the

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<sup>36</sup> Teresa Barnes & Everjoice Win (1992) and Teresa Barnes (1999) have written on African women’s urban history in Rhodesia. These works show how African women arranged their illegal urbanisation both on their own and in cooperation with African men living in the cities.

hysterical “black peril” scares that raged both South Africa and Southern Rhodesia in the 1910’s-30’s.

The racialised sexual fantasy in the colonial setting had bearings, of course not only on the way in which settlers looked upon their maids, nannies, nurse-boys and cook-boys<sup>37</sup> but also on the way in which subsequent generations of Africans have constructed racialised discourses of sexuality. The variation among these discourses is of course great, ranging from the view that White women are much more in control of their lives, even as married, than Black women—a perception, which is only partly correct—to ideas of racial differences in sexual performance. The most violent versions of these discourses have been publicised on the Internet during the political instability and violence of the last years. “Fantasies” of rape, sexual abuse and ritualised sexual killings of White women (including pregnant women and killing of foetuses) have been mailed to news-paper’s publicly open debate net-sites, signed by typically African male names.

Hence, colonial rule rested on the political economic power division between Blacks and Whites, i.e. black/white, male/female, and racialised sexuality. White superiority came to rest on colour rigorously policed both through legislation and public opinion. Whiteness had to be protected even before conception of a new member of the colonial community: a mix of colours in the European community could not be tolerated (nothing mentioned on the tolerance, which African communities had to show their mixed members).

Coloniality is a condition fraught with complexity, anxiety and contradictions in which social change is both forced and welcomed. It all depends on the position from where the individual or group is standing. This means that, even though the colonised as a group is oppressed there are always some gains to be made by some segments within those colonised. One such gain made was that of male Black elders particularly, as those of them who co-operated with the colonisers were given the possibility to strengthen their hold on the younger generations of both men and women, and especially the latter. Bourdillon claims that

people choose from their traditions precisely those patterns of behaviour and those values which support their own livelihood or which protect the comforts they have got used to or wish to acquire...people seek to control the actions of others...[thus] some people appeal to traditions which support their particular status in society (Bourdillon 1993: 124).

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<sup>37</sup> Nurse-boys were male servants who changed and cleaned White babies’ nappies (in families where nannies were not favoured), and cook-boys worked in the kitchen mainly preparing food for the European family.

Especially the control of women's sexuality has become an area, in which Black men in particular invariably appeal to traditions. Many husbands and their parents perceive women's freedom through education and labour market participation as an opening of Pandora's box; educated women with individual incomes are often depicted as sexually loose and hence untrustworthy. Among White Zimbabweans the discourse is somewhat different, and a daughter's education is a sign of status. However, upon marriage she is expected to dedicate her time and energies to mothering and homemaking (and in some cases this may include earning a supplementary income). Women who maintain their right to be economically self-sufficient even after marriage are often described as irresponsible mothers, and implicit references to White traditions and values are made.

## Chapter 3

### **The war and/of women's bodies: Family planning in Rhodesia and Zimbabwe**

*Whether women are encouraged, discouraged or sometimes forced to have children [...] depends on the hegemonic discourses which construct nationalist projects at specific historical moments. (Yuval-Davis 2002: 29)*

*Between 1957 and 1990 [...] the attitudes of African nationalists in Zimbabwe toward family planning underwent fundamental transformation. Denounced during the colonial period as a sinister plot to control the black population while increasing the numbers of whites, with the coming independence family planning was embraced, after some initial hesitation, as a major instrument of development. (NAZ GEN-P-WES, p. 470)*

Nira Yuval-Davis (2002) claims that there are three main discourses, on which nationalist politics on reproduction is based. She defines these as being the 'people as power' discourse, the eugenicist discourse and the Malthusian discourse. During the 1966 parliamentary debate and until independence, all these three discourses interacted in European arguments for the need of African population control, while the 'people as power' formed the discursive frames of the Black African nationalist discourse of authenticity. As Zimbabwe became independent the African nationalist discourse changed and turned towards the Malthusianist, while many Zimbabweans continue to lean towards the 'people as power' discourse. The 'people as power' discourse of both Black and White nationalists focused largely on what was called demographic warfare during the 1966 debate, i.e. on outnumbering the Europeans, or on maintaining White supremacy through two population strategies (enticing White women to have more children and European immigration). The eugenicist discourse, as well as the Malthusian was, however overwhelmingly "European" discourses in the 1966 debate, and only with independence did the African nationalists embrace the latter. 'People as power' and eugenicist discourses on reproduction are no longer accompanying debates or policies.

## **'Exterminating us, is that the idea?' The impossibility of debating family planning in a colonial setting<sup>1</sup>**

The Rhodesian Parliament and House of Assembly was, as the rest of Rhodesian political and economic structures based on the Cape Model, or so called separate development (see chapter 2). This meant that the all-male "House" consisted not only of White but also Black MPs.<sup>2</sup> In the debates the members of the two groups constantly referred to each other as 'the opposite' or 'the other side'. The colonial condition, whether in a racially mixed parliament or in any other context was constructed and re-constructed through a discourse in which the politics of Othering was a constantly ongoing process.<sup>3</sup> Hence, the reference to 'the opposite' or 'the other side' in the House<sup>4</sup> is not only a reference to a racial-political opposition or to those people actually sitting on the other side of the room—it was also simultaneously a reference to the racial divide in general.

The racial divide included politics, economy, social policy, religion and life in general, i.e. it was perceived in terms not only of colour but also as a cultural split between the two major groups in the country—the colonised and the colonisers. This split is evoked constantly during the debate, both in forms typical of the eugenicist discourse, which concerns 'itself not with the size of the nation but with its quality' (Yuval-Davis 2002: 31), and often in terms of the national cause as Owen-Smith did in his opening remarks (Parliamentary Debates, vol. 63, 1471: 28-34):<sup>5</sup>

The sooner they [Blacks] develop a sense of responsibility with regard to this whole question of improving the status of and standard of their family and as a corollary of the country as a whole the better it will be for themselves and for Rhodesia.

However, there was also a very sharp edge to the cultural split, formulated by Owen-Smith in rather classical Malthusian terms, as he

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<sup>1</sup> Owen-Smith was interjected during the presentation of his motion on family planning in 1966 with this question posed by Majongwe (vol. 63, 1474: 53-54).

<sup>2</sup> The House of Assembly had 65 members of whom 13 were African and 52 were European.

<sup>3</sup> Off course, this othering in parliament was facilitated also by the physical construction of parliament according to the British model in which the political parties sit on opposite sides of each other.

<sup>4</sup> 'Together with certain hon. members sitting on my side I deplore the manner in which this subject was introduced' (Mr. Hlabangana, vol 63, 1898: 4-6). 'I believe we, the African on this side, have not turned this debate into a racial one' (mkudu, vol. 63, 1892: 33-35). The Minister of Health referred to the African section of Parliament as 'the official Opposition' (vol. 63, 1905: 45).

<sup>5</sup> In the following I will refer only to the volume, column and lines of the 1966 parliamentary debate.

and others were concerned with the perceived economic and developmental effects of African overpopulation (vol. 63, 1471: 51-56 and 1472: 1-4):

I would ask this House how long this country can expect the reasonable and intelligent minority who act responsibly and who provide the overwhelmingly part of the national income to provide...  
[interjection] ...for the increasing numbers of the shiftless and the incompetent. This sort of thing cannot go on if the country is to prosper for the benefit of all its inhabitants.

The anxiety with the growing numbers of 'shiftless' and 'incompetent' Blacks was paired with pure neo-Malthusian concerns about the resource-people equation in which the many (i.e. Blacks) are made responsible for sinking the common ship. The strategy of blaming Africans of irresponsible reproduction was by Hamilton-Ritchie expressed in several metaphors of which I have chosen the two most expressive:

The family car is a four-seater or a five-seater. Try to put 30 people into it and there is no comfort. One can hardly breathe and there is certainly going to be no progress. (vol. 63, 1487: 34-37)

We have the economic tap pouring into a bath and the plug is out. Now I ask hon. members, is it sense to go and grab the nearby hosepipe, get more buckets and pour more water in and disregard the obvious, which is to put the plug in the bath? (vol. 63, 1483: 30-35)

The double imagery possible in these metaphors is tempting: the completely over-loaded African cars and "emergency taxis" transporting people all across the country—slowly but surely—and the plugging up of African uteruses. Hamilton-Ritchie's metaphors are typical of the neo-Malthusian discourse (they are among the very illustrative in this particular discursive genre).

The motion had a double objective, however. One was obviously to control, contain and decrease African population growth—the other was to increase by any method the number of Whites in the country. In Owen-Smith's (vol. 63, 1471: 25-27) words '...the enormous increase in population in this country is almost solely due to the increase in the African population'. The growth in the "European section" was hampered partly by the low birth rate among White women/couples (Kaler 1998, referring to Clarke 1971). The

European birth rate fell by 18,5/1000 in 30 years<sup>6</sup>—a quite dramatic decrease. I have seen no research on the reasons for this, but there are some indications that a combination of increased use of contraceptives, especially the pill (Kaler 1998), a high rate of divorce<sup>7</sup> (Godwin and Hancock 1999) and influences from abroad (changed attitudes to preferred family size) might have been preventive. Owen-Smith's reaction is typical of the 'people as power discourse' in which 'the future of the nation is seen to depend on its continuous growth' (Yuval-Davis 2002: 29).

This was by the speakers solely blamed on economic considerations in White households, and partly by the fact that European emigration was larger than immigration, a "fact" which for some odd reason none of the White speakers attempted to explain. It might have become much more difficult to attract Europeans and to hold on to those who came because of the economic growth in the USA, Europe and Australia in the post-second world-war era, especially in the 1960's when social and economic conditions in the North were raised considerably. In such a global climate of Western socio-economic transformation adventuring in Africa was probably not as interesting as before, and the economic gains not as promising.

The economic analysis made by Owen-Smith (vol. 63, 1481: 6-30) in his presentation of the motion clearly define the "us" and "them" of the debate, a dichotomy which the Black (and one White) MPs had difficulties in transgressing—they were caught, maybe not against their will, in a racialised discourse:

I would remind hon. members if this House that the minority, responsible European population of this country bears the brunt of the financial burden which has to supply all the facilities [schools, clinics, job opportunities etc.] [*interjection*] which hon. members opposite so frequently ask for. If we [the Europeans] are going to so diminish our population by ill-advised excessive family planning methods [referring to decreasing birth rates in the North, and possibly also to the popularity of family planning among European Rhodesian women] [*interjection*] we would be committing national suicide. The demand for facilities would be increasing; the ability to create those facilities would be diminishing. I would submit, therefore, that we must encourage those who can afford to have larger families, who can afford to bring up their children well as far as education is concerned, health

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<sup>6</sup> In 1947 births/1000 was 29,5; in 1957 it was 26,7; in 1967 it was 17,7; and in 1979 it was 11,0 (data collected from the Rhodesian Ministry of Health 1968 and 1980 yearly reports, RHA 624.12s.13).

<sup>7</sup> By 1978 'one marriage in just over three was being dissolved' (Godwin and Hancock 1999:217)—rising from one divorce in five marriages in 1970. This was of course not part of Rhodesian-ness, and perplexed Rhodesians who blamed the permissiveness in society.



is concerned, and so on, who will provide a responsible background, environment for these children, to have more children.<sup>8</sup>

This was a suggestion, which is recognisable also in international contexts, e.g. in the US where such worries had been discussed since the 1930s<sup>9</sup> (Ross 1994). Ryan (vol. 63, 1886: 44-52) picked up this other side of the debate and stated that:

It must be brought home to the European section of our society that they have a duty to this country, which is a very real one [i.e. to have more children]. I think it is accepted by all and sundry that the European is most essential to the economic, social and other structures of this country and that without the European this country could very well revert to the deplorable state in which it was found at the end of the last century.

The latter part of the quote rings like an echo of Smith's claims in the late 1990s of the dangers connected with the Africanisation of Africa (Smith 1997)—i.e. civilisation will be lost. Ryan is arguing fiercely for the Government to go out to the European public with a campaign aiming at increased European birth rates. He suggests not only to play on patriotism and nationalism but also to make it economically profitable for White couples to have many children, which was in line with the mover and other White speakers. The suggestions are similar to those of US eugenicists who proposed "'positive" methods, such as tax incentives and education for the desirable [part of the population] and "negative" methods' for the undesirable (Ross 1994: 148).<sup>10</sup> Ryan (vol. 63, 1888: 16-38) was, like Owen-Smith of the opinion that

there is far too much of what we would call birth control, which is only a facet of it, amongst the European section of society, not only in this country, but in other countries. It is leading to the appalling situation in which we are now finding ourselves, and that is race suicide. We are heading headlong into the abysmal future where the European, the white man, could decimate himself and could produce such an

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<sup>8</sup> Majongwe (1481:30) who states that this is about 'selection' here interjected him.

<sup>9</sup> The manner in which Owen-Smith formulated his concerns rings like an echo of the late 1930s US Birth Control Federation's "Negro Project", within which it was argued that "the mass of Negroes...still breed carelessly and disastrously, with the result that the increase among the Negroes, even more than among the Whites, is from that proportion of the population least intelligent and fit, and least able to rear children properly" (Ross 1994: 151).

<sup>10</sup> In the US situation "negative" methods meant 'sterilization, involuntary confinement and immigration restrictions' (Ross 1994: 148). The only one of these "negative" methods applied in Southern Rhodesia was the last one, used against "undesirable" parts of European immigrants, particularly in the 1940s and 1950s (see chapter 2 for a short discussion of this).

appalling reduction in his numbers that he will not be an effective member of either local or world society in the years ahead. That is an appalling possibility to contemplate, and there is no doubt that this present civilization of ours which has been built up over the centuries on a very true and firm foundation could disappear into nothing and could be replaced by something which need not necessarily be a civilization, not necessarily be up to the standard of the one that is tending to disappear.

The practicing of birth control among White women was by some White MPs perceived of as a threat to White survival in Rhodesia, while population growth among the African population was described as demographic warfare:

Hon. members opposite—and this is a phrase that has been used by saying that we must go on quite heedlessly—these two words “demographic aggression”, that is merely breeding as Hitler suggested before the last war in that one should just breed in order to be militaristic, to suppress someone else by sheer numbers; this is surely madness. I am sure hon. members opposite concede that there is no validity, there is no sense in merely breeding where there is starvation, whether you suppress the white man or anything else, this will surely lead to your own eventual downfall, because one cannot cope with the problem of food. (Hamilton-Ritchie, vol. 63, 1488: 20-35)

However, the argumentation of the White MPs was generally not as emotional as the above. However, there seems to have been similar fears beneath less emotionally expressed argumentation based on “responsibility”, “quality of life”, “economic resources” etc. (Kaler 1998).

One theme of the 1966 parliamentary debate on family planning links up with the argument raised in Chapter 2, that racialised sexuality was one of the cornerstones of (Southern) Rhodesian political economy. In a sense one might define it as the continuation of racialised sexuality into a discourse on racialised reproduction. Owen-Smith who had suggested legislating against polygyny brought this theme into the debate. Only a Black MP from Bulawayo, Dr. Hlabangana reacted when Owen-Smith claimed that ‘we, on this side of the House, would not do this [have several wives], and indeed we have more responsibility to our family and country to even consider this’. Hlabangana’s comment was simply: ‘I wonder really’ (vol. 63, 1479: 39-43). Alexander continued on the issue of polygyny, claiming that it was one of the ‘bad’ customs which Africans ‘still believe in’ (vol. 63, 1500: 22)—and that Europeans did not have any bad customs anymore since they had ‘passed laws which do not allow us to have any bad ones’ (ibid: 17-18). The reaction from the Black MPs came

quite immediately in the form of opposing the claim that polygyny was an African 'custom' since, as someone among the MPs interjected: 'The Europeans practise it privately' (ibid: 23-24), while Behane commented Alexander's plight for Africans to accept the European principle of 'one man one wife' with the suggestion that one also then needed to have 'one brothel' (ibid: 43-45). This theme on the "white peril" continued from then on to be a point of reference for many of the Black MPs. The "white peril" had created a population group—the Coloureds—which belonged nowhere in the racial hierarchy as it was the proof of illicit sexual liaisons, it was "in between" and the state was unsure of how to handle it (Mandaza 1997). The "polygyny" practised by White males, was by Chipunza described as 'the irresponsible actions of men who pose that they are civilized' (vol. 63, 1513:45-46). In his speech Hlabangana also returned to the issue of the "white peril" calling it 'indiscriminate propagation of human beings without thought about the future of the children', who grow up without '...anybody whom [they] can call "dad"...' (ibid: 1897: 54-56). He continued, saying that 'we must prove that, in actual fact, the people who are guilty of this sort of thing are the people who stand up to-day and tell us that family planning must be introduced among the Africans' (ibid: 1898: 11-15), i.e. Hlabangana argues that the use of contraceptives among Black women would also function as a contraception against the birth of mixed children. The under-text of contributions concerning the "white peril" from both "sides" of the House was a wish to stop inter-racial sexual and reproductive mixing as it threatened to destabilise both African and European images and discourses of authenticity and claims to nation and civilisation, which were both based on embodied racial separation.

Within the European community the separation was to be upheld both in the political, economic and sexual-reproductive spheres. Black's sought, on the one hand to become equal partners in political and economic terms, and on the other wanted the Europeans to leave the country all together. Common to African views expressed in the House, however, was that they agreed with the sexual-reproductive separation between Blacks and Whites, i.e. sexual apartheid turned up-side-down.

When talking about polygyny Alexander had a double strategy. Firstly, he turned racial discrimination up-side-down, i.e. saying that he, as a White man was discriminated against since he was not allowed to have more than one wife. Secondly, he made fun of an issue, which had been a source of conflict in European homes since the beginning of the colonisation of Rhodesia, i.e. the "white peril," by suggesting that 'I should imagine that when I get home tonight I might be asked what I am after now' (vol. 63, 1500: 32-34).

## African population discourses in conflict

Within the African caucus there was one main discourse within which two discursive streams developed. The discourse within which both these streams are expressed is that of 'people as power'. One of these discursive streams was the explicitly Christian discourse concerning morality and the limited rights of the human being to fiddle with God's will and re-creative powers.<sup>11</sup> The other was based in the Western medical and social policy discourse on health and development.<sup>12</sup> Both of these, as well as the African Nationalist opposition was based in the internally differing views on family planning formulated already in 1957, when US organisations came to Southern Rhodesia offering technological family planning to Blacks (West 1994 1994).

Both streams were also supported with reference to African authenticity. However, they disagreed openly on what authentic African custom on the issue of family planning actually was. In particular the Christian immorality discourse was mixed with a claim to the un-Africanness of family planning, while the medical and social policy discourse was combined with arguments of African family planning traditions. Displaying such seemingly incompatible differences did not cause the African caucus to go against each other in Parliament (except regarding Dr. Hlabangana<sup>13</sup> who was accused, during the debate of being a traitor)—rather they joined each other in a refusal of the motion on racist grounds. The split between them, however is interesting because it displays the battle over family planning in the African communities, and thereby also the different interests in women's reproductive capacities—in short it lays the landscape of gendered power struggles over fertility open.

The Christian discourse is comparable to the colonialist discourses on the sexual immorality of the 'Other', which functioned to prevent people from discussing such matters at all in public. If Beach was right, there was a similarity concerning discourses on sexuality between the colonised and the coloniser: it was strictly taboo to speak publicly of sexuality (Beach 1990; Kaler 1998; Foucault 1981; Weeks 1989). The Rhodesian/African Christian discourse on family planning and sexual morality might therefore be understood as an expression of the hybrid masculinity, which developed during colonialism. Family planning is termed by some of the Black MPs (White MPs with

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<sup>11</sup> Ryan confronted this argument, saying that 'all [Christian churches] do support the idea of family planning', hence questioning the Christian conviction of the African MPs with a differing opinion (vol. 63, 1519:7-8).

<sup>12</sup> A typical initiative emanating from this discourse is the development policy focus on mother and child health.

<sup>13</sup> Cephas Hlabangana was a medical doctor from Bulawayo who had been actively involved in the Bulawayo Family Planning Association since the late 1950s (West 1994).

similar views, if there were any, did not speak) as a highly immoral, indeed disgraceful issue to speak of in Parliament because it is in a sense as speaking of sex. The following contribution to the debate with its interjections clearly shows the disgust some of the Black MPs felt:

It is with the deepest regret that this House has been asked to debate a motion of this nature to-day.-[Mr. Chigogo: It is shameful.]-It is shocking.-[Hon. Members: Hear, hear.]-I can hardly express myself because I am terribly shocked.-[Laughter.]-[Colonel Hartley: Do you need first aid?] (Makaya, vol. 63, 1494: 51-58)

The interjection by Colonel Hartley reveals the strategy also displayed by Alexander regarding polygyny and the “white peril”: he ridicules the Black speaker and the laughter, most probably by White MPs indicates that Makaya’s views are perceived as out-dated. It also shows the wide gap between some of the Black and the White MPs on this issue.

The basic argument raised by the Black MPs based in the Christian discourse was hence that such an issue (family planning) should not be discussed in public. First of all it was a strictly private concern, secondly family planning was up to the Creator, not Man and thirdly, it was against African custom:

I am completely opposed to the terms of the motion, because it is not Christian to limit, by artificial means, the number of children a husband and wife may bring into the world [*quotes the bible, Genesis, 1 chapter, verse 28*]. The act of man to limit or delay conception by artificial means must be viewed by all those who profess to be Christian as contrary to the Divine will. [...] According to African custom, it is a sin against the tribe and the spirit of his ancestors to limit in any way the number of children a woman may have. (Mhlanga, vol. 63, 1489: 30-45 and 1490: 28-31)

This quote shows that Christian and Shona discourses—both patriarchal—on reproduction and sexuality overlap and support each other. The argument against family planning is that it is contradictory to *both* Christianity (the will of God) *and* Africaneity (the will of the “tribe” and the ancestors) as it favours the wishes of the individual/couple rather than those of society and the divine powers. However, other Black MPs used the very same constellation of discourses to argue to the contrary:

No one is against the control or the regulation of families. This is a practice that is as old as time itself, but for the mover to recommend and suggest that he would ask the Minister of Internal Affairs to make

investigations, recommend to the Minister of Local Governance to impose restrictions [*interjection*] on housing and also on taxation [...] nobody who can boast of being Christian or who believes in any Christian ethic would ever be a supporter of such [*interjections*] a motion, and I believe that this motion has done nothing else but to lower the dignity of this Parliament. (Chipunza, vol. 63, 1513: 4-27)

Chipunza's interpretation of the Bible focuses on the message of love and respect for the next of kin, rather than sin and immorality. He appeals to European humanist sentiments in the manner he expects the White members of Parliament to agree with, i.e. referring to the Christian ethos.

The arguments concerning health and education in matters of reproduction raised by Hlabangana stands out as a less voiced concern among the Black MPs. As demonstrated above he was accused of disloyalty, being labelled a traitor to the African population. As a medical doctor he kept strictly to the issue of family planning as a *social* issue, and joined the other Black MPs only in their critique of the objectives of the motion: "I deplore very much that the racial issue has been brought into a matter of this type and I hope we shall be a little more careful in the future" (Hlabangana vol. 63, 1900: 3-6).

The Black speakers linked the issue of population and family planning directly to the racial policies of the RF Government (i.e. the low wages paid to Blacks, the bulldozing of African institutions, lack of educational resources and facilities, housing, land etc.), to sexual double standards, the lack of respect for the human rights and citizenship of Blacks and to what one might call population warfare (or as expressed by Hamilton-Ritchie, "demographic aggression"). They continued throughout the debate of 1966 to claim that the motion was 'political' and 'racial' and aimed at 'destocking' or 'exterminate' the African population of Rhodesia. Chigogo referred directly to the way in which the settlers forced Blacks to give up much of their cattle in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century: 'So the *irresponsible*<sup>14</sup> Africans have got to be destocked as their cattle were destocked' (vol. 63, 1503: 25-27, my emphasis).

The issue of de-stocking had been on the political agenda of Black politicians and public since the 1940s when the White regime introduced the Native Land Husbandry Act (NHLA). The NHLA aimed at changed agricultural methods and tenure and 'forced African farmers to reduce their holdings of cattle on the grounds that the Native Reserves were overpopulated and overgrazed' (Kaler 1998:

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<sup>14</sup> Chigogo had been interjected by Ryan who answered Chigogo's rhetorical question why Chinese and Indians had not been included in the motion, saying that 'they are responsible' (ibid:24-25).

241). The policy of de-stocking turned out to provide those opposing family planning with a valuable metaphor for the presumably concealed objective of the Rhodesian government during the 1960s and -70s, i.e. of African population reduction or extermination (West 1994 GEN-P-WES). Consequently, family planning educators in the 1970s 'recall that they were called "human de-stockers" and accused of being sent to finish the genocidal job that the government had begun by cutting down the numbers of cattle' (Kaler 1998: 242). The opposition to the de-stocking of cattle as well as the meddling with African agricultural methods and preferences was based on economic and political grounds (subsistence and land alienation), as well as on symbolic motivations. Cattle and children were central to the reproduction of society (Bourdillon 1991; Lan 1985; Beach 1990) and to a 'happy [...] and successful family life' (Kaler 1998: 242). One simple example of this is the *Mombe yeumai*—the cow (heifer) of motherhood<sup>15</sup> transferred to the mother of a young wife at her wedding.<sup>16</sup> Hence, childbearing is intimately coupled to the economic, symbolic and religious value of cattle, as this kind of cattle has a direct impact on the economic<sup>17</sup> and social status of the young mother's mother, and on the health of her children.

Mkudu (vol. 63, 1891: 31-36) accused the Whites of being guilty of the change to high fertility among the African population:

We must not be blamed that we had no family planning at all. We had a very effective family programme of our own, and it is not our fault that the increase has come about; it is you the Europeans, who have brought it to this country.

Some argue that the labour needs of the coloniser were a factor in changed reproductive behaviour among the colonised (Schmidt 1992; West 1994; Kaler 1998; Bandarage 1999). Mkudu, however, argues differently making changed reproductive behaviour an African tactic in a battle between the races: 'The African watched the Europeans take a child off the breast after nine months and proceed to feed it artificial feeds. The African saw that he was losing' and hence took after the European resulting in a faster growing population and a total outnumbering of the coloniser (ibid: 21-29).

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<sup>15</sup> Those who today do not own cattle but wish for a variety of reasons to uphold this tradition gives the mother a sum of money equivalent to the price of a heifer.

<sup>16</sup> The heifer should bear a calf before being slaughtered and eaten at a large feast for the mother's relatives celebrating the birth of her daughter's first child.

<sup>17</sup> The *Mombe yeumai* was the personal property of the aged woman, and as such one of women's very few personal possessions. Hence the *economic* value of it should not be neglected.

## Your women/our women

Black MPs referred to women only in terms of being 'our women', and they featured as such only in interjections when White MPs talked of the important role to be played by African women in population reduction. The subject in both the European and African discourses is the male while women are the objects of masculine interests, whether they are European or African. The concerns are with 'his' ancestors (as in the quote above), the wife of a 'proud' husband and 'our' pregnant women, it is 'his' family, children, wife—never 'hers'. 'She' figures as an agent only in terms of being the gate to White objectives of modernising the African community, as the wife of men and the mother of future generations. Men, however, are agents in the public and political life of the nation, 'he' moves motions in the Parliament, 'he' is the planner of both family and society, 'he' teaches others how to do/not do, 'he' is the one who has children, 'he' is the threatening/welcome European immigrant who will boost the economy with both know-how and family.

Hence, among the White MPs there seem to have been a fairly consistent opinion about the reasons for the high birth rates among the African population—the degraded position of the African woman. The White MPs argue, in a way similar to late 20<sup>th</sup> century feminism that what is needed for a change to be realised among the African population is the raising of Black women's status. However, the White MPs come to this conclusion from a very different angle, and from completely different discursive backgrounds than contemporary feminists, i.e. that of racialised sexuality and reproduction, in which women are the epicentre of family and community:

If the African family were limited to a reasonable size... [*interjection*]  
...the wife, instead of being a perpetual slave to continual pregnancies  
year after year... [*interjection*] ...would have the opportunity to  
improve herself, to acquire new and improved social ability. She  
would have the chance to improve the whole environmental  
background of the home on which the advancement of the African  
must depend. [*interjections*] She could be someone that the African  
husband could be proud of instead of being in her present state of  
almost chattel-like subservience. (Owen-Smith, vol. 63, 1471: 1-16).

In this quote Owen-Smith leans heavily on a colonial discourse which many western feminists have reproduced in their analyses of women in the South (see Mohanty 1991 for a thorough critique of this kind of feminism), which was created not only in colonial administration and colonial anthropology but importantly also in colonial missionary contexts. The domestication of African women through the Missions reshaped the initial perception of African women as even less



intelligent than African men—now *she* became the entry point of development, the one who listened to good advice from the knowledgeable.

I would submit that until the status of the African women in this country is raised there can never be any true or appreciable raising of standards or advancement of the African population as a whole (Owen-Smith, vol. 63, 1470: 52-56).

In the early years of family planning in Rhodesia, Black women had to accept, however, that family planning was reserved for the women of the White elite (Clarke 1969; Kaler 1998). It was seen as much too sensitive an issue to be spread among the Africans—it was, according to many contemporaries in fact too sensitive to be spread to any woman. The reason for this must be sought in the patriarchal discourse on womanhood as expressed in hybrid masculinity where girls become women through motherhood—i.e. through the regeneration of the community. She is thereby perceived of as the bearer of the future both physically and symbolically, whether this future is one marked either by a preference for large or small families. As the two population groups came to define African fertility in opposing terms, i.e. as threat and weapon respectively, European discourse on African women's sexual immorality was destabilised and re-configured. The discourse was re-formulated to focus on the good African woman, having received (missionary) education in hygiene, sewing and homemaking, and added to it the idea that responsible motherhood included family planning (Schmidt 1992; Burke 1996; McClintock 1995; Kaler 1998). The African discourse, however, came to focus on motherhood as one factor in winning the racialised battle of political power, in much the same way as it became politicised in the US civil rights movement.<sup>18</sup> Moghadam (1994:18) has described such processes as fetishism of motherhood, a fetishism which also marks out those who refuse to follow (through the use of contraceptives) the reproductive demands raised:

When group identity becomes intensified [e.g. in a liberation war], women are elevated to the status of the symbol of the community and are compelled to assume the burden of the reproduction of the group. Their roles as wives and as mothers are exalted, indeed fetishised. ... Women who resist this role are accused of disloyalty.

Hence, as racial tensions in Rhodesia grew, the discourse on woman/motherhood fixed *and* changed simultaneously depending on

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<sup>18</sup> Loretta Ross (1994) describes how the more 'radical' Black American civil rights leaders attacked population reduction programmes in the US as genocidal.

which discourse one chooses to focus on: either as reproductively controlled and responsible motherhood, or motherhood as resistance/struggle. Womanhood as separated from motherhood did not cross the minds of the all-male Parliament.

Irvine also argued that the oppression of African women was grounded in African under-development. Like feminists of the late 1990s and early 21<sup>st</sup> century (but yet again based in a very different discourse) he argues for the education and emancipation of African women, and similar with today's neo-Malthusianists his objective is lowered African fertility, *not* women's political economic emancipation and gender equality:

In sophisticated societies the participation of women in cultural and social activities as well as the tendency to later marriage has brought down the birth rate to a level where society is well able to feed, clothe and to educate their children. [*interjection*] I have no doubt that the spread of education and the gradual emancipation of African women will reduce the rate of population increase to a level where they will be able to make ends meet. (vol. 63, 1494: 13-24).

Alexander, drawing on the knowledge that many Black women actively sought and used modern family planning made predictions about changes in gender relations among Blacks:

In all that has been said, I do not think enough emphasis has been placed on the part that [African] women play in this matter. [*interjections*] I think the hon. members opposite here are in for a rude awakening in a very short period of time, because it is their women alone who are going to force them to do something about this. [*interjection*] There has been an enormous change in the last decade in this country as to the status of the African woman. I have seen it very clearly not only in the urban areas. The women are beginning to become realistic in this approach. (Alexander, vol. 63, 1499: 42-57)

Behane and Hlabangana interjected Alexander when he talked about the changes taking place among African women. Behane asked if Alexander was 'going to tell my wife what to do' (ibid) and whether he on a larger scale was going to 'tell our women what to do' (ibid: 1500: 4-5), while Hlabangana questioned how Alexander could 'know so much about our women' (ibid: 5-6).

The tactics of the mover was partly to compel (with economic means) the Black MPs and public to conform to family planning, and partly to appeal to male (patriarchal) sense and responsibility. He argued that the wonders of modern family planning meant that the status of the family as a whole, and of children and women especially, would increase:

If by planned parenthood, by planning his family, the African can bring the number of his children down to reasonable limits, he will then be able adequately to educate his children... [interjection] ...adequately clothe his children, he will produce a better level of health for his children... [laughter] ...he will be able to feed his children better, and most of all he will benefit his wife (Owen-Smith, vol. 63, 1470: 40-49).

This last claim afforded the question 'How?' from Chigogo, who by this question confronted Owen-Smith with the essence of a social system different from that of industrialised Europe, i.e. in which women—in theory—gain increased social, religious and implicit political influence through motherhood.<sup>19</sup> A woman without children is both linguistically and socially not a woman (*mukadzi* in Shona) but a girl (*musikana*) despite her age.<sup>20</sup> Essentially, however, a woman's successful childbearing gives her status because she reproduces her *husband's* family and lineage, securing their future survival and possible increased political weight (specifically through having many sons) locally and regionally (Beach 1990; Bourdillon 1991 and 1993; Schmidt 1987; Lan 1985).<sup>21</sup>

The use or abuse of African women as vessels of male interests in the debate on family planning, and in the liberation war was expressed in the media in terms of war as the following quotations show:

We have no guns, but at least we can make sure we have more babies.  
(An Black medical student quoted in *The Herald*, on May 25 1971  
(NAZ, S 3285/45/126)

We, the silent majority, are not happily silent. We are instead busily producing more and more babies. This is our only weapon. We hope to flood this country with the black population by a huge percentage during the next decade or two. Nature is on our side. While the Government is busy screaming for more and more immigrants, we are

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<sup>19</sup> Shona adulthood is marked when a person becomes a mother for the first time as she is re-named as *mai X*, i.e. X's mother. This also happens to male parents but is not at all used in daily speech as much as for female parents. Many female parents are, contrary to male parents, generally not known by their personal names but only by their "mother-name". This is especially the case in rural contexts. An African feminist political strategy to change this de-individualising mothering of women is to always inquire about and use women's given names.

<sup>20</sup> The same is true for a man. However, a man has today other possibilities of showing society his maturity, especially through paid work.

<sup>21</sup> This is a quite simplistic description and we still need much more research into how this particular perception, i.e. of motherhood as woman's main source of social status and elevation, has been in a process of change especially during colonialism with the consequent transformation of society.

busy sending our pregnant women to the nearest clinic to give birth to future voices. (Letter to The Herald on June 4 1971, quoted in Kaler 1998: 101)<sup>22</sup>

That The Herald printed such letters and published similar arguments raised by Blacks might be perceived not only as examples of general views among the African public, but may also be analysed as agenda-setting by the media. The Herald was (and is) the largest daily in Rhodesia (Zimbabwe) and was (is) widely spread and read. It was (is) also more or less loyal to the Government. Hence, publishing African anti-European sentiments might have been a very effective way of creating and shaping public (White) opinion in favour both of family planning and the war. The main problem of such a strategy, however, would have been that also Blacks were informed of the views of the “opposing” sides in the public debate. The importance of eventually gaining support of key White opponents (among civil servants and intellectuals particularly) to a government run population reduction programme among Blacks ought to have been overriding such worries.<sup>23</sup> Hence, it is possible to imagine that if the RF Government was successful in constructing the population problem as a major threat both to peace, stability and the survival of Rhodesia they would be able to get a forced population reduction programme going.

### **Sex(uality) and violence: The liberation war, population policy and racialised sexuality**

The importance of the debate in 1966 as a moment of clearing the air on the main standpoints of the opponents in the coming liberation war was expressed by Makaya (vol. 63, 1415: 55-57/1416: 1-3): ‘For the information of this House, this motion has given ammunition to people who have been against the Rhodesian Front Government, and they say they are trying to create a sort of human destocking. We cannot run away from those facts’.

The main controversy during this debate—the reduction of Africans and increase of Whites—was in the following years to become the way in which family planning was perceived in African communities. Or rather, the way in which certain groups of people perceived it. Women generally were positive towards family planning, and during the 1960s and 70s the number of “barefoot”-family-planners grew (Kaler 1998). Men, however, were much less

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<sup>22</sup> Loretta Ross (1994: 153) cites a quote in much the same vein by Marvin Davies of the Florida NAACP: “Our women need to produce more babies, not less...and until we comprise 30 to 35 per cent of the population, we won’t really be able to affect the power structure in this country” (quoted in Littlewood 1977: 75).

<sup>23</sup> As ‘the fear of an uncontrollable demographic threat paralleled the fear of an uncontrollable political threat’ (Kaler 1998: 95).

positive towards family planning, and using “the pill” was and still is risky business to many Black women.<sup>24</sup> Those who delivered the pill, i.e. the “barefooters”, however, risked their lives as the liberation war intensified as evidenced by the annual reports from the Ministry of Health:

When pill distributors were first employed at Gutu, three were unable to keep an appointment because of intimidation. When the first male educator went to Shumba Tribal Trust Land an ambush was laid for him, fortunately he was warned by one of our Health Nurses who learned of the plan to beat him. (Ministry of Health 1972: 45)

Family Planning Agents... have not escaped the attention of the terrorists [liberation army] but have managed to continue their activities, albeit in a less open fashion. The fact that they have managed to increase their figures slightly is, in the circumstances, highly commendable. (Ministry of Health 1978: 37)

Family Planning Pill Agents... worked a total of 518 Pill Agent months. Some resigned because of intimidation [the number of agents fell from 53 to 38 during the year], one was abducted but fortunately escaped, and some were discharged because they were unable to move round the district. (Ministry of Health 1979: 37)

Godwin (1996: 92f) tells the story of another, less fortunate of these “barefooters” and the politicisation of their work:

Mercy [active in the eastern parts of Rhodesia bordering to Mozambique from where the ZANLA operated] was killed in the war. She had chosen to ignore warnings from the guerrillas to stop her family planning services. Contraception the guerrillas said, was a white man’s conspiracy to reduce the black population. By carrying it out, Mercy was the white man’s stooge. The guerrillas pointed out that at the same time as the government was encouraging black people to have fewer children, they were also trying to encourage more white people to immigrate to Rhodesia. [...] In reply the guerrillas launched their own ‘have a baby for Zimbabwe’ campaign, and told Africans that the more children they had the sooner the country would be theirs. Mercy, by then a grandmother, scoffed at the politicization of family planning and not long after her Land Rover detonated a land mine. [...] When the Africans did finally inherit [sic.] the country in

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<sup>24</sup> Both in terms of experienced medical side-effects, and in terms of risking being battered, killed and/or divorced if the pill is taken without the husband’s consent. This particular risk in women’s lives has been debated both in Zimbabwean newspapers and in women’s organisations’ newsletters and magazines (such as *Speak Out* and *Woman Plus*) over the years.

