A MATTER OF DIFFERENCE?

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

Department of Peace and Development Research,
Göteborg University

Ane Marie Ørbø Kirkegaard

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Based on field and archival research, this thesis explores reproductive decision-making in contemporary Zimbabwe, as well as the historical background of current discourses on sexuality and reproduction. Zimbabwe (Southern Rhodesia) was created and structured by a European Imperial diaspora, based on racialised patriarchal structures of control. White rule lasted from 1896 to 1979, a period during which the patriarchal structures of coloniser and colonised were increasingly intertwined, as they were implicated both in conflicts over, and joint struggles for increased control of women, sexuality and reproduction.

With the point of departure in Zimbabwe's colonial history, *A matter of difference?* analyses how reproductive decision-making relates to discourses of race, sexuality and gender, and on what grounds Zimbabwean men and women make reproductive decisions. Feminist theories, as well as theories of fertility decline are explored in the search for a theoretical framework, which may help us understand the Zimbabwean situation, which seems to contradict conventional theories on fertility decline. The main conclusions of the thesis are, that the historical background has consequences for contemporary practices and discourses on sexuality and reproduction; that women's dependency on men is under-theorised in theories of fertility change; and that gender equality and economic growth are not necessarily required for setting a trend of fertility decline in motion.
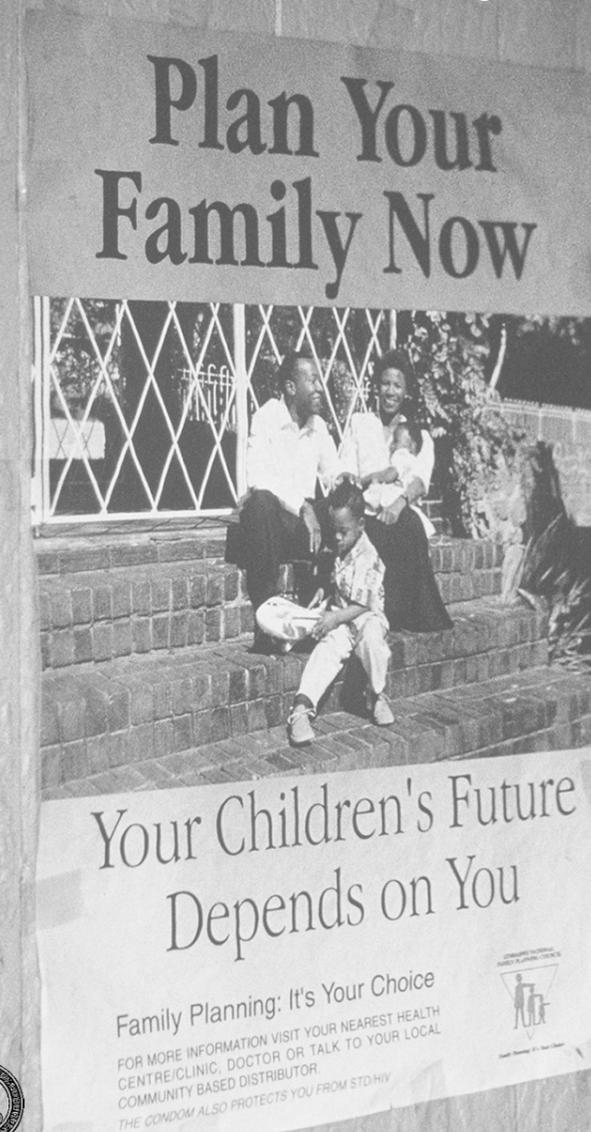
Ane Marie Ørbø Kirkegaard

Department of Peace and Development Research,
Göteborg University, Box 700
405 30 Göteborg, Sweden
Phone: +46 31 7731000 Fax: +46 31 7734910
E-mail: info@padrigu.gu.se
www.padrigu.gu.se
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