1980, one of the first acts of the new government was to ban the Family Planning Association, as a racist organisation. The ban lasted less than a year. It was overturned after a mutinous horde of African women threatened to march on parliament and roast the politicians – most of them men – alive.

Having been on the Nationalist agenda since 1957, family planning became an issue of the Nationalist liberation war during the 1970s and one of the first issues to be dealt with by the first republican Zimbabwean government in 1980. During the war foremost male politicians hit each other with arguments of the needs and interests of “African women”. The “women”, however, were “disappeared” by those who talked for them. Kaler (1998: 245) claims that ‘the voices of African women were conspicuously silent’ as nationalist politicians talked loudly of the Rhodesian interests in African population control. The nationalists had been opposed to family planning as early as the 1950s and had been firmly mooted at least once before the UDI by a woman within the movement who claimed that the opposition to family planning was based in male interests only (Kaler 1998: 246):<sup>25</sup>

...Mr. Mawema... only your wife and other women know what it means to have unplanned families...or are you reasoning like a typical native husband that the wife is only there to suffer and produce children? Preach to your fellow men about the sorry condition of the African women and then cry for freedom in general as you have wonderfully been doing. Stop punishing the women to a string of unplanned piccanins.

The fear of the possible European aim of exterminating the African population was voiced and widely circulated among the African public, who of course was also the audience of local Black politicians (Kaler 1998). Makaya’s (vol. 63, 1496: 39-42) point was precisely this as he said that, ‘I am living with Africans and I am trying to tell you what Africans are thinking. They say the Europeans are trying to get rid of the African population’. Chipunza (vol. 63, 1890: 34-57) was very clear in his description of the immediate objective of the motion put forward by Owen-Smith and Hamilton-Ritchie:

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<sup>25</sup> Again Loretta Ross (1994: 154) brings us a similar reaction from the other side of the Atlantic Ocean as she quotes Littlewood (1977: 72): ‘most of the commotion about the [family planning] clinics...seemed to be coming from men – men who do not have to bear children’. A contrast to the US, however was that African-American women ‘exerted a dynamic and aggressive influence on the family planning movement’ constituting ‘the largest single block of support for family planning and were so visible that politicians ...began to see them as a potential political force’ (ibid).

The mover, if I understood him correctly, was trying to make this House realize the necessity of family control on the part of the Africans. On the other hand he was trying to encourage immigration—that is on one side we must have the Africans decrease and on the other we must have Europeans coming in. [*interjection*]<sup>26</sup> [...] Mr. Speaker, how illogical can a person be? We are discouraging the Africans not to increase the population because the country is getting smaller. The Africans are said to be multiplying more than the country can hold. If that was in the mind of the mover then how can he, on the other hand, advocate the increase of the European population if the country cannot hold what it has now?

During the years to come after the motion had been withdrawn in April 1966 the RF continued and intensified its work in the field of population control despite the warnings put forward by the Black MPs.

### **A not so hidden agenda: RF interests in African population reduction**

In a 1963 confidential letter to the Prime Minister's personal secretary, Mr. Edmondson, Chief Information Officer Leaver (NAZ, IS/336/Conf.) explained the background and work done by Mrs. Spilhaus (chairman of the FPAR). He tells about her tour in Europe, during which she was successful in obtaining 'certain concessions from manufacturers of contraceptives, which are now available from their [the FPAR] clinics to Africans at absolutely sub-economic prices'. He continued

In the past, we have had to be extremely careful in associating ourselves too closely with the activities of this Association. Some years ago, the Nationalists launched an attack on the idea of family planning, indicating "it was a wicked Government plot to de-stock the people [Africans], in much the same way as cattle were de-stocked." It is, however, quite obvious that more and more sympathy for the ideals of family planning is coming from the African public, particularly from the womenfolk... We are still of the opinion that, for the time being, the whole subject can be better handled by an independent

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<sup>26</sup> At this point the mover, Owen-Smith, interjected him, and said: 'Read your *Hansard*, you are very ignorant of what I said.' Having read my *Hansard* (the printed transcripts of parliamentary debates in the British parliamentary system) I must say that Mkudu was right, but that he was wrong in one respect. Owen-Smith's point was that the Europeans already in Rhodesia should be encouraged both to stay and to have more children. He did not talk very much of the need for importing Europeans, but others, among them African MPs, did.

organisation, but the time might well be approaching when we could give some more practical assistance to them.

The suspicion towards the whole issue of family planning as a plot of the European minority was carried over into the new constitutional setting of the UDI and the subsequent RF governments. However, African family planning had not been of any great interest in the Federation (West 1994). According to West 'it was only with the advent of Ian Smith's Rhodesian Front regime, and more particularly after the declaration of UDI in 1965, that the broad outline of such a policy actually became evident' (ibid: 456).

The suspicion about possible genocidal prerogatives on the part of the RF government was brought up in the 1966 debate and resurfaced in the FPAR's fieldwork, as this quote from a 1968 report on the activities of the association's field-workers shows (NAZ, S 3285/45/126):<sup>27</sup> 'In a considerable number of cases the [field] workers had to convince people interviewed that they were not Government employees before the information asked for was forthcoming'.

In a news article in *The Herald* on June 4 1971 (NAZ, S 3285/45/126) Dr. Stamps (i.e. Timothy Stamps, then Salisbury's Medical Officer of Health, and Zimbabwe's Minister of Health during the 1990s) said that 'the right to procreate is the only human right which is not legislated against or licensed in any way. If we continue to abuse this right then we seal our own destiny'. The pressures on the RF Government to get the upper hand with the population problem, as perceived by the European public and loud-speaking White politicians and journalists mounted in the late 1960s and the early 1970s. It is not clear whether or not the various Ministers in the Government agreed with the Minister of Health who was most definitely pro-family planning, and possibly also positive to African fertility control.<sup>28</sup> One might suspect that Ian Smith, the Prime Minister would have been rather cold headed as he believed so strongly in the principle of separate development. However, Rhodesia was at war with a large proportion of its own population at this time and he might well have decided that there was possibly a bit of sense in what the Minister of Health was saying. Most certainly something was going on in Rhodesia in 1973-74, which might indicate that the

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<sup>27</sup> The report was marked 'Seen by P.M.'.

<sup>28</sup> At the end of the 1966 debate he held one of the most fired speeches of all the contributors, calling into question the religious knowledge/convictions of the African MPs, and playing on the obvious contrasts in the African caucus regarding African family planning traditions. He referred to the African opposition as illogical, violent, emotional and to the 'sick nature' (vol. 63, 1966: 47) of the critique raised against Owen-Smith as a medical doctor. I believe there can be no doubt about his political position; he belonged to the group of extremely worried and aggressive proponents of African family planning and European immigration.



Government launched, or seriously prepared to launch an African population control programme. According to West (West 1994: 456) such a programme did exist and he also claims that

The Smith programme...was unique [in relation to earlier governments] in two important respects: namely, in its avowed, vigorous and open African anti-natalism and in the direct way in which it linked population growth rates, both black and white, to the political survival of its ultra-repressive and brutal form of white supremacy.

There are several indications to this effect. In 1973/74 the Government almost doubled its economic support to the FPAR—and continued to increase its funding tremendously year by year until the end of the war (Kaler 1998: 327, table 3).<sup>29</sup> The RF Government's interest in family planning did not come out of the blue in the 1970s. The FPAR had received quite little attention as they were dealing with tabooed issues, i.e. women's sexuality, and their work was therefore by many Whites perceived as immoral (Kaler 1998).<sup>30</sup> Accordingly, 'the FPA[R]'s work remained quite low-key until Ian Smith's Rhodesian Front regime declared its independence from Britain in [November] 1965' (ibid: 114f). Kaler (ibid) also suggests that

...freed from the constraints of British liberalism, the Rhodesian Front could move more aggressively to contain and manage the African population, expressing in concrete form...racial anxieties... The FPAR, throughout the 1960s and 1970s, became drawn into this strategy behind the face presented (rather unconvincingly) to the African population of concern for national development and the welfare of African families. [...] The [RF] was explicitly concerned with family planning as a means towards the end of reducing a politically volatile and environmentally destructive [sic.] "surplus" of African population.

Supporting this, West claims that 'it was only with the unilateral declaration of independence in 1965 by the Rhodesian settlers under Ian Smith that the state began assuming a major role in family planning' (West 1994:448). One of the first signs of a changed attitude

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<sup>29</sup> Despite the Ministry's growing problems of generating funds for regular medical and health activities according to the annual reports from the Ministry of Health from the mid-1960s to the late 1970s. In 1972 for example, the introductory remark was as follows: 'the writer [Secretary of Health] has often found himself in the same position as the legendary Irishman whose blanket was too short, so that, when he pulled it up to cover his chest, he uncovered his feet and vice-versa' (Ministry of Health 1973: 1)

<sup>30</sup> Many African MPs (and, notably, none of the European MPs) referred not only to the racialised political aspects of family planning but also to the immorality in discussing such an issue at all, with all its connotations to unsanctioned sexuality (Parliamentary Debates, vol. 63).

is the parliamentary debate of March and April 1966 (three months after the UDI). Owen-Smith (the mover) put forward, at the end of his speech, the policies he wanted the government to act upon, concerning both Black and White families:

I would suggest that this House might consider economic pressures to reduce the size of families [*interjection*] by increasing fees for education and health [*interjection*] [...] I would ask the Minister of Local Government to consider whether something could be done to discourage large families by making certain provisions and conditions for the occupation of houses, for Africans. [...] There should, I feel, be a tax inducement to this end [of making rich white couples have more children]; for instance, rebates for children I would suggest should be granted as a proportion of taxable income, and not as a flat-rate fixed figure. (vol. 63, 1480: 11-23 and 1481: 30-34)

Another sign of change in the mid-1960s was that the FPA was re-organised in 1965 to become a 'national [hence the addition of the R for Rhodesia in the organisations name] welfare organisation and received its first government subvention' (Kaler 1998: 116). In 1966 the government doubled the (small) amount granted in 1965, and promised to continue and to increase their financial support in the years to come. In the report on the work of the Ministry of Health in 1966 (NAZ 624.12s.13-1966: 3), M. H. Webster, the Secretary of Health wrote that

The ministry itself, although happy to leave the role of education and propaganda in the hands of the voluntary organisations, and giving support and encouragement to this end, has become, during the year, more and more actively involved in the provision of family planning services. Steps have been taken and efforts are being extended to train profession staff at all levels of the Ministry... so that advice and help can be given to all who seek it, even down to the level of the rural hospital.

This is quite a remarkable change in just one year. It was not only the Government, however, which 'provid[ed] facilities through its own units' but also the FPAR had been 'very much to the fore during the year and [had] expanded very considerably... The association has...established... a number of clinics where family planning advice and facilities are provided' (ibid: 49). The following year the Minister of Health, Labour and Social Welfare was able to increase the Government's efforts, as he had the backing of the 'whole cabinet' (Kaler 1998: 117, quoting *The Herald*)—and the Ministry's 'liaison with the [FPAR] was close throughout the year' (NAZ 624.12s.13-1967: 42). Only two years later the Ministry of Health wrote in the annual

report that 'the Ministry intends in the near future to employ considerable numbers of workers on a part-time basis who will act as distributors of oral contraceptives' (NAZ 624.12s.13-1969: 29). The government decided to give family planning on their own a try, and started to train more of their health personnel as well as recruiting "barefooters" in the principles and methods of family planning (ibid). Clarke (1969: 18) wrote in 1969 of the Rhodesian government that

The complacency of Government is brought out by the fact that some 88 per cent of its total donations [to FPAR] of £39 123 over the period [from 1957-1969] have been in the two last years. The only redeeming feature of the public sector record is in fact that this is now a permanent commitment, and fortunately Government's own efforts are being extended, in the medical fields at least.

According to the FPAR Director from the late 1950s to the early 1970s, Dr. Spilhaus the government also 'instructed their doctors [at state run hospitals and clinics] to help where possible' which they apparently did (Clarke 1969; Kaler 1998). Of the medical family planning activities in 1969, 40% was carried out by the Government as compared with FPAR, which was responsible for only 25% (Clarke 1969: 18).<sup>31</sup> Hence, in the following years there are references in the annual reports to the successes of and problems faced by provincial Medical Officers of Health and local "pill distributors" and later "Pill Agents" employed by the Ministry. During this period the Ministry of Health, through the Minister himself and his Secretary went public on a broader scale:

The minister of Health appeared on Rhodesian television [in the late 1960s] in a series of public-service messages to launch an appeal for funds to build a family planning clinic at Harari Hospital. The Secretary for Health, Dr. Mark Webster, told the Rhodesia International Medical Congress that "the limitation of the natural growth of the population was the "first objective" of his ministry. (Kaler 1998: 120)

According to Kaler (1998: 121) the establishment of "well-baby" clinics in 1967 was a 'first direct governmental foray into organised [yet not officially formulated] family planning programs', where post-natal care and monitoring was provided as well as family planning (see also

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<sup>31</sup> According to data cited by Clarke (1969: 18) FPAR provided 95% of the education on family planning, while the Government only provided 5%. Interestingly, the remaining 35% of medical family planning activities were divided between missions (25%) and local (state) authorities (10%). Hence, the Rhodesian State in 1969 provided 50% of all family planning in Rhodesia.

West 1994). Kaler claims that the “well-baby” clinics was a ‘cover for the distribution of contraceptives’ to Africans (ibid), and

...the FPAR and the Rhodesian Ministry of Health continued to expand their work throughout the early and mid-1970s, and melded their efforts more and more closely, while retaining the crucial distinction of the FPAR’s nominally non-governmental status.

In September 1973 ‘rumours circulated that a “comprehensive plan to combat the population explosion” had been agreed by cabinet ministers in a confidential session at a Rhodesian Front congress’ (Kaler 1998: 125). It is possible that the rumours had a grain of truth to them as the Prime Minister in 1973 actually did order a confidential report looking into the possibilities of creating an African population control programme. One might speculate<sup>32</sup> in the possibility that this report did suggest the establishment of such a programme but also that it should not reach the knowledge of the public. However, the intra-governmental discussions on an African population control programme did produce a couple of confidential reports. Hence, the rumours might have been based on the fact that in 1970 Mr. Hamilton-Ritche, Chairman of the Health Committee,<sup>33</sup> wrote a confidential letter to the Chief Government Whip, stating that ‘the importance of population control cannot be over-emphasised and it was the opinion of the Health sub-Committee that a Junior Ministerial post should be created according to the schema outlined’ (NAZ/HA17/14/9). Two documents were attached to his letter, both confidential. The one was titled ‘Population Control in Rhodesia: A Matter of Urgency’ in which the population problem is explained in both (Malthusian) theory and “fact” (economic, political, religious, relation to industrial and developing world etc.). Under the heading ‘The implementation of a Programme of Population Control aimed at halving the growth rate of the African community on a basis of Voluntary Effort’, it is suggested that government 1) creates a National Day dedicated to family planning, 2) registers all adult (Blacks) at family planning clinics around the country, so as to force men and women to come in direct contact with family planning, 3) that all ministries are made aware of the effects of over-population and hence synchronise their efforts in this area (ibid: 7).

The other document is titled ‘The Need for a Family Planning Campaign’. In this report a more detailed plan of action is suggested starting with the ‘political decision on a Family Planning programme’ (NAZ/HA17/14/9, p. 2). The programme should take advantage of

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<sup>32</sup> The confidential request for the report is filed but not the actual report and the probable inter-ministerial communication concerning it (NAZ/S3285/45/126).

<sup>33</sup> And the seconder of Owen-Smith’s motion on Family Planning in 1966.

the health facilities already 'established throughout the country' to 'integrate the Service and Educational Elements of the programme into the Health Service structure, especially making use of Maternal and Child Health Staff' (ibid: 3). It is furthermore stated that the 'mobility of Supervising Staff, of Service Personnel and of supplies is essential if the programme is to succeed' (ibid: 4, emphasis in original). There is further a listing of what the Minister of Health had already promised to do and had previously stated:

[To] cover expenses of Staff for Family Planning ... that African nurses would be trained to give advice and treatment ... to consider the possibility of a conference of *all* ministries concerned ... [and that the minister of Health] understood that Health Assistants, Agricultural Assistants, Teachers [and] Community Advisers and Secretaries attending Domboshawa training school would be given instruction in Family Planning. (ibid, emphasis in original)

Suggestions posed by Owen-Smith and other White MPs in 1966 concerning raising the costs of living for large Black families, the land issue, increasing European immigration<sup>34</sup> and taxation of Whites is brought up in the report.

Suggests that policy should aim at: 1) Maximum utilisation of land (general land reform); 2) *Clear* understanding that Tribal Trust Lands will not be extended to accommodate African overpopulation<sup>35</sup>; 3) Education, social and health services must be charged and paid for on a more realistic basis; 4) Home ownership encouraged. (ibid, emphasis in original)

The report claims that the taxation of Whites is hampering the growth of the European population, partly because it 'discourages immigration of skilled manpower [as] whites in Rhodesia can never

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<sup>34</sup> The European MPs claimed that there was a need for European immigration so as to stimulate increased economic growth. This argument is rejected by D. Clarke, an economist at the University of Rhodesia who stated that the economic development of Rhodesia would rather be 'dependent upon the existence and distribution of factors such as education, public health, nutritional intake, housing and social welfare. On this basis Rhodesia must be regarded as being adequately endowed, in both stock and flow relationships, with the quantitative elements of human resources required for economic growth' (Clarke 1969:12). However, economic growth is dependent on changes in African agriculture and employment, i.e. on increased income among Africans. The immediate problems in such a development policy seems to be too great to overcome (politically) and hence Clarke suggest that the future hold problems unless population increase among Africans is not lowered and suggests the adoption of 'a population policy aimed at a reduction in the rate of natural increase' (ibid: 17) as this 'provides the basis upon which economic development in Rhodesia must rest' (ibid: 18).

<sup>35</sup> I believe that you would have to be a Rhodesian of the time to understand the relation between points 1) and 2) as it to me is contradictory.

progress whilst carrying the burden of non-whites', and because 'present taxation forces married [White] women to work [resulting in] falling European Birth rate' (ibid). In the late 1960s the Prime Minister himself had officially spoken on the problem of a decreasing number of Whites in Rhodesia in a speech held in Bulawayo where 'he referred to immigration via the cradle, and endourag[ed] the crowded people overseas to come and fill the empty spaces of Rhodesia' (cited in Clarke 1969: 18).<sup>36</sup>

Under any circumstances the government seems to have followed the suggestions formulated both during the 1966 debate and in this second report. The increasing co-operation between the RF Government and the FPAR, the use of their own "barefoot" family planners, increased focus on clinics and hospitals role in spreading family planning, the (failed) demand by the Minister of Health to have a seat reserved for the Ministry at FPAR's board, the "Settler '74"<sup>37</sup> campaign and the continued governmental efforts in spreading family planning as both principle and practice indicate that this might very well have been the case. The co-operation between the government and the FPAR had also intensified with the change of FPAR Director in the early 1970s,<sup>38</sup> which was visible in the so-called Protected Villages (forced movement of the African rural population into camps) created around the country in the mid- to late 1970s (Kaler 1998).

In the proposed *Five Year Programme of Development* for Rhodesia Zimbabwe<sup>39</sup> of 1979 (NAZ 624.14s.55-1979(2)) family planning is a budgetary post on its own with a budget of \$ 5.000.000 and clearly stated objectives as an incorporated part of Government activities. It was stated in the programme that 'most [of the family planning outlets in the country] belong to the Ministry of Health' while only '5.6 per cent. belong to the Family Planning Association' (ibid: 42) – in other words the RF Government had worked target-oriented on family planning since 1970. Further more the 'contraceptive usage has been raised by 214 per cent. over the past five years [i.e. since 1974] and male contraceptive usage by 800 per cent' (ibid). 1979 is also the first year in which the provincial Medical Officers of Health used the

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<sup>36</sup> This 'seemed to have an adverse effect on education of Family Planning among the educated—one school teacher cancelled my appointment with the Remove Class because, as the Headmaster put it 'There are many empty spaces in Rhodesia as we have been told'...' (report from FP field-worker, cited in Clarke 1969: 18).

<sup>37</sup> A campaign to attract '1 million white immigrants' to settle in Rhodesia (Kaler 1998: 247). The campaign failed, which is understandable as the country was at war.

<sup>38</sup> With the change of Director there was also a shift in policy from a focus on *family planning education* to *contraceptive provision* (Kaler 1998).

<sup>39</sup> Facing the realities of losing the war, and of international isolation and sanctions Ian Smith and the RF finally gave up in 1978, and opened up to talks with leading African politicians whom they had not defined as 'terrorists' (Smith 1997). This resulted in a new government and the renaming of Rhodesia to Rhodesia Zimbabwe.

term Family Planning Agent *Programme*. The terms Family Planning or “Pill” Agent had been used since 1977—i.e. during two intensively violent years of war before the Lancaster House Agreement.

### **Coming to terms with family planning**

When the Nationalists came to power in 1980 after the elections stipulated in the Lancaster House Agreement they brought with them the antagonism towards family planning, however in a lower key after independence than before (West 1994). The first clash with the Rhodesian family planning establishment was the banning of Depo-Provera in 1980, a ban, which was founded both on medical and political grounds. Depo-Provera had become a favourite contraceptive both with the previous government (because of its economic, administrative and contraceptive effectiveness) and with Black women (because of its invisibility). At an international symposium on primary health in Harare (then still called Salisbury) in mid-December 1980 the reasons for banning the drug were described by the Minister of Economic Planning and development (ZG-P/HEA/0/86927/339LI):

...you find here in Zimbabwe that the Depo-Provera which is not used in America or Britain is being administered to women and it has very dangerous side effects—for instance, very heavy bleeding or infertility after a period of using the drug. Therefore it is very important for us for scientific reasons to explain to the women exactly the side effects of contraceptives—either pills or injections—and I think the injection [Depo-Provera] should not be administered to women because it is detrimental to their health. (ibid: 31, Ms. Makamba)

Also a medical doctor, participating in the symposium, opposed the use of Depo-Provera but did so because of the manner in which it had been introduced by the RF regime, thereby continuing the Nationalist critique against it:

[One aspect of Depo-Provera is that] the Western world did not accept it... And then the other aspect is the way in which Depo-Provera was introduced in this country. At the beginning it was used on a wholesale basis, so that women, after delivering, were given an injection without telling them what the drug would do. (ibid: 33, Dr. Chindwera)

The discussion regarding Depo-Provera during the symposium was however quickly rounded up by the Minister of Health, Herbert Ushewukunze, a trained medical doctor in the liberation army, who

rejected Depo-Provera mainly on political grounds and explicitly in terms of the racialised political economy of the former RF regime:

I think we came up against problems when people who worked in the health services of the former regime pretended that they knew what Africans wanted and they never wanted to explain to him or her what exactly the side effects of a given drug were. The problem here was accentuated by the fact that when one defined the target population to which Depo-Provera was exposed it was one hundred per cent black [...] so much of a problem we have had with Depo-Provera lies in the mentality of those who were issuing it to the patient. If only they had explained. You link this to the political connotations that family planning had in the days gone by when it was actually construed as a form of family limitation rather than child spacing. If you preach child spacing to the African he will be with you. If you preach family limitation in the context of our political set up, that is a non-starter. Thank you! (Dr. Ushewukunze, *ibid*:34)

However, the ban on Depo-Provera<sup>40</sup> was also the only really rigid clash with the family planning lobby, and as the new Government was faced with an independence baby-boom,<sup>41</sup> they also had to realise that something needed to be done, as it was formulated by the Minister of Natural Resources and Tourism, Victoria Chitepo who in 1982 'warned in Malthusian-like terms about the increasing disparity between population growth and finite resources' (GEN-P-WES, p. 466). Maybe Ushewukunze's carefulness of not attacking the medical side of Depo-Provera in 1980 was strategically wise; he focused his rejection on the political aspects, and might therefore be able, in the future, to argue that the political parameters had changed and hence that Depo-Provera was again acceptable. This was in fact what happened in 1984 when the Zimbabwean Government presented the National Family Planning Council Bill to the parliament. During the debate on the ZNFPC Bill the new Minister (Dr. Pswarayi) was 'happy to tell hon. members' of Parliament that the government 'will reintroduce it as soon as we are satisfied that the necessary measures are there for its implementation' (ZGZ, Nov. 27, col. 971, Minister of Health).

The different discourses within the African parliamentary caucus in the 1966 debate on family planning illustrated the inconsistency of arguments against family planning during the liberation war, and

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<sup>40</sup> The ban was not total, as 'it had been restricted to four categories of women: those with mental and physical disabilities 'who might be abused', those over thirty-five, those who had five or more children, and as a treatment for those with cancer of the kidney or the uterus' (West 1994: 467).

<sup>41</sup> Around independence the birth rate was 3.3 (West 1994: 462) and in the 'years immediately following independence...around 3.8' (*ibid*: 469)



paved the way, as did the demands for family planning raised by women and women's organisations, for the changed attitude of the new Zimbabwean Government in the mid-1980s. Having been neglected since independence, the former FPAR became the parastatal ZNFPC in 1984, a change, which signalled changed attitudes within the Government regarding family planning. However, the change also meant that the role of the council, i.e. the former association, became much more focused on a holistic approach to family planning including gynaecological services, treatment and operations, as well as help to those who could not have children,<sup>42</sup> apart from providing contraceptives and information about them (ZGZ, Minister of Health, November 27 1984). The Government had turned its back on those the liberation movement had been allied with during the War of Liberation. An example is the manner in which the new Minister of Health, Dr. Pswarayi, rejected Bishop Dhube's (MP from Manicaland) worries. Dhube maintained that one should only give family planning advice and contraceptives to married couples. He is a rather mainstream representative of the general view among Black MPs during the 1966 debate, who accepted the principle of family planning but worried about the moral aspects of such knowledge being spread too widely (i.e. to women and youth mainly). Dr. Pswarayi, who was clearly unwilling to discuss the matter in such terms, told Dhube off quite briskly (ZGZ, November 27, col. 972), and thereby also set the agenda for future Governmental views on population:

...he [Dhube] feels that only married couples must use contraceptives. Well, that is really an individual issue. Yes, married people can run to these offices to control how their children come and the number of children in the family. But, I think we have a problem here whether youth should be told what they should do and not do. I think things are pretty difficult at the moment and I think it will interest the hon. member that we have included youth on our board [...] We think they should have a say in the issue. [...] We cannot dictate at this stage what the youth can do and cannot do, after all they are going to be the fathers and mothers of tomorrow. The earlier we get them involved in this [family planning] programme, the better for the future of this country.

As is obvious from this quote it is not only a matter of whether unmarried people (youth in Dhube's terminology) should be offered knowledge about family planning methods, and even have access to contraceptives, but also of the Government having turned completely

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<sup>42</sup> Infertility was, and is a great problem in Zimbabwe, not only medically but more importantly socio-politically in particular to barren women. However, it was typically not an issue of interest to the RF regime.

on the issue of family planning as such. The battle over women's bodies and reproductive capacities had become internal. It was no longer a question of demographic warfare between White and Black Zimbabweans, but a matter of creating a better future for the newly independent republic of Zimbabwe. A better future clearly involved changed attitudes towards fertility levels; the ideal was to become one of healthier and smaller families. In a sense the post-independence government had arrived at a similar conclusion as had the former RF regime regarding one specific principle, i.e. that the state had a right to interfere in the planning of families:

Population growth rightly belongs to the Government and the nation. Not only the Ministry of Health is concerned, I think it is a national problem. I think this is for the whole country, which is a matter of policy by the Government as a whole, about how the population should grow and how it should not grow. [...] how many children there is going to be in by the year 2000 is a matter for the Government to decide. (ZGZ, November 29, col. 1092-1093)

However, where the RF had focused on the interests of a racialised state in controlling the size of particular population groups, the post-independence Government focused on the involvement of all groups. Where the RF had limited their efforts to contraceptive delivery by doubtful means, the post-independence Government concentrated on a broad and holistic approach including a wide range of reproductive issues including treatment of infertility. Where the RF had focused on state control of fertility reduction, the post-independence Government emphasised control in terms of families, not the state, being able to 'control the number of children they want and at what rate they will come' (ibid, col. 1098, Minister of Health). The main opposition among White MPs towards the ZNFPC Bill was that they believed it should be privately run (to be more effective), that its board was too big (to be effective), and that the mandate was too broad (to be effective), and that the work of the Council would therefore be hampered. Otherwise this was obviously something they had been waiting for 'because this country is breeding itself into hunger and starvation' (ibid, col. 968, Mr. Butler).

### **Becoming an internationally reliable and 'progressive' partner**

Eleven years later Zimbabwe participated in the UN conference on Population and Development (ICPD) in Cairo, and the following year the country was described as one of the most progressive among the

participants at the 4<sup>th</sup> World Conference on Women.<sup>43</sup> Michael West (West 1994: 449) formulates the change very explicitly: 'So complete was the about-face, in fact, that by 1990 Zimbabwe had become an internationally recognized leader of family planning among developing countries'. Inspired by the debates during the ICPD, Baloyi, the MP reporting on the UN conference, urged the Parliament to set up a committee to keep an eye on the progress made on 'population policy in Zimbabwe; development issues affecting different groups; and empowerment of women' (ZGZ, February 25 1995, col. 4186). In his words the 'Conference adopted the programme of action emphasising reproductive rights, health needs, empowerment of women and sustainable development' (ibid, col. 4190). Only a few MPs rejected the results of the ICPD, some on the grounds that the ICPD Programme of Action (PA) was racialised and neo-colonial, and that Zimbabwe was not in need neither of population reduction, nor of any women's empowerment. The arguments against the ICPD PA in many ways resembled those raised against family planning in 1966. However, the Parliament was in 1995 peopled by politicians with other views and priorities than the Black MPs in 1966. The post-liberation Zimbabwean Parliament and Government needed to be in control of issues of priority in the donor community, among NGOs and in certain parts of the civil society—population, women's rights and sustainable development—issues, which are often understood as co-factors in under-development.

The similarity between the 1966 and 1995 debate on population lies in the opposition to the proposed population policy on racial grounds and in the objectification of women through mothering discourses. The similarity lies also in the manner in which the proposal is heralded by MPs of the same inclination as Baloyi and his Second, Chinamaza, as well as in the emotionally laden engagement in the issue by the Minister of Health, Dr. Timothy Stamps (ZGZ, February 14 1995, col. 4685) who claimed that:

Unless we act vigorously to empower women to make informed choices about pregnancy and fertility I fear much of the health gain we have achieved since 1980 can be swiftly lost by virtue of malnutrition, infant mortality, maternal deaths and sexually transmitted infections of which HIV/Aids is only the most obvious.

Women are still the targeted group, and in much the same way as in the 1966 debate the status of "African woman" is in focus. Whereas

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<sup>43</sup> During the 4<sup>th</sup> World Conference on Women in Beijing 1995, Dr. Gita Sen (feminist academic-activist, active in DAWN) described Zimbabwe as one of the most progressive countries during the negotiations, comparing Zimbabwean perspectives on women's sexual and reproductive health and rights with those of Denmark, Norway and Sweden.

she in 1966 was described as a slave in need to be freed for the best of her self, her children, her husband and the nation, her empowerment was called for in 1995—for the very same reasons. On both occasions, the cause for the call is not that she should be able to take a firm grip of her own life, on equal terms with men, but that she should be able to make informed decisions about her fertility, i.e. have fewer children.

The National Population Policy published in October 1998 is even clearer on the points sketched by Baloyi and Stamps in 1995: the empowerment of women means less children born, which again means less pressures both on the environment and the deteriorating economy.

One might argue that such a policy, so extremely in line with the Cairo PA would attract donors to Zimbabwe thereby enhancing the chances of turning the downward spiralling economy. One might suggest that through formulating a population policy in correspondence with the more radical views in the international donor society<sup>44</sup>—such as the Scandinavian countries, Holland, Canada—Zimbabwe prepared the ground for good harvests later on. The documents from the ICPD and the 4<sup>th</sup> World Conference on Women focus on women’s empowerment. This, one should remember is in sharp contrast to the situation at home, where women’s organisations and feminist activists defined Zimbabwean women’s struggles as the Third Chimurenga. Among many feminist activists the preparation for the 4<sup>th</sup> World Conference on Women, as well as the very conference including the NGO Forum were seen as two important battles (see for instance the book on women’s living conditions prepared by Citu Getecha and Jesimen Chipika for Zimbabwe Women’s Resource Centre and Network 1995, and Cawthorne 1999).

Regarding the officially stated goal of Zimbabwean gender equality referred to in the 1998 population policy, the Government is at odds both with large parts of its male population and with central parts of the judicial system. In 1999 IRIN (the UN news agency) reported that in March that year

Vennia Magaya lost her inheritance battle when [the Supreme Court] in a five to zero decision gave the estate of her deceased father to her half brother...in their ruling, the judges said women should not be considered adults, but given the status of “junior males”. Justice Simbarashe made specific reference to the 1982 [Majority Age Act on inheritance] and said it had been interpreted too broadly and given

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<sup>44</sup> Excluding abortion. Baloyi is very explicit regarding abortion, reading out the particular clause on it from the ICPD PA, probably to cool down fellow MPs who worried that the ICPD PA, and hence the adoption of it would allow abortion.

rights to women they never had under customary law. (IRIN, 15 April 1999)

Hence, while the Zimbabwean Government proclaims the need for women's empowerment, the Judges, standing firm against the government in the latest battle over land, stands firm also regarding the legal status of women: they are and should continue to be legal minors.

The road to an official population policy in Zimbabwe has been long and paved with violence both in private and official political relations. However, the lines of continuity are not as obvious as those of change. While the control of women by men and a patriarchally organised state and administration may be less visible than the change from anti- to pro-family planning among Black MPs, it has never-the-less always been at the centre of the debates on population issues in the Parliament, i.e. in 1966, 1984 and 1995.

# Chapter 4

## 'It's not just living together playing house-house':<sup>1</sup> Wo/men and the married family

Commuting between Gothenburg and Lund I tend to listen much to evening radio programmes. One such programme was dedicated to a one-hour discussion on "the family". It was arranged as a panel debate between authors and journalists of differing age among them also a feminist of the *Group 8*.<sup>2</sup> The discussion evolved around the various (married or unmarried) family constellations in contemporary Sweden,<sup>3</sup> i.e. the single-parent-family, the heterosexual and the queer nuclear family,<sup>4</sup> the collective family<sup>5</sup> and the composite family.<sup>6</sup> Despite the many varieties of what a family may look like and what kind of union it evolves around, it was obvious that the discussants never thought of a family as a small or large group of people *without* children. In other words a family without children was to them unthinkable. Yet, the childless family is in practice already here, maybe not conceptually but as a target group on the market, as is the parentless family, which is growing in societies hit by the Aids

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<sup>1</sup> Quote from III03.

<sup>2</sup> The Group 8 was formed in the early 1970s by Stockholm based feminists. Many of the members of this group have since become prominent feminist debaters as well as professionals in their own areas (research, journalism, writing, activism etc.).

<sup>3</sup> One kind of family, which they did not discuss, was the extended family, which is generally the family form we are used to think of when we consider the "African" family. That the extended family should be particularly "African" seems a bit strange, as we know that it still exists in rural European communities as well as in other parts of the world. The Danish concept and practice of *aftægt* bears witness to this. *Aftægt* means that the new owner of landed property – in particular when a son inherits the land – provides accommodation and support to the former owner/parent.

<sup>4</sup> The traditional heterosexual family I define as mother, father and children, while the queer nuclear family is a homosexual couple and their children.

<sup>5</sup> Several people including children sharing residence and every day life. In such families parenthood might or might not be of significance to those living together.

<sup>6</sup> Typically the composite family consists of a couple, their children from other previous relationships and in some cases also children born in this new relationship. Such families are often "bigger" than the single-parent or nuclear family, i.e. includes more children than the Swedish family in general.

pandemic. The parentless family however, is not interesting to the market, but rather regarded as an epidemic in itself.

In contemporary Zimbabwe the acceptance of various forms of family, and the marriage or marriage-like unions they are mostly based upon, *may* not be as great as in Sweden, but there are nevertheless a wide variety of family constellations and many ways of conceptualising “the family”. This chapter is concerned with describing, or picturing Zimbabwean family constellations and conceptualisations of today, as a historical product of particular masculinities as they are expressed in partilineal and patriarchal discourse and practice, and as an important part of Zimbabweans’ lived reality. In Zimbabwe as well as in all societies we know of the family evolves around some sort of organisation of those with reproductive and parental responsibilities. Therefore this chapter will naturally also deal with marriage as a self-evident part of making family – not because I personally think this is essential but because that is how the interviewees perceived of it whether Black or White.

### **Making family in Zimbabwe**

It is difficult to determine what family is. Of course one might argue that the definition of family should be based on an ideal, e.g. according to a dominant discourse such as the Victorian/Edwardian or Shona sketchily described below. Murdock<sup>7</sup> on whom Women and Law in Southern Africa (Ncube and Stewart 1997) base their definition of family works in large within the discursive framework of the traditionally<sup>8</sup> modernist perception of family, i.e. as consisting of the following three elements: marriage, parenthood and residence. Murdock’s understanding of family is based on the idea of a married couple having children of their own blood or adopted and defined as children of the couple – i.e. parenthood – with common residence. His was the heterosexual, patriarchal nuclear family.<sup>9</sup> Ncube and Stewart re-defined all these three elements quite heavily to be able to apply them to contemporary Zimbabwean realities. Even when applying them to contemporary European realities they need to be re-worked rather much. However, Ncube and Stewart (ibid: 107) are keenly aware of the ‘amorphous’ nature of *family* and also the power over our imagination of dominant discourses on *family*:

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<sup>7</sup> Their definition is based on the one suggested by George P. Murdock in his book *Social structure* (1949).

<sup>8</sup> I use the expression “traditional” here since it is necessary to pin point, I believe, that the dominant European discourses and organisation of the family is also traditional.

<sup>9</sup> Murdock (1949) based his study on 159 societies, in other words his point of departure was not the European family but the traits of the nuclear family per se.

The stories people tell each other about families in Africa and elsewhere have constructed a 'reality' about families which is inherently unreal and which bears little resemblance to the reality of family life. These stories have constructed two major family forms – the nuclear and the extended family forms. [...] Both these family forms are idealized constructs, which hardly exist in practice and yet they have imposed a powerful and pervasive influence on the sociology of the family providing an image against which familial relationships are judged.

I do not intend to present an exhausting list of various forms of family set-ups existing in contemporary Zimbabwe, as I cannot claim to know all of them. However, I have experienced, met and heard of a number of different constellations which will be presented below, and at the end of this section I will also make clear what I believe to be the major difference between European and African family set-ups, making one aspect clear at this point: the heterosexual<sup>10</sup> nuclear family is recognised in Shona (Bourdillon 1991), and central in European social organisation. Hence, the nuclear family is not a colonial invention, but the importance of it might have been strengthened through the changes brought by colonialism and post-independence development economics.

Among Black Zimbabweans the colonial politics of a dual economy changed and homogenised family organisation in a particular way, i.e. the split and inter dependence between the male focused wage economy and the female focused rural subsistence economy. Despite the increased female migration into towns and cities in the 1960s and 70s when colonial regulations softened (Barnes and Win 1992; Barnes 1999), and the changes that have taken place since independence, the expectations on urban women's part taking in the rural economy have not lessened to the same degree.<sup>11</sup> In many families young married women are not allowed to live with their husbands in town, because he or his parents does not want her to, also in cases when she might have grown up in town and have limited knowledge of rural life.

You can stay with her [in town] [...] but in most cases, the parents want the wife at home so that she does some work that is always there in the communal areas. [...] They want to establish the total well being

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<sup>10</sup> Bourdillon does not name the nuclear family heterosexual but as it according to him consists of mother, father and children, this is in fact what he means.

<sup>11</sup> In contrast to their husbands married African women living in towns and cities are expected to return, mainly to their husbands' rural home at peak seasons, i.e. planting and harvesting to help parents/-in-law with the heavy work of farming.



of the daughter-in-law before they are satisfied that she is the right one for their son. (28)

The major form of family organisation in Zimbabwe is hence a hybrid between the colonial and the pre-colonial, between the virilocal and community based marriage on the one hand and the dualism of rural and urban economies on the other. The European family was basically the imported heterosexual nuclear family of which Murdock's definition is in large correct, and one might add, which was geographically separated from close relatives and economically dependent on the political economy of African subservience. As in any society throughout history there are a number of other ways to organise a family, which do not correspond with dominant discourses but help mapping out possibilities for those who do not wish or for some reason cannot live according to "custom". In contemporary Zimbabwe almost<sup>12</sup> all the varieties of family organisation described above exist across the ethnic spectrum.

The major differences as I see it between White and Black Zimbabweans in terms of family is largely in whom is reckoned as belonging to the family, i.e. whom you have familial responsibilities towards; the issue of *roora*;<sup>13</sup> and the focus on high fertility among many, particularly older Black Zimbabweans. The European family is as mentioned above by and large defined as the heterosexual nuclear family, basically with common residence to which grandmothers and -fathers, aunts, uncles and cousins would be termed close "relatives" and those more remote would just be relatives towards whom responsibilities would be rather limited. There are of course many examples where this constellation does not hold for closer scrutiny, as is the case in one of the families included in this thesis, and as one of the families encountered during Women and Law in Southern Africa's (WLSA) research on family in Zimbabwe (Ncube and Stewart 1997).

The African family is often perceived of as larger, i.e. including more people—that is both "close" and more distant relatives in European terminology—than the European family as described by Bourdillon (1991). One might argue that the responsibility towards or dependency on family members is greater and more accepted or forced (depending on perspective) among Black Zimbabweans. This might generally be so, but it is somehow dangerous to take this

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<sup>12</sup> I have not heard of queer or collective family constellations in Zimbabwe, but I have no difficulties in imagining that such families exist.

<sup>13</sup> Or lobola, i.e. the transfer of resources from the family "receiving" a bride to the family that "gave" her. In more harsh terminology the price paid for a wife. It is important to observe that this qualitatively harsher definition of *roora* is not only a feminist re-definition of patriarchal ideas of exchange but also often defined as "payment", i.e. a form of sale, by African Zimbabwean women. See Bourdillon 1994 for a short but informative discussion of this issue.

argument too far, because it will eventually blur similar relations of dependency and responsibility among White Zimbabweans (e.g. Ncube and Stewart 1997).

*Rooru* is an issue, which has been up for discussion ever since (as far as we know) Zimbabwe was colonised. It was by the colonialists defined as the ultimate expression of African disregard for, and oppression of, women<sup>14</sup> because women were “bought” and because the individual woman was of no importance as she could be exchanged for other women within her lineage in case she did not produce children.

The logic of *roora* is in short that the material goods transferred from the groom’s family to the family of the bride will (ideally) be used for future transfer of goods when the bride’s brother marry – and *ideally* she should be treated as a real daughter of the family. The political importance of marriage in certain lineages also means that certain daughters are much more “expensive”<sup>15</sup> than others’ and some men “pay” more than others to get access to a family of importance. Weeks (1989) description of what I call the political economy of sexuality in Britain is in large parts similar to how Shona discourses on women, marriage, chastity and politics have been described by historians and social anthropologists (Beach 1990; Beach and Noronha 1980; Bourdillon 1991; Gelfand 1992a and 1992b; Schmidt 1997). Weeks (1989: 29f) writes that

As Dr Johnson noted, upon the chastity of women ‘all property in the world depends’. The middle-class capitalist required the legitimacy of all his children not only to protect his possessions from being enjoyed by the offspring of other men but to ensure the loyalty of his sons who might be business partners, and of his daughters who might be essential in marriage alliances.<sup>16</sup>

This summarises also the essence of *roora*, i.e. the control of persons who are of vital political and/or economic value. The positive aspect

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<sup>14</sup> Of course Europeans would not like to be told that European women’s economic dependency on men might be defined as similarly oppressive (see Carole Pateman 1988) for a sharply edged analysis of Western marriage as a socio-economic institution).

<sup>15</sup> The cost of bringing up the daughter, including expenses paid for her education is included in the calculation of *roora*. Hence, a woman with a university degree is impossible to marry for most Zimbabwean men. However, a young man playing his cards well might be able to marry such a woman anyway. This was the central theme of the movie “Jit” where a young trainee without any higher education paid *roora* to the father of his favoured woman (who was unreachable by normal standards and further more did not like the young man) in the form of a fridge filled with beer.

<sup>16</sup> Hence the chastity of daughters was as important as that of wives since a woman who had been “deflowered” before marriage was either too “easy” or “polluted” by another man and thereby lost her value on the marriage market (that is, if she was caught or believed to have done “it”).

of this is of course that daughters are valued as much as sons since sisters provide the means for their brothers' possibilities of creating families. *Rooru* is a complex issue and I do not intend to delve on it here (see Stewart and Armstrong 1990; Bourdillon 1991 and 1994; Schmidt 1992; Gelfand 1992a and 1992b; Aschwanden 1982; Weinrich 1982; Ncube and Stewart 1997; Stewart and Sithole 2000 for differently positioned discussions of this issue). However, it has created, and continues to create, tensions in many Zimbabwean families. In many cases the grooms' parents and patrilineal relatives are sidelined because young couples decide to marry without their consent and involvement, which they today can do without the "customary" transfer of goods, or if the groom can pay<sup>17</sup> *roora* from his own pocket (Adepoju 1997; Bourdillon 1994). The changing relations of power within families which this testifies to, is perceived as very disturbing by parents, who have no say in whom their son/daughter marries, and who might use this sidelining as an explanation for misfortunes that might happen to the family, and for demanding to be in control of their new daughter-in-law (Stewart and Sithole 2000). Some women are also starting to voice their disapproval of the custom as this young woman expressed: 'I am one of those people who don't see why *lobola* should be paid (laughing) but it's the custom to pay *lobola*' (19).<sup>18</sup> She believed it is a form of buying a woman,<sup>19</sup> and when the interviewer asked if she thought it should be abolished she agreed.

Many wives can tell stories of how they have been ill-treated by their in-laws who take out their irritations over the situation on their daughters-in-law. In some cases parents make life so difficult for the young couple that a divorce turns out to be the only solution. One of the interviewees phrased it as not feeling at home when living with parents-in-law and 'the fact that I do stay with people I did not grow up with' (11) frightens her. Her solution is placing responsibilities for future relations with her in-laws on herself as a young wife: 'The wife has to learn about the new family rules so that she can live harmoniously with them', i.e. she retreats into ideals of "custom" in which young brides are perceived of as minor daughters who must learn to live with the family. As it was expressed by her father-in-law:

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<sup>17</sup> In most cases *roora* is today paid in cash, i.e. it has been monetised, whereas it used to be a transfer of cattle, which was among the most valued assets to a family. The *mombe yeumai* (referred to in chapter 2) was perceived of as central to the future health of the new family created through marriage and continues to be of great importance at least to the parents of the couple.

<sup>18</sup> *Rooru* (or *rovora*) is the Shona term, while *lobola* is the term used in English.

<sup>19</sup> Not only women define *roora* as a regular payment for a woman, which puts her in a rather disadvantaged position in her husband's family. Ncube and Stewart (1997: 89) quote one of their key informants as saying that '...from the *roora* I charge, my wife will only get a small share while I take the bulk of it. Although my wife may not be happy with this arrangement the bottom line is that one is bought and the other buys.'

‘Once she has been brought into the family, what the parents can do is to guide her so that she is accepted by the family and then the community’ (21). Being brought in as a daughter-in-law is, however very different from being a born daughter in a family—she is expected to bear children, and therefore also to have a sexuality, which is embarrassing as sexuality as such is an area of taboo: ‘A woman feels shy in the morning when she gets to the family kitchen, because she thinks everybody there knows about the fact that she has had sex with her husband in their bedroom’ (11).

One might say that the difference between Black and White families when it comes to *roora* is mainly that the transfer of goods between “receiving” and “giving” families implies a transfer of rights and resources between *communities* not individuals—ideally speaking. In practice however, it is today regarded as a transfer of rights over sexuality to the husband, rights over children to him and his parents, and a transfer of economic assets to the bride’s father (Bourdillon 1994)—it is no longer even a transaction between families, but between particular individuals within families.

Considering the general attitude among Europeans and in many European legal systems towards rights over sexuality and offspring the difference to African Zimbabwean practice is no longer apparent. When marrying, women’s sexuality is often legally and discursively perceived of as belonging to her husband. This applies in many countries also to the right over the children born in marriage (Pateman 1988; United Nations 1987 and 1988).

In African Zimbabwean discourses on family the size of the family, i.e. the number of children born to it, is emphasised. The importance of having a large family is voiced by many of the Black interviewees, particularly the women because their status and marriage are dependent on their childbearing—a barren woman<sup>20</sup> is at great risk in a society where childbearing is by many considered to be economically, politically and religiously essential.

The larger the family and the larger the number of dependants, the wider the political influence and power of a particular patrilineage (this is reflected in the interviews and also described by Bourdillon 1991 and Beach 1990). This is also a matter of difference among Whites and Blacks, as Whites tend to build such networks beyond family.

It used to be, and often still is, the ambition of a man to gather around him a growing lineage of descendants and dependants, who would act

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<sup>20</sup> Men’s infertility is recognised and solutions often found to that problem, traditionally through a brother or other male relative of the husband (to keep it within the family so to speak). If those solutions are not helpful (or for some reason refused) the woman is considered to be at fault and her situation becomes problematic.

as a corporate body for economic purposes and also as a united body in times of crisis or tension in the community. (Bourdillon 1991: 26)

The growth of a family is of major importance to many and often the reason given for having many children reveals the intimate relation between the politics of family influence and the birth of male children: 'It's because my husband is the only male in his family. The rest are female children, so I kept on having children so that the family could have enough males' (11). This is echoed also by this man who said that having children and creating a family is important 'to perpetuate the human race. To carry on the family name' (26).

Family, as everything else, changes with the larger social and economic processes in a society. The *dominating* discourse on the family in contemporary Zimbabwe is rather homogenous and based on the masculine definition of family as patrilineal, patriarchal and embedded in the institution of marriage. It is challenged however, by new practices as families have to re-organise and re-conceptualise what they are and what they should be in a changing and increasingly globalised world, where influences from outside tend to open up to new ways of thinking, acting and negotiating family. One of the interviewees put it this way when I asked whether marriage and children go hand in hand:

Probably a year ago I would have said "oh, yes, absolutely!" But we have just spent [...] seven weeks in Australia and there I can see that that's not the way the system works. It doesn't work like that. People don't necessarily get married. In fact it doesn't pay you to get married. Now, that doesn't agree with my Christian principles, which are that God made you to get married but I can see that there's another system there that actually, it works—it works differently from my system and I can see I've got pluses in mine but I can also see the people that get ostracised in our system they fit nicely there and they are ostracising different people that would fit nicely in my system. (129)

Despite having seen that 'the system' works differently in different places she maintains that

I must say I still think that bringing up children, whether you are married or not married, by yourself it's hard work. It doesn't matter what anyone says. And so... I've had these discussions about why you should get married or why you shouldn't get married. I see marriages as a commitment as a promise from one person to another you can bring God into it if you want to or if you don't want to. But, I think for a woman, she needs that kind of commitment, especially to give, to create a safe warm environment for her to bring up her children [...] other women don't think like that, especially in other parts of the

world. [...] but I do think that if you're gonna bring up children you need two of you that are committed and its not a "oh, well I'll just be committed for this year" because a child lives...

For her, as for all the other interviewees regardless of their background as European or African, heterosexual marriage is perceived of as the precondition for establishing a proper family. Being unmarried means that you or your husband has no real 'commitment' (which the woman quoted above found necessary for women in particular) to the family you are creating. Marriage is in whatever form it might take, the legally binding force, which is perceived to be the pillar of family life. Through it you and your family become an institution, which might be regulated by society and community, and importantly, which you can refer to for help and support, or when claiming rights/obligations from others.

Practice is not always in line with discourse. This is also the case concerning family organisation in Zimbabwe. People try to live according to "custom" or what is deemed "proper", unless they make the choice not to or are forced for different reasons to find alternatives.

### **'The men are the greatest problem!'<sup>21</sup> The bio-logic of Zimbabwean masculinity**

My argument in this chapter is that the dominating discourses on family in contemporary Zimbabwe stem from masculinities, which are quite similar in their patriarchal expressions, i.e. that many of the features we are used to think of in racialised terms are in fact not determined by "racial" or "ethnic" differences between Blacks and Whites. Instead, I will argue, first that these differences represent the final "polish" added by racialising discourses requiring opposites to re/produce relations of power, and secondly that they are determined by a common masculine bio-logic (biologically based logic) with severe effects on social constructions of family and reproduction. I have already raised the issue in chapter 2, claiming (with Schmidt 1992) that during colonialism two patriarchal structures were intertwined creating new patterns and practices of gender oppression. Below I will demonstrate that the *logic* of patriarchy is similar/same, while the elaboration on that very logic may appear to differentiate African and European patriarchies.

The bio-logic of Zimbabwean masculinity is rooted in the idea that there is a determining biological difference between women and men. The gender discourse, which claims that women and men are incommensurable, is according to Laqueur (1997) an important part of modernity as created and sustained since the 17<sup>th</sup> century. The idea is

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<sup>21</sup> Quote from interview no. 126.

not only reflected in commonly held popular views but also in one direction of feminist theorisation on gender difference, i.e. the feminist essentialism. Butler who by some are criticised for having taken gender a bit too far into post-modernism, has had to deal with biology in her multifaceted move to rid gender of sex connotations, making it truly social (or “performative”). In her view biology is itself a social construction and hence cannot be used to determine gender, in other words in her view we can only really talk of gender, as gender is recognised as socially constructed while sex bear with it connotations of essential naturalness to it. However, biologically determined sexual difference as socially meaningful is generally held as being the true matter of things, in Zimbabwe as well as in Sweden.<sup>22</sup> Consequently, women and men will define their respective ‘shortcomings’ or problematic behaviours as based in biological sexual difference:

It's the fact that they [men] are a 100% right and they will not see that, a problem isn't the shortcoming, a problem is a problem because we're different, you know, between men and women. (126)

The behavioural difference between women and men are explained in terms related to disrespect as in the quote above, as well as to violence, sexuality, rationality and logic as expressed both indirectly and directly in the following quote:

I am reading this book at the moment, "Men are from mars", and I've read another one called "Why Men do not Listen and Women can't Read Maps" and it just highlights—and these are books written not here [Zimbabwe]—and they do highlight how different we are. So I would not say it's only here you know, women *do* communicate different from men, it seems like a different communication style. Men are different to us, they can go off there and sleep with that one and that one and [it] can mean absolutely nothing to them, whereas we don't work the same way, it means more than that to us. (129)

Masculinity as expressed in patriarchal logic is not unique to European society. Even if the form patriarchy takes in different places seems to differ there are two central features of this particular kind of social organisation, i.e. the control of vital powers of survival and hierarchy. As I have gone into some depth on this issue in the introduction I will not repeat myself here. Suffice it to say that I consider the vital powers of survival to be the ultimate power and control over economic and political resources, or more dramatically expressed: over life and death. Generally in Zimbabwe (historically

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<sup>22</sup> Among the more successful writers on the topic is a sociologist who writes for the general public is Francesco Alberoni (e.g. 1981 and 1986).

and contemporarily) this power has been in the hands of men, or shared by men (fathers, brothers and husbands) with women on lower positions in hierarchical social, economic, political and religious structures (e.g. Beach 1990; Bourdillon 1991 and 1994; Stewart and Sithole 2000)).

Having made this clear I will now proceed to discuss the particular ways in which patriarchy makes itself manifest in the construction of femininity and masculinity, or what makes a man a man and a woman a woman in the dominant Zimbabwean discourse. According to Connell (1999: 67) "masculinity' [in] modern usage [...] assumes that one's behaviour results from the type of [biological] person one is. That is to say that, an unmasculine person would behave differently'. This was described by one of the interviewees, who struggled to explain what a man *is*:

This friend of ours, [...] they've got three girls, now he's a very... very much a mans-man... you know, he's a... [...] He is not at all effeminate or you know he, he would much prefer male company. He loves to go on boys [...] fishing trips. And... I think a lot of us Zimbabweans are like that. We, we tend to be very male orientated. If we have a problem in this count... not a problem... but you will see it happen. If you socialise in this country, if you spend any time here, you'll find the men always are together, standing around the pub and the girls will always be sitting together. That's how the evening *always* starts and if it's a Sunday lunch or whatever, it is... we don't mix very easily initially. Eventually it all ends up where everybody is mixed obviously, but you find the men do a lot together as men. Fishing... I don't know whether that is a forming trait or what it... but I think it's generally, generally the men in this country are criticised for it, in that we tend to prefer male company. He is very much that way, but he loves the girls [...] [I]f he gets a chance to, you know, to be with the ladies he doesn't mind at all and he has a good evening, you know, with the girls. But give him a choice and of course he will always go. Now, he's only had daughters. He would have loved to have a son, just because who he is we know he would have loved to have had a son. (224, interviewee's emphasis)

He has difficulties coming to the point in what masculinity really is, apart from men fishing and drinking together. However, it is easier when describing the behaviour, which negate gender norms. Describing what women should *not* do or be leads him to an implicit description of what men are. Having described his friend as a 'man's man' he turned to tell me of one of this man's daughters. In doing so, he describes that which differentiate men from women, he delineates the markers of masculinity. In describing his friend he searched for the right words much more than when describing the man's daughter.



In other words it seemed easier to describe the image of masculinity through the behaviour of someone transgressing the feminine. He restores her femininity through defining her sexuality as properly and heterosexually feminine:

[In] fact his daughter, the one daughter, she actually worked with him on the farm as a farm manager at one stage, 'cause she was very rugged and *manly*, and of course he loved that. You know, she rounded up the cattle, and she worked with him every day on the cattle, and, and he just loved having her around and she was very rugged. But that goes right back to when she was a little girl. When they were little kids in the district and we would have a crowd here and all the kids would be playing rugby on the lawn and that sort of thing, [she] was very much as tough and rugged as any of the boys were, and they often seemed... if they could choose anybody for their rugby team they'd rather have [her] than some of the boys there to play rugby. But she's a very effeminate person, and she's married, got her own kids and she, she's still a lady. She's not, she's not in any way wrong or different, she's a lady. But that was just the way she was. And I think a lot of influence from her dad. But he treated all his girls [...] like you would have liked to treat your sons, they all, they are all good at fishing, they spent a lot of time fishing with him. (224, interviewee's emphasis)

What this quote also illustrates is that "[m]asculinity" does not exist except in contrast with 'femininity' (Connell 1999: 68), a reflection also made by one of the female White interviewees: 'And then I wonder how those two [masculinity/femininity are] linked, you know I don't think that the one can be there without the other' (126). To the somewhat younger adult male generation this kind of masculinity might be related to similar masculinities in other former colonies and, importantly might be experienced by men, as a façade:

We tend to be, I suppose we also tend to be chauvinists yeah. We tend to be a little bit like Australians, we try to keep our maleness although we fail. I mean we fail, like the Australians we fail. We try and pretend that we are sort of a rough bunch, a really bunch, we are all male and we are the boys, but really when you get home its a different story, and you will hear a lot of chauvinist jokes, male slanted jokes but really I think it's nothing It doesn't draw a comparison on what it's really like, you will find the most men are respectable towards women and are decent. In Zimbabwe anyway. (226)

However, he admits, in another part of the interview that there is a socio-economic reality behind the chauvinism, which negates his claim that 'it doesn't draw a comparison on what it's really like'. His

brothers do not want his wife to be a part of their farming enterprise. She is a professional businesswoman and she is headstrong. His explanation of his brothers' refusal of including his wife is that 'that's just a male thing, my brothers are very conservative there, in that respect' (226), or in other words a businesswoman is threatening to their 'rough-bunch-masculinity' and is therefore not welcome in the business. She does not at all behave like a "real" woman. The general attitude amongst women she (126) describes as follows:

A typical Zimbabwean female, I would say would be that you get married and your husband will provide for you. Or you'd be finding security in your husband. I mean that would be the typical female attitude. [...] And I think that attitude comes from the fact that men were always the elevated partner in everything in this country. They were the ones who, you never questioned, a wife never questioned her husband. [...] A lot of the women of my age are so bloody old fashioned you can't believe it! Old-fashioned ideas you know! They are not with the times. [...] No, they are more traditional in their role as wives and in their attitude to how they would deal with their husbands, and what your role as a woman, how it is defined. I mean, they would put all their trust in their husband, and he's the provider and they'd be taking the backseat their whole life with... I don't view, I don't feel like that. I like to have a little bit of financial independence, which is very threatening to many of the husbands you know of my generation.

A "real" woman 'was a woman who was only concerned with the well-being of her family' (110). The "ethnicity" of the interviewee quoted is not at all obvious. She is talking from within the hybrid colonial discourse, in which her African history was mixed with the history of the coloniser. Her view, as well as the narration of the 'typical female' Zimbabwean attitude above is similar with Seidler's (1994: xii) description of European enlightenment re-constructions of the public as masculine and the private as feminine:

...the public sphere was redefined as a sphere of male reason. Women were confined in the private sphere of emotional life and sexuality [...] Women were made to feel responsible for the happiness and well-being of their partners [and families].

The rural-urban split typical of the colonial political economy turning otherwise intertwined African economies into feminine and masculine domains respectively has resulted in the perception that African women can not survive in the urban space: 'She [the wife] must be able to work for the family. The husband may die, so the wife should be able to provide for the family. She won't be able to do it if she is

used to staying in town' (28). This quote shows first of all that urban-based women are viewed as less capable of surviving than rural women (they do not know anything about agriculture), and secondly that urban women have no proper income. An often-pronounced view is that women in town have few if any career options except prostitution. Hence, married women do not prostitute themselves because they have a husband who brings in income to the family, while divorced and widowed women must return to their rural based families or in-laws to avoid getting into this kind of "trouble".

The discursive practice of separating between inside/outside in terms of feminine and masculine areas of responsibility was reflected particularly among one of the older White interviewees (125) who perceived of younger women working after having married and had children as doing this because the economic situation forced them, not because they wanted to. She had herself seen her role as one of being a house lady who supported her husband and cared for the family, making sure the children's needs were met (even after they had grown up). Her husband portrayed her role as wife and mother in the following way:

Normally, the male and the female roles in our set up, you know, that the wife is always responsible for the house, the garden, everything around the house and it was this sort of work, you don't interfere much, you help her. And then with myself, business was my side of it and work on that part, she never interfered in the work. Although, took a keen interest, she always had a very keen interest, always had a keen interest in the house. (225)

When women step out of the "proper picture", becoming a professional or choose not to marry and have children, or just have an opinion on matters outside the home or demand to have something for themselves it creates tensions because of the prevailing "male attitude". When

women started realising, "But, hey! What about me?" That was a problem for them [men] and it's still there. [A] very chauvinist attitude [among men]. Maybe a sense of inadequacy as well, that, you know, if a woman is strong and capable and questioning and has an opinion, they would definitely be threatening their male ego. So they are not comfortable with women in that way. [...] It's hard to describe what the typical male, you know attitude is. [...] [T]he women in sort of my age-group and slightly above, the husbands can't cope with a wife being independent having an opinion of her own, a life of her own, perhaps her own income, they must rather down-play their role quite significantly and be there for *them*. To sort of serve them, make sure

the meals are right and be around the house and that sort of thing, you know. (126, interviewee's emphasis)

In the future this might change, as the young have other experiences of greater equality between the sexes than their parental generation. Such changes are, however painfully slow and easier to sustain in families with good economies. One might also suspect that it is even easier to those who see themselves as part not only of Zimbabwean society but also of a rapidly changing Europe:

Maybe we as families had come from Europe or something and had been exposed to different experiences, yes, there were those kinds of girls at our school who came from the UK, or Germany or whatever and their parents encouraged them to go to university and get a real degree that they could do something with. Not just a BA and then go out to be a teacher that got married two years later, you know... (126)

To most Black Zimbabweans it is not an issue of getting a 'BA and then go out there to be a teacher that got married', it is rather to get basic education above ground level at all. However, most parents today perceive of education, especially secondary schooling as very important to the future of their children and in the end themselves. A well-educated child—meaning at least secondary education and perhaps vocational training—in particular sons but increasingly also daughters might get a paid job with a relatively good salary, which will provide security to their parents in old-age.

Among White Zimbabweans education is valued, not for its potential importance to parents' survival when they retire but as the means by which children become self-sufficient, i.e. they will not burden ageing parents but provide for themselves. To some education also represents an independence previously denied women as reflected in the following quote (126):

I was a: "Go and be a teacher, 'cause anyway you'll probably go and get married one day so you know, somebody will provide for you". That's definitely the era I grew up in, whereas my girls, because no one ever advised me on career options or vocations or anything I am very strong and I say: "Look, if these are the things you're good at", then encourage them in those areas and say: "Look, one day you will have to provide for your self, you know, you gotta be able to clothe, feed and house your self so you must pursue something that will... you will be able to do that with. You know, don't think that you are going to get married and have kids and everything will be happy ever after. You may be in a position where you're on your own and you have to provide for your self". So, in my era there wasn't that.

However, the perception that women should educate themselves to become professionals pursuing a career, was not common among either of the interviewees, except one woman. To her, women's education and their possibilities of having a serious career means greater freedom and control over their own life, while also offering greater possibilities of providing for a family. The reason why the interviewees did not express greater support for female education and working careers, is that working women cannot devote the same time to home and child care, i.e. to that which is perceived as their main responsibility. And of course it is not only policy-makers and feminists who have realised that women may become less dependant on men, and hence more assertive, when they have access to an individual income (Bourdillon 1993).

### **The successful transplantation of a family discourse?**

As mentioned in chapter 2 the settlers who colonised Zimbabwe in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century brought with them a specific family set-up based on the Victorian discourse on family. This particular discourse was one in which the nuclear family, i.e. the Christian married mother and father and their born children, was the central unit on which society was based. Sex for procreation as well as recreation was perceived of as being acceptable only within married family life. The family discourse had wider connotations, however: 'in all social discourse a stable home was seen both as a microcosm of stable society and a sanctuary from an unstable and rapidly changing one' (Weeks 1989: 29). This view is reflected also in Smith's autobiography in which he heralds the (heterosexual) nuclear family as the most important unit of a civilised society. The family set-up imported to Zimbabwe was basically agrarian, as the colonial settler economy was based on agrarian production rather than the development of industries—those who settled in Southern Rhodesia generally became farmers. The ideal of a large family is probably based in 'a system of settled agriculture, in which access to land is closely related to community identity and in which ambitious men try to build around themselves a larger family of dependent agricultural labourers' writes Bourdillon (1991: 23)—about Shona ideals. However, this ideal was also present among White Zimbabweans as testified by this older White woman who said that 'I didn't want an only one—I wanted a family' (128). The major difference was that White families did not depend on 'a large family' for survival—they had and still have their labourers and children who will probably take over the family farm:

I think that's what's really keeping me going [...] knowing that he [son] is keen to come and farm and if that wasn't the case, if we had no

kids, I think maybe we might have just packed up, sold up and, you know tried to make things easier for ourselves. But having him in the background certainly is inspiring to me to, you know to keep going and make sure that there is something here, if he wants to. If he doesn't, so be it you know, but obviously he indicates that he'd like to come back to the farm, so to me that would be first price for him to come and one day and have it as his own. That will be first price and I am sure that's every farmer, that's really what we all work towards. I don't think farmers are made, I think farmers are born you know. (224)

Furthermore, as pointed out by Weeks (1989: 29), 'a central factor in the familial ideology, was the separation of home from work, based as it was on the withdrawal of the [bourgeois and petit-bourgeois] lady from social labour'. This is reflected both in Zimbabwean discursive practices, i.e. the particular way family formation and economy is intertwined, and in the idealising discourse on family. The idea that women should not be working, at least for wages, but being taken care of by a wage-earning husband is an ideal, which was new to the colonised and unattainable to many of the settlers before they arrived in Southern Rhodesia (Bourdillon 1991; Beach 1990; McClintock 1995).

Even though many settlers did not manage economically to live up to the ideal of becoming rich and successful farmers, and hence entering or maintaining a certain class standard many struggled to keep up a façade of success – which was easier in Southern Rhodesia than in Britain where signs of economic success were too expensive.<sup>23</sup>

The bread-winning father and home-making mother was an upper class European ideal nurtured particularly since the Enlightenment and fed by Rousseau's argumentation of women's fragility and inability to reason (Weeks 1989; Wollstonecraft 1992; Okin 1979). The settler family ideal was securely based in a discourse where a particular construction of femininity and masculinity were formative and in an economic system in which women's ideal role was that of the domesticated wife and mother.

According to Godwin and Hancock (1999: 141) women 'saw their careers as additional 'to their traditional roles of mothers and homemakers'' (quoting the National Federation of Business and Professional Women) and this, they claim 'accurately described both their own outlook and the expectations held of them'. A woman senator in the Rhodesian Parliament, also in 1975, 'assured women that their overriding devotion to the family and the home was both laudable and self-fulfilling' (ibid).

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<sup>23</sup> The keeping of servants, cookboys, gardeners, nursemaids, arranging afternoon teas, drinking sun-downers on the veranda, affording to buy land, build a house and to keep the wife off the labour market through a single (male) income etc. (Hancock and Godwin 1999; Lessing 1994).

Young girls were being reminded of their traditional status. A booklet published just after the conclusion of the International Women's Year examined the range of careers open to young Rhodesians. It pointed out to male school-leavers that they would want to earn enough to support a wife and family, and that they should be sufficiently qualified so that the wife would not need to go out and work. Girls were told that although a 'career' of being a wife and mother was of 'the greatest importance', it was desirable for a mother of grown-up children, a divorcee, or the wife of a disabled husband to be well qualified so that she could re-enter the work-force. [...] Most jobs listed in the careers booklet—from accountancy to real estate and dental surgery—assumed that the applicants would be male while 'female' jobs were the familiar ones of nursing, teaching, beauty therapy, bookkeeping, office reception, and secretarial work. Fashion modelling was another possibility: a good figure was 'essential' but good looks 'may not be quite as important' and, in any case, 'wonders can be done with the right make-up and hair style (Godwin and Hancock 1999: 142).

In Southern Rhodesia the European settler of any class (or ethnic) background became the middle and upper class of a transplanted and re-created "Britain" and hence the aspirations of the settler was to adopt the proper manners, views and habits of the British upper classes. The colonised were designated to play the role of the British poor—providing, re-producing and maintaining labour, being a constant source of sexual fascination and fear, and serving the rich/colonisers need of playing out the role of saviour.<sup>24</sup>

At the centre of this discourse and practice was the propertied, heterosexual nuclear family consisting of the breadwinner and *pater familia*, his domesticated housewife and their children—who lived harmoniously and respectfully together in their own house in a nice suburb or in the countryside. The dark side of this social construction was among other things the sexual double standard,<sup>25</sup> economic vulnerability and dependency especially among women and the stigma attached to divorcees, single women and those who did not "make it". The stigma of being a single woman in White Zimbabwean communities leads to the perception that women's only option is marriage:

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<sup>24</sup> Among other things teaching the poor/colonised proper hygiene, cooking, child-care, sewing, agricultural techniques etc. (Weeks 1989; Schmidt 1992; McClintock 1995). This perception of which needs the poor have is still prevalent in development aid projects particularly those directed at women.

<sup>25</sup> Or, according to African Members of Parliament in Southern Rhodesia, the European variant of polygyny (as described in chapter 3).

I couldn't see a future for myself as a single woman in this country. I knew if I was going to carry on here I had to [get married] because, once you have certain age in this country there is no social life for you. You know, if you're not a couple—forget it! You know, you're not... you then must be a woman out on the lookout, sort of thing. So where you can go is very limited, 'cause wherever you go it's that male attitude we talked about, they assume that you're looking for a one-night-stand or whatever. You could never go out to party and have a good evening without being hassled by men who thought maybe you were available you know. So and of course all the functions you go to there are couples there [...] so you are a bit odd-man-outish. (126)

The perception of women's role in society as married homemakers has been expressed, not only in social organisation and the political economy of the "motherland" and in the colonies, it has also found expression in jokes as testified by this White male interviewee:

I was raised in my parents' shadow of a subservient wife that will wash, iron—you know what wife stands for, you have heard that one? Washing, Ironing, F-ing [fucking], Etc—okay? You will hear a lot of all sorts of jokes. (226)

Some women might actually experience their situation in the family as described quite accurately by the joke above even though none of the interviewees expressed it in such terms. However, some women expressed feelings of dejection related to patriarchal social organisation and hybrid masculinity, and the consequent role ascribed them as married women with children, even if they would not define it in such terms. The woman quoted below was the most "radical" of the White women interviewed as she openly discussed what she defined as male chauvinism:

The typical male Zimbabwean attitude, you know, with relationship to women. [...] An unwillingness to accept any blame for anything and the knowledge that you always withdraw from the problem as your way of coping with it. Either withdraw or attack. Either to defend yourself you draw the tacked or just leave it and pretend it doesn't exist, or just put a little "plaster" on it but never really get to the real issue, and not be willing to appreciate what's the real issue and say: "Hey, I don't quite understand where you're coming from and I probably do have some blame in this but, and I am ready to accept that." (126)

Being the only one who defined Zimbabwean men as male chauvinists she was not the only one who felt that men were most definitely the 'elevated part' in Zimbabwean society. Neither was she



the only one who defined women's role as directly linked to married motherhood. However, she was the only one defining this role as problematic because of the constraints it places on women who want to be both mothers and professionals:

[men should] not only [be] supportive in saying: "Yes I support you", but support in terms of not making you feel inadequate as a mother and as a wife. Because you weren't quite matching up, you can't be quite be there all the time for your children and, you know you're going out there with a guilt complex every day because you're being reminded that: "Hey, the children aren't actually quite well today you better get them to the doctor": Where his role of a father should have come into play as well. And you are struggling with that guilt and feeling of inadequacy, but you're taking all those responsibilities onto your own shoulders instead of saying: "Well, Okay, I am not quite matching up here, so could you, you know help". You can't ask for help, because that is your role, your role is *that*. That is, the society has defined your role as a woman, those are the functions you perform. If you're not making it, you're failing. You are not allowed to stress, 'cause if you stress that's weak, that's a mental deficiency that you must have. (126)

Despite this she described the family as 'important... it is important for your kids to grow up with two parents'. Being a workingwoman as was a few of the interviewees has a bearing on you and your marriage, it does crash with married motherhood. Re-creating the socially significant, and according to Ian Smith (1997) most central unit of a well functioning society—the family—was important to all the interviewees, whether they regarded certain consequences of the patriarchal social structure as problematic or not:

my personal significance have been more fed by the relationship I have with my kids and my husband than what I get here [at work]. This is the thing that will feed me and clothe me but that [the family] is the thing that keeps you whole as a person. (126)

It is something, which you do not only re-create however, but also hope, as a parent to transplant to your children: 'And I would like, hopefully... that they have children and they just keep the same set of family values that we have' (224). In a patriarchal society where the masculine ideal of the heterosexual married, nuclear family<sup>26</sup> is

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<sup>26</sup> In Shona discourse the heterosexual nuclear family is recognised as important, but the focus is more on the *imba* (the house which contains the mother and child unit) and on the wider family (*chisarwa*)—with a focus on the patrilineal side—including grandparents, uncles, aunts and their children. This might be changing as more and

discursively defined as *the* form of family it is not surprising that the interviewees presented their view within this framework, whether they were White or Black.

### **Individual or community: Changing images of the African family**

The African family has often been described as fairly immutable despite the enormous social, political, religious and economic changes, which have taken place since the African continent was colonised. The archetypal African family is the extended, patrilineal and patriarchal family in which the *individual* holds no position as such, i.e. positions are not individualised (Aschwanden 1982: 62):

It is the social position that is important, not the person. In the general order of things, the community is above the individual, and the child can develop his [sic.] ego only within the communal pattern.

In line with this way of thinking on the African family is the understanding that 'in their use of kinship terms people distinguish members of their own patrilineal group only by generation, age and sex, and not according to genealogical distance' (Bourdillon 1991: 25). Through the institution of *roora* children are born within and belong to the community rather than their mother and father and their responsibilities are to re/generate resources for that community – or as expressed in rather typical and generalising terms by Bledsoe and Cohen (1993:39) 'children born to [a marriage union] belong as much to their kin group as to their parents'. In short the African family is frequently described as

the extended family (which was supposedly the dominant form in pre-colonial Africa) [which] is said to be composed of a whole range of relatives tied together by kinship and marriage who interact with each other at a variety of levels providing spiritual and material support. The extended family is often portrayed by traditionalist perspectives as having provided a stable and secure family environment placing kinship ties and family solidarity and collective interests above individual passing abstract interests such as love, personal choice and happiness. (Ncube and Stewart 1997: 107)

Hence, the African family ought to consist of members who think of the wider family/community rather than themselves. However, the interviewees expressed themselves in such a way that one might ask whether "family" is really as large in their conceptualisation and

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more nuclear families become less dependent upon and live farther away from the wider family.

whether individuals act on behalf of the community or themselves. It was repeated over and over again that it was important 'to have a family [wife and children] of my own and so to have a home' (222) and that 'It's important in that the wife will be having a family of her own, and this gives respect' (113). Thus, the interests of *the community* might not be the reason for wanting a family, whereas the dominant discourse on family might suggest that this is or ought to be the case. The interests of the community or wider society might be referred to in more or less explicit terms as this male did: 'As Africans, we want to perpetuate the African race. As a family man, I want my name to continue to be called after I die through my children' (210). However, safeguarding one's own or one's lineage's interests are often more important than serving the community: 'A man with a large family commands more respect as compared to one with a small family. [...] I am afraid my family name is going to disappear' (217).<sup>27</sup>

Being married and having a family does not only mean that you command respect in society, it does not only confer status but also security and "home". The view that marriage, children and home are intertwined and inseparable is expressed in this woman's answer to why it is important to marry: 'To have a family of my own and so have a home' (222). This was also reflected by an older female interviewee whose explanation was somewhat more detailed, linking her marriage both to security and her natal family's needs of knowing her whereabouts:

I wanted to have a family of my own. That way, I was guaranteed to settle in one place i.e. at my home. [An unmarried woman] does not have a place to stay. She is someone of no fixed place. As a result, relatives are not aware of any misfortunes that might befall such a woman, misfortunes like illness or even death. A married woman has a fixed place. Relatives know where she stays and often visit (15).

Not being able to bear children means that the security of marriage falls away as the following quote demonstrate: '[t]he barren woman is divorced and the husband gets another one' (220).<sup>28</sup> Hence, the

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<sup>27</sup> This view of family size is described also by Caldwell (1982) who claim that this is particular to societies with family based production systems, rather than capitalist production systems.

<sup>28</sup> This is based on the custom through which a man could demand compensation from his in-laws by way of receiving another wife from them if the couple was childless. The barren woman's sister became her co-wife, she would bear the children which her sister did not bear. Women were therefore in a sense exchangeable, which is different from the Enlightenment ideal where romantic love relationships play a central role. Today women's attempts of controlling their fertility, their failure to conceive or bear living children may result in divorce because the marriage does not bring the sufficient number of children either according to the husband and/or his parents.

security-aspect reflected when saying that 'I want a husband of my own, [t]hat way I can have my own family and live comfortably' (19) is wholly dependent both on the childbearing capacity of the couple, their economic situation and the safeguarding of economic assets to that particular family unit. Disease, which disables a couple's wage earning possibilities and infidelity, which often means draining economic resources away from the wedded family to other families, as well as the inability to bear children poses threats to stable family life. Hence, the dominating discourse on the ideal family is challenged by real life circumstances to a much greater degree than many are willing to admit: being married means security and comfort, it means having a place to stay. It means being "someone" to both women and men as expressed by this older male (220): 'I am now considered an elder, and I can join elders at village gatherings because I have a family'. In light of the realities of family life the reflection that '[o]nce a woman has had a family she is quite happy' (115) seems naïve and is negated by the fact that many women find marriage problematic though necessary.

That young couples experience the establishment of themselves as "family" as the main avenue to security and respect in the community of course make them less prone to reject the forms of family constellations which their parents might want them to embrace. As the economic situation changes, however, many couples have or attempt to re-negotiate the family constellations they live in. Such negotiations might lead a young couple to create an urban-based nuclear family rather than adhering to the family set-up, which became traditional through the political economy of Southern Rhodesia, i.e. the extended rural family in which young men labour migrated to towns and mines, and in which the nuclear family was just one of many units making up the "family" (or *chisvarwa*).<sup>29</sup> Young women's unwillingness to stay in the rural areas, living and working with their parents-in-law while the husband is away large parts of the year, as became the custom during colonialism, creates tensions in the wider family because their help is needed in the production. Hence, those young women who live with their husbands in town often make arrangements, in which they share their time between their own home

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<sup>29</sup> '...a residential group consisted primarily of a patrilineage three to five generations deep under the family head [...] the old patrilineage of three to five generations of descendants of one man is still recognised under the name *chisvarwa*. While the head of the family group is still alive, it forms the most fundamental family unit, acting together in court cases and other disputes, and acting as a unit in marriage negotiations' (Bourdillon 1991: 27). This is similar to the families of modern US soap operas in which the families operate as a corporation of people who are related to each other. While there are numerous disputes between the members of these families they tend to stand united and support each other when a member of it faces or is perceived to face problems with people outside the family.

and the natal home of their husband in an attempt at avoiding such tensions as described by this young woman:

Daughters-in-law of today do not want to stay in the communal areas. They do not want to till the land. [...] They have to help in growing of crops. These days, the cost of living has gone up, so that at least we should grow our own food, and not buy it. They don't have to stay in the communal areas for the whole year. They only stay during the summer season, then go back to town. Women can also have income generating projects in the rural areas e.g. poultry keeping so as to supplement the husband's income. An African woman should experience both the urban and rural ways of life. (26)

Among the interviewees we find young families who stay together in town, and where the young wife go back to her husband's family during planting and harvesting, and families organised around the husbands' parents, i.e. where the young wives live in their husbands village while the husbands labour migrate.

### **Family as dependency**

The logic of patriarchal masculinity in Zimbabwe is centred on the heterosexual married family within which the control of women in particular but also to some extent young men is fundamental. To men marriage is not necessarily the only avenue to respect, but it definitely strengthens their position in society. For women however, the situation is different. Outside marriage most women become social pariahs and economically vulnerable both discursively and practically. Most Black Zimbabwean women risk losing their children to their husbands upon divorce (or when they marry another man who do not want to fend for other men's children), women in general have fewer job opportunities and lower salaries than men, and they are often not welcome back to their parental home as yet another dependant (or several dependants if they bring their children with them). A divorced/unmarried woman, whether Black or White is perceived as a potential sexual partner by most men and as such have social difficulties in the public space (and even in the private if we believe the increasing number of reported sexual assaults against women). In short women's socio-economic dependency on marriage and family is fundamental to the constantly ongoing re-production of Zimbabwean masculinity and shrinks the potential for negotiating patriarchal discourses and practices which herald motherhood and women's domesticity as their main road to social respect and participation. In this, Zimbabwe is not unique—it is rather quite a typical patriarchal society. The small steps taken by women in their private lives in terms of supporting daughters who want an

education, saving money without husbands and in-laws' knowledge, manipulating husbands etc. *might* bear witness to a slow pace of change. However, it might also be practices of resistance, typical of societies of oppression, i.e. resistance, which does not challenge and change the social structure and the discursive practices, which reproduce it but which rather functions as channels wherefrom steam might be lead off. In other words, the silence and invisibility with which women try and manoeuvre around stumbling blocks in a sense keep these blocks laying in the road rather than explode them. The social meaning of marriage and family, the discursive practices of it are both wanted (it is important and provide you with security and meaning) and loathed (it straps you down), and however you turn it, as a woman you depend on being a man's wife if you want to be respected.

# Chapter 5

## **'Its part and parcel of every marriage': The power of and over pleasure**

*Long back, life was very different. [...] [O]ur culture has changed. Sex was something we respected, but now when girls grow up and reach puberty, they automatically indulge in sexual activities. [...] It's different now. The cost of living has affected the women. Long back, women were afraid of men but now... [...] they easily have love affairs and have sex casually. [...] [L]ong back women got married before they had had sex, but now we see a lot of unwanted pregnancies. (12)*

We have all heard it—that "it was better before"—and Zimbabwe is not an exception. There are few things, which can set people off talking as comparing their own youth with how adolescents behave sexually at the present times. It brings to the fore not only accusations of immorality, carelessness and over-sexuality but also feelings of sadness both in terms of the young having "lost" the presumed sexual innocence of youth, but also in terms of the threats they face as sexually active individuals. Most children are (still) conceived because their parents had sex, i.e. sexuality is reproductive. The intersection of recreation and reproduction, which was essential to colonial control continue to govern Zimbabwean sexual discourse and practice. Marriage and childbearing should ideally be the frame and the result of sexual relationships, hence excluding homosexual, pre-marital and extra-marital sexuality as indecent and promiscuous. As argued by Gerda Lerner, patriarchy is basically about control—in particular of women and their sexual and reproductive capacities. Controlling the latter has discursively been constructed as dependent on the control of the former, and it is only with the introduction of effective contraception that sexuality may to some extent be de-linked from reproduction. In a society, such as Zimbabwe where elders and men have customarily been those discursively equipped with the control mechanisms of sexual behaviour (in particular of young people and women) the bright new lights of de-colonisation seem quite un-attractive, no matter where they are located. The woman quoted above somehow summarise the essence of the discourses to be discussed in this chapter in a very few words: women used to be

afraid of men, but are no longer so; women's sexual behaviour has become promiscuous; women are poor and resort to sex to access resources; sex used to be practiced within marriage but that is not the case any longer. The fears of losing control of particularly women's sexuality looms large, however, not only because it threatens patriarchal stability but also because it is perceived as threatening societal survival. The threat to survival in the form of HIV/Aids is highly dependent on location, in contrast to the perception of change in general—it is experienced to an un-comparably larger degree among Black than among White Zimbabweans.

### **Social change and cultural threats**

Explaining the changes going on in a society where poverty has been on the rise for more than a decade and a half, and where the number of people infected with HIV and dying from Aids is increasing by the day may be difficult. Perhaps it is understandable that many focus on that which is closest to them, family and neighbours, changes in behaviours, practices and discourses. Women's sexuality, and particularly the sexuality of adolescent girls and young women have become a kind of epicentre of social devastation. This is perhaps also understandable as women, and in particular Black women have been constructed as the epicentre of sexual immorality since the beginning of the Rhodesian colonisation of Zimbabwe. In any case both the young and the old, the Black and the White, women as well as men interviewed in this study referred to female promiscuity, and hence implicitly to the loss of male control over them, as a major reason for marital instability and the spread of HIV/Aids. Many thought of modernisation and post-independence developments as the driving force behind these changes, changes which threatened both customs and lives.

The loss of respect for the elders, who perceive of themselves as the gatekeepers of good morale, and proper sexual conduct was central to the older interviewees:

Very few young people are respectful. The rest cannot be controlled, let alone given advice. They do as they like. [...] Girls have many boyfriends because they say they would like to find one who can satisfy them sexually. They don't care if they are called prostitutes in the process. (115)

The problems of sexually policing young Black women centres around cultural change, and the loss of indigenous knowledge—i.e. knowledge of patriarchal measures of control. Very practically such change is perceived by some of the older women—who have customarily been the gate keepers of young female sexuality, holding



the key both to virginity and knowledge of pleasure—to be the cause of promiscuity among young women:

At times promiscuity is caused by the large clitorises these girls have. They give high sexual feelings to such girls. The clitoris should be rubbed while the girl is still young so that it does not become very big. That way the girls will be able to control their sexual feelings when they grow up. [...] [T]hese young girls don't take advice from elders. They themselves were not rubbed and so cannot do the same to their baby girls, because they don't know about it. So we now have young girls with high sexual desires who are bound to be promiscuous. If not checked, this will go on. [...] Without that, we will have the prevailing situation in which immorality is high. (115)

The sexual appetite of sexually un-manipulated women is seemingly enormous, it needs to be socially controlled, through practices and knowledge, which young mothers are unaware of:

Some young women nowadays complain that they are not getting satisfied sexually. They accuse their husband of sleeping all through the night and forget that they are married and so have a job to do. In our times, women, when they grew up, something was done to them so that their sexual feelings were moderated. Mothers of today do lack that knowledge that is why their girl children are getting wild. They can no longer get satisfaction from one man. They need several. This has caused promiscuity and unfaithfulness. (11)

Taking the critique of young women further, one older woman claimed that even the respect of the dead seems to be fading away as young women look more towards their own personal satisfaction than to that of their families and in-laws:

[Before] [i]t was different from what is happening nowadays. For example, if the husband died, the widow would go for two years without sex while traditional ceremonies were being done so that she could become free to either remarry or have affairs, but woman nowadays have affairs as soon as the husband has died [...] even whilst the husband is still in hospital terminally ill, the wife will be having affairs already. (115)

A woman should ideally be a virgin when she enters into marriage, but '[v]irginity is no longer important' (115). In contrast to the contemporary situation, sexuality, and sexual relations (within marriage) was by many perceived of as 'valued' (115) before. According on of the younger women, who presents a quite common opinion 'it's now very rare' (19) to abstain from sex until marriage, and

she claims that to find virgins you have to look for very young girls 'at fourteen and below'.

Other explanations are explicitly linked to the colonial and postcolonial condition in which traditional values are being exchanged with "European" ones. An example is that in contrast to how sexual education of adolescents was handled before liberation co-educational schools and curricular sexual education are norms of the postcolonial government's school policy. Accordingly immoral sexual behaviour in both boys and girls are perceived of as to some degree caused by this change as this older Black woman claims

Boys are now uncontrollable. Once they propose love to girls, they end up fondling the girls' breasts [...] but long back, it was a taboo [...] no moral boy could do that. [...] they say they... that they cannot be prevented from talking or playing with girls since they are learning about sex at school. (11)

In other words "knowing" leads adolescents into immorality as it promotes a wish of "doing" – the implicit proposition is that silence on the subject is to be enforced. Education should instead focus on marital sex as the only kind of (legitimate) sexuality (ibid). The problematique connected with "knowing" sex is also that it causes divorces, as, according to an older Black woman the couple 'know about each other sexually before marriage' (11) – and men who have tasted the forbidden fruit loose interest and instead of committing themselves to it, continue to the next one.

Changing school policies seem not to be a top priority though. The embracing of European values among the young, present parents and grandparents with much more immediate problems concerning their attempted cultural conservation:

Some couples are adopting European customs. [...] They no longer value our African values. [Interviewer: Which customs have been adopted?] Couples no longer visits aunts during their engagements, as was the custom. Couples do have sex before marriage. Couples no longer [have] long engagements where they have to know each other better before marriage. They are rushing into marriages. (117).

Her claim that the young are rushing into marriages seems to be somewhat contradictory to what a younger woman describes. Both however have not much more than contempt for "modern" marriages:

Marriages nowadays are a laughing matter, couples are now living together as husband and wife before marriage. [...] [This is a problem] because once a man has had his way, then he is no longer interested in that woman. He will look for another one. [...] [I]t causes diseases (12).

The central issue, towards which both these women point, is sexuality and the loss of control over it by others than the young couple themselves, a view echoed by one of the oldest Black men interviewed: 'Modern marriages are now a problem. Most children are loose. They no longer follow the proper channels [of marriage]. As soon as they get married you will see them dying because they are not steady' (27). The threat of Aids is discursively linked to the problem of "steadyness" and "prostitution", problems, which he and most other interviewees attribute to women rather than men:

What makes me afraid is [...] this deadly disease. One has to see whether the woman is steady. You have to see whether you will live or die. [...] Marrying is now a big issue since life has become hard and Aids is a big problem. (27)

Men present themselves as 'at a loss' on the marriage market. They want to do the right thing, i.e. getting properly married but this is nearly impossible because women generally are suspected of improper sexual behaviour:

They [men] are afraid of STD's, which are prevalent these days. Women of all ages seem to be promiscuous these days. Young girls are loose because they want money, so as to buy fashionable clothes, good food etc. Girls who go to churches are promiscuous as well, so men are at a loss, who to choose as a partner for life. They are afraid of choosing the promiscuous type. [...] They are afraid of sexual transmitted diseases especially Aids. (26)

However, women have the same impression regarding men, and for women marriage is problematic as men are perceived of as notoriously unfaithful, and women today are 'afraid that the husband [...] has Aids, especially if he has been away for quite some time [...] unfaithfulness is a problem' (115).

"The disease" has, however also brought some of the old values back in, at least among some of the young women: 'some women have good moral behaviour [...] [b]ecause they are now afraid of the diseases' (115). This peculiarly positive effect (in the view of parents and wives) of the HIV/Aids pandemic, which has hit Zimbabwe with force during the 1990s was reflected by a White woman (126) in her late thirties. She claimed that a new trend was on the rise among the youth in her 'community': 'there is quite a lot of pride in some of the youth here, where... proud to be a virgin when you get married, when... that's like a big thing, you know: "No way, that's not for me, I wouldn't do that!"' However, not having been 'such a good girl' herself, as are the young women she refers to she has to balance between measures of control through emphasising the value of in

particular female virginity and of accepting what she knows, that the flesh is sometimes stronger than the mind:

We all think we know it all at 18 but... my, I would strongly encourage my kids to be very careful and I've got a very open relationship with them at that score which I never had with my parents. [...] I've said to her [daughter]: "Look you know, you must wait until you marry", but because of Aids more than anything else, and STD's are so common these days. That sort of dangers... you try and put into them sort of, at least that if they're gonna sleep around they won't sleep with ten partners before they marry. They might have one stable boyfriend. That's the hope I suppose. They got to be more cautious. But they probably would experiment. And I know that at high school there is a lot of experimenting taking place. (126)<sup>1</sup>

The openness with which she claims to talk sexuality with her daughter is different to the silence on the matter with which she herself grew up. Then, sex was something one feared not only to do, but even to mention. Those who "did it" and were caught either in the act or afterwards, through a pregnancy were defined as losers and the threat hanging over many a head was that of being thrown out of the house. But nowadays '[i]t's *completely* different!' (225):

I think its far more open [now]... I mean I would never have an opinion not to talk to my children about something like that. [...] [I]t was very different to what it is now. [...] I think it's now more open. [...] I think it's... umm... more easily spoken about. (124)

That it is so much more easily spoken about may also be experienced with melancholy by the older generation:

I mean everything is very much more open now. [...] I think they [young people] probably do [know much more about it today]. I think they don't, they don't keep their youth as long. But it's quite precious, really. Everything is... the generations are all different, and what we thought was very daring, is sort of everyday now. (128)

The changes, which the older interviewees perceived to have taken place was by one woman in particular, expressed as the loss of a joyful youth in which sexuality was something valuable, sacred to be discovered when one married, i.e. grew up to be a real adult. One

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<sup>1</sup> Sexual experimenting is by parents believed to be going on also in rural schools attended by the children of communal farmers: 'Now we have these young people who are still going to school. [...] They are having affairs whilst at school, and these relationships end there. They are not meant to lead up to marriage. They are simply whiling up time' (12).

woman also seems to think that her pre-marital sexual experiences were somehow more precious because she did not have them until after her teens:<sup>2</sup>

I like the young people today [smiling]. I enjoy them. I think they get themselves into a terrible mess. [...] I don't think sex means anything to them, *really*.<sup>3</sup> I mean it's nothing very important about it, is there? It's sort of premarital anyway. [...] [When I was young] I think it was, it was something... yes I think it probably would have been [more precious]. (128)

Marrying quite late she admits, however, to have had relationships before she met her husband: 'I had been around by then. [...] I'd *been* around by then but I mean it's...' just different, because she did it not just for the fun of it but because she was searching for a husband—i.e. it was proper sex.

The reasons for the change, which is believed to have taken place were attributed a range of factors such as the end of sanctions and isolation upon independence and the post-independence influence of lower sexual morals from Europe, the influence of a changing media<sup>4</sup>—'I think it is because I think it's so much more publicity about these things' (128)—to the pill, co-educational schooling, and the HIV/Aids crisis.

### **Masculinity and sexual pleasure**

The discourse on sexual promiscuity re-presented above testifies both to the power of the "flesh" and the power of social constructions of legitimate desire—in short it more than indicates that sexuality is a highly contested issue. This contestation is phrased in terms of gender, generation and norms defining sexual legitimacy and illegitimacy, or in other words the legitimacy of reproductive pleasure. Based on the quotes above one might suggest that at the core of the "promiscuity" of adolescents and "immoral" adults is the search for sexual pleasure, a search which is perceived to threaten the power of those who according to the norm system should control it, i.e. men and elders. A woman's sexuality and through it her childbearing capacity belong to her parents before marriage, and to her husband thereafter. This is more explicitly expressed among the

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<sup>2</sup> When she did have her experiences she had aimed at marriage, hence attempted at least to keep within the moral codes.

<sup>3</sup> In this, her worries are the same as those of an older African woman who said that 'No value is now attached to the sex act, as in the olden days' (11).

<sup>4</sup> No one explicitly set a date for this change, but referred to how the television had become much more explicitly sexualised than when they were young, i.e. basically before independence.

Black than among the White interviewees, but is nevertheless central to both groups. Non-marital sex is not accepted however widespread it might be.<sup>5</sup> It threatens heterosexual marriage stability and reproduction as well as male control of women within and outside of marriage. Legitimate sexuality and sexual desire is defined as heterosexual marital sex, especially regarding women.

The common image of "African" sex is dichotomised however, rather than nuanced; it is either described as exotically brutal and naturalised (as many non-European-colonial Others' sexuality) or as purely and threateningly reproductive and instrumental. Such images blur a truism, or what *ought to be* a truism in academic writings on sexuality in Africa: people on this continent as well as all around the globe enjoy their sexuality without it necessarily being more brutal or instrumental than in other places. Sexuality in Africa is *as* diversified as in all other places, as everywhere else it involves violence, desire, satisfaction, anger and disillusionment. What is more, across time and space, it involves gendered relations of power. Below I will exemplify one manner in which this control works through the discourse on legitimate sexual desire.

Sex is "done" 'not to have children only' but also to 'fulfil the love between us' as a young woman declared (114). Having sex for pleasure is not only something which young people are doing despite the impression one might get from the sections above. To older interviewees who were past childbearing age sex is indulged in 'to please ourselves mainly' (11), sex is 'done to please each other' (115). To one of the young interviewees one has sex not only nor mainly to have children:

[T]he whole process of marrying is to have someone you can make love to. [...] Let's have this example: a couple married at 20 years of age. They live up to 60 years of age. During their life, they have 3 children. It means that for the forty years they have been making love, it was simply to consolidate their love and nothing else. (26)

According to one of the older White interviewees sex is something which is 'a part of married life which I think develops and just becomes important and *definitely* becomes better and better. And I don't know when, when it is not important you know, I think it will always be important in ones life' (224). Both these two last quotes reflect the common view on sexuality and pleasure, not only to Zimbabweans but to most people in the world: it is defined as

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<sup>5</sup> One might argue that any parent would want to protect her child from sexual abuse, teenage pregnancies and generally from "getting in trouble". However, it seems as if this is not really the main prerogative, as marriage is perceived of as a guarantee that abuse will not happen (e.g. marital rape is considered impossible), and that pregnancies are legitimate whether the wife is a young teenager or an adult.

legitimately taking place within, not outside of marriage. However, non-marital sex is nothing new in Zimbabwe, neither in African nor European communities despite the claims made by the older interviewees. The perception voiced by the White Zimbabweans that divorce was rare “before”<sup>6</sup> is simply not true, neither is the idea that abortions did not occur nor that people did not have extra-marital sex (Godwin and Hancock 1999). Sexual pleasure was sought outside as well as within marriage previously as well as today.

However, sexuality and pleasure have a dark side, i.e. that of women’s economic dependency on men, through sexual performance and the definition of pleasure. First of all it is important to realise that many Zimbabweans perceive it as a given right of a husband to have unlimited sexual access to his wife on his conditions, an attitude which might be represented by Gelfand’s (1992: 170)<sup>7</sup> somewhat patriarchal-poetic statement that ‘...the husband... has the right to sexual relations whenever he so desires, whereas she has to wait for the first advance to come from him... [Sex] is there to be indulged in as much as the husband [sic.] wishes’—i.e. sexual pleasure is constructed as masculine.<sup>8</sup> Male sexual power is re-constructed through women’s fears of explicitly expressing their own desires:

It’s the husband who takes the initiative, but the wife is important even in old age. [...] Maybe some women can do it [tell their husbands that they want sex] but I find it very difficult to do [...] but in the older days... [...] it was not allowed. If the woman took the initiative, she was considered loose, so they were afraid of taking the initiative. (12)<sup>9</sup>

To consider one’s own sexual desires and seeking sexual pleasure, *as a woman* is by some defined as immoral: ‘A morally well-behaved woman should be able to control her sexual feelings and let the man take the lead. A woman who takes the bull by the horns is considered immoral’ (11). However, ‘if he takes long to initiate it, then I act in a way, which will arouse him’ (11).<sup>10</sup> What is interesting here is the

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<sup>6</sup> “Before” meaning during the youth of most of the interviewees, i.e. the 1960s and 70s.

<sup>7</sup> Gelfand wrote his ethnography about ‘the Shona’ and did not at any instance draw any lines to the regulations and policing of women’s sexuality occurring in his own European community.

<sup>8</sup> This is contrary to other historical and ethnographic accounts (e.g. Beach and Noronha 1980; Ashwanden 1982; see also Laqueur 1995 on pre-modern sexuality/pleasure in Europe) wherein women’s sexuality is constructed as central not only to her but also his sexual pleasure and expression.

<sup>9</sup> This was referred to also by one of the older European interviewees, suggesting that there is a common background between her community and the African: ‘I have always found it difficult for women to be the one to approach, to be the one to open up’ in sexual matters (124).

<sup>10</sup> This was a big issue during one of the group discussions we held in 1998, since women who do take obvious sexual initiatives risk being accused of acting like

carefulness with which many women act to please their husbands. A woman's dependency on her husband and on marriage, and thereby access to income results in strategies, which are designed to keep his sexual interests turning around her rather than other women. Women's ways of seeking and finding sexual pleasure often take the point of departure in husbands'/lovers' rather than their own pleasure. They are engaged in a balancing act, which demands careful attention to how intentions are expressed—if too elaborate (e.g. in clothing, cooking or how she prepares the bed)<sup>11</sup> a woman might be accused of acting like a prostitute. In the end she will do things to please him rather than herself (or detouring around his pleasure to find her own)—if he is pleased she will be pleased.<sup>12</sup>

She tries by all means to please him sexually by trying different styles. This usually makes both the husband and wife happy. [Interviewer: Will he not call you immoral?] No, the aim is to have sexual satisfaction. [...] If he is satisfied, then it means that the wife is the right person for him. [...] [W]e learn from others. If at a gathering, women discuss about sexuality, that is where we get some guide lines from. You have to take their advice. If it works for you, the better. Even at the Thursday church gatherings, good advice is given on sexuality. [...] [I]t [the advice] may help, and once it is a success, then you know how to behave morally. (14)

Pleasing him means that he will not look for other women, a strategy which has been practised throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century it seems, as this woman of 87 said that a wife in her younger days 'was willing to have sex with the husband and was always available. The husband then did not have affairs' (117). This idea of pleasing-him-is-pleasing-me has survived UDI and independence, as women in their fifties as well as in their twenties adhere to it: 'I do it [have sex] in order to please the husband, and to prevent him from going out with other women' (118). Another advice given from a young newly married woman was that '[women] should have few children [...] [b]ecause if a woman

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prostitutes. Hence, the ways in which women "act" to trick their husbands into "taking the initiative" are extremely diverse.

<sup>11</sup> This act of balancing was most explicitly explained to me by women whom I interviewed during a Minor Field Study in Manicaland 1995/96.

<sup>12</sup> An issue, which I have not discussed at all, because I deliberately have avoided asking people to explain how they do sex, is that of dry sex. Dry sex is *said* to be widespread in Southern Africa and is based in a belief that female vaginal fluids are dangerous to male virility and potency. Hence, for a man to enjoy sex (i.e. without fear of losing his potency) his partner has to be "dry", a condition which is contradictory to the biological state of a vagina during intercourse. Women therefore use herbs and other substances to dry their vaginas up in order to please their partners. I think that most women can at least imagine the pain this will cause during intercourse—as well as the power of the one who can make her accept such pain.



bears many children, she will age fast [...] and the husband will go to someone younger' (17).

The manner in which women act to make sex pleasurable to their husbands has changed somewhat and among the youngest interviewees taking the initiative is now included in their strategies: 'The wife can tell the husband what she wants. It's allowed [...] it's the right thing to do [...] in fact he appreciates it because it shows that I love him' (114). Some also directly link their appreciation of their own sexuality to their duties as a wife, hence re-locating women's sexual pleasure—by others defined as promiscuity—to the proper institution of heterosexual marriage:

[Sex is to] consolidate the marriage. Love is all about the husband and wife sleeping together willingly. No one should be forced. [...] The wife can [initiate and] ask the husband [...] he is my husband, why not? If I have the feelings, I tell him. He may not be in the mood but I have to arouse him because he is my husband. (14)

The focus on preventing a husband from having extramarital sexual relationships is closely linked to women's economic dependency on husbands and their in-laws. For women it amounts to unnecessary risk-taking to consider their own pleasure as similarly important, and if they choose divorce (or are divorced) because they are unhappy with the situation, they might lose their children in the process;<sup>13</sup> they lose the little economic support they might have had from their husbands; they become dependants on fathers and brothers;<sup>14</sup> and they become social outcasts. To White women there is often only one major difference in the case of divorce, i.e. most White women have an education to fall back on and probably<sup>15</sup> a broader labour market to enter. In other words the dependency on men through sexual performances structured around male pleasure is one of the central hub around which the hybrid masculinity of colonialism was constructed, and around which it continues to be negotiated and re-constructed.

### **Extramarital sex and "prostitution"**

The quotations above exemplify the Zimbabwean version of a globally spread discourse, by which sexually active girls are defined as

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<sup>13</sup> Despite the changes made to common law, which gives mothers and fathers equal rights to the children, but which often favour the mother (as in contrast to earlier practice) since the children are most often perceived of as more emotionally dependent on their mother than their father.

<sup>14</sup> Which is perceived of as more shameful than being dependent on a husband.

<sup>15</sup> We know close to nothing about contemporary European Zimbabwean women's living conditions, which is why I write *probably*.

"promiscuous" whereas the boys and men they have sex with are generally not demonised. Both women and men should behave according to norm of sexual decency and morality—neither she nor 'he [has] affairs. He does not lust after all beautiful women because there are plenty such women in the country, a man can not get them all (12)—but it is women who implicitly bear the responsibility of immorality:

[In sexual matters a morally sound person is] someone who has dignity. Someone with only one partner. [...] There are some women who have extra-marital affairs. These women are immoral. One who is morally upright has only one man. Even if the husband stays in Bulawayo for ten months for example, a morally upright woman waits for him. (115)

It is also a common understanding that young girls are more "promiscuous" now than they used to be historically. However, the discourse regarding sexual promiscuity and prostitution, whether as commercial sex-work or not has a discursive black-spot: it is believed (but not confirmed) to be more widespread among the African population than among the European.<sup>16</sup> We simply do not know whether Black Zimbabweans are more engaged in extra-marital relationships and prostitution than are White Zimbabweans. However, despite the interviewees' attempts at covering up<sup>17</sup> married White Zimbabweans are of course unfaithful to each other, as married people are and have been across time and space.

there's some [of my friends]having problems in their marriages. [...] ehm... infidelity, is that what you call it? And divorces going on and that kind of stuff... [...] ...ehm... yah the one [is divorcing because of infidelity], the other one the wife doesn't know yet but it's coming. You can see there's problems in the marriage so it must be that, what goes on behind the bedroom doors you don't know, you know what I'm saying? (229)

Two other interviewees claimed that what they called 'wife-swapping'<sup>18</sup> did occur more often before than it does today (it has

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<sup>16</sup> I have not seen one single study or news item regarding prostitution in Zimbabwe, which even consider European prostitution, i.e. regular sex work. This seeming lack of interest and research on European prostitution is most probably reflecting a discursive blindness to its existence rather than its actual non-existence.

<sup>17</sup> The unwillingness to discuss such matters were very clearly spelt out during the interviews, as it was something most of the interviewees claimed they did not have any knowledge of or they described it as happening to people they did not know. The one exception is represented in the quote.

<sup>18</sup> The female sexual passivity inherent in the concept *wife-swapping* is interesting as it emphasises male sexual activity (exchange of women for pleasure) and is totally

diminished due to the Aids risk involved in swapping partners). However, prostitution, i.e. sex work in which money is exchanged with sex was first of all defined as a distinctly female trade, and secondly directly dismissed as non-existing in the 'communities':

it's the same pool of girls... umm... you know, it's four or five girls that are always searching for something, looking, looking, looking and they're the ones who service these sixty men or hundred men in that area... ehm... well that's my... [...] it's definitely not the money or anything. (129)

This 'pool of girls' seems (rather obviously) not to be anything new as other interviewees referring to their youth told stories of young women who for some reason which set them apart from the rest, seemed to wander from one man to the next:

Certainly when I was at school the girls who experimented [sexually] quicker than the rest more or less came from broken homes, or perhaps mother or father had died, or there was some unusual circumstance at home *for* that environment. [...] Well, a couple of them went on to then have a child before they got married and then a line of broken relationships and disasters. (126)

That (young) unmarried women who were and are sexually active might be fewer than those who are not is suggested by one of the older interviewees, who elaborated quite a bit on the consequences of the different conditions for young girls and boys in "the district" regarding sexuality:

I think there is a lot more said, I still believe even today maybe in this society, in our society our kids, I think they talk about having achieved a lot more than they actually achieve in a relationship. Umm... it's you know, if you get young guys together and all of them will have slept with *a* girl or two or three. I really think maybe if one of them has, it might be a lot. (224)

He has the feeling that most girls do not really 'want to sleep with a chap every time they go out with him. If it becomes a special relationship and that happens, it happens, but even then I think its... it doesn't happen that easily' (ibid). He attributes this most probable scenario in "the community" to the fact that girls cannot boost of sexual encounters as can boys:

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negligent of women's possible and in many cases probable (pro-)active sexuality in partner-swapping.

[I]f a girl start talking like that [the bravado of young men] then, and I don't think girls do, because it straight away puts them... they are... for a guy to go and sleep with the girl, it's, it's a tremendous achievement. For a girl, it puts her into a different class straight away. She [...] is now morally worse off than, than her mates or peers or whatever it is and this, this is the sad thing in it.

He explains how a girl might get a bad reputation through the sexually oriented gossip in "the district", a reputation, which for the boy would be one of achievement:

You get a young girl in a district like this, young unmarried girl. Now, if one of these youngsters claim to have slept with her or whatever it is, immediately she is put into a group of immoral type person. She's prepared to sleep around. Every young guy in the district is gonna have a go at her. Whether he does or he doesn't he will say he has. And you got... That young girl will end up with a terrible name and having actually done nothing. And that is where I think a lot of this happens and a lot of girls get bad names, and they've, they've done nothing. But for them to clear their name, it's almost impossible. [...] you will hear of stories and, oh, we have got a friend who one Sunday lunch said to us: "Have you heard about so-and-so?" And [my wife] said: "Careful what you say! You don't know for sure". And he said: "What do you mean? So-and-so told me." She said: "Oh, yah, have so-and-so actually achieved anything, does he *really* know, or has he just heard it at the bar as well?" Too much pop-talk... (224)

His concern is focused on those who have 'done nothing' – or one might suggest those who are able to present an image of having done 'nothing'. That young women might have and possibly also act on sexual desires similar to those of the young, boosting boys seem not really to enter his mind.

The difference to how Black Zimbabweans talked about and perceived especially female pre- and/or extramarital sexuality is vast. It is very explicitly talked about and generally frowned upon – almost to such an extent that one might be led to believe that all young Black women are sexually insatiable. Some women made a connection between male inadequacies and women's infidelity in terms of men not being able satisfy wives sexually (or, wives being too focused on sexual satisfaction), and in terms of not being able to provide wives with essential goods (hence women looking for that somewhere else in exchange for sexual favours). Girls' and young women's perceived uncontrollable sexual behaviour is mostly, however perceived as a loss of feminine dignity, which some directly link to the market, luxury consumption, outside cultural influences and the spread of deadly diseases, foremost HIV/Aids:

Prostitution is now rampant, so most of the girls follow suit. [...] [it is the] [l]ove of money. [...] girls now want European foods. [...] [W]omen love these [soft drinks, cakes an so on] [laughter] [...] people long back were more clever than us, because we are now dying young because of prostitution. [...] money is the root cause. (19)<sup>19</sup>

The use of the expression “prostitute” is highly interesting as it reveals the colonial history of sexualising African women and men. There is a point to be made, namely that prostitution must be understood as different things as most women who are accused of being prostitutes are not sex-workers.<sup>20</sup> On the one hand prostitution, as the quotes above show, defines female non-marital sexuality *as such* as prostitution. Most women who have relationships with married men do so not as sex-workers but as girl friends, some of whom are geared towards securing themselves and their children’s survival and legitimacy as the man might in the end divorce his wife and marry the girlfriend, or bring her into his marriage as a second wife (the latter option is widely despised and hence undesirable). However, seen from the perspective of a wife whose husband has such affairs and relationships, these women who drain resources away from the wife’s family is nothing but a prostitute: she eats while the wife doesn’t. From the perspective of parents and parents-in-law sexually active women also represent trouble, as they destabilise their sons’ and daughters’ marriages. Women’s prostitution as sex work, as well as the practice of men having extra-marital girlfriends is not a new phenomenon in Zimbabwe. It was a planned part of the colonial political economy<sup>21</sup> (but seldom discussed publicly as such) in the same manner as alcoholism among male labourers. It was a lucrative business: ‘women used to get a lot of money from it. When my mother got married, the cattle paid as *roora* for her came from my grandmother who was a successful prostitute’ (115). The duality inherent both in colonial law and policy and in the perception of women as either moral or immoral has survived colonialism in discursive practices. With independence, judicial restrictions on women’s mobility were lifted, while the possibilities of women’s wage

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<sup>19</sup> This love for luxury consumption, which was perceived to drive young women into ‘promiscuous’ behaviour was echoed by a young man (26) living in Harare: ‘Young girls are loose because they want money, so they can buy fashionable clothes, good food etc.’.

<sup>20</sup> Men and their wives refer most often to women with whom men have affairs, i.e. longer or shorter love/sexual relationships.

<sup>21</sup> One might speculate in the possibility that the colonial authorities to some degree saw through their fingers concerning this issue as it might help in diminishing the development of homosexuality among labourers. It is quite well documented at least in South Africa that homosexual activities developed among men who were forced to labour migrate leaving families and wives behind. On the other hand homosexual sex was/is not unusual (Dunton and Palmberg 1996; Aarmo 1999).

earning possibilities were not seriously altered for the vast majority of Zimbabwean women. The petty trading and trading with sexuality and reproduction by women are still one of the avenues of securing economic resources outside marriage. The accusations of women's sexual immorality, especially when formulated by men seem more or less hollow, as many men who wish to control their wives, daughters, daughters-in-law and girlfriends themselves sexually access other women to whom they are not married or whom they do not intend to marry. One such man, who had a personal history of being a sex-worker, and who also had had a series of extra-marital girlfriends explicitly analysed the situation in terms of masculine power:

Once a woman sleeps with more than one man, and if those men are not her husbands, she is automatically a prostitute. And in our society, you see that women are so oppressed that men see themselves as having the right to do what they want. You hear someone saying that: "I can have as many wives as I can". A woman can not do it because of the oppression that has arisen within the society. (22)

The images invoked of the "loose" woman testifies more to the perceived need of being able to differentiate between women who can be "trusted" and those who can not, than to women's actual appearance. Hence a prostitute (any sexually accessible woman) is recognised through 'the way she walks' (12)—a decent woman's walk should show that she is married—and how she dresses: '[s]he wears mini-skirts' (118). This perception is contradicted by a young man, who said that a 'married woman should not wear a dress that has a big vent. People do not respect a woman dressed that way. [...] They [immoral women] dress like that so as to get the attention of men' (26). This focus on correct dressing and bodily appearance is not new as this woman in her mid-fifties can testify to:

Long back, a woman who used to bath more often was taken as a prostitute. [Laughter] I want to tell you the truth. Long back, there were petticoats made from cotton and were coarse. When I came here from Wedza, I brought with me petticoats made of nylon. So whenever I had a bath with other women who had these cotton petticoats, they used to call me a prostitute because of my nylon petticoats. But I did not take it seriously. I knew I was no prostitute. I did not like the cotton petticoats because they had spots on them, which looked like lice and the fabric was hard and coarse.

In a society in which "decent" Black women should not and do not wear trousers one wonders what is left for them to wear, apart from

*zambias*<sup>22</sup> and knee-long skirts. One is left with the impression that being a "decent" woman demands careful policing by the individual woman not only concerning her clothes and awareness of varying dress-codes but also regarding the way she moves. As McFadden (not dated) rightly points out

what is represented in present-day Zimbabwe [...] as decent clothing for women, is really a product of Victorian, white, restrictive notions of sexuality [...] clothing is meant to cover up the female body rather than enhance it and or elicit a celebration of the female self.

The focus on dress-code highlights the perception that women have to hide their bodies and sexuality from preying men—as men tend to view women's bodies and sexuality as arenas over which they may exercise control and enjoy sexual pleasures.

### **'The disease' or the re-making of sexual danger**

Most Zimbabweans are of the opinion that the spread of the HIV virus is caused by an increase in what is referred to as promiscuity and prostitution, in particular women's non-marital sexual behaviour. It matters little that research tends show that it is not necessarily more partners, but the combination of unsafe sexual and medical practices, poor health conditions and poverty, which put people at greater risk in countries such as Zimbabwe (Stillwaggon 2000, 2002 and 2003; Gisselqvist et al. 2002). Those at greatest risk, as far as we know, are Black Zimbabweans, and among them in particular poor women. In short, being white, rich and healthy functions as a barrier to HIV susceptibility.<sup>23</sup> Only one of the interviewees referred (shortly) to the difference in how Aids affects rich and poor Zimbabweans, while the rest focused all their worries on sexual behaviour (as she herself also does in the end), either of their partners or children.

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<sup>22</sup> *Zambia* (or *kanga*) is a piece of ankle-long cloth, which is wrapped around the waist. It is a very practical piece of clothing and is used whenever people (mostly women) do work which might soil their regular clothes.

<sup>23</sup> It is quite well documented that women in Africa *and* elsewhere tend to be more chronically ill than men, both due to practices, which favour male nutrition over female and because they more seldom visit clinics and receive treatment for diseases and ailments (Wisner 1988; Dixon-Mueller 1993; Bandarage 1997; Jackson and Pearson 1998; Sen 2000). Hence, women are even worse off than men when attacked by viral infections such as HIV, to which they are therefore more receptive: they fall ill with Aids more easily and die quicker than men. New South African statistics is an indication of this as the ratio of men to women has changed in South Africa from the natural ratio of slightly fewer men than women in the population to a ratio of 120 men to 100 women (Dr. Alan Whiteside at the University of Natal's Health Economics and HIV/Aids Research Division, quoted in the Cape Times, June 25 2003).

[A]t junior school there are no children there that I know of in the private school where perhaps one of the parents died of Aids and the children have contracted Aids, I don't at this stage, there's not. But then again, you know with good nutrition and that it doesn't make a difference. But it is... there must be HIV at the school I have no doubt of that, you know. (126)

The HIV/Aids discourse in co-operation with the political economy of globalisation, in which poor people are even more marginalised has made sexuality an area of danger and possible death. As such it fits nicely in as yet another technology of fear and control, which has been absorbed by most Zimbabweans: 'I think Aids is a huge worrying factor for young people in this day and age. [...] I think that is a huge factor in any relationship in today's world and time. I think it is a very worrying one, scary' (124). HIV/Aids functions as a moral warning finger wavered against youth and women in particular who do not conform to the rules set by people in powerful positions, whether they be powerful through the purse, politics, religion or otherwise. To the extent that the government *has* had a policy on HIV/Aids<sup>24</sup> it has been focused on sexual education of children and adolescents mainly through school curricula, television and radio: 'Obviously now with the Aids crisis in this country, obviously there is a lot of focus on that and our kids have been made very aware of it at an early age' (126).

In Zimbabwe, HIV/Aids is generally talked about as a "black" disease, not only because the African population is so much larger but also because it is perceived of in terms of "African promiscuity". This however does not mean that White Zimbabweans do not contract the virus and develop the disease. It is just that that is not talked about at all to the same extent.<sup>25</sup> Getting to know anything about HIV among the Whites means dragging it out of people, through talking about Blacks:

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<sup>24</sup> Prior to the published policy of 1999.

<sup>25</sup> The situation is probably similar to that of South Africa, where information on the spread of HIV and its prevalence has 'shocked' the European community and surprised medical professionals: 'the [HIV] rate for whites could be as high as 12 percent...' ([www.iol.co.za](http://www.iol.co.za), December 10 2002) but is *reported* as being 6,2 % which is still six times higher than expected prior to a recent report on HIV/Aids prevalence in South Africa (The Star, December 5 2002). The most "surprising" results of recent research is that 'there was an unexpected high infection rate among White, affluent women in their 40s and early 50s', of which Professor and medical doctor Lynn Webber said 'they are probably not restless in their marriage, but their spouse was'. Interestingly, she talked from within the particular patriarchal masculinity discourse discussed in this chapter as she described men as extra-marital sexual risk-takers and women as sexual victims of it, and defined White *men*, not women as 'particularly at risk' ([www.iol.co.za](http://www.iol.co.za), December 10 2002).



It's just because it's so prevalent here now. To see... I've seen [my wife's] younger sister and she was very promiscuous, I see the youth these days are very promiscuous and in Africa I see... you know labourers of mine dying every week you know...and... ehm... the kids... it's starting to happen now it's... we're told about it and told about it and told about it. You can't say it's Aids but you got a guide to, when it... when a guy dies and his wife dies four weeks later and...

Wanting him to talk about Whites and Aids I asked whether it had come into his family or into other families he knows of. He answers that 'no' not into his family but 'into Black families yeah. My labourers...'. Pressuring him a bit I ask explicitly about the European community and he unwillingly enters a forbidden terrain, which he does not want to enter:

It is, I mean the doctors have told us we... we're involved so heavily in it because the farming community *has* been involved because our survival depends on the labour and, and the doctors have told us "there's several of your friends who've got it". How can I say that it is, he's not allowed to but he's got it in his locality.

The racialised sexuality, which was central to the creation of Rhodesia lingers on, not only in the political economic structures of post-independent Zimbabwe, but also in racialised perceptions of sexual risk and morals. Hence, a bit frustrated, he throws out a 'Yes!' when asked whether it has been found among the White members of the community, and choose to snap the discussion off with a short 'Don't know' (229) when I want to know if he has any idea of how they contracted the disease. However, he "knows" perfectly well how his labourers got 'it'. His refusal to open up for a discussion of 'how they got it' is most likely based in the difficulty of admitting that White Zimbabweans have extra marital sex to any great extent, and in the impossibility of voicing the un-talkable, i.e. that there might have been some sexual race-mixing going on.<sup>26</sup> In other words it might be based in the uneasy feelings of not being as safe as the Whites might have believed they were, through defining HIV/Aids as a "black" disease.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> In Aarmo's study (1999) it is made quite clear just how separate lives Blacks and Whites still live in Zimbabwe. Social cross-racial mixing is very unusual and racism—historical or contemporary—is never really discussed between the groups (when mentioned it is often hurled at a political opponent, it is not discussed and debated as a serious socio-economic and ideological problem). This is a situation, which I recognise, i.e. functions and private parties are often racially homogeneous.

<sup>27</sup> Again I believe that there is a great similarity between Zimbabwe and South Africa: 'many [White South Africans], especially Afrikaners, still believe that Aids was a black man's disease' (Noloyiso Mchunu, *The Mercury*, December 11 2002).

However, while the White interviewees fear for their children's future many of the young and middle-aged Black interviewees fear for their own lives—a difference in fear which both allude to the racial-economic difference between them and to the belief that unsafe (and non-marital) sex is less prevalent among Whites than Blacks. This fear of HIV/Aids was by many of the Black interviewees expressed in terms of being afraid of having sex and of marrying '[b]ecause most newly married couples are dying of diseases' (115). The following captures the contemporary double-ness of sex, i.e. it being connected with both pleasure and death:

Having sex makes one happy in that sex entertains—its part of leisure. Marriage makes one happy in that a married person would get help in many things. [...] People are now afraid of Aids and hence having sex, marrying and having children is now risky. (21)

According to one of the interviewees some people choose to stay single. Maybe they prefer a single life because marriage is a bad option if you value a life on your own (as some urban women do) or because it is too much of a hassle to both administer a wife/husband, girl/boyfriends and safe sex. Because legitimate sex is defined as marital sex most people (particularly women) resort to marriage however, while still being aware that a partner may host the HIV virus, and '[m]oral people are afraid, they can marry immoral people thus get infected' (21). A woman claimed that her husband has Aids because he is unfaithful and she recounts how this has affected their marriage. She is now taking care of their children alone:

I don't know how I can tell my husband about Aids. He is so thick headed. Even if I suggest that we see a doctor, he refuses. He says that I will be accusing him of having extra-marital affairs [...] [H]e won't admit that he is having extra-marital affairs. [...] He simply dismissed it [his illness] as a common ailment. [...] He says that as long as I am married to him, then I should do as he wishes. If not then I should pack my bags and go. [...] He refuses to use [condoms]. According to him, a man should not use a condom on his wife. If I suggest it, he accuses me of suspecting him of having the disease or worse still that I have the disease and do not want to spread it to him. [...] [My marriage is] a loveless one. We cannot talk to each other because we no longer have anything in common. (114)

The sexualised discourse on HIV/Aids, which tend to erase the fact that it is an infectious viral disease, which may be spread in many ways other than through sex, has resulted in a continued sexual

Othering of women within the African community,<sup>28</sup> particularly when they may be accused of immoral behaviour.<sup>29</sup> The common explanation of the spread of STDs in general as well as HIV/Aids in particular is the existence of prostitutes. Barnett and Blaikie (1992: 3f) rightly point out that

suggestions that it [HIV/Aids] is 'caused' by any particular group invite moral panic. [...] Because of its particularly threatening nature, it is also a disease which rapidly becomes socially defined as a disease of 'the impure other'—affecting some culturally defined out-group, homosexuals, black people, foreigners, prostitutes.

The blaming of "others", e.g. of not blaming the sex-customer must be understood not only as a mechanism of distancing one self or ones close relatives from the immorality of buying/having extra-marital sex, but also as a colonial heritage. While simultaneously agitating against prostitution at mines and in towns whereto Blacks labour migrated, the colonial authorities also saw between their fingers regarding women's labour migration and earning through selling homebrewed beer, petty trade and prostitution. Women had few other opportunities to earn an income and hence this developed as the way in which to secure a flow of increasingly necessary financial assets into women's families. Contemporary Zimbabwean practices of exclusion and marginalisation of women on the labour market effectively keep them in informal professions such as petty trading, vending, running of illegal shabeen businesses and prostitution/sugar-daddyism (Barnes and Win 1992; Schmidt 1992; Schlyter 2003; Espling 1999).

According to one of the oldest Black interviewees, Aids appeared in his community for the first time around 1995. They have been witnessing its consequences '[f]or 5 to 6 years now. We started to have Aids victims in 1995' (21). To him, it came with the prostitutes at the different growth points to where young men, among them at least one of his sons, went both for work and leisure: 'Most of the prostitutes became sick and have since died. These are the prostitutes who used to frequent the growth points like Gaza, Dorowa, Murambinda and some even came from the towns. (21). Some of the interviewees claimed that the sudden rise of prostitution, whether perceived or actual, at Murambinda growth point (not very far from Buhera) in the mid-1990s was caused by the musician Obert Mupofu, who released a song called "Murambinda" in which he sings of the women at this

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<sup>28</sup> Internationally it is the African man, however, who are most visibly exploited as sexual threat to women, while African women are portrayed as his truncated and most usual victim, thus reproducing age-old images of the sexualised African.

<sup>29</sup> Such as cross-border trading women, women working in town, unmarried women, women who have strong personal opinions which they willingly share with others etc.

particular growth point. The song is said to have had the effect that women and men travelled to Murambinda to have sex—women as prostitutes/sex-workers and men as their clients.

Despite the very concrete threat to survival, which HIV/Aids poses, it seems difficult to sensitise the youth, whether they are White (as the quotes above illustrate) or Black. One of the older Black men claimed that a man visiting a prostitute these days will be laughed at '[b]ecause everyone is aware of the Aids disease. Why should the man be so stupid?' (21). However, he immediately contradicts himself: 'The young people are not taking any heed, and as a result they are dying. [...] We do advise them all the time, but our advice is falling on deaf ears'.

He is not alone in feeling that it is nearly impossible to control the young's sexual behaviour despite the connections constantly and explicitly made between HIV/Aids, sexuality, morality and death: 'These days, young girls are not decent at all, and they don't fear death. Aids is killing but they take sex as casually as if there is no Aids' (12). The blaming of women, and in particular young women for the spread of HIV and Aids is tightly linked to the gendered and racialised political economy in Zimbabwe. It is not necessarily that young women break or challenge the norms, which has generated the critique and the accusations of promiscuity. The reason might quite simply be that it is more easy to put the blame somewhere close to home when the basis of society is perceived to be torn apart—torn by deadly diseases spreading like epidemics, a successively worsening local economic situation, soaring formal and informal unemployment, declining interests in indigenous knowledge and the preservation of customs. It might just be easier to blame dysfunctional marriages on a daughter-in-law's sexual and reproductive disrespect for the elders, than on historical and contemporary global political economic structures.

# Chapter 6

## **Fertility control: masters or mistresses of reproduction?**

Unlimited and uncontrolled childbearing is, I would argue not the most usual preference in any society, even though I assume that there will always be a few persons in all societies who believe that one should not attempt to control childbearing at all. In Zimbabwe, women have through history had and passed on knowledge both of contraception and of methods that will 'make you a virgin again'. Often those women being knowledgeable of the former also have knowledge of the latter, and the reason is perhaps that sexuality and reproduction so fundamentally intersect in people's everyday lives. On the one hand sexuality, apart from being pleasurable, is a means of keeping a relation together as well as securing access to monetary assets, on the other it might lead into unwanted pregnancies, which are averted or terminated through the use of a variety of contraceptive and abortive methods. This is also an area of concern, which is common to all fecund women living in heterosexual relationships, i.e. the fear of unwanted/unplanned pregnancies, and the search for methods to avoid it. Hence women will have, and have always had a variety of means through which they attempt and succeed in controlling their reproduction, not only in societies featuring low fertility. That is, they have found and continue to find means through which they may limit their childbearing and through which they are able to have and enjoy sex without fearing pregnancy. This chapter follows up the issue of sexuality, through focusing on discourses on contraception, i.e. on the measures taken to avoid the otherwise not so unusual consequences of heterosexual sexuality and intercourse, i.e. pregnancy.

### **Knowledge and use of contraceptives in Zimbabwe**

The scientific control of reproduction is very recent while the attempts at controlling reproduction are most probably as old as the human being. However, the efficiency and discursive effectiveness<sup>1</sup> of

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<sup>1</sup> By discursive effectiveness I mean both the effectiveness of bringing out the methods, the effectiveness of the modernist discourse on technology as successfully replacing

technological fertility control seems to be knocking out older methods at a fast rate in countries such as Zimbabwe. In a White context I doubt that there are any widespread knowledge of indigenous fertility control, except maybe for the withdrawal method and possibly the Lactational Amenorrhoea Method (LAM),<sup>2</sup> i.e. breastfeeding. This holds true also of the European diaspora in Zimbabwe, at least if I consider the knowledge of methods among the interviewees, who implicitly or explicitly define themselves as belonging to the European cultural and “civilisational” sphere of which technological fertility control is perceived of as civilised and enlightened – or in other words *effective* as in contrast to the perceived ineffectiveness of indigenous or “traditional” methods.

The tendency of a declining knowledge of indigenous methods of fertility control is spelled out in the 1999 Zimbabwean DHS.

Knowledge of contraception, percentage of all women who know contraceptive methods				
	1984	1988	1994	1999
<b>Any modern method:</b>	unknown	95.4	97.5	96.7
<b>Any traditional method:</b>	unknown	75.3	67.8	58.8

Figure 2: Knowledge of contraceptive methods among women in Zimbabwe. Deduced from Zimbabwe Demographic and Health Survey 1999, table 5.3 ‘Trends in knowledge of family planning methods’.

The table shows not only that the knowledge of technological methods of fertility control are replacing the indigenous but also that the knowledge as such of technological fertility control is widespread in Zimbabwe, a fact which sets Zimbabwe apart from most sub-Saharan African countries – in other words, the family planning efforts of both Rhodesian and Zimbabwean governments and non-governmental organisations have been quite effective. According to the 1999 DHS, 60.8% of all women between 15-49 have at some point used technological methods of fertility control, while only 16.6% had

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other discourses, and the perceived effectiveness of the methods as such in comparison with indigenous methods. I have no opinion on whether the technologically based methods are more or less effective than certain indigenous methods, but choose to be open to the possibility that other methods might be as effective.

<sup>2</sup> LAM is different from just relying on continuous breastfeeding as a contraceptive method. LAM as a relatively safe contraceptive method means that certain criteria must be strictly observed, i.e. the woman has to *exclusively/fully* breastfeed the baby, she must be *less* than 6 months postpartum and she must be postpartum amenorrhoeic (i.e. her menstruation must not yet have resumed after birth).

used indigenous methods. The percentage of women who currently used a technological fertility control method was in 1984 26.6 and in 1999 50.4—a rise of almost 100% in 15 years.<sup>3</sup> Simultaneously, current use of indigenous methods dropped, from 11.8% in 1984 to 3.2% in 1999 (DHS 1999, table 5.4). Further more Zimbabwean men even seem to be slightly *better* informed about technological methods of fertility control than women (ibid, table 5.1).<sup>4</sup> Yet again the difference to most other sub-Saharan African countries is remarkable.

### **Different views and different methods of fertility control**

Many Zimbabwean women apparently believe that most of the indigenous methods, which the Black interviewees describe, are less effective methods of fertility control than the technological ones. Technological fertility control is focused solely on preventing conception,<sup>5</sup> while indigenous methods are often focused on controlled re-generation of society. In addition to this difference, technological contraception does have negative side effects, which most of the indigenous methods do not have. However, what is interesting about indigenous fertility control methods is that they exist, and that there are such a vast number of them. The plethora of indigenous fertility control methods evidence the need women (couples and communities) have of being in control of reproduction. There are methods, which are more or less global, there are those typical of Sub-Saharan Africa (such as the *mutimwi*, or fertility belt, see below), and those, which seem to be more or less individually created means of attempted control. Below I will focus on the local arena of fertility control and the interests in it among different groups of people. Roughly one might say that there is a difference between the younger and the older interviewees as well as a difference between those living in Harare and those who stay in the rural areas, and between White and Black Zimbabweans (the latter will be discussed at the end of the chapter).

The trend of declining knowledge of indigenous methods of fertility control seems to be coupled to a decline in information from

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<sup>3</sup> The latest census and DHS (2004) has not yet been published.

<sup>4</sup> While women seem to be slightly better informed than men about indigenous methods (ibid).

<sup>5</sup> Feminist activists have increasingly under the last decades pointed out several problems related to the technological fertility control methods, which have been spread throughout the world via family planning programmes, especially in the South and in poor communities in the North (see Sen and Snow 1994 and Ginsburg and Rapp 1995 for a broad collection of essays on this and related issues). Among these Snow points out that 'there has been *undue emphasis on effectiveness* at the expense of safety or acceptability' (1994: 234, my emphasis).

older to younger generations.<sup>6</sup> This is indicated not only in the 1999 DHS (table 5.4) but also in my field data. Young women and men were considerably less knowledgeable of indigenous methods than they were of the technological ones, except from the popular variant of LAM and the withdrawal method. The older interviewees however could mention a plethora of indigenous methods in addition to the newer ones. There were among them one, which is found in many other parts of Sub-Saharan Africa, as well as methods based on herbs that should be chewed, cooked and/or disposed of/used in different ways. The latter are methods, which have probably been used throughout human history<sup>7</sup> and which are also widespread globally.<sup>8</sup>

The use of contraception needs to be placed in a context where sexuality and reproduction is intertwined as parts of many women's survival strategies. In other words contraception is not only conceptualised as a means to avoid unwanted pregnancies, but as tool to master a situation, which would otherwise be uncontrollable. Through contraception, women may themselves determine (without direct consent by anyone) when their sexuality should be reproductive and not, considering their own, as well as husbands' or other peoples wishes. The ideal is that wife and husband agree on planning their family, but many particularly among the older interviewees claimed that the responsibility often fall on women, because, as it was put by one woman 'men always want to have sex, so it's up to the wife to see to it that some of these sexual activities don't result in unwanted pregnancies' (11). The means by which this is done varies of course, but all aim at controlling and managing fertility as '[t]hey [people in previous times] did family plan. We planned our families so that we could space our children' (213). The one method of fertility control which is known in large parts of Sub-Saharan Africa, and which is mentioned by the older interviewees is in Shona known as the use of the *mutimwi*: '[W]here I come from, the

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<sup>6</sup> Those who know that people used herbs as contraceptives in earlier days claimed that they did not know which herbs were used. The loss of knowledge seems to be more related to the kind of herbs involved than to the concept of using herbs as such. As they do not know the specific herbs they cannot use the methods, even if they should want to do so.

<sup>7</sup> Historical evidence is of course difficult to find but concerning Zimbabwe David Beach refers to a Portuguese writer (around the 1780s) claiming that 'many Manyika [of the Eastern Highlands and Mozambique] women were taking medicines to avoid pregnancy' (1990: 184).

<sup>8</sup> I do not want to completely rule out the possibility that certain herbs might have contraceptive effects when prepared/used a specific way. Herbs have always been used for different ailments, cures and preventive efforts and many have turned out to be rather effective also by Western medical scientific standards. One can therefore not rule out that such knowledge does exist locally in Zimbabwe as well as in other regions – one might even fear that such knowledge have been lost particularly in the North because of the focus on technological rather than herb-based medication.



wife ties some herbs around her waist. The couple can make love, but no pregnancy occurs. When then couple is ready for the next child, the wife simply unties the string of herbs and she falls pregnant' (21). Another man described the idea of the *mutimwi* in some more detail:

Women used to wear beads around the waist. Now, [...] the beads were also put such that the woman appeared to wearing beads only whilst in actual fact some herbs were there as well. Women nowadays don't want to wear these beads. [...] Every woman was supposed to have them. They were supposed to look beautiful wearing them. [...] Women tend to forget especially when using the pill, [which is] unlike traditional methods, because once the string has been tied around the waist, the woman forgets about it. Long back, if a woman did not have this string of beads, the husband had to pay one head of cattle to the in-laws when she died. [...] [After the wedding it was] the husband bought the beads for his wife. (214)

All children including boys were supposed to be provided with a *mutimwi* at birth, but only girls were supposed to wear it throughout their lives. A second *mutimwi* should be given the girl upon her first menstruation and served to protect her virginity until marriage. When she married her husband would get her a new one, which served as a protection against unwanted pregnancies. The *mutimwi* was a marker also of fertility/good health in that it served to hinder pregnancies which would otherwise occur pre-maturely, i.e. before the last born was old enough to be weaned and the mother healed and fit enough for another pregnancy. The idea of protecting women from getting pregnant too early after a birth is recognised also when Aschwanden wrote that people he had talked to claimed that 'God would be angry if we begot more and more children all the time instead of thinking of the welfare of those we already have' (1982: 212). This means that there was a whole "package" of ideas and discourses on virginity, fertility and measures of control, both of the young unmarried woman and later of her marital reproduction. Importantly the control over the *mutimwi* was not hers alone, it belonged to the couple and ultimately to the husband who was the one who removed it when they/he deemed it was time for another child.

The use of fertility belts is found also in other parts of Africa, and the various uses of herbs to be chewed, pounded, brewed, swallowed, inserted, hung somewhere or thrown away in various ways also mentioned by the interviewees, are more or less common to all societies in which technological fertility control is not generally used or known.

However, most Zimbabwean women today rely more on technological methods of fertility control than on indigenous, and most of them use the contraceptive pill or the Depo-Provera injection

(DHS 2000). However, for those who can afford it and live close by a family planning clinic or a private practitioner who has it, there is also IUDs and implants, as well as the diaphragm, the female and the male condom<sup>9</sup> and the contraceptive sheath CARE. The four last options, however require that couples communicate openly about sexuality, reproduction and contraceptive methods, while the former do not. It is interesting to note that commercial ads for contraception are almost solely for the male condom and the contraceptive sheath, both of which protect not only against unwanted pregnancies but also against STDs. Such commercials tend to put focus on the rich and the beautiful, which are also advertised as happy, successful and responsible people who apparently talk sex with each other. The television ad for CARE was shown regularly on television during my fieldwork in 2000. The logo of the package is the male/female symbols and the colour of it is light rose. In the ad a young, very good looking Black woman, who is obviously very successful—she lives in a nice sub-urban house, which is well furnished—says that there are many important choices to be made in life (indicating that of correct appearance by choosing among her many fancy suits), such as education (her British English is perfect), health and of course in matters of 'love'. In contrast to most Zimbabwean women, she actually *has* alternatives to make choices from, which is a distinct marker of individuality *and* success. She says she has chosen to use CARE, which protects both against pregnancies and STD's (which she apparently needs to be protected from to save herself if her choice of partner should turn out to be “wrong”)—she takes care of herself. Now we see her boyfriend approaching the house, saying essentially the same things. He holds a beautiful bouquet of long, perfect red roses and baby's breath. He knocks on the door. She opens, laughs towards him and says that he is obviously a right choice. The latest variant of televised ads for condoms I observed was shown in 2003, and differed from earlier ads, which had been rather boring and informative. This one, however, used humour and played on the shyness of young people who do not want to admit to having anything to do with sex. An adolescent boy in his mid-teens is at the local shop in a rural area, possible at a growth point somewhere. He wants to buy condoms but does not dare. While asking the increasingly irritated young man behind the counter for different kinds of odd groceries, he steals glances at the condom packages on the counter. Then, a very successful, rich young and good-looking man (modern one can tell from his fashionably dreaded hair and nicely designed leather jacket) enters the shop, takes a package of condoms, smiles and pays it—he leaves in clouds of dry dust caused

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<sup>9</sup> Most of the male interviewees perceived of the male condom, not as a contraceptive but as a method to avoid STDs.

by the speed of his very expensive car. The teenager watches the whole scene and decides to play rich and confident, takes a package of condoms and pays it with a smile.

While the mediation of correct behaviour between generations, as in the condom ad is historically rooted in indigenous practices, the open communication on sex among couples, explicitly and implicitly depicted in both ads, is according to historians and anthropologists who have worked in Zimbabwe not usual. Sexuality and reproduction were, historically, taboo issues, which should not be discussed between parents and children, siblings or between such people who may have sex (i.e. get married) with each other.<sup>10</sup> It is strictly an issue, which young women and men should be informed about by specific relatives such as the *vatete* (father's sister), *ambuya* (grandmother) or *sekuru* (grandfather) respectively (Weinrich 1983; Gelfand 1992b; Bourdillon 1991 and 1993). Some historians believe that such education for young women was one of the central roles of the historical Shona queens and that the huge cone-shaped constructions at Great Zimbabwe played a role in this sex and marriage education of Shona youth in that area at the time of the Zimbabwe kingdom (see for instance Huffman 1987).

The older interviewees testified to the silence between spouses both concerning sexuality (as discussed briefly in the previous chapter) and fertility control. To them fertility control is either up to the woman since she is the one with the ultimate control over the couple's fertility as the husband can not make her pregnant by force, or it is an issue which is mediated through the expressed wish for another child by the husband. The discourse concerning female control of a couple's reproduction is flawed however. Both women and men maintain that it is up to the wife and/or God to decide, but this is immediately contradicted by statements such as 'I wanted as many as she could produce' (216, my emphasis) or '[l]ong back, men did not have a say in family sizes. They [men] let the women have children as many as naturally possible' (110, my emphasis). However, controlling one's fertility is easier when it comes to having many children than when one wants to restrict ones childbearing. This, i.e. bearing *more* children than decided or wanted, might be one reason for the claim that women are the mistresses of reproduction. This is indicated by many of the women, who said that if they for some reason decide to have another child, despite their husbands' wish not to have any more, they will simply get pregnant and 'pretend it's an

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<sup>10</sup> Things are changing in Zimbabwe because of the HIV/Aids pandemic. The taboo on discussing sexuality and reproduction was, as shown in chapter 2, an important objection against family planning in the 1966 debate. It was also one of the objections in Parliament, against the adoption of the guidelines of the ZNFPC in 1984, and the ICPD PA in 1995.

accident [...] it's attributed to being a mistake' (15). The opposite is far more problematic however. A woman who decides not to have any more children might run into troubles if she is determined and if her husband or his parents want her to have additional children.<sup>11</sup> She needs to secure her position as a good reproducer before she can successfully refuse to bear more children, as is witnessed by some of the younger women interviewed. In that case she might decide as a few of the interviewed have done to take the pill (or another technological method) secretly, and tell the husband that she is 'failing to conceive' (113).

When the contraceptive pill arrived on the scene in the area of research,<sup>12</sup> men attempted to avoid this possible female control, and 'men collected the family planning pills for their spouses [...] [t]o avoid secret family planning by the women' (217). The wish to avoid the secret taking of pills by wives who attempted to control their fertility on their own prompted a direct involvement of men into what is claimed to be a sphere of female control. This concern about women's sole control of contraception brings to the fore a conflict between the new fertility control methods and the old constructed around male fear of loss of men's power and decision making over female sexuality and reproduction. The anxiety is expressed through the claim that women who take the pill (or other invisible contraceptive such as the Depo-Provera injections) are planning on their own when ideally planning should be done by the couple together, or ultimately by the husband. In addition, the pill is believed by many older people to cause infidelity on the part of women, because they do not fear falling pregnant with another man than their husband. Considering these two aspects of the opposition against the pill (and other technological fertility control methods) as an expression of male fear of losing control over women's sexuality and reproduction opens up to a questioning also of indigenous methods. Why is it that a woman taking the pill is more prone to infidelity than one who bears the *mutimwi* or takes herb concoctions? All three

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<sup>11</sup> According to a number of reports from women's organisations many of the women who in this manner try to control their reproduction are divorced, battered and/or killed by their husbands when pills are discovered. The interviewees did not bring up this particular problem but they still struggle with other people's demands on their reproduction. This will be discussed in the next chapter.

<sup>12</sup> The interviewees did not mention the specific time but according to one interviewee (115), there used to be many more children born in the village up to 1985 than thereafter. From this indication one might suspect that the pill, and *maybe* the Depo-Provera injection appeared on a general level in the area in the mid 1980s. Generally, Zimbabwean fertility levels dropped from the early 1980s to the early 1990s. According to Hill and Marindo (1997: 2) 'the 1982 and 1984 CEB [children ever born] distributions are similar, but from 1984 to 1994, the average CEB declines in almost every age group for almost every period [measured between 1980 and 1994], suggesting a fertility decline in all reproductive ages'.

methods protect against pregnancy, and at least two of them are invisible. A woman wearing the *mutimwi* is visibly married but if she and her secret lover do not mind the belt (or string) she could easily have sex without, according to beliefs, fearing pregnancy.<sup>13</sup>

The answer, I would argue is that as long as men are involved and implicitly perceive themselves as those who *ultimately* control female sexuality and reproduction (through pills, concoctions, fertility belts or any other method) they will go along with most kinds of contraceptives. The major problem arises when women *de facto* decide that this is a matter of their own conscience and wishes. Female control over reproduction leads to male insecurity over matters perceived of as greater than her personal whims—matters of politics, societal survival and future economic security.<sup>14</sup> In any society political, economic and religious interests are invested in the social structures constructed and reproduced to support the discursive practices of the society and its socio-economic organisation. The very reproduction of a society is dependent on the fertility of its members, hence the control of fertility is central. In patriarchal societies the main institutional, political, economic, social and religious interests rests with men, in particular men of certain positions, and hence they have vested interests in the control of women's sexuality and reproduction, i.e. in the controlled, physical regeneration of a society in which they hold power. When women demand to be in control of their reproduction they challenge men's patriarchally legitimate claims to control, to power. Bourdillon (1993) and Stewart and Sithole (2000) claim that the conservatism among elders and men is based in the fear of loss of control of the young and of women. This conservatism also create tensions within families as

The young [are] constantly resisting and seeking to lessen the control of elders and tradition, while the elders [are] seeking to maintain and impose their views, authority and interpretation of tradition on the young. (Stewart and Sithole 2000: 60)

The objective of the attempted conservation of practices is to maintain the claimants' position of power in a fading, contemporary or emerging social, political and economic structure. The struggle over what kind of contraceptive methods to be used by women represents

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<sup>13</sup> That married women were sometimes unfaithful is indicated in the saying that severe problems during labour occurred when the father of the child was another man than the woman's husband. Only upon telling his name could the child be delivered without problems and both mother and child survived.

<sup>14</sup> As discussed in chapter 2, such fears were expressed by African politicians during the parliamentary debate in 1966, which fed into the threats by male nationalists during the liberation war of increased African reproduction as a weapon against the Rhodesian regime.

such an area of attempted conservation. The position of power afforded men with large families, i.e. men who are able to control the reproductive growth of a patri-lineage is perceived of as important, at least by the older generations. The shifting over of fertility control from the older generation to the young couple thence is perceived of as worrying:

[young couples] are having few children, but... [...] I am not happy about it. Family names should live on, and this can only be done by having many children. [...] [a] man with a large family commands more respect as compared to one with a small family. [...] I am afraid, my family name is going to disappear. (217)

In one particular way this strategy of conservation is effective. There is a widespread belief, especially among the male interviewees that technological methods of fertility control affect women, men and children negatively. However, these attempts are obviously not really successful as a steady growing number of women (and men) use these methods. Several of the interviewees claim what is also reflected in the DHS (2000), i.e. that most people are using technological methods of fertility control mixed with breastfeeding and the withdrawal method.

### **Eugenics and technological fertility control**

The donor community's view of non-White reproduction is one in which non-White reproduction is less wanted than White—because it endangers women's lives, threatens global political security, economic development and the environment.<sup>15</sup> The arguments are not too different from those of the debate in the Rhodesian Parliament in 1966. Population growth among non-Whites is in popular and political European discourse portrayed as threatening, both politically, economically, racially and lately also religiously. The eugenic<sup>16</sup> background of contemporary population policy and its advocates has roots back to Malthus' blaming of the English Poor

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<sup>15</sup> As discussed shortly in the introduction.

<sup>16</sup> According to Ross the term *eugenics* was conceived by Francis Galton in 1883 (in *Inheritance of Human Faculties*) 'as the means by which the physical and moral attributes of a population might be improved by selective breeding which favoured the increased genetic representation of those who were considered to possess more of what he variously called "natural ability" and "civic worth". It was taken for granted by Galton and other eugenicists that such qualities generally were distributed throughout the population in a manner which reflected social classes, and that such classes themselves reflected the intrinsic character of their members' (Ross 1998: 60). Eugenics thereby attempted to define those groups within a population, which were 'genetically inferior' and to minimise their reproduction.

Laws<sup>17</sup> for the ills afflicting English society in the 18<sup>th</sup> century (Ross 1998), and of the misinterpretations of his 1798 essay. To Malthus, the reproduction among the poor strata of the population was a threat to the survival of society, but the poor themselves did not necessarily cause it:

To remedy the frequent distresses of the common people, the poor laws of England have been instituted; but it is to be feared, that though they have alleviated a little the intensity of individual misfortune, they have spread the general evil over a much larger surface. (Malthus 1798: 30)

Malthus blamed population growth among the British poor foremost on the Poor and the Parish laws rather than on the poor themselves. He perceived of poverty as a check on population growth 'which is already begun' (ibid: 29), rather than a cause of it. Increased fertility is, according to Malthus the result of a combination of *better* living conditions among the poor, and badly conceived economic policies.<sup>18</sup> However, the argument that social welfare tends to increase fertility among the receivers was adopted without any of the theoretical nuances presented by Malthus in 1798. Hence, in the Malthusian discourse<sup>19</sup> the poor themselves are blamed for their poverty. The "naturalness" of poverty as a consequence of excessive reproduction was successively to be explained by the lack of 'middle-class virtues such as prudence, foresight and the capacity to manage their affairs in a rational manner' among the poor (Ross 1998: 60). With the rise of eugenics in European thought in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century this lack of middle-class 'virtues' became ascribed to the perceived genetic deficiencies of the poor. This line of thought was compelling to population debaters and researchers of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and has continued to yield great influence on research and theorisation also

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<sup>17</sup> I.e. 18<sup>th</sup> century English social security for the poorest strata of the population.

<sup>18</sup> The essay is in many respects a heavy attack on Adam Smith's economic theory, and on the focus on international luxury trade instead of on domestic agricultural production. He was at odds with what he perceived as the inevitable consequences of this, i.e. growing numbers of poor people and rising prices on essential goods such as meat and bread.

<sup>19</sup> That is the class-, race- and sexist discourse constructed around some of the arguments presented by Malthus in 1798. The Malthusian discourse differs in many respects from the principles and arguments outlined by Malthus in his essay on population. The Malthusian discourse has incorporated influences, which Malthus might not have agreed with if he had lived to see them. This does not mean, however that Malthus' essay was free of neither class- nor sexism, but rather that he debated his principles in quite a different manner than Malthusianists and their opponents tend to do. Therefore one might also argue that Malthus has been and continues to be misread and misinterpreted. The interests involved both in heralding and in dethroning him are, understandingly too strong for a more complex discussion of his essay in this thesis.

throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The early history both of the Planned Parenthood Federation and Western colonial as well as non-colonial governments is one of classical Malthusianist upper and middle class fears of the poor, which was during the height of colonialism extended to include non-Whites:

[Margaret] Sanger [of the US branch of the International Planned Parenthood Federation]<sup>20</sup> was looking for an oral contraceptive that would be easy to use because she believed that poorer people were less adept at using what were then the most widely used contraceptive methods or practices, namely the diaphragm, vaginal douche, condom, rhythm method or withdrawal. Like many of her contemporaries, Sanger was worried about 'racial suicide' in the USA, fearing that poor, particularly black, people would 'outbreed' white, middle-class Americans. Although initially women-centred, her perspective had gradually shifted towards a eugenic point of view as she declared in 1919, 'More children from the fit, less from the unfit—that is the chief issue of birth control'. (Richter 1996: 2)

The knowledge was already in place at that time but the development of an oral, hormonal contraceptive had been prevented because of the sexual-moral decay generally imagined to be the result of widespread use of such a contraceptive, fears also expressed by Rhodesians in the late 1950s and by Black Zimbabwean men from the 1960s onwards. It was the class- and race fears of the White middle- and upper classes, expressed by Sanger, which set development in motion when she asked a reproductive scientist (Gregory Pincus) to undertake this development. However, it lasted until the second half of the 1950s until it, the contraceptive pill, was marketed (Greer 1984; Richter 1996).<sup>21</sup>

The European and North American 1960s are often referred to as the decade of the sexual revolution, a revolution, which is widely attributed to the introduction of the pill. One would believe that this very quick acceptance of and steadily increased use of the pill should have led the pharmaceutical companies into further developments of hormonal contraceptives, but this is not so. The many lawsuits against

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<sup>20</sup> The American Birth Control Federation changed its name in 1948 to the Planned Parenthood Federation of America (becoming a chapter of IPPF). The first president of the re-organised ABCF was Margaret Sanger 'and its board of directors included former presidents of the American Eugenics Society and the *race* Betterment Conference' (Ross 1998: 73).

<sup>21</sup> It is interesting to note how quickly the pill was introduced in Rhodesia as it indicates that the idea of Rhodesian society being isolated from and hence "behind" the rest of the world with which Rhodesians would like to be compared, i.e. Europe and the USA, might not have been a fact of the 1950s but rather a result of the UDI policy of the 1960s and -70s.



the pharmaceutical industry because of side-effects (of which some resulted in handicapped children being born) meant that most of these firms pulled out of research and development of new technologies. According to Richter 'such companies have helped to perfect and market new contraceptives only if they are satisfied that there will be sufficient profit potential and that the research institutions have fostered public acceptability for these methods' (Richter 1996: 4). Developing new medicines and technologies are an expensive and risky business, and the profits might not come at the end of the day if the general public perceive the products as hazardous, i.e. the experiences of the first two decades of the pill and other hormonal and non-hormonal contraceptives should have put further developments on a halt. However, profit is not the driving force behind the development of the latest technological contraceptive methods (e.g. Depo-Provera, Norplant<sup>®</sup>, the contraceptive vaccines). When the pharmaceuticals pulled out private foundations, international organisations such as the WHO and governmental institutions and university departments entered the arena, i.e. private and public money with different objectives than regular investment for profit. The interests are, I would argue, to be found in classical political considerations of threats to the elite's wealth and economic development—in this case that of the West. Countering this possible threat might be an expensive enterprise but worthwhile, especially if it might be dressed up in acceptable language, and hence be embraced even by groups, which are usually critical (such as feminists, rights-, health- and environmental activists etc.).

Within the research institutions/foundations/organisations which took on or were given the assignment, the search for a long-lasting, cost-effective, immunological contraceptive has resulted in the development of different immuno-contraceptives, popularly called pregnancy 'vaccines' by those who favour them (Richter 1996; Bandarage 1997). The first, but failed attempts at developing contraceptive 'vaccines' focused on immunisation against egg- and sperm cells, e.g. vaccination of females<sup>22</sup> with live sperm, in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century (Richter 1996). However, the idea of immunisation against egg or sperm cells have since the 1970s developed into ideas and products which attempt to immunise women against pregnancy hormones, or in a different wording: to immunise women against parts of themselves, i.e. substances produced within their own bodies. Simply put, immunisation means that either a pregnancy would be barred (as is the case with contemporary methods), or that a pregnancy would be attacked as if it was a disease, not very different to how the body, through immunisation attacks viral diseases:

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<sup>22</sup> Trials never left the animal testing phase.

the objective [of immunological intervention] being to use the body's own immune system to provide protection against unwanted pregnancy [i.e. against products of that very body] in essentially the same way that it provides protection against unwanted diseases [products foreign to the body]. In other words to develop a fertility regulating vaccine. (Griffin 1992 cited in Richter 1994: 215)

The story of vaccination against diseases is one of the great success stories of the medicinal history not only because vaccinations against a number of fatal diseases have saved millions of lives, but also because it has become *accepted* as effective even in the most remote places, and hence *requested* on a global scale. According to 1991 Population Council senior advisor Sheldon J. Segal '[i]mmunization against specific diseases has proven to be the most effective approach available for disease prevention. It may also become a technology for pregnancy prevention' (cited in Richter 1996: 215). The 'vaccine' metaphor of the reproductive research community has developed the central health argument of the racial hygiene discourse into one in which non-White pregnancies are defined as a disease, which may be eradicated or brought under control through vaccination. The vaccines are primarily developed for use in the South, not in the North: 'new methods of birth control are necessary to halt, and ultimately reverse, [the] inexorable trend in population growth' (Henderson, Hulme and Aitken 1987, cited in Richter 1996: 213). As the North do not experience a 'population explosion' or pregnancy epidemic – but rather the opposite – these researchers clearly have the South in mind, and maybe even what has lately come to be known as the South in the North, i.e. poor, non-White communities with perceived or actual higher fertility rates than the surrounding White society.<sup>23</sup>

One of the arguments of the researchers involved in immuno-contraceptive development is that it might be distributed through the regular health systems in the South, and dispensed alongside vaccines against fatal diseases. This of course has, to those involved in technological fertility control, an appealing side; it would be easy to distribute, it is imagined, because people are already used to vaccines as something positive.<sup>24</sup> However, the metaphor of 'vaccination' against pregnancy might jeopardise the general acceptability of vaccines against disease, because people are afraid, wise from experiences, that regular vaccines might be exchanged or mixed with

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<sup>23</sup> Such communities have been and continues to be targets of family planning programmes designed in the same manner as family planning programmes in the South (Bordo 1995; Mullings 1995; Bandarage 1997)

<sup>24</sup> Probably it is also favoured because clients would ask fewer questions as it thereby being so obviously linked to better health.

anti-pregnancy vaccines.<sup>25</sup> Being wise from previous experiences is in some cases counterproductive. The rumour that condoms are infected with HIV/Aids to kill off Blacks is an example of how experiences of medical research and health sector abuse is sometimes turned into false accusations against donors and the medical industry. However, in other cases the experiences of such abuse are very real, as in the history of contraceptive technology testing or the indiscriminate distribution of dangerous contraceptives. When researchers deem the time proper to test new contraceptives on human beings they do not choose to test them on upper- and middle class White women, partly because it is deemed unethical in the North, and partly because such women would probably not want to enter into such testing schemes, since the health risks are too great. In other words, a well informed, well off woman would either not be allowed by her government to be included or she would refuse. Neither applies to women in the South, and in some cases not even to poor and/or non-White women in the North (Floreman 1981; Richter 1996; Mullings 1995; Bandarage 1997; Sillman and King 1999). This means first of all that the health, well-being and in some instances the life of poor women in the South is threatened by testing, and secondly that the health, well-being and maybe to some degree the life of women in the North buying and using the end product is threatened as well. By testing on poor women in the South, a number of research problems arise. The obvious problem of research ethics includes the health risks the women are exposed to, the low level of information if any about the product they receive—if they are informed at all that they are involved in testing that is. Apart from this there are pure clinical problems attached to testing of this kind: the women are often in a bad nutritional and health condition, the researchers are often unable to keep track of those women they are testing the contraceptive on (hence there is a tendency to disperse the contraceptive widely in the hope of getting enough feed-back), the medical follow-up of the women is often non-existent or very poor (Floreman 1981). The result is that the marketing of the products are either delayed many years because testing is prolonged, endangering the lives of an unnecessarily great number of women and their dependants on the way, or the products are marketed prematurely, which also risk the health and well-being of women and their dependants. The testing of both Depo-Provera and Norplant had a number of these characteristics, and both contraceptives have been introduced on the European and North American markets much later than in many countries in the South with the argument that they were not safe

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<sup>25</sup> This has already happened in as diverse places as the Philippines, India, Tanzania, Peru and Mexico (Richter 1996).

enough<sup>26</sup>—more testing was needed (ibid). Interestingly, Norplant<sup>®</sup><sup>27</sup> has not come into regular use neither in the South nor in the North, but have in some instances been used with force ‘inserted in women convicted of drug- or other criminal offences’ in the USA (Richter 1996). Depo-Provera, an injection, is however very popular, both among family planning personnel because it is effective and easy, and among women because it is invisible and does not last too long.

The discourse of those involved in reproductive research is not only one in which non-White pregnancy is discursively defined as a disease, which may be vaccinated away, but also one in which acceptable language is being deployed to mask the eugenic aspects of it. The fertility ‘vaccines’ is presented as protecting against ‘unwanted pregnancies’ (feminist activist discourse) in the same way as we have used various vaccines, which provide protection against ‘unwanted diseases’ (health discourse). Furthermore, it is argued that both women and family planners ask for long-lasting, cost-effective, invisible contraceptives. Women want them to be able to contracept without significant others’ knowledge and family planners want it because they see a need to diminish “user failure”. In the first argument there are two interweaving discourses, i.e. one of the demographic concept unmet need and one borrowed from feminism concerning women’s inability to negotiate reproduction in the face of male power. In the second argument women are discursively constructed as bad or ignorant pill-takers and condom-, diaphragm-, spermicide-, etc.- users. They are not defined as actors who have decided for some reason, be it health related, economic and/or reproductive, to interrupt and/or discontinue contraception.

The major problems, apart from the side effects (e.g. untimely and excessive bleeding, headaches, sterility etc.) with the new immuno-contraceptives and the Depo-Provera is that they are irreversible for a certain period of time (between three months and several years) as soon as they have been injected/taken<sup>28</sup> and they are expert-dependent, i.e. the user has no control over the effect of the contraceptive during the period it is supposed to be effective. This means that if the life of the user changes and she wants to have another child, or if she experiences side effects, which she feels she cannot live with, she has no possibility of reversing the contraceptive. This is to some degree true also of Norplant<sup>®</sup> and IUDs, in that the

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<sup>26</sup> Which was also the argument used by the first Zimbabwean government when it banned Depo-Provera in 1980.

<sup>27</sup> An example of the racial and class-ist discourses surrounding expert rather than user controlled contraceptives such as Norplant<sup>®</sup> is cited by Richter (1996: 65) when she refers the Philadelphia Inquirer editorial which ‘advocated Norplant<sup>®</sup> as a “tool in the fight against black poverty”’ in the USA.

<sup>28</sup> The immuno-contraceptives might be injected or taken as pills or liquids.

user is dependent on health personnel to remove the devices, but when removed the contraceptive effects (are supposed to) end. User controlled contraceptives, however, are reversible at any time, which is also why they are not trusted by family planners.

It is easy to develop fears of the manner in which immuno-contraceptives and Depo-Provera lends them selves to abuse by family planners and personnel, but it is also important to keep in mind that the issue of user control is complex. Hence, many women do ask for contraceptives, which may not be detected, and as argued by Snow (1994: 236) injectables may in this perspective be defined as user controlled:

[I]f secrecy is an essential feature of control, e.g., as for many women in the Gambia [and Zimbabwe], the injectables [...] may offer the best opportunity for user control. [It] leaves no detectable mark on the women [as Norplant does], requires no incriminating paraphernalia in the house [e.g. as the pill], and allows a woman short, predictable intervals of protection. It allows a woman to exercise control over her own fertility, while other methods do not.

Richter (1996) is right, however, that the reproductive research community could have chosen to develop contraceptives, which would have the qualities which Snow points out, other than immuno-contraceptives, i.e. contraceptives which are invisible, short-term and with few or no side effects. However, the objective of the reproductive research community and the international donor community supporting the research (e.g. the WHO immuno-contraceptive research, which is at the moment leading in this area) is not *women's* access to fertility control but the *donor's* access to fertility control of women in the South. The focus of international worries is on overpopulation rather than on women's access to resources such as items and structures, which would increase their decision-making power and control over their bodies and lives, as well as the health and well-being of themselves and their dependants.<sup>29</sup> Seeing women's childbearing as an epidemic rather than as an effect either of their own choices or of them being locked in structures, which favour high fertility sometimes against their wishes, has re-opened the old discourse of racial hygiene in which unwanted persons' reproduction is perceived as a threat to the political, economic and social "health"

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<sup>29</sup> This is exactly the issue on which feminists have criticised population policies most heavily. The result of the lobbying during the Cairo and Beijing UN conferences was that policies are now often formulated with women's broader economic and social interests (i.e. gender equality or equity) in focus. The trickling down of such changes is, however, more difficult to assess. Family planning activities in countries in the South often have practices developed over the last four decades, and may be difficult to change.

of affluent societies. A discourse in which pregnancy is equated with fatal viral diseases, which may be eradicated through 'vaccination' is, however contrary to the perceptions among those the 'vaccination' is intended for.

### **'They are dangerous':<sup>30</sup> Opposition to technological contraceptives**

Against this technological fertility control discourse of pregnancy as disease stands the localised discourse among many of the interviewees. Some of them claim that technological fertility control *creates* illness, disease and death. In the techno-discourse, non-White fertility is a menace and a huge problem, while in the local discourse, fertility represents health and life:

It [fertility] is life itself, *rupenyu*, and therefore gives *simba* (strength) to each local group. Children are regarded as the greatest wealth, for they guarantee the continuity of the group over time and help living members to produce the necessary daily food. (Weinrich 1983: 104)

Importantly fertility control is described as ideally user controlled. The objections towards technological fertility control expressed by many of, in particular, the male interviewees spring not only from wanting to keep women and young couples in a reproductive leach, however, but also from actual experiences or perceived side-effects of the pill and the Depo-injections. Some of the mentioned side-effects are more or less known and accepted by the medical scientific community, while others seem more to be expressions of anxiety over lost control over fertility by men and elders. This anxiety is expressed not only in terms of morality (such as infidelity or individual and exclusionary decision-making on the part of women and young couples), but also in a health discourse. In this, the interviewees clash with the reproduction research community. Both they and the reproductive technology researchers argue in the same manner, from a health discourse, but with completely different outcomes. While the researchers argue that technological contraceptives means better health to women, through fewer pregnancies and births, the interviewees' discourse on fertility control methods engages with and argues against the techno-discourse, describing the local methods as more healthy and less risky than the other,<sup>31</sup> as the following quotes illustrate:

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<sup>30</sup> Quote from interview no. 216.

<sup>31</sup> This is typical also of the techno-discourse, which portray local (always labelled 'traditional') methods of fertility control as highly unsafe and risky through scientific, health and development arguments.

Of course, the traditional method is more reliable. [...] Because it does not affect anything, it does not affect because it is something that is not direct on the cyst. [...] It doesn't affect anything. (22)

The use of traditional medicines is quite good in that there are no mistakes to be made and there are no side effects to the users. There are no diseases as well associated with the use of traditional methods. (214)

The idea that 'It's bad [...] [because] [f]oreign bodies are put into the stomach' (213) is based of course on the experiences of actual side-effects but is also contradictory. The use of herb concoctions taken orally might too be defined as 'foreign bodies', which are 'put into the stomach'. The trouble seems to lie both in the experienced side-effects and in the fear of new and for lay people non-transparency of technological fertility control methods. Technological fertility control methods are excellent examples of what Giddens (1995) has called expert systems, which are not localised, and the operation of which is expert dependent and the workings and contents being unknown to the general public and lay people. To Giddens, the very marker of modernity is the general public's *acceptance* of expert knowledge, expressed in among other things the acceptance of the products of this system, e.g. technological fertility control methods. The use of the pill in Europe, North America and Australia bear witness to this as the overwhelming number of women using it know extremely little if anything about the scientific composition and workings of it. Most women probably do not want to know either as it would require huge investments in time, energy and money to get the knowledge (through education within that particular expert system)—they choose to trust the experts who develop, produce and deliver it. The opposition among the interviewees to these methods may be interpreted as a rejection or resentment of modernity as such, as they do not have the ultimate control over neither the knowledge about the contents of them nor of their use. They are therefore not trusted as is the knowledge of a *n'anga*<sup>32</sup> or a knowledgeable elder in the local community with whom they have close social contacts and with whom their interests are perceived to correspond.

The opposition lay, however, *particularly* in a resentment of methods, which are perceived of as potentially beyond the control of others than the user in a manner, which is perceived of as typical of individualised 'modernity'. It is prone to abuse 'especially by women' (21), who thence 'do what they want. [...] The wife can take the pill secretly, thus does not become pregnant, which, is something contrary to he husband's wishes' (*ibid*). Again, herb concoctions and other

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<sup>32</sup> A Zimbabwean local medical and health expert (or "traditional healer").

methods might of course be used secretly by women but they belong to the sphere of 'tradition', which is perceived of as opposing the 'modern' and defined as within male control whether this is, or used to be true or not.<sup>33</sup> Technological fertility control methods are part and parcel of the critically observed 'modernisation' particularly of women and of the young who 'take the pill as another social development' (222), on which they have become dependent: 'They cannot stop now because family planning is now the in thing. Every couple now is doing it so they cannot live without it' (21). The social dangers of taking the pill or using other technological fertility control methods are expressed in the moral implications of its use, which are perceived of as contrasting indigenous control methods. The latter are perceived of as 'the best because it does not affect anything. [...] When you want a baby, the wife simply cuts the string. [...] It's over and you certainly know that you are going to have a baby' (22). The reasons for opposition may also be more explicitly focused on controlling women's sexuality and reproduction:

He [my father] never allowed his wife to use the pill [...] [b]ecause he said that a) the pill allows the wife to have affairs because she knows that she does not get pregnant, and b) when the couple want to have children when the wife was on the pill, she might have difficulties in conceiving because of the pill. [...] [My father] chased them [family planners] away. (210)

The perceived social transformative potentials and hence dangers of technological fertility control—i.e. the explosive consequences of women controlling fertility—is translated into health hazards, either to the user, to her children or to her husband: '[With] some women, the pill affects the husband, e.g. myself. When [my] wife is taking the pill, my whole body itches after sex, but this itching goes away once she stops taking the pill' (215). However, the main health related argument against the use of the pill is that some of the children born 'grow thin, while others [...] appear to be weaklings' and that some 'have big heads, which are soft to touch. Others do not have strong legs, they are weaklings' (219). In addition to it being hazardous to women and their children, husbands and lovers, the gendered perception of the health hazards of technological fertility control is obvious. It is an issue, which is brought up almost exclusively by men as affecting the children born or *not* born by women using the methods thereby enhancing the anxiety over lost social control over women and young couples:

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<sup>33</sup> As discussed earlier in this chapter, men in the Buhera village used to collect the contraceptive pills for their wives, hence defining themselves as controlling fertility, i.e. as long as the husband controlled the pill it was acceptable.



[I don't recommend the use of the pill] because the pill limits the woman on the number of children she can have. And when a couple wants to have children, they are likely to have physically handicapped children, so I think it's better to have many physically fit children than a few handicapped ones. A handicapped child is of no use to the parents. (219)

The one woman who mentioned the side effects did so in rather dramatic terms, as she claimed that a 'woman can have two to three children only [these days]. If she tries to have a fourth one, she either dies or the child is stillborn. I think it's because of these modern family planning methods' (113). Hence, while reproductive technology researchers, family planners and policy makers talk of "user failure" the (foremost male) interviewees talk of "product failure", which render technological fertility control methods unreliable and risky to those who want to control their reproduction:

When couples decide to [delay childbearing], they may fail to have even one [if they use Depo-Provera]. In some cases, the injection does not work, instead of preventing pregnancy the wife can actually fall pregnant after she has been injected. [...] [This happened to] my brother's wife. Maybe her body doesn't accept these injections, so they actually don't work for her. The resultant child is right here. [...] [You cannot depend on Depo] it's not reliable. (215)

The product failure has an impact not only in terms of not providing protection against unwanted pregnancies, but also in terms of women experiencing side-effects, which are also recognised by the producers of the contraceptives:

Some women, will take long to conceive after they have stopped using them [Pill or Depo-injection], while others will not conceive at all. [...] [This is caused by] both, but the Depo is the problematic one. [...] It causes a... [...] I heard one woman say that, the moment it is about to expire, she becomes very weak and she has many monthly periods. [...] I don't know if this happens to all women [but] some say so. (22)

To yet others, technological fertility control represents murder because 'for 3 weeks, fertilisation is allowed to take place. The woman then takes the Pill in the 4<sup>th</sup> week thus kill the developing embryo. That's murder' (21). Knowing that the wife uses the pill some men are sexually turned off because '[i]t's not enjoyable. [...] Then men usually loose interest in sex' (217). Loosing sexual appeal is by most women not perceived as something positive and to many Zimbabwean women it is, as demonstrated in the previous chapter, perceived as directly linked to possible loss of marital stability and thereby access

to vital financial resources and general social security and 'place'. The contraceptive effect itself might also be perceived as threatening marital stability:

We had family planning pills but no one took them because we thought that they caused sterility and once a woman failed to have children, she was divorced. A woman who had many children was her husband's pride. [...] [I]f a wife was barren, she had to go. (115)

Probably the perception of technological contraceptives as dangerous is based not only in actual experiences, which are downplayed by women and displayed by men, but also in the political opposition to it during the Liberation War. The changed attitude on state level towards family planning after independence trickle down only slowly and affects the young more than the old. However, times *have* changed particularly in the cities, and young people, men included have adopted technological fertility control methods much in the same way as women and men in the North have done; they largely trust the developers, the producers and the distributors.<sup>34</sup> Particularly the younger interviewees living in Harare seem to have accepted technological fertility control without any major objections:

We use the pill, but there are the injectables and the condoms, as well as the loop. Condoms are not all that effective. [...] They can burst while in use. [...] [...] According to us [the pill is an effective contraceptive], yes. [...] [When we want a second child] we simply stop using the pill. (24)

The interviewee is in contrast to some of his relatives in Buhera not worried about his wife becoming sterile from using the pill, neither that his children are going to be 'weaklings'. His and others' wives in the urban areas are using the pill and the Depo-injections to a larger degree than their rural counterparts. The fears of the older generations, i.e. of loosing control over a youth which is becoming modernised are hence based in the experience of the youth listening more to health personnel at the local clinic, teachers at school and debaters in the media than to parents and local elders. The message of family planners is being appropriated. The small family ideal has successfully been projected to the young many of whom equate a large family with poverty: 'who cannot afford the doctor do not practise family planning. They have many children. Those who can afford the doctors have small families' (26).

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<sup>34</sup> And if they do not really trust them they are willing to take the risk, because the risks connected with having many children are perceived as greater than the possible problems connected with the contraceptive.

## Stratified contraception

The availability of technological fertility control methods in Zimbabwe is stratified along a class and racial continuum. The last quote above does not really illustrate the actual situation, as the pill is so cheap in Zimbabwe today that only the poorest cannot afford it. However, there is a grain of truth to it in the sense that the variety of contraception is limited both by availability and cost. It is possible to get virtually all the technological fertility control methods in Zimbabwe but to most people only the pill and the Depo-Provera are within reach. The diaphragm, IUDs and other, non-hormonal methods are both expensive and are available only in the cities and with a few private practitioners outside the cities. The stratification becomes clear when considering the methods used by the White women interviewed. They have all used the pill at one stage but found that they did not really 'like' it and hence tried other methods.

I use the copper T. I've never used the pill again, I don't actually like it. [...] [I use the] Copper T [loop], yes. As soon as I have had my six weeks check-up after my babies, I've had a Copper T, and then until we were ready for the next child and obviously after that we discussed what we were doing.<sup>35</sup> (129)

Some women have virtually had a contraceptive career in their search for a method, which is agreeable from their point of view, a possibility, which is open only for those who can afford it:

Initially I was always on the pill. I was a very bad pill-taker, you know. [Laughs] Guess why I have three children! [Laughs] Actually after my second child I then decided I didn't want to be on the pill anymore, and so... I decided to try the Copper-T I think it was, yah. But that didn't really work for me. I had side effects, I didn't like it. And then when the third one, when I had the third child, you know when I had a Caesarean delivery and I said to them: "Make sure it's permanent!" [...] So, I mean I got sterilised after, 'cause I knew, there is no way I wanted any more children, ever! [...] I would like to know what the side effects are [of sterilisation], maybe I could identify them, but you know, I haven't really had any problems that I know of. [...] I haven't had any physical problem, you know, in terms of different periods or anything like that [...] Mentally I certainly haven't had a problem with it! I don't have to worry anymore you know. ... (126)

Probably there are a few White women using the Depo-Provera, but it is likely that they avoid it if possible, both because of the side-effects it

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<sup>35</sup> She used the pill when she was young, i.e. until she and her husband decided to have their first child in her early twenties.

is known to have, because it is associated with fertility control aimed at Black women and because they have access to the more 'classical' methods apart from the pill. Among these methods, female sterilisation seems to figure high on the list among those who have decided to call it quits: 'Well, I kept taking the pill and I wouldn't take the pill and... it was awful. [...] I had my tubes tied [after the third child]. I *insisted* I wanted to do it straight' (128).

The methods, which are used and available to White and Black Zimbabweans differ in accordance with their racialised socio-economic position, as close to all White women are better off than most Black women are. They have access both to better/safer methods, to a broader variety of methods (including safe abortions, which is illegal in Zimbabwe but legalised in South Africa and in most of the European countries they may visit) and to better service when choosing a method and when it is inserted or fitted. Today they also have access to a common discourse, which endorses the use of contraceptives, quite to the contrary of the 1950s and 60s when many Whites would not even discuss contraception, they may even be faced with accusations of being irresponsible if they do not use it: 'Oh, I was disappointed... when she [daughter-in-law] tells me she's pregnant [...] what did he [son] say? He said, well he didn't actually plan for it! This shows how important family planning is' (225).

Another aspect of stratification framed by the racialised and value-laden discourse of traditional vs. modern practices and beliefs is of course that many Black Zimbabweans could use the local methods of fertility control, if they wanted to.<sup>36</sup> These methods, however, are not available to White women, both because they lack the knowledge themselves, because they do not have access to people with such knowledge and because they are discursively excluded even from considering them. Local fertility control methods belong to the

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<sup>36</sup> One might go to any of the many marketplaces in any town and city in Zimbabwe and find a stall where medical remedies and herbs are sold, among them herbs said to be used for fertility control. Many old and also younger people still have the knowledge of herbs and their uses, despite the claim that 'the elders who know of the traditional family planning methods are few and are so old and so are of no help at all, [and] the few healthy ones who know of these methods have turned to Christianity and so no longer talk or [teach] traditional herbs. [...] No help is now forthcoming, because the Christians don't want to hear of it' (222).

category of knowledge, which is defined as backward, traditional, superstitious and unscientific, hence not trustworthy as effective fertility control but interesting and amusing as an object of historical and ethnographic inquiry.

# Chapter 7

## 'There should always be children in a marriage': The change and continuity of reproductive ideals<sup>1</sup>

A man of power is a man with many children. In 1996 Ushewokunse (known as Ushe), a former Zimbabwean liberation-war hero and the first republican Minister of Health (mentioned in chapter 3) died in a car accident. His burial became a public matter as the burial speech held by his friend President Robert Mugabe was televised through the ZBC News and quoted in the written media. In his speech at Ushe's home, President Mugabe pointed out that Ushe was a great man—he had fought the war, *and* he had at least twenty children out of wedlock.<sup>2</sup> This was quoted extensively in the media, and emphasised as much as his contribution to liberating Zimbabwe. What *I* remember as central to this hailing of Ushe's prowess was that Mugabe did not only point out that Ushe had many children, but also that he had so many children because he had "had" many women (this he said with a broad grin across his face). Thus, not only his procreative greatness was glorified, but also his sexuality and potency, his attractive power. In short he was a man of great power and as such he had done what was expected—he had spread his name to many children. Mugabe's glorifying of Ushe's many children might be understood as homage to a man who meant much to the creation of present-day Zimbabwe, which it was of course. However, the focus on Ushe's sexual and reproductive potency and power also has wider implications—especially as it was quoted in Shona by the media with the English translation brought in brackets. Maybe it was not simply a friend paying Ushe his respects at his burial? It might also be interpreted as a message of reproduction to Shona speakers in Zimbabwe sounding not too different from the messages conveyed by nationalists in the Rhodesian media during the liberation war (see chapter 3).

The ideal of male reproductive prowess expressed both in Ushewokunze's fathering of more than twenty children, and by

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<sup>1</sup> Interview no. 228.

<sup>2</sup> As well as a number of "legitimate" children.

President Mugabe<sup>3</sup> in his speech at his funeral is one, which is most probably fading away in Zimbabwe, as the functions filled by children is slowly being exchanged with other contents, other meanings are added or emerging as more important than they used to be. It might also be the case that the ideal of a large family among in particular the older Black population is rooted in socio-economic aspirations of upward mobility in a society, which is strictly hierarchical.<sup>4</sup> Beach (1990) suggests that the reports by several 19<sup>th</sup> century travellers of polygyny being the main form of marriage were incorrect. Instead he considered these reports to be reflections of 'wishful thinking' by the men the travellers talked to (they generally did not talk to women). Men, he suggests would probably wish to represent themselves as rich and successful, rather than as simple commoners who could not afford the high status afforded through having the means to practice polygyny. Polygyny was a marital practice among the few and rich members of the Zimbabwean societies of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, not a common marital pattern. What I suggest here is in line with this suggestion of male 'wishful thinking', i.e. that the ideal of a large family might be the result of peoples class based aspirations, translated in their wish to move upward in the socio-economic hierarchy through having many children, aspirations which among the younger generations are being transferred from "quantity" (many but less educated children) to "quality" (few but educated children).

The question I am intending to give some answers to in this chapter is why young Zimbabwean women and men choose to limit their childbearing, how they do it and how the parental and grandparental generations react to this limitation. Through attempting such answers I will both go along with the hegemonic discourse on reproduction in the South as it has been constructed by students of population in the North, while simultaneously argue that this discourse is too limited, too focused on childbearing and too negligent of the subtle and multi faceted workings of power in the lived realities of people involved in reproductive decision making.

The main theme of this last chapter is reproductive decision-making, i.e. who are those involved in it; how are such decisions made and why do people make the decisions they make. From this way of presenting the main themes of this chapter it might seem that I follow the traditional path of demography in which reproductive decision-making is theorised as being a highly rational activity, in

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<sup>3</sup> Who himself has only one (known) child, i.e. a daughter with his second wife and former secretary, Gloria Mugabe.

<sup>4</sup> However, the ideal of a large family among the older generation may also be waning as exemplified also by the worries of the ageing Tobela, interviewed by Richard Werbner (1991: 49) when he says that 'the thing we were warned about by the missionaries is this we see today [the burden of having several wives and maintaining their children]. For I cannot do it, when I am not working myself'.

which people consider the pros and cons of the alternatives they presume to exist. This is of course far from the lived reality of many, in particular women around the world. Pregnancies are very often unexpected or unplanned, surprisingly, as one of the older White interviewees expressed it, despite the availability of contraceptives to a vast number of people globally. In many cases, such as my own, the decision whether to keep an unplanned pregnancy/child or not is extremely difficult to make, in yet other circumstances the decision is made by *some-body*<sup>5</sup> else than the woman herself. When children are not unplanned they may still be wanted for a variety of reasons other than their own existence. They may be wanted because parents or grandparents have political ambitions as described in chapter 4 and in the introduction to this chapter; because they represent added labour or social status to their family; or because their mother and father are expected by others to have children. This does not mean that children wanted for such reasons are not loved, only that they are wanted for additional reasons than parental joy.

Most often reproductive decision making is academically perceived as part of the larger concept of *reproductive behaviour* in which decision making is treated as one aspect of reproductive behaviour among many (e.g. health, wealth flow patterns, educational level, contraceptive availability etc.). My approach is somewhat different from this traditional way of studying population as I consider reproductive decision making rather than reproductive behaviour as the central concept, which is broad and inclusive of other aspects rather perceiving it as one among many limited and often compartmentalised categories of population research. The reason why I perceive of decision-making as inclusive and as preferable to reproductive behaviour is that it opens wide open the analytical field of power. Reproductive behaviour as a concept carries with it no obvious conceptual links to relations of power, but rather to the classic, liberal ideas of the “rational” behaviour<sup>6</sup> of individuals developed in Europe and North America specifically since the Enlightenment. It thereby obscures the relations of power,

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<sup>5</sup> By highlighting *body* I want to make explicit that a *body* in this case means not only other persons but also e.g. political, religious, organisational and state *bodies*, with both direct and indirect decision making resources regarding reproduction. This means that anti-abortion laws for example represents a state’s very direct decision making powers over women’s (and men’s) reproductive decision making—through the creation of constraints in making effective and personal reproductive choices. Also the global political economy, which is based on economic and political exclusionism keeping most people in the South in a state of poverty and vulnerability form an indirect structure of international *bodies* influencing peoples’ reproductive choices and decisions.

<sup>6</sup> In particular the extreme focus of liberalism on economic rationality (lately labelled the belief in *homo economicus*), which tend to side-line other—e.g. social, religious, emotional or kinship based—rationalities.



dependency and influence experienced by those interviewed, relations, which are in many cases perceived of as conclusive to the choices made by people of childbearing age. To me the issue of decision making is central because it plays a crucial role to the understanding of other aspects of reproductive choices both in terms of reasons to have children, how many children one wants, and importantly to how many children one does *not* want. It also plays a crucial role in understanding why having children to many is not really a choice at all, as well as in our understanding of how a person's opportunity structures conspire with reproductive decision making. Reproductive decision making is, importantly, inclusive not only of the factors concerning contemporary choices made, but also of the discourses, which are embedded within these choices and decisions, discourses which have been shaped through specific historical contexts, and which change continuously.

### **Reproductive imagery**

It is a popular assumption both among researchers and the general public in the North that women in the South, and in Africa in particular are the victims of male interests in their reproduction. In other words, (Black) women continue to have many children because their husbands demand it—if they had the possibility to decide themselves, they would choose to have radically fewer children than they actually do. This image of the powerful and demanding husband, and his victimised wife/ves is favoured both among researchers and development aid policy makers, both because it makes a complex issue simple and because it is highly recognisable—it is compatible with the discourse of the fe/male Other with which we grew up. The image of the “male” Other is one of extreme power and self indulgence at the expense of the woman who has no power to avoid or circumvent his decisions, wishes or whims (e.g. the ‘powerless’ in Handwerker’s theory, and Rhodesian parliamentarians’ perception of African women as ‘chattels’). This perception is particularly prevalent when issues of reproduction are up for discussion, and in which African men’s sexual behaviour is frequently demonised as extremely endangering to African women.<sup>7</sup> The image

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<sup>7</sup> And lately also to children of all ages. The widespread publicising in Northern media of sexual assaults on small children and also babies in South Africa bear witness to the impressionability in the North of images of the sexually dangerous African man. The assaults *are* horrible, but few. The rape of women is a much larger problem in South Africa and Zimbabwe, especially in times of political unrest, as presently in Zimbabwe when rape is being used as a political weapon against women who supporting the opposition. The rape of women and children are moreover, in an African context almost always presumed to be *sexual* rather than an expression of extreme power over another person, as is more common in the North. It is also seldom discussed as part of a

of the “female” Other is one of her standing head down in a dry field with a baby on the back, or on the roads with heavy bundles on the head and—again—a baby on the back, often also with a number of children of diverse ages around her legs.<sup>8</sup>

None of these images have turned out to hold much truth among those interviewed for this thesis. In considering reproduction and sexuality as both connected and disconnected parts of their lived reality I have come to learn how sexuality and reproduction are tightly interconnected with dependency, with discourses on femininity/masculinity and with marital ideals based on mutual agreement. In a wider perspective sexuality and reproduction is connected also with the global restructuring which has been going on since the Second World War, a part of which aims at controlling population growth particularly in the South and lately also in the North.<sup>9</sup> Reproductive decision-making is therefore a most appropriate concept, as it in my understanding not only includes individual, communal and state interests/interference in reproduction, but also global interests, expressed in international and bilateral policies. Reproductive decision-making is in this sense a *glocal* phenomenon, as the reflexivity between the local, regional and global is obvious in the reproductive choices people make, whether they live in the North or the South.

## Dependencies

Patriarchal masculinity creates certain very specific dependencies, which are not always thought of in terms of dependency. Below I will explore a number of such dependencies, which contribute to the interviewees’ perceptions of reproduction and their reproductive choices. Some of the structures of dependency are obvious, while others are less so. When a young couple marries or decide to live

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complex political and economic situation in a society, which has been extremely violent through the last 100 and more years of settler colonialism.

<sup>8</sup> This image was also evoked by one of the European MPs during the 1966 family planning debate, when he described the numerous African women with children he always witnessed walking along the roads while driving back home (he lived in a small community outside Harare) after sessions in the parliament

<sup>9</sup> It is frustrating to witness the debate on too low fertility rates in the North and the envisioned economic decline caused by it, as aid donor and environmental rhetoric define fertility in the South as too high. Governments in the North which do not want to force women in the North to bear more children than they wish, have embarked on a neo-colonial and racial discursive trip into an organised brain-drain of the South in a bid to secure economic growth in the North. One might perceive of it as a modern form of slave trade, as those invited are not invited to become new citizens (e.g. afforded political agency) but only to work for limited periods of time, at lower pay than their counterparts in the North. All this moreover, as the North has growing populations of non-European immigrants who wish to but have limited possibilities of accessing education and qualified jobs.

together as a couple they are confronted with explicit or implicit expectations of bearing children. As one of the White interviewees responded when I asked why he and his wife had their children (who according to both of them were unplanned) his response is: 'Well, there should always be children in a marriage' (228). Another older White man said that 'I just knew that this marriage would not work without children' (224). The discourses surrounding marriage are so intertwined with parenthood that many, across racial and class barriers have difficulties envisaging a childless marriage as a possibility, unless the couple is unable to have children (which is regarded as a tragedy to any couple regardless of ethnic and class belonging). It also produces an understanding of childbearing outside of marriage as nearly impossible, as implicitly expressed by this older White woman who says that 'I have got one son who isn't married, [but] I wish he would [...] [b]ecause I would like to see him with a companion and children. He loves his nephews and nieces, I'd like to see him have some of his own' (128), which he in her way of seeing it cannot without getting married. Similarly, one of the Black women says that 'every married woman is expected to have children' (113). Men also perceive of children as a ticket to respect and a happy marriage, and some directly link marital reproduction to love:

If a man has a child, then he knows that he is a real man in that he is capable of fathering children. That makes a man happy. If a couple does not have children, then their marriage is not going to be a success because they will blame each other for the failure to have children. This problem can lead to a divorce. [When they have children] they will be happy and their love will blossom because of the child. (26)

The focus of this young man on love rather than position might partly reflect that he and his wife are in love, but it might also indicate a shift in focus among the young urban generation. His view was reflected also in a young woman's claim that even if she hypothetically could not have children she would 'still have been here' (113), i.e. she sees children as important but not as that which binds her and her husband together. To her people 'have children because they love each other' (ibid). To other men, childbearing is linked more to their dependency on "showing off", that they can claim position and status, that they may enter society as a respected member:

There are many reasons [to have children that] I can give you, but the most important in our society is to show that you are productive. If you have a wife, you must have children. [...] [You have to show society] [t]hat you are a man who can reproduce. (22)

If a man has children, then other people in the community respect him. If a man does not have children, then he is not a happy man. [...] As Africans, we want to perpetuate the African race. As a family man, I want my name to continue to be called through my children after I die. (210)

In some cases, children are perceived of as so central to a marriage that barrenness (or the refusal to continue bearing children) is seen as grounds for divorce: 'The barren woman is divorced and the husband gets another one. The husband needs a family' (220) – the focus lands on children rather than on the relationship between the wife and her husband, and she becomes exchangeable. This is of course not always the case, individual histories differ between families regarding the acceptance of barrenness: 'At times, this [barrenness] lead to a divorce but some couples stay together, after trying in vain to get a child. It is up to the husband to decide' (113). As this woman explicitly put it the husband decides whether his wife is more important to him than their childbearing. She continues by explaining that a childless marriage is unstable 'because the husband will have affairs. [...] [C]ouples continue to have sex as usual [but] the man won't be happy. They will perceive sex as a formality or as a mere waste of time. It isn't productive'.

Being barren, or unable to have the number of children one self wants, and/or significant others expect, may hence have a variety of consequences, divorce and loss of sexual excitement included. To a newly married couple sexual activities are closely tied to reproduction as they are expected to get pregnant within a certain time limit (unless they or one of them do not want to have children). The time, which is "allowed" to pass before relatives start inquiring about pregnancy varies of course. The Black interviewees claim that the first child should be on the way within a year after marriage. If not relatives will begin to ask questions.

That [failing to conceive] is a grave issue especially when one is newly married. You will be anxious to have a child. One does not expect a newly married woman to go for two or three months without having conceived. The woman really becomes worried if this happens. The aunts expect the wife to be pregnant by then, and the same applies to the husband's relatives. [...] [This is a serious problem in a marriage because] childbearing is essential in any marriage. No woman wants to be barren or let people think she is barren. It's very disturbing. [...] [This problem is] not confined to women only, but men think that women are responsible for [them] being childless. It's true, women are blamed for being childless because people always think that women are the ones who [are] barren. They don't blame the men. I don't know

why it is this way. Women are always [made] responsible even when it comes to failure to have children. (14)

The situation is experienced differently among the White interviewees and according to the older White interviewees they felt that when they had just married children were not the top priority as exemplified by this older man:

Everyone waited for about two years [before they had kids]. [...] We waited for two years. [...] I think the fact is that you settle into your house and get a... It's like... making a nest like a bird, to lay your eggs. [...] A man can't get married before he can give his wife a house to live in you know. (225)

It may still not be seen as a “top priority” today as is the case in many African marriages, but among the younger White interviewees and their relatives some had children rather quickly after they got married, some even got married because of a pregnancy. The reason for this disparity between White and Black interviewees may lay in the difference between so-called love based marriages<sup>10</sup> and marriages based on exchange of productive and reproductive resources (e.g. cattle and fertile women,<sup>11</sup> to simplify intricate anthropological theories of exchange). It may, however also lie in the historical difference between the groups as some of the ageing White couples came to Rhodesia independently of their parents, and established themselves as farmers upon arrival—they perceived it necessary to create ‘a nest’ before bringing children on board. Their children did not have to consider their material life situation and were possibly not as dependent on making a home before they had children. The Black interviewees on the other hand, all have the ageing members of their families around them and thence also a whole social, economic and political set up with deep roots back in time. The focus on quick childbearing after marriage among the Black interviewees, is quite obviously linked to the practice prescribing reproductivity as a marriage union customarily is one between two kin groups in which childbearing is the prerequisite of the continuous union between them (Ncube & Stewart 1997). It may, however also be linked to dependency on parents who have strong interests in controlling their children’s lives, either for political and/or economic reasons or because the ageing parents fear the effects on their own lives, or society’s future of rapidly changing norms.

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<sup>10</sup> The discourse on love marriage goes hand in hand with the idea of having children out of joy rather than political and/or economic considerations.

<sup>11</sup> Or exchanging fertile royal daughters for political/military alliances, which has been common during most of European history.

As the years pass and a couple has children their sex life will be more and more re-creative. However, if children do not appear the couple's relatives will get more and more involved in the reproductive (and hence implicitly the sexual) life of the couple.<sup>12</sup> In a context where In Vitro Fertilisation is out of the reach to barren couples, the energies of close relatives' would be focused on a variety of methods to get the couple going, they may visit a *n'anga* and get some herb concoctions, they may arrange for the woman to have secret sexual encounters with a brother of her husband, they may suggest the couple to go on holiday and relax as some of the interviewees described.

The emphasis on the one hand on marriage as the only legitimate institution within which people may enjoy sex, and on the other on the centrality of this sexuality's reproductiveness, i.e. the bearing of (legitimate) children conspire to make women and men dependent on a discourse in which marriage is defined as full only if it is reproductive. However, women are comparably more dependent on this discourse than are men, because they have few if any other opportunities. Their dependence on the discourse, i.e. on behaving in accordance with it, is greater also because their sexuality is defined as illegitimate outside marriage to a far greater extent than men's sexuality is. To Black women there is, in addition, the practice of viewing women without a *reproductive* sexuality as minors throughout their lives. Hence, being a full/respected female member of society implies a need for, or dependence on being married with children. However, there are differences between women regarding the degree to which they are dependent on this discourse, foremost one of class belonging. Among two of the interviewed White women who had managed to gain economic independence through their careers, that independence led to their parents-in-law's negative attitude towards them as mothers:

You know, I have told my youngest son [...] forget about having children. Now that they have one, their life has changed. Well, they both, their life style you see, the wife is working, she is [...] qualified... she's got a degree and she's working [...] she's independent. You see if you're independent like that... A child must still have a home and a house and somebody who look after him during the daytime. [...] I

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<sup>12</sup> In her biography of the French queen Marie-Antoinette Antonia Fraser describes at length the detailed interests of her mother, Habsburg Empress Maria Teresia, in her reproductive condition and Marie-Antoinette's sexual relationship (or more precisely its absence) with King Luis XVI. There were international political economic reasons for Maria-Teresia's interests, but they also represent worries common to all parents who have explicit expectations and interests in their offspring's reproductive capacities.

can't [see] a child being brought up [properly if both parents work].<sup>13</sup>  
(225)

A mother's independence is perceived of as a threat to her children and successively to society, as her focus will not be entirely on her mothering responsibilities. This is not a perception specific to Zimbabwe but a common expression of patriarchal masculinity, in which women who have their focus somewhere else than on their role as mothers threaten male spheres of power, not only in the home and on the labour market, but successively also in public political spheres. Such women also form a threat to women who have come to define themselves through motherhood, as economically independent women are more free than other women, they can fend for themselves, and can upon leaving an unsatisfying marriage/relation become a sexual/marital threat to other women.<sup>14</sup> Hence, such women need to be disciplined. Zimbabwean women have their legal freedom of movement but the patriarchal discourses on marriage and motherhood—consequence of hybrid masculinity—function discursively to lock women in an exclusionary single identity, which is based on the status of legitimate womanhood, i.e. as married mothers.

Women's dependency on becoming mothers, not only once but twice or more is foremost by the Black interviewees experienced as quite literal: 'the wives [used to compete] in having children in order to please [their] husbands like what happened [...] from 1968 to 1985. [...] We had so many children so that we could not get divorced' (115). This dependency is, as mentioned in chapter 5 linked to the dependency of providing sex to a husband on his conditions, which may not always be in phase with his wife's wishes. Men of course do not seem to consider this side of the issue at all, neither women's constant efforts to please him sexually nor her dependency on bearing

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<sup>13</sup> This rings a bit strange in my ears since many European Zimbabwean (and Rhodesian) mothers have (had) nannies for their children even when they did not participate on the labour market themselves. Hence, it is to him probably more a question of the mother being home-based rather than working, of being tied strictly to the sphere of childcare and the management of the home.

<sup>14</sup> I have two quotes illustrating this, partly a European husband who compared his wife with women in his mother's generation: 'I have got a very, very independent wife. She doesn't need me, doesn't need me whatsoever, she earns her own salary, she can sort herself out, if I was out of the picture tomorrow she would be 100% self sufficient. Whereas in my father's time, my parents time... you became a housewife. There was no such thing as seeking a job, maybe teaching post yes, but a manager-ess was rare in those days' (226), and a European woman who said that 'before I got married, I couldn't see a future for my self as a single woman in this country. I knew if I was going to carry on here I had to [marry] because, once you have certain age in this country there is no social life for you' (126), because single women fending for themselves are seen as a threat to other women's marriage stability.

the children he or his parents want, or she believes he or they want. Many women expressed a feeling of vulnerability regarding the issues of sexuality and reproduction – they feared being divorced if they did not perform sexually (as discussed in chapter 5) and reproductively:

The wife is likely to have some affairs [if a couple fail to have children]. [...] It can lead to divorce, but in some cases, if the woman is at fault, then the in-laws give a second wife to the husband, so that their daughter is not divorced. (210)

This dependency is also linked to a couple's relations with their in-laws, in particular *his* parents. Most of the Black women interviewed live very close to their parents-in-law, and they (and their husbands as well) bear witness to the attempted influence on their reproduction by their husbands' parents.

I would have liked to have two girls. [...] And two boys as well. [...] That is all. [...] I have girls and one boy, but the boy is not mine. [...] My husband's parents encourage us [to have more children] [...] they even want us to take some herbs so that I can eventually have a boy child. [...] If I find someone who knows about [these herbs I will take them]. I want to keep my marriage intact. (114)

To this woman as to many other women, her perception is that her marriage stability is dependent not only on her husband's reproductive desires but also very much on the reproductive prerogatives of his parents. Women, in particular rural women are often vulnerable to their parents-in-law's wishes because they live close by<sup>15</sup> (the "nagging" factor) and because they are often dependent on parents-in-law for survival (e.g. use of land for agriculture) as husbands' incomes are often irregular or non-existent, and they themselves are not expected to enter into trade or the labour market. Men also feel this pressure and some express resignation when faced with it:

I didn't want to have more than four children but because I failed to have a boy, I now have six. [...] Of course somebody influenced [me]! They told me that the next one would be a boy, only to find that it was a girl. (22)

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<sup>15</sup> This is most probably also the case within some of the few commercial farmers running their farms as family businesses where sons primarily live on and run the farm together with their parents, as was the case with one of the families included in this project. The interviews conducted with members of that family indicates that this might be the case.



The difference between today's couples in their reproductive age and their parents is great, not only in terms of the number of children they have but also in terms of values. One of the older Black interviewees expressed this difference in outlook as he said that '[m]y parents influenced [our childbearing]. I was told that I should let the wife have as many children as was naturally possible [...] *we used to do what our parents told us to do*' (217, emphasis added). The young of today do not really do what their parents tell them to do. Either they diplomatically go "half the way", or they refuse to go along at all.

Among some of the White interviewees pressure was experienced not as a *demand* for grandchildren, but more in terms of children being "important":

I think they would have said that wasn't good and they probably would have... I don't think they would have forced me or ostracised me [if I had decided not to have children], but they would have said "no, children are *so* important". [...] I suppose both of my parents are quite logical, so if they had, you know if I had married somebody who couldn't have had any children then that would have been a different reaction to "no, I have decided I don't want any children". (129)

To yet other White interviewees it was an issue of either not having children at all (as the older man who believe that motherhood should not be combined with being a 'professional') or of having more than one. One of the White couples said independently of each other that if they had decided on having only one child his parents would have had opinions:

One was definitely a non-starter, you must have two children, you can't have one. If you're gonna have one, you mustn't have one at all. It must have company. You know, that was their attitude to... that was quite strong. [...] [M]y mother-in-law is fairly opinionated in those sort of areas, so she would speak her mind. [...] You'd be nagged until it happened. (126)

They always tell you that the next one, next one, next one. That's what we got as well. You can't leave them, you spoil them. You got to have the second one, so we got a bit of pressure there to the second one. (226)

However, in the decision to try and ward off the idea of establishing a family, as was the case in one of the families interviewed, different perspectives on motherhood vs. professionalism, antipathy and a bit of mendacity comes into the picture as well. In this particular case, women's choice to combine mothering with career disturbed the parents-in-law to such a degree that they strongly advised their son

against having children at all. This message was not, however, conveyed to the expecting daughter-in-law who rather felt that the attitude towards them as a couple was one of 'get married and get on with it' (III06/EwH30). The ageing mother-in-law also had opinions regarding her daughters-in-law as such as she said that the wives of her sons would have to 'be made' to fit her ideal. That her two daughters-in-law have had children and have maintained their right to have a career besides being mothers possibly signal a change also among White Zimbabweans. This goes against the old generation's ideal of gender-role complementarity, in which the husband takes care of business while his wife cares for the house and the family, a set-up in which women 'would put all their trust in their husband, and he's the provider and they'd [women] be taking the backseat their whole life' (126) as a woman expressed it. Again the difference in values between the younger generation and their parents is wide, but among the White interviewees the difference seem to be more one of slowly but explicitly changing gender roles than regarding family size.

### Planning a family

Among the Black interviewees the materialisation of the discourse on female legitimacy through married motherhood is clearly expressed in the discursive practices regarding reproductive planning, i.e. the ideal of who is involved and who is in his *right* to make such decisions, and why he has this authority despite the stated ideal that husband and wife should come to a mutual agreement:

We plan together, my husband and I [but] [i]t's the husband [who decides]. [...] I can not do so because I am not employed. The husband, who is the provider should do the planning. (113)

It's the husband [who plans the family size] [b]ecause he is the head of the family, and also the provider, so he determines the size of the family he can provide for. At times, the wife might want many children but she has to do as her husband wishes. (113)

The image of the providing husband and the economically dependent wife, who is concerned with the bearing and rearing of children, i.e. mothering becomes strikingly clear in the following quote.<sup>16</sup> This image is drawn from the same well of discursive practices of patriarchal masculinity as the White man quoted above concerning working mothers:

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<sup>16</sup> And as described by one of the ageing European men (225) it is not particular to the African interviewees.

It is the husband [who plans the size of the family b]ecause he provides for the family. [...] The wife sees to the cleanliness of the children and the family. [She is involved in the planning of how many children we should have] but it's always what the man says that prevail [...], because only the husband provides for the children, he provides for the wife. It's pointless to have a large family where the children move around with bare buttocks for example. (210)

It is also obvious that in this man's perception he, as the father takes the responsibility of *limiting* the family size, hence implying that he must use his authority as the provider to stop his wife from having too many children.<sup>17</sup> The idea of the excessive reproductive demands of African husbands becomes a myth, at least in a contemporary Zimbabwean context. If he represents a trend among middle-aged and younger Black men in Zimbabwe there ought to be other men with the same inclination, and there seems to be: 'It's the husband [who plan the size of the family]. [...] It's all about providing for the family' (215) and that he cannot do if the family is too large. One of the older Black women claimed that 'men these days do plan the sizes of their families and are strict about it' (110). The turning point for men might lie in changing perceptions both regarding family values and of how to bring up children: '[A man] cannot have many children [whom] he can't provide for. [...] [M]y [3] children can go to school and [they] also [...] have enough food and clothing' (215). He thereby contrasts one of the older Black interviewees who said that '[a]s long as the children are having sadza, that is okay with me' (219),<sup>18</sup> i.e. it is more important to have many children than to have a few who are educated.<sup>19</sup> The contrast to how the younger generations perceive the

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<sup>17</sup> Which is also implied by the woman quoted above, when she says that if the wife wants many children she will have to go along with her husbands wish of limiting their childbearing, because he has the economic responsibility.

<sup>18</sup> He thereby echoes the values reported by Ian Smith in his biography, remembering one of the older "boys" at his farm in the early 1950's who refused to let his children go to school. This answer i.e. 'as long as they eat sadza' also appeared in one of the interviews I conducted in another Zimbabwean village in the mid-1990s on the same issues. This indicates that there is a value conflict between the older generations and their adult children, in which the older attempt to keep on to the practices of their own youth when education and the acquiring of middle-class values, behaviour and tastes played a minimal role to future possibilities of changed livelihood and upward socio-economic mobility. Rhodesian policies of racial segregation and oppression effectively stopped such opportunities for the great majority of Africans and those few who were given an education could never reach to the top in Rhodesian society, but only in the African communities with lower salaries and limited future prospects despite high education.

<sup>19</sup> There are some indications also that except from regarding education as less important, the young adults are also perceived of as spoiled, as discussed in chapter 5, when their immoral sexual behaviour is linked to cravings for luxury items and another way of living.

situation is great, while always expressed with due respect of the parental generation:

As you know these days we are practicing family planning. Long back, [people] thought that by having [...] many children, they would become rich, but today you cannot do it. Today's living is tough [...] it's too much. And raising them up the right way, it's very tough. (22)

The changing perceptions of the needs of a family is thus expressed in the difference between the older, who say that they themselves were encouraged to have as many children as 'we were able to feed' (213),<sup>20</sup> and the younger who refer to clothing and education as more important than just being able to feed the children: 'If the children are well dressed, happy, neat and do whatever they want, I feel better. I feel miserable if they are not' (22).

Planning ones childbearing is not always the easiest thing to do even when you supposedly make your decisions yourself or in co-operation with your partner only. You take into consideration both the contemporary ideal and that, which you grew up with, some considers their economic situation, yet others do not plan at all – it just 'happens': '[We had our first child] three years after we were married. [It was not planned] it just happened' (228), and 'I don't sort of plan anything at all' (128). This was an experience most interviewees recognised as being their own, regardless of being Black or White. The unplanned manner with which some had their children was different to the young, Black urban couples whom were very intent on not letting it 'just happen' – they could not afford it. As one of these young men said, the husband will be angry if 'the wife falls pregnant without planning' (26).

The difference between the ageing Black interviewees and their grown children may be defined as one in which the ageing parents had not considered their reproduction as planned. Only in two cases the ageing women mentioned their reproduction as planned. One had informed her husband of the blessings of child spacing, and the other had decided to have more children than she originally wanted:

[I had 10] because my husband is the only male in his family. The rest are girls, so I kept on having children so that the family could have enough males. [...] I have six [boys now]. [...] I wanted six children [before I married], because a small family is easy to look after. [...] We are four children [in my natal family]. (11)

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<sup>20</sup> Which, however, was 'not as many children as the sand of the sea. No. [But] [...] [a] number we could teach good manners so that they were well-behaved' (213).

Family planning as a concept is part of the late pre-independence period, and enters Zimbabwean discourses on a broader scale in the mid-1970s. It is a concept embedded in the Neo-Malthusian discourse linking health, private economy, education and limited fertility to a better, more civilised and “modern” life. It is a discourse, which mark contemporary considerations among the young couples in contrast to their ageing parents. Hence, while the perceived economic dependency on children as old-age security continues unabated, the changing view on family size have become a factor of disagreement—the discursive practices of the young is a source of conflict with the older. The argumentation of the White (and one of the Black) parliamentarians during the debate in 1966 seems to have become common understanding of the young in post-independent Zimbabwe, as many have come to regard a big family as an unnecessary burden on an already stretched private economy. The work done by the family planning organisation through local clinics in particular, have focused both on providing mainly the contraceptive pill to women and on informing Zimbabweans of the economic benefits of a small family. Many of the Black interviewees have listened to that particular message (as will be illustrated below), while only one explicitly said that he had changed his mind because of the arguments raised in favour of a small family by the village health workers:

I wanted as many children as my father has. [That is t]welve. [...] After getting advice from the village health workers, I wanted to have four children. [...] They made us aware of the high cost of living, which necessitates having a small family. Health workers encourage child spacing and if a couple spaces their children, then they can have four or five children only. (222)

Statistical data and studies of contraceptive prevalence indicate that a growing number of Zimbabweans are planning their families more strictly than before (CSO 1988, 1994a and 2000; Edwards 1996; Guilkey and Jayne 1997). One of the interviewed White men, now in his sixties, described the changes in family size of previous generations. His reflection upon the changes that have taken place in his family may well illustrate what is happening on a wider scale in Zimbabwe:

Those days [when I was a child] families were large [...] I would tell you that they come to those four, those days [when I had kids]... and I come out of a family of six, and I think my [parents], the previous was 12, 13 or something like that. (225)

Thoughtfully he added that ‘there were open spaces then’, indicating that the small family ideal somehow had to do with what he referred to as the population explosion in the country since the 1940s, thereby

leaning on the discourse of African overpopulation propagated both internationally and within Zimbabwe since the mid 1960s.

### **'As an adult I will do as I want':<sup>21</sup> Changing perceptions of family size**

The difference between the Black and the White interviewees seem then to be one in which the former is moving towards lower fertility rates, while the latter is slowly moving towards a change in gender discourses and practices.<sup>22</sup> However, the change to lower fertility is most probably more rapid than a change in gender discourses, and a lowering of fertility rates may precede changing gender discourses. One indication of this is a comment on the use of contraception by an older Black interviewee, who said that

These days, couples have few children because they are family planning using the pill. [...] As long as the family planning is done after the couple has agreed on it, then there is no problem. Some couples family plan so that the wife can go to school or can get employed so as to supplement the husband's income. I think if the family planning is done for these purposes, then it's very good. (110)

This woman positively links contraception and family planning for limitation to the education of women. She thereby contrasts the views expressed by some men that education has detrimental effects on women's sexual-moral behaviour. Her reason to support family planning when done for such purposes, however are based in the discourse of the providing father, and the supporting wife. Yet, the fact that women of all ages are beginning to perceive of women's education as positive and important and their active linking of it with lower fertility is an indication that things are starting to turn. When older women embrace this view regarding their daughters and possibly also their daughters-in-law, young women might in the future be supported more in their choices regarding education, work and children by their mothers and mothers-in-law. This would be contrary to the contemporary situation; many interviewees claimed

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<sup>21</sup> Interview no. 24.

<sup>22</sup> One of the European women (in her late 30's) claimed that 'there is [now] a sort of new generation where things are a bit more equal. The husband takes more of a role with the children, and the wife is an equal partner, and she must also have her area of importance and significance. And she must be engaged in something, which she enjoys, that she is pursuing career-wise [...]. And they [husbands] wouldn't resent their wives having a life of their own, whereas a lot of the women in sort of my age-group and slightly above, the husband can't cope with a wife being independent having an opinion of her own, a life of her own, perhaps her own income, they [women] must rather down-play their role quite significantly and be there for *them* [husbands].'

that parents/-in-law are not generally supportive of young women who want an education.

However, the focus on agreement between the husband and wife on the use of contraception to limit their childbearing voiced by the woman above also show that this change will take time as husbands and in-laws may have other opinions than wives and daughters-in-law both concerning education, work and childbearing. The ideal of mutual agreement, which may in individual cases be overrun by the father's right of decision making, is expressed also by other interviewees, even though this agreement might mean that the couple bear very few children: 'If they are fully agreed to have one child, that is the husband and wife, then I have nothing against it' (220).

The influence of parents-in-law might as I indicated above be contingent on distance and the different forms of dependency (economic, social etc.) between ageing parents and their adult children. Hence, couples living away from their parents may experience pressures differently than those living very close by. The Black interviewees living in Harare were more assertive than their rural counterparts when discussing the issue of influence on reproductive decision making from parents/-in-law. They voiced a greater confidence in that they were going to follow their own decisions rather than other peoples' wishes, despite the attempts, both hypothetical and actual of such interference taking place. The woman quoted below explicitly refers to the ideal of mutual agreement as the basis both of her irritation with relatives' attempted influence on her, and for her refusal to follow their advice:

[In my case] the influence comes from both sides. They are always asking me about when I am going to have the next child. They don't respect my decisions as concerns the size of my family. In-laws from my husband's family may think that it's me the wife who doesn't want to have so many children, but having children is by mutual agreement between my husband and me. Old people don't want us to use the pills. (14)

There is, however a difference between how women and men are approached by relatives and in-laws on the issue of childbearing, since this is foremost regarded as a "women's issue" as long as the situation does not deteriorate into crisis – initially the young wife and not her husband is approached.<sup>23</sup> This one-sided family policy of pressure might be one of the reasons why women sometimes have what their husbands call 'unplanned' children, i.e. it has been planned

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<sup>23</sup> This is partly due to sexuality being a tabooed area and partly because the relatives want to find out what the problem is and whether it may be solved without the husband's involvement.

by a wife who have decided to give in to his (and sometimes her own) parents without consulting her husband. This of course creates conflicts between husbands and wives, but the wife may experience these conflicts as worthwhile. It is difficult to explicitly refuse having any more children when parents/-in-law are constantly reminding you that you are keeping the babies in your stomach as it is sometimes expressed. Hence, women tend to take the chance, and often believe that their husbands will eventually accept and love the child when it arrives. Of course, men are also approached by their parents but women refer to this as problematic much more often than men do—instead men seem to brush such pressures aside claiming that they will not follow suit. However, men are not as dependent on their reproductive capacity as are women, who may risk their marriage and hence their social and economic security if they refuse their parents-in-law more grandchildren. Many of the women—and none of the men—when reflecting on why they let other people interfere in their reproductive decision-making referred this to as a problem. The young woman above states that she is approached by both her own family and by her in-laws, inquiring about her reproductive status. Her own parents are probably concerned about the possible destabilisation of a low-fertility marriage.<sup>24</sup> Possibly they are also anxious about her childbearing because they live in the same area as her husband's parents, hence they may find themselves in a position where her in-laws put pressures on them to influence her.

The changing perceptions and family values among the young interviewees living in the capital is expressed in a distinct feeling of individuality, of being responsible towards themselves and their partner rather than towards their parents. They do not do as their parents want them to do but they are mindful of the collision, which may follow from such arbitrariness:

No-one [influence our childbearing]. It's up to the two of us. [...] I would not [tell my father that I want only one child] because old people always want many children. They forget that the life we're leading these days is totally different from the life they had long back. [...] I don't want to have a second child. [...] I think my father is an understanding man. After all if he ever asks me about it, I will tell him why I am doing it. [...] My mother is likely to give problems. My mother wants many grandchildren. [...] [But a]s an adult I will do what I want. [If my father tells me to have more children] I will tell him that I will have another child [but I will not go along with it] I will

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<sup>24</sup> I.e. the possibility that the young husband will divorce her, which generally means that she will return to her parental home as an economic liability. Their interest in her marriage stability is hence presumably rather great.



only tell him that we are having problems in trying to have the second child. (24)

There is of course always the possibility that a husband might change his mind, and want more children than what he and his wife have come to an agreement on. The reaction to such a possible scenario will depend on the individual woman and her circumstances. One of the interviewees said that she wants only two children and that '[w]e will stand our ground, my husband and I', against pressures from their parents. However, if her husband changes his mind, she says she 'will do' as he wants but that 'two is the number we can afford to look after properly' (14). Hence, she regards herself and her husband as strong enough as a couple to resist outside influences, but she does not see herself as strong enough to go against her husband. She thereby differs from another young urban wife who said that if her husband should suddenly want more than the two or three children they have decided that they are 'able to provide for', she 'won't have the children. [Then] I will practise family planning, I will do that' (26).

The ultimate individuality regarding reproduction in a society in which adulthood is so profoundly linked to becoming a parent might be expressed by the oddity in this context of the young man who claims that he did not want children at all:

I did not think about it [having children]. In fact I did not want to have children. [...] I read a book about people from a certain country who simply get married and stay together without having children, so I also did not want to have children. [...] It just happened [when we had our child]. (24)

That 'it just happened' when he had his first (and only if he is to decide) child is most likely not an accident as he implies, but rather a decision made by his wife. She indicates this, as she claimed to experience continual and quite explicit requests for children by his, as well as her own parents. Her description of the pressures put on her indicates that she chose to have the child because she needed a rest from nagging parents/-in-law. A decision not to have children may however be linked to other factors than changed attitudes towards marrying and settling down. To some it is also linked to the HIV/Aids situation as one of the interviewees claimed:

[B]ecause of the diseases, men now prefer to live and die childless. They do not want to leave a fatherless child here on earth or a widow for that matter. [...] Aids is killing both the mother and the father, leaving orphans of about 9 to 10 years old. (222)

In the rural context, individual decision making is also practised, despite the close proximity to parents-in-law with interests in a couple's childbearing, a practice which is apparently not all that recent as this woman testifies to: '[T]hey [parents-in-law] did [try to influence us] but we did not follow their advice because they wanted us to have many children. (15). However, the interviewees in the village generally have more children before they decide to put an end to childbearing than those in Harare, and they are not as assertive in their refusal to let parents/in-law have a say:

Of course, they [parents] have [a say in childbearing] but their advice is not put into action. [...] Of course they are saying so [that they want him to keep having children until a boy is produced] but as far as I can see, I can not keep on having children. I cannot because I cannot afford them. [...] Of course, in our society we believe what our fathers say is correct. [...] It's okay, I will do it [listen to them] and it ends there. [...] Because they can not ask you whether you had sex last night. They don't interfere [in that]. [But they are] [v]ery influential. (22)

A major difference between this man and his urban counterpart quoted above is that he refers to the respect shown elder members in the community, which has led him to have more children than he originally wanted in his, his wife's and his parents search for a sex-mix among the children. The urban man above does not refer to the respect for elders, but rather to the forgetfulness (or lack of knowledge) of the elders; they have 'forgotten' that the life of their grown children is 'totally different' from the lives they themselves lived when they had their children.

Of course, conflicts over childbearing are not only or solely between generations, but also in some cases between husband and wife. Such conflicts seem to arise not mainly concerning the number of children but the sex-mix<sup>25</sup> among the children they have, whereas in urban marriages the concerns are more focused on how many (few) children to have rather than what these children's sex is. In this, ageing parents play a crucial role as the man quoted above illustrated. He has a large family and feels that he cannot go on having children. He continued explaining his dilemma:

I have got girls, you might want to have say a boy but it's... That [having only girls] is not very good to me, so I will not be all that happy. [...] [I have] [s]ix daughters. [...] I need variety, that is a

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<sup>25</sup> To the White interviewees a sex-mix seemed also to be important as they described it as "nice" when they had one of each, and if they had two of the same sex a third one of the opposite sex would be very welcome. However, there seems not to have been conflicts concerning this.

problem because I cannot solve it myself [laughing], because I am not God. It happens. (22)

He, as well as other interviewees complained of the problems arising when a search for either boys, who may carry the family name into the future, or girls who would in time provide *lobola* results in a family, which increase more than they want or can afford. One older Black woman had made the explicit choice to have many children despite coming from a small family, because her husband's family had too many girls, i.e. there were too few boys to carry the name. When husband and wife are unable to come to a mutual decision the woman is the one with the final decision in her hand, despite the claim that men are the ultimate decision maker. She will calculate the pros and cons and then decide what she is willing to risk by having another child against his wishes or by using contraceptives secretly so as to space or limit her childbearing.

In my marriage, I was encouraged to have children by my husband. [He wants many children b]ecause we have male children only, so we would like to have a girl. [He wants s]ix children [but] I already have enough [four]. [...] I don't know [what I will do]. [...] I want to have a rest, so I am going to take the pill secretly. [...] We are finding it difficult to clothe, feed and send to school the children we already have. [H]e says he can provide for them [but] the cost of living has gone up and will continue to go up. He will not manage it, I know. [...] [I wanted t]hree children [before I married]. [I will not have anymore than t]hese four. I am not going to have another one. [I'm family planning] on my own. (113)

Her decision to have a rest from childbearing is based in the most common argument, of both women and men, i.e. economy. This was also the major difference between the White and the Black interviewees; when the Black interviewees talked of not having the means to have as many children as their parents had, they talked of survival in an economic setting very different from their parental generation. When White interviewees talked of the economy-children equation it was however from the perspective of lowering their standards somewhat, of forsaking luxuries, but of it being worthwhile if they wanted more children than the European Zimbabwean discursive standard of two, i.e. a girl and a boy (or 'pigeon pair' as one interviewee (224) called it). Two of the White families had more than two children (3 and 4 respectively), in one of them due to (admitted) bad planning and in the other because they had wanted a big family. In the latter family she said that she had originally wanted 5 children ('I like the idea of it') but thought that she 'would probably do a better job on four and not five' (129). The economic aspect entered into her

reasoning only in terms of having less material goods, a view, which her husband shared and thought of as positive since the children would then be less spoiled. Their situation, and hence perspectives are thus radically different from most of their Black co-citizens.

### **The cost of children**

As mentioned above there is a latent conflict between ageing parents and their adult children regarding family size, a conflict which is possibly greater between those living in Harare and their rurally based parents. As a young woman living in Harare stated 'we no longer want big families, although in-laws insist on big families. [...] [M]any children will give us problems in the future' (14).<sup>26</sup> The contradictions inherent in the conflict between the consequences of economic decline, changing perceptions of family size and the practices which ageing parents want to uphold are explicit in the following quote:

It's up to the couple to decide [how many children they want]. The economic situation dictates the size of the family, so most couples are having one child like the Europeans. [...] They are always worried about child support. [...] [Having few children is] nonsense. [...] I would not have allowed it. (219)

While admitting that young couples decide themselves on the size of their family and that their choice of smaller families is linked to the economic situation in the country, he is also provoked by it. He indicates that he would not have allowed the economic situation to decide his family size. He seems frustrated and angered by it, possibly he also feels insulted by the young, who apparently disregard the advice and wishes of the older generation. The same sentiments were expressed in a conversation between one of the interviewees and his friend who came by during an interview:

*Friend:* young people no longer listen to us old people. [...] Family planning has to be done because the cost of living has gone up. *21:* And there is not enough land to use for farming. *Friend:* We used to get enough food from the fields. We sold the surplus produce and could

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<sup>26</sup> There is a contradiction in this interview as she describes lowered fertility both as wanted, and as 'controlled by the cost of living', i.e. forced by circumstance. The contradiction is perhaps insignificant, but may also indicate that there is a conflict within her self, regarding the small family ideal she propagates in the quote above. A legitimate question is therefore: If the economic situation had been different would she and other Zimbabweans who are now limiting their childbearing maybe have wanted more children?

then buy clothes, because the prices of commodities then were low [...] we did not need beds to sleep on for example. We slept on reed mats.

They, as well as other ageing interviewees referred not only to the negligent attitude of their grown children but also to the good old days, when people were content with what they had and did not aspire to a higher standard of living. In fact they seem to romanticise the days gone as days of simplicity and ascetic strength. The contrast to how the young view their situation is wide and only a few of those in the parental generation seem to understand why the young want smaller families:<sup>27</sup>

Life long back was cheap. We could provide for many children. Nowadays, the cost of living has gone up and that's why couples are having few children. [...] Life then was cheap. We had good lives. We grew our own food, clothing was not expensive as today. Education was affordable as well. (15)

Large families are by the young described as a sign of poverty: 'Some have many children especially those that cannot afford to provide for them' (26). Providing for children is however different today than it used to be: it includes education, preferably above secondary school, it means good clothing, and good health – apart from just “sadza” (i.e. basic food). It means providing your children with opportunities, which you as a parent did not have, could not access or did not use to their full potential. In the young generation's view, poverty is not romanticised and not perceived as strengthening – quite to the contrary. The young's expectations of life are different from those of their parents and particularly different from their parental generation, they place a high value on their children's education, whether they live in the rural areas or in Harare. These days a 'big family cannot be well provided for. Clothing, food and education are very expensive now' (113). In addition 'medical care has also gone up' (26), all of which is the effect of the economic decline. As a consequence, childbearing is going down:

We are now limiting the number of children we are having. Most families are now two to three children big [...] because having more than three children per family is a burden. Above all, who wants to have many children who are not healthy anyway? (222)

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<sup>27</sup> What a smaller family is, differ between the interviewees, e.g. ranging between 4-5 in the rural area (except one young man who said that one is enough), and 1-3 among those living in Harare.

A more prosaic side of this is that ageing parents generally do not materially provide for their grandchildren, which is the responsibility of their parents unless crisis looms. It is easier to be critical of the small family ideal when you do not have the financial responsibility of raising the children. However, one might possibly expect that grandparents will come to see the point of the small family ideal as a growing number of Aids orphans needs to be taken care of and thereby increase the economic burden of child support on the ageing sections of the Zimbabwean population. This has already happened but with the explosive spread of the disease the number of orphaned children will most probably grow and the effects be felt in still wider circles.

### **'Your children make you': The differing meanings of children**

Having children is to most of the Black interviewees linked to old-age security no matter whether they lived in the rural areas or in Harare, it was deemed important among the old as well as among the young. However, the perception of how many children you need to secure your survival in old age differed. One of the older interviewees expressed some confusion regarding this, seemingly being unable to grasp how old-age security could be linked to smaller families. He said that children are important because 'they will look after me when I am old. [The problem now is] [t]he fact that couples are finding it difficult to provide for these children, because most of the men are not employed' (21). Hence, a Catch 22 situation seem to appear in his reflection of the matter, as one needs many children to be sure that someone will take responsibility of the ageing parent, but there is no economy to have these children. The reasoning among the young, however is one of reproductive rationality, at least in the planning phase: 'Nowadays what determines the number of the children a couple can have, is the economy of the country. A couple can only have [the number of] children they are able to provide for' (26). This man, as well as most of the younger interviewees focused on the main theme of Zimbabwean family planning activities, i.e. that of being able to 'provide'. What one needs to provide today is different from needs of earlier generations. One might suggest that the needs perceived to exist today differ foremost because the racialised opportunity structures of Rhodesia have disappeared. It is today *possible* to envisage a better future for ones children because they are now allowed to have aspirations. Having an education, being well dressed and enjoying good health seem to be top priorities of today's parents. Of course the latter has presumably always been important to parents, but education and clothing did not range too high on the agenda of their parents when they had children. That the aspirations of today's parents may be severely hampered by the class-biased opportunity

structures of post-independence Zimbabwe seem not to enter into the calculations.

The whole socio-economic set-up is perceived of as so different that the way life was organised when today's young parents were children is incomparable with contemporary society.

[Our parents and grandparents] had many children because when these children grew up, they looked after their parents, so raising them was worthwhile [...] it suited their life well in those days. [...] They would work at home and relieve [their] parents of some of the hard jobs. [If they could not find gainful employment] [...] they worked for the family. (14)

The explanation of why the parental and grandparental generations had many children is the same across gender, age and place. However, the importance of old-age security, the carrying on of the name and the help provided by children in their household are central also to the young generation of parents, not only to their ageing parents. This means that the reasons the interviewees gave as to why they have children is that children will 'carry on the family name [and c]hildren will help their parents financially when they get employed' (26), and that you have 'someone to help you on what you will need in the future [...] [a] child helps parents in times of need' (14). There is, in this no difference whether the interviewee lived in the village or in the capital:

When a man has children, he will have someone to send on errands, and also children look after their parents during old age. Couples that do not have children have problems in that, they do some petty jobs themselves e.g. herding cattle or fetching firewood, jobs that should be done by children. That is why we want to have children. (215)

In a society where only legally recognised war veterans and a small number of formerly employed people are eligible to pensions, and where the pensions are generally so low that a household cannot survive on it, it is understandable that children represent old-age security. However, as mentioned above there is a difference in what old-age security means to the ageing and the young parents, as old-age security through children is today perceived of as possible only if the children are educated and through their acquired skills at school their hoped for future employment. The meaning of children seems also to be slowly changing, as fertility drops. The focus of urban couples with a planned low fertility is not solely old-age security, continuation of the family name and the daily help provided by children. Among the urban young there was a tendency of adding other values to childbearing as well, values which none of the rural

interviewees mentioned. They said that they have children '[t]o have someone to talk to, [to be entertained]' (26) and '[s]o as to have friends in life' (14). One of the interviewees implicitly referred to the value of children as conveyors of adult status but did it in a remarkably changed way, as he linked it to the demands of the new socio-economic structures of Zimbabwe in which employment and a future 'good life' is perceived as dependent on education and proper behaviour:

The fact that I have a child of my own. Someone I will be able to raise properly, send to school, so that he can be able to lead a good life in the future. A child who will not end up being a robber or something bad. (24)

Another young urban man put his finger on an issue, which no one else touched, maybe because it had not entered their minds at all, when he said that '[i]t's unlikely that they [our children] will be able to look after us parents when they grow up' (14), and hence he could not see a point in having many children at all. He thought it wiser to have few and educated children, who can manage their own lives, or no children, which will lend you the possibility of living a different life than if you had parental responsibilities. The gap could not be wider between him and the women back in the village who experienced childbearing as the corner stone of marriage:

I have one [child] only. [...] [children are important for you] [t]o be able to have a happy marriage with your husband. [This why you have children], it is important. If a woman fails to have children, then she won't have anything important in life. Dispute that? [...] What is important about having children is this, if a woman get married and fails to have children, then her marriage will be on the rocks, but if she has children, then she will have someone to take care of her in the future. (113)

Their daily lives are lived side by side with the ageing parents of their husbands, people on whom they need to be on good speaking terms. They also live in an environment in which school drain resources, such as time and money away from their home giving nothing in return, at least not in a short time perspective.

Because if a woman has two children for example, one or both of them may die and so she will remain childless. But if she has three or four children, it's highly unlikely that all four children will die during her lifetime. (15)



One of the older men told the story of John and his wife, a story which shows why the woman above reasons as she does:

Let me tell what happened at Juru growth point in Murewa. There was this man called John. He had a shop and agreed with his wife to have 2 children, a boy and a girl and God Blessed them thus. Then the boy died and then the question of inheritance arose. Juru was not prepared to leave the shop to the girl child who would pass it on to her husband, who was not a Juru by name, so Mr. Juru had an affair and he had a son from the extra-marital affair because his lawful wife had been sterilized as per agreement, after she had had two children. The wife was not prepared to accept this son as the heir of all the Juru wealth because he was not her son. The wife wanted to commit suicide then. So you can see the problem that can arise from using these modern methods of family planning. (21)

As the young man above, who did not want to have children at all, the woman and man immediately above exemplifies an oddity at the other end as they were the only interviewees who referred to the possible death of children as a reason to have more than one or two. Of course, the women and men in the village also refer to children as a source of enjoyment as children makes you 'able to live happily, [t]o be a happy family, [c]hildren make a family happy' (214). However, there is always a link to the wider family: 'The importance... Of having children? [...] I love my husband so I had children [...] and [to make] the parents [happy] too [...] my husband's parents [that is]' (110). This link was not explicit in the urban interviewees when talking of the enjoyment of having children

To the White interviewees, children represented gratification and personal fulfilment, as they did for the young urban Blacks. One of the White couples was unable to have children and they adopted. The decision to adopt was met with a certain opposition in their family but they could not 'see' a life without children. The description of how that decision influenced their life may describe the motives when making reproductive decisions:

[i]ts not an easy decision [adopting]. But we made it and we adopted, and that was the best thing we've ever done [...]. It was a big step in our life, but it was very fulfilling and we've had tremendous joy out of our kids and its... I don't think our lives would have been the same without them. It's very fulfilling, it's important. (224)

That young White couples "normally" choose to have two children is according to the interviewees often based in economic considerations. However, a few young couples choose to have more than two children, and to some of the older White interviewees such decisions

may sometimes be met with a certain enthusiasm, an enthusiasm which differ radically from the negative attitude of other ageing Whites:

Mainly two, you find [...] a lot of families have two children, [...] but we've got friends who feel that two is... is not the right amount to have, three is better. It's a more rounded family [...] it's better to have three than two. It's a sort of... the bad side of it is that you can loose one and then you're left with one. If you loose one and you have got three, you're still left with two. And I think that's maybe quite a sensible way of thinking. There is the down side of 't because there're a lot more expense [but is that really important when it] comes to rearing a family [...] is it really? It is not. If you can't afford to educate three people [...] that isn't the end of the world. We don't all have to have education here, I mean university education, we don't *have* to have private schooling. So, really family values are much more important and if those are coming back, I think it's a good thing. Yah, there is quite a few people now, the young couples now got two or three kids [...] and there are others who are having four. One young couple I know have got five, so... (224)

He sees the young families with three or more families as entertaining the old family values, which he himself appreciates. In fact he seems to indicate that these are more important than the ability to provide the children with higher education or private schooling (which is not uncommon in the farmer community). He is also to some extent in line with some of the older Black interviewees, however with the difference that he views *higher* education as not necessarily important, while the ageing Black interviewees question education as such.

The White interviewees also describe having children as something, which develops your marriage or your self as a person. It shapes you and changes you:

I think that your children make you. That's what I think. ...ehm... They round you off, they finish you, they break you, they mould you, they make you into a much better person. And my friends that I have who've got no children... ehm... I feel sorry for them because I see that they're so, they're so selfish and they battle to make their own relationships with *their* parents and their spouses and their siblings work because they've never had to give in a child type relationship. (129)

None of the White women mentioned children as important in the sense of securing their position in a marriage, but children may function as "marital glue". One of them mentioned that without the children she might have walked out of the marriage. She claimed that

she did not stay *because* of the children, but she believed that the existence of children in her marriage meant that both she and her husband put a lot more effort into making the marriage and the family function and develop positively.

To the White interviewees the numbers game was not as important as to the Black interviewees. The largest of these families was one with four children and the reason the woman gave for settling on four instead of five was that 'I actually think I will probably do my kids a better job on four and not five' (129). Again the reference is to the psychological well-being of her children, not to the economic burden an additional child would put on the family.<sup>28</sup> To the contrary she and her husband both perceived of the economic side of having many children would be positive since they would not be as spoiled as children in small families—i.e. they reasoned in a similar way as the ageing White man quoted above. However, the White families are generally considerably smaller than the Black families, maybe except the younger urban Black families.

The link between economy and children was to one of the ageing White interviewees expressed the following way: '[It's] up to them [to decide how many children they want]. I do feel that you must limit it, limit them to the number they can educate', but when asked whether she thereby feels that if her children were so rich that they could have an unlimited number of children she suddenly gets a serious look on her face and says: 'Ah, no! Because money doesn't really count in that. It's time and quality time. You can't really give quality time if you've got ten or twelve children, can you' (128).

The psycho-social dependency on mothering as women's proper "work", i.e. the discourse defining children as a central part of marriage and marriage as the ticket into the community as a respected member, may be quite decisive, however to White as well as to Black couples:

I think [my parents] would have said that [deciding not to have children] wasn't good and they probably would have... I don't think they would have forced me or ostracised me, but they would have said "no, children are *so* important". And you know, I suppose both of my parents are quite logical, so if they had, you know if I had married somebody who couldn't have had any children then that would have been a different reaction to "no, I have decided I don't want any children" [...] it would depend on your circumstances. (129)

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<sup>28</sup> Economy was not an issue concerning childbearing to this family despite them probably being the poorest of the European families interviewed. Their farm and farm house was smaller than the other families' and their home not furnished as elegantly and expensively as the other families interviewed.

The economic and political dependency on childbearing in White families may not be as strong as in Black families and it is certainly not made explicit. It is, however, quite possible that the White women are much more dependent on their marriages than they want to admit or have come to understand. Many White women are not as well educated as their husbands, and the ideal of home-making mothering puts discursive limits to their participation on the labour market (on which women are also generally paid much lower wages than men are). Few women (in particular among the farmers) are, I would suspect able to fend economically for themselves and their children, and would upon a divorce have to depend on support from their parents or siblings at least initially. The major difference between Black and White women is perhaps not that White women are more 'free' (as some of the Black women expressed it) but that their economic situation upon divorce or widowhood is not at all as precarious as they themselves tend to believe, as it is for many Black women—i.e. their physical survival is not threatened, while their social life may be severely limited and their standard of living deteriorate.

# Chapter 8

## Dependency and control: The political economy of sexuality and reproduction

*The Government realises that unless women are fully integrated into the main stream of development, efforts to improve their standards of living can not be realised. [...] As women play a major role in fertility management as well as development issues, it is imperative that their aspirations be given prominence [...] The current disparities between population dynamics and economic growth are not only unsustainable but herald absolute poverty in the long run. (NEPC 1998: 15 and 29)*

In early October 2000, I was inquiring for a maternity dress at *Coconut Joe's*, a has-it-all shop in Sam Levy's Village, Borrowdale—a very "white" suburb and shopping mall for weekending farmers. The White lady behind the counter smiled and said: 'No, I am sorry. They don't cater for us you see'. Bewildered I asked, 'Who are 'they'?' She explained that 'they' are the manufacturers, and in the end the government, and that the 'us' are Europeans. She then laughed and said that, of course this was not meant literally but the fact remained that the locally manufactured maternity dresses were not designed to the taste of Europeans — they were simply gross.

In a sense, this small incidence points out quite precisely the intersection of reproductive choice and political economic relations in a society so heavily marked by its past as a settler colony—being pregnant is a condition fraught with racial-political overtones even in the smallest possible sense. Through the various chapters of this thesis I have, through the research questions raised in the introduction attempted to understand the grounds on which reproductive decisions are made among Zimbabweans with very different backgrounds. I have focused not only on the individual and local aspects of reproductive decision-making and population politics but also on the historical background both of the Zimbabwean context and the fertility control lobby, and the medical research into contraceptive technologies for those who "overpopulate". I have attempted to show how reproductive decision-making—and local and global population politics—makes sense (to paraphrase Susan Greenhalgh) in particular contexts and discourses. I have also had the

ambition of placing my interpretations in a theoretical frame, which takes into consideration not only feminist theorisations of gender, patriarchy and masculinity, race and position, but also the politically influential theories of scholars on population and fertility change.

The conclusions of this work *could* be summarised in the following four points, i.e., that the historical background is decisive to sexual and reproductive discourses and practices, and continue to be so when a change to lower fertility appears; theories on fertility change over-theorise women's dependency on children, while under-theorising women's (economic, sexual and reproductive) dependency on men and masculine discursive practices; the theories are un-able to explain how economic decline and increased poverty is connected to fertility decline, as the theoretical relationship is defined as the opposite, i.e. economic development leads to lower fertility; and fertility does not necessarily fall as a consequence of gender equality—falling fertility may in fact be one among many factors generating a change towards gender equality.

Below I will substantiate these four points, through attending to the research questions raised in the introduction. I will begin the end with a discussion of the results of my work in relation to the research questions, and end it with a reflection on and critical discussion of Caldwell's theory and Handwerker's model of fertility change, which were presented in chapter 1. The four summarising points referred to above will criss-cross the discussions throughout this concluding chapter.

### **History, politics and change: Understanding the connections**

I postulate in the section above, that the historical background in a society is decisive to practices and discourses on sexuality and reproductive decision-making, and that it continues to play a role in contemporary discursive practices, in ways not always recognised by students of population. The interaction of masculinities, racialised sexuality and reproduction, colonial and imperial political economies and the British imperial diaspora is central to contemporary politics, policies and practices, and the discourses on which they lean. The objective of the colonisation of Zimbabwe was to create a new "white" homeland in "black" Africa, i.e. it was from the very beginning based in settlerism, not exclusively in wealth extraction. In difference to British colonial practice, White women were allowed to trek into the colony from the late 1890s—i.e. the colony was deemed "safe" shortly after the First Chimurenga was defeated. The administration of the colony followed the usual path of land grabbing, relocation of indigenous populations to less fertile areas, the introduction of individual ownership to land and mineral resources, hut taxes, the establishment of a male labour migration system and a restructuring

of African households. The revolt against colonisation, led not only by male fighters but also by female spirit mediums (e.g. Ambuya Nehanda), was brutally crushed, giving way to other means of opposition, and importantly also to appropriation of colonial values.<sup>1</sup> It also opened up to a hybridisation of masculinities, which came to form discourses and practices of sexuality and reproduction in Rhodesia, and which continues to form contemporary gender, class, age and racial relations in Zimbabwe. Women continue to be subjected to male control, both in private and public, through a hybrid masculinity focused particularly on women's "proper" sexual conduct and reproduction. The consequences of stepping outside of the sexual-reproductive control and dependency on men, ranges from malevolent gossip, isolation, and divorce, to murder.

The hybridisation may be seen as a result of a usual colonial strategy; i.e. to give in order to get. What the BSAC and the British administration gave, was both small patches of spaces of (colonial) refuge to women (missionary schools for girls and young women who fled home), and the right of control over women by men in the family and the local community. The trade-off strengthened indigenous male power-bases in the home and the community, while diminishing it drastically on regional and state levels.<sup>2</sup> The processes of male exchanges of rights over women, extended into the European community as well: White women were subjected to sexual control measures, maybe in more rigid forms than African women.

European discourse on African promiscuity was dual. On the one hand, it constructed African men as sexual brutes and African women as lusty. On the other hand, women (both Black and White) were seen as disgraced and victimised by African men's sexualised brutality. The racialised duality of the discourse on sexuality, was strengthened by the split between male and female spheres of work, demanded by colonial political economic structures and gendered, racial and class hierarchies. Furthermore, this duality of British racialised sexuality entered indigenous discourses on sexuality and reproduction, a hybridisation, which was possible because the basic requirement for it to happen was present—social structures and discursive practices of masculinity. The results of this hybridisation of masculinity were, *inter alia*, that some men established separate families/love relations in the area whereto they labour-migrated, as well as in their natal

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<sup>1</sup> See for instance Dangarembga (1988), Maraire (1997) and Nzenza (1997) for literary descriptions of this process.

<sup>2</sup> Silberschmidt (1999) has written a highly interesting book on gender antagonism in Kisii district in Kenya, in which she discusses the consequences of male loss of political significance during colonialism. She argues that one consequence was a substitution of "big politics" with "small politics," i.e. lost political economic influence/control on regional politics was substituted with increased control over women in the household and the community.

villages. Fertile grounds were thereby created for accusations and practices of infidelity among men, and “prostitution” among women (in particular those who left the rural communities to earn an income). In a sense, men became a sort of game to be played by women who were not under the control of other men—the essence of the bitter accusations of “prostitution” and sexual danger (through HIV/Aids) raised against “other” women in my field data is an example of this.

As women generally have few opportunities of survival other than through men (e.g. allocations of agricultural land, part in income, regular prostitution or sugar-daddy’ism) their sexuality and reproductive capacities (i.e. being a good wife or a perfect lover) have become essential to their survival. Many women perceive of providing sex and children as social and economic security, in addition to being re-creative and an important source of enjoyment. Sex and children do not provide this security per se, but secure a woman’s relation to a man, a mother’s relation to her children’s father (and his income), and also to his parents on whom many Zimbabwean women are dependent. In principle, both Black and White Zimbabwean women are generally dependent on men for their social and economic security. However, White women often have another, tighter, economic safety net below them, should they fall, than do Black women, mainly because the economic situation of their families is so much better. Socially, however, the case is another one. Divorced women, or women who have chosen not to marry and/or not to have children are viewed with scepticism and as sexually accessible by other men. The dependency on men and parents-in-law signal not only that women in their reproductive ages are involved in sexual-reproductive politics on the local level, but also that their closest family members are often actively engaged in this as well.

Many women and men argued that ‘bedroom politics’, i.e. marital sexual and reproductive negotiations, are central both to family conflicts and their solutions, and that ideally decisions made in the bedroom should not be re-opened for negotiations by other parties, such as parents/-in-law. Many women choose, despite this marital agreement, to include parents/-in-law in their own, private considerations. They deem it un-strategic not to. This means that the number of children women bear, has a tendency to be lower than in their parental generation, and lower than the expectations of the older generations. Despite it being “too low” to many older people, however, it is often higher than the woman’s own desired number of children, and often also higher than the number desired by husbands. In other words, women make very active trade-offs between their own desires, those of their husbands and of their parents/-in-law. They are acting quite consciously to balance their desires, needs and dependencies in the midst of a worsening social and economic situation, in a society where male interests are of primary concern,



and where the older generation is considered wise and powerful (and sometimes erroneous and old-fashioned).

The colliding reproductive interests—politics—between younger and older generations are perhaps those most visible in my interviews. Younger husbands and wives are more often than not in agreement on the preference for a small family. The younger and the farther away from home they are, the more assertive they become. A change seems to be under way in which the young will hear what the older people say, nod their heads and walk off in the opposite direction. They have become modernised, they have attained, through economic decline and growing poverty, what has been the norm among affluent and middle-class Whites for at least two generations; the small family.

By 1998, many of the arguments in favour of a Rhodesian family planning/fertility reduction programme had been embraced by the republican Zimbabwean Government. The focus of the Zimbabwean population policy lay not, however, in local concerns of racial population growth and control, but in the globalised population reduction discourse of the 1990s. This particular discourse is one in which feminist demands for gender equality has been included in otherwise economic-environmental arguments for the need to control population—i.e. family size—in the South. A reason for suddenly letting the “woman question” seriously enter the debate on overpopulation and population reduction was maybe both the growing acceptance of feminist arguments in the international community,<sup>3</sup> and the fact that Caldwell introduced his wealth-flow theory. According to Caldwell, women’s exclusion from education and the labour market is central to the explanation of why high fertility levels prevail in “traditional” societies. Handwerker developed this thought specifically in his attempt at showing how intimately fertility is intertwined with power over resources, particularly for women. The Zimbabwean population policy, which was followed up by an Aids policy in December 1999 and a very new gender equality policy (March 2004) shows that the Zimbabwean Government has not only adopted views that are opposing those of the 1960’ and -70s nationalists, but also that it intends to try to tackle the perceived obstacles to sustainable development in accordance with the global discourse on population reduction:

The ultimate goal of the national population policy is to achieve high standards of living of the people through influencing the population variables and development trends in a desirable direction, which can

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<sup>3</sup> For instance through the steadily growing and increasingly more vocal and visible body of feminist research and activism, and the signing and ratification of the CEDAW (from 1979 onwards) and the establishment of the CEDAW committee in 1981.

contribute to the achievement of economic, social and other collective goals of the nation. (NEPC 1998: 1)

However, the Zimbabwean Government's vision, in which gender inequality, high fertility and poverty is a memory of the past, and the discourse on how such a vision should best be turned into reality seem not to correspond with what is going on in Zimbabwe. According to the logic of this discourse, based on the wealth-flow theory, economic growth theories and gender equality models, the Zimbabwean situation should not exist. The country has since the early 1990s experienced a rather sharp downward economic spiral into general poverty, a shrinking labour market, falling school enrolment rates in particular for girls/young women, and the goal of gender equality is not much nearer today than in the 1980s—but fertility rates are falling.

This means that the theories on which policy-makers and researchers ground their work may not always hold the explanatory power expected of them. The results of this particular thesis, which are admittedly limited and not generalisable, do seem, however, to find support in the statistical data on rising poverty, increased use of contraceptives and declining fertility. Understanding fertility change apparently does require a closer look at the local level, as Caldwell (1982), Dixon-Mueller (1993), Greenhalgh (1993 and 1995) and numerous other researchers claim.

### **Complicating the theories of reproductive change**

The fertility transition and the wealth-flow theories are grounded in theoretical assumptions developed by demographers and other students of population (e.g. economists, anthropologists, sociologists, historians etc.), who have been academically socialised in western liberal thought (see for instance the edited works by Coleman and Schofield 1986; Bledsoe and Cohen 1993; Demeny and McNicoll 1998). The modernisation discourse of the 20th century focus on individual rights as if they were gender neutral, which is a particular marker of liberalism including feminist liberalism (Tong 1994). In this discourse, the understanding of gender is one in which power is perceived as working in direct relationships of "power over the powerless". According to this model of thought, what is necessary is a formal breach of male "power over" women, i.e. the need to provide women with legal and institutional resources, such as the right to vote, the right to work, the right to equal pay, the right to control over fertility etcetera. Accordingly, once the legal and institutional resources are in place women and men will eventually become equal partners, socially, economically and politically. The idea that fertility levels will drop once women have access to "effective" contraception is a very

good example of the liberalist discourse. However, it disregards the more subtle ways in which power may also work, and the resistance expressed in the agency of individuals who in a liberalist tradition would be defined as “powerless”. It disregards also the interactions of structures and the discursive practices maintaining them, which position people differently in relation to each other, such as class, race, age and gender. The lack of theorisation of hierarchical intersectionality disable the analysis of dependency for instance, and results in a limited understanding of the dynamics of dependency relationships, which criss-cross gender, race, class and generation.

In Handwerker’s model, relations of dependency are constructed solely around the mother-child nexus. Childbearing is an activity, which is either productive or non-productive to the mother, who acts either through increasing or limiting her childbearing—she is either dependent on her children or her children are dependent on her. In this construction, which has a certain charm because solutions are rather simple to envision,<sup>4</sup> the focus typical of feminist research is almost completely left out. I argue that the focus should not be women’s dependency on children, but rather their dependency on husbands, in-laws and mothering discourses in patriarchal societies, in particular in societies, which have developed a patriarchal organisation of masculinity. In other words, practices and structures of gendered and generational relationships of dependency, rooted in a patriarchal-masculine organisation of the reproductive arena. In more detail this imply women’s dependency on masculine discursive practices, in which they are construed as dependants and as minors through the deployment of discourses and practices in which women’s sexuality and reproduction are perceived of as not belonging to them, and as legitimate only within legal and male controlled institutions—e.g. marriage, the house, motherhood.

Handwerker claims that reproduction is directly linked both to power on the political and the individual arena, in which I deeply agree with him. In trying to come to grips with the intricate relations of power in relation to childbearing Handwerker (1990:2) produces a double and somewhat contradictory argument, however. On the one hand, he leans on the traditional liberalist assumption that power is one-directional, i.e. that ‘power accrues to individuals or organizations to the extent to which they control access to strategic resources’, while simultaneously arguing that the ‘powerless...use a variety of means to subvert’ the powerful. Apart from the inherent contradiction in defining a person who subverts power as ‘powerless’, his understanding of ‘strategic resources’ is also limited. In my understanding childbearing is in many instances a strategic resource

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<sup>4</sup> E.g. through Hyden’s (1985) idea of dismantling the kin-based social networks in Africa, and getting African women out on the formal labour market.

and hence the bearing or non-bearing of children might in itself be understood as an act of power. Defining people as powerless is problematic, as one who is powerless in my understanding would be one who have all together ceased to counter or subvert the power exercised over them by others. In defining people as 'powerless' rather than as agents, a conceptualisation of the contradictory ways in which power is most often exercised is obstructed. If we want to understand the reproductive changes taking place in contemporary Zimbabwe, changes which are expressed not only by the interviewees re-presented here, but which are also visible in statistics on fertility and contraceptive prevalence, we need to be able to conceptualise people as agents, not as powerless.

In Handwerker's understanding, it is the ability, of persons or institutions, to enforce childbearing upon someone else than oneself, which is the main act of power—an ability, which it is of course of great importance to consider. However, it is also incredibly important to include the control exercised on the other side of the equation, i.e. the resistance practised in relation to a significant other (e.g. mother/- or father/-in-law, wife or husband) in any model or theory of reproduction. Handwerker does not consider this latter perspective on power/reproduction, but I argue that it is quite central to the understanding of relatively high fertility levels in societies undergoing socio-economic and political crisis and change, as are most countries in the conceptual South, including Zimbabwe.

Handwerker also emphasises that women's direct dependency on children is often much greater than men's dependency, which is more derived than women's. That is, women are more immediately dependent on the gains and productivity of their children than men are because their survival and security is linked to their reproductive capacity as well as to the productivity of the children they bear and care for: 'Childbearing constitutes an investment activity for women when their material well-being is dependent either directly or indirectly upon their children' (Handwerker 1990: 21). Men's dependency on children is based more on the status and political influence children confer, than their immediate survival and security. Of course this is, something which Handwerker fails to observe, a problematique related particularly to hierarchically constructed societies in which, e.g. gender, class, race and masculinity interact in ways, which exclude certain categories of people from access to strategic resources, politically, economically and socially. In other words he, as many other students of population, fails to recognise the centrality of situated fertility (Greenhalgh 1990 and 1995).

In a context where masculinity, discursively locating women in a subordinate position (through her different-ness from the masculine norm) interacts with race, where non-White individuals are located in a subordinate position vis-à-vis the White standard, and with class, in

which those earning less and having lower living standards than their better-off counterparts, the location of a poor non-White woman is essentially one of dependency and lost opportunities (hooks 1990 and 1992; Collins 1996). She is through these discourses and practices of hierarchy robbed of control over her faculties and capacities, as these are denied because they are defined as belonging to someone else than herself (e.g. her father; brother/s; husband; in-laws; relatives; children; the state) or they are defined as nearly lacking all together, leaving her in a position where she must be guided by men (as argued by Rousseau in the 18th century, see Wollstonecraft 1792 and Okin 1979). The location matters both literally and discursively. Such a location is of course seldom, if ever, equal to women perceiving themselves as devoid of possibility, opportunity or manoeuvring space. However, unless they have the possibility to step out of their locality, it severely limits the space within which they may engage with and negotiate their position vis-à-vis those defined and defining themselves as better able to decide what women may and may not do.

Caldwell's wealth-flow theory and Handwerker's explicit focus on the basic arguments of feminist liberalism, takes for granted that parental dependency on children end when childbearing becomes a consumption activity, and when women have access to the same resources and opportunities on equal terms with men. In other words, fertility decline will come about as a consequence of reversed relations of dependency between parents and children, and increased gender equality. However, considering the results of my research presented in this thesis, I believe that this assumption is problematic and simplifies relations of dependency, economic development theories and gender theories too much. First of all, the claim that fertility will fall as a consequence of childbearing becoming consumption rather than investment, and of parents' increased opportunities on the labour market is complicated by the Zimbabwean situation. To the Black interviewees, childbearing functioned simultaneously as both investment and consumption, and one of the consequences of economic retrenching and decreasing opportunities on the labour market (formal and informal) is the spread of the small family ideal. Sharply limited childbearing represents a calculated investment, while bearing few children does not necessarily mean that parents do not expect to be taken care of in old age. The young couples in this study clearly tell us that having few children does not mean that they do not expect their children to take care of them when they grow old. Only one young man does not expect that of his children. To the contrary, they are planning a small family *because* of their old age security. Hence, today's young Zimbabwean parents are in disagreement with their parents, who believe that a large family provides better security than does a small. What we witness is a rather dramatic change in the discursive practices of reproductive decision-

making, which is linked to the political economic change, which has taken place in Zimbabwe as a consequence of independence. To the White interviewees, the economic situation did not matter too much in their consideration of how big a family they wanted. Children were much more an issue of pure consumption as suggested by Handwerker.

There is one particular kind of relationship of dependency, which is not calculated for in the theories on fertility change, i.e. the relationship between women and their husbands in particular in societies where masculinity is the ordering principle. This is, in my perception the most interesting relationship of dependency in relation to reproductive decision-making as this is where patriarchal, political and economic hierarchies and the deployment of technologies of control intersect. In her relationship to her husband, a Zimbabwean woman will include at least his close family, and sometimes her own parents as well. In that sense, Zimbabwean marriages are generally quite crowded. Men do feel the interference by their parents in particular, but often define their own interests as more important. Women, however cannot afford to consider such interference as marginal – many are dependent on staying married for their survival and are hence, in difference to their husbands, keenly aware of reproductive interference by significant others. The complex and changeable relations of dependency between ageing parents and sons in particular, therefore intersect and are expressed in women's reproductive "disobedience" both towards their husbands and their parents-in-law, as they may choose to have more children than their husbands want and fewer than their parents-in-law expect.

The claim that increased gender equality should be one of the main factors in fertility decline also seem difficult to sustain when studying Zimbabwe. The Zimbabwean Government has instituted laws and regulations aiming at greater equality between women and men, but the process is very slow, and mainly limited to the sphere of policy. I believe it would be difficult to argue that fertility decline has been effectuated through the (limited) gender equality policies since independence.

A change is taking place in Zimbabwe from high to low fertility, while the rationale for having children continue to be old-age security. This change is according to the interviewees related to the economic situation, i.e. they feel that they will not be able to provide what is necessary to more than a couple of children (the desired number of children varied between none and five, with the higher number more typical in the rural and the lower number in the urban setting). This is in contrast to the parental generation among whom many feel that the young make wrong priorities. The interesting question is therefore why there is such a difference among those in reproductive age and their parents. Partly, young parents today believe their children need

education, and then not only primary education, to get a job in the future, i.e. they can not or do not want really to see their children becoming peasant farmers. In addition, they have been educated in school about the importance of using contraceptives, and of having smaller families than their parents so as to be able to care for it properly (i.e. with clothing, education, health, food etc.).

In other words, today's young parents have other ambitions in particular for their children (more than for themselves) than their parents had for them. They perceive of the demands coming from ageing parents as obsolete. This has of course to do with the historical background of Zimbabwe, with a larger than usual White colonising population, which acted rather quickly to get the colony "modernised" (in terms of infrastructure, education, leisure/tourism, labour etc.) to fit their expectations. They did not want to live on the colonial frontier but in a well-functioning society as defined by colonial standards. The liberation war was not only about taking back land, but also about gaining access to this modernised society and the possibilities it could provide. Today's young parents have greater access to the fruits of modernisation than did their parents, not only practically and actually but also discursively. The changes in fertility in Zimbabwe might therefore also be a matter of finally being able to access the resources of modernity – an access many people feel they have to make use of whether they like it or not because it is perceived of as the only way of surviving in contemporary Zimbabwe.

The patriarchal masculinity discourse and the practices going with it does not change however; i.e. falling fertility may not necessarily lead to a development towards gender equality (and was it really in Europe one might ask). However, falling fertility may open up windows of opportunities to women through which they may see other roles for themselves than mothering only. When such windows opens up through less demands within the home, while the economic situation deteriorates, even men might see the point in women getting an education and a job. Increased gender equality may very well be the (unintended) result rather than the cause of falling fertility, maybe more so in societies where the economic situation tends to worsen successively.

### **A battleground of wills**

I choose to conclude this last chapter by returning to the very beginning of the thesis, i.e. to the description of the areas of research and those peopling it. They are all part of families of which I, Nyaradzo Dzobo and Noah Nyongo interviewed many members. Drawing together the threads of these families at the very end, and in generalising terms may seem a bit odd. However, seeing these people as members of families is important. Relations of dependency and

their consequences is the main stream throughout the preceding chapters, in particular the relations of dependency constructed around masculinity on international, state, local and familial level.

Returning to the introduction, which opens with the relation of dependency between the Rhodesian colony and its “mother country”, Great Britain, I sketchily describe the class based relations of dependency between and within the families in Buhera. In other words, those you have met throughout the major part of this thesis are bound to each other not only as husbands, wives, sons, daughters/-in-law or parents/-in-law but importantly also through economic ties that bind many of them rather tightly to the richest members of the families. This is not similarly true of the White families, all of whom may fend rather well for themselves as independent economic units. However, the members of the White, as well as Black families are tied together by discursively constructed dependencies that interact with political economic structures centring on gender and the patriarchal organisation of the reproductive arena. This implies that White women are not necessarily less dependent than are Black women, despite their higher educational level and their background. In a society such as Zimbabwe, organised around the hub of masculine definitions of woman-ness as married motherhood, women become dependent on those who may provide them access to that which is defined as legitimate roles and responsibilities, i.e. husbands and their parents. The experience of such dependency is shared cross-racially and across class, a conclusion, which is not surprising to feminists.

Within all the families included in this study, i.e. across race and class, women were defined as mothers, and only in a few cases as professionals—never as breadwinners.<sup>5</sup> Men on the other hand were unanimously described, and described themselves as breadwinners and decision-makers, and only rarely *as fathers*. Ageing parents described themselves as having lost all influence on the young, while they were by their grown children described as having retained quite a lot of influence on family politics regarding reproduction and marriage—i.e. on that which is to many Zimbabweans the most central aspects of adulthood. Almost everybody described adolescent and young adult sexuality, particularly young women’s sexuality as having been let loose—mainly through modernisation—with dramatic consequences on marriage stability (both in terms of dysfunctional marriages and as an effect of unmarried female promiscuity and the spread of HIV/Aids), and reproduction (both non-marital and decreased reproduction). The major area of common interest between male indigenous and colonising elites was exactly

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<sup>5</sup> Only one man was very aware of his wife’s ability to sustain herself economically if need be. This, however, did not change both her and her family’s perception of family coming first to her, i.e. that she would give up work if she had to.



this; securing the masculine control over organisation of the reproductive arena in the midst of dramatic (colonial) social change.

This was also a major area of *disagreement* after the UDI. The family planning debate of 1966 signalled not only a change in attitude among the Whites towards African childbearing, but also a radically changed perception of White rights of interference in African social organisation—the silent agreement regarding who was to control whose women was broken. The male colonising elite wanted to enter the sphere of decision-making formerly allowed indigenous men in accordance with the politics of separate development, because their project, i.e. creating a White nation in Africa, was threatened by African population increase. At this point in time, the de-colonisation of the African continent had gained momentum and African Zimbabwean nationalists saw this attempted White invasion into formerly prohibited area as a declaration of war over women and human and social reproduction. This might also explain why it was relatively easy for the nationalists to change political direction on the issue of family planning within five years after independence. It was not any longer an issue, neither of who controlled whose women, nor of racialised demographic warfare, as Black men had re-installed themselves as the masters of the house. It became an issue of survival in the rather tough international climate in which Zimbabwe was and is dependent on aid donors talking family planning. The kind of family planning talked in the international aid donor community, however, takes for granted that the theories and models upon which population and development policies are crafted are right. The Zimbabwean case seems, however to suggest that they are not.

# Appendix 1:

## List of interviewees

<b>Interviewee</b>	<b>Identification mark</b>
Woman, in her 20's	13
Woman, in her 20's	14
Man, in his 20's	25
Woman, in her 20's	16
Man, in his 20s	26
Woman, in her 20's	17
Woman, in her 20's	19
Woman, in her 20's	111
Woman, in her 20's	112
Man, in his 20's	212
Woman, in her 20's	113
Woman, in her 20's	114
Woman, in her 20's	121
Woman, in her 20's	122
Woman, in her 20's	127
Man, in his 30's	22
Woman, in her 30's	12
Man, in his 30's	23
Man, in his 30's	24
Man, in his 30's	28
Man, in his 30's	29
Man, in his 30's	210
Man, in his 30's	215
Man, in his 30's	221
Man, in his 30's	222
Man, in his 30's	226
Woman, in her 30's	126
Man, in his 30's	228
Woman, in her 30's	129
Woman, in her 40's	118
Woman, in her 40's	119
Man, in his 40's	223
Woman, in her 50's	11
Woman, in her 50's	15
Man, in his 50's	27
Woman, in her 50's	18

<b>Interviewee</b>	<b>Identification mark</b>
Woman, in her 50's	110
Man, in his 50's	214
Man, in his 50's	218
Woman, in her 50's	115
Woman, in her 50's	116
Woman, in her 50's	120
Woman, in her 50's	124
Man, in his 50's	224
Man, in his 60's	21
Man, in his 60's	213
Man, in his 60's	217
Man, in his 60's	219
Man, in his 60's	220
Woman, in her 60's	125
Man, in his 60's	225
Man, in his 60's	227
Woman, in her 60's	128
Man, in his 80's	211
Man, in his 80's	216
Woman, in her 80's	117
Woman, in her 80's	123

## Appendix 2:

### List of abbreviations

BSAC	British South Africa Company
CFU	Commercial Farmers Union (Zimbabwe)
CSO	Central Statistical Office (Zimbabwe)
DHS	Demographic and Health Survey
ESAP	Economic Structural Adjustment Programme
FPAR	Family Planning Association of Rhodesia
ICPD	International Conference on Population and Development (UN)
ICPD PA	The Programme of Action from the ICPD
IUD	Intra Uterine Device (a group of technological contraceptives, which are inserted into the vagina to hinder conception)
MDC	Movement for Democratic Change (Zimbabwean opposition party)
NAZ	National Archives of Zimbabwe
NEPC	National and Economic Planning Commission (Zimbabwe)
RF	Rhodesian Front (governing party in Rhodesia between 1963 and 1978)
RHA	Rhodes House Archives
STD	Sexually Transmitted Disease
STI	Sexually Transmitted Infection
TFR	Total Fertility Rate (the average total number of children born by a woman during her life time)
UDI	Unilateral Declaration of Independence (by the Smith regime, November 25 1965)
UN	United Nations
UNFPA	United Nations Fund for Population Activities (or. United Nations Population Fund)
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WLSA	Women and Law in Southern Africa
ZANU	Zimbabwe African National Union
ZAPU	Zimbabwe African Peoples Union
ZNFPC	Zimbabwe National Family Planning Council

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