# Sexuality in Africa

MAGAZINE

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Technology, Sexuality And Reproductive Rights In Africa

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James Hughes

Caption: A man uses a palm pilot.
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Caption: A man uses a palm pilot.
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EDITORIAL

# A thought on Technology and Sexual wellbeing in Africa

By Richmond Tiemoko

2007-468 Nairobi, Kenya
Credit: (c) 2007 Charles Kimani, Courtesy of Photoshare
Caption: A young woman makes a call at a public pay phone in Nairobi, Kenya.

There has always been a link between technology and sex in Africa but this link has recently become more diversified and complex to involve various dimensions of sexuality. From the numerous forms and quality of aphrodisiacs available in Africa, it is clear that sexuality, reproduction and technology have always been linked. However the last few decades have changed the landscape of the sexuality and technology nexus, with a support and advocacy for science based technology. This is particularly true for reproductive technology, although non-reproductive technology has sprung and diversified over time.

Public support and funding of techno-sexual and reproductive services in Africa are mainly in line of the public discourse on sexuality and reproduction. Embedded in demographic (population growth control) and biomedical paradigm, techno-reproductive services and commodities such as contraceptives (including emergency contraceptives) have largely been welcome and at times heavily subsidized. This development has helped individuals and the society at large to plan their reproductive lives and enjoy their reproductive rights.

Another aspect of techno-reproductive services that seldom benefits from public support and funding but yet addresses community and individual reproductive health and right need; is Assisted reproduction technology which is available in countries but still remains a largely private issue even in the countries of the so-called *infertility belt* from Nigeria to the Democratic Republic of Congo. In spite of lack of support for assisted reproductive technology, it appears that the support of at least the indifference is because until recently these technologies remained largely in the essentialist approach to sexuality and reproduction. They did not fundamentally challenge or oppose the 'nature' of procreation and the social construction of reproduction.

**Hormonal treatment and plastic surgeries are also aiding the reconstruction of sexuality, gender and identity.**

Hormonal treatment and plastic surgeries are also aiding the reconstruction of sexuality, gender and identity. Although not yet widely accessible on the continent, these technologies are helping willing transpersons, transit from one gender to another or from intersex to one gender. It is not clear whether this transition is to domesticate nature or support the essentialism paradigm. What this may suggest is that in the field of sexuality, nature encompasses not only body appearance, functioning, feeling and desire. Technology could at the same time challenge and give prominence to different natural and reality of sexuality. This is clear in the over publicized 'the pregnant father' or a pregnant female to male (FTM) reported by British Broadcasting Coorporation and in the fact that sexual preference and gender identity are different i.e a trans person could be heterosexual, bi-sexual, homosexual or asexual at any given time or at different stage in the individual's life cycle.

Many of the technologies used for sexuality is about pleasure, care and wellness. Telecommunication including video communication, texting and internet based communication are providing loving individuals new and different opportunities and ways to show love and maintain their relationship. This has become a necessary tool for couples/partners *living together apart.*

Technology like cosmetics, sex toys GSM can also be an asset or a liability for sexual health and wellness and also for social justice. The later is particularly true for the DNA paternity testing. While DNA Paternity test is relevant in establishing genetic/biological relationships, it raises some crucial questions: 1) of fatherhood and paternity, which one is relevant and important and to whom? And what stage in life and under what circumstances. The second most important question is to what extent does DNA paternity, test equity and justice and women, men and family wellness? The quotation below amply shows that the social interpretation of DNA paternity test could be discriminatory and judgmental for some sections of the population.

'These children [who failed the paternity test] will need counseling. But because there are no illegitimate children in Africa, many of them will confront their mothers and ask them to identify their real fathers. Those women have explanations to give, and they had better start preparing their stories. *But what kind of women are these? What kind of mother would lie about her child's paternity for mercantilist reasons?* Men have to be careful too about the kind of *"away" games* that they play [1].

**Reference:**

[1] Reuben Abati (2007) 'DNA test, Abiola's Will and those 'bastards', The Guardian Newspaper of October 8, 2007 available at http://www.guardiannewsngr.com/editorial_opinion/article02/100807 (accessed September 5,2008)

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FEATURE

# Technology, Sexuality And Reproductive Rights In Africa

Gamal Serour

(L-R) Prof Gamal Serour with Folake Sholola and Louisa Ibhaze

In an interview with Professor Gamal Serour a Professor of Obstetrics and Gynecology and the Director of the International Islamic Centre For Population and Research Al Azher University Egypt, Louisa Ibhaze and Folake Sholola, got an insight on the influence of technology and reproductive health in Africa.

**Technology And Sexual Health**

Technology, in many ways has contributed to reproductive and sexual health and rights in Africa, unfortunately this has also been associated with problems like,

1. **Affordability:** New technology is very expensive and even if they are available in a country, many people especially in developing countries cannot afford them.

2. **Safety:** Some of the technology that have been introduced and are already in use in developing countries , have not undergone adequate testing

3. **Over and under use of technology** : These have resulted in problems

4. **Poor Information and education:** Some of the new technologies have been marketed as the solution for all problems in the area of sexual and reproductive health. Even though science has proved that this is not true.

**Technology And Health In Developing Countries**

Developing countries lack proper health education and credible sources of information. Poor control of medical information and poor marketing strategies can give the public general misconception about the use of technology with regards to health and sexuality. Technology has played a major role in the improvement of reproductive and sexual health and sexuality in women going by the definition of the World Health Assembly in 2007 "New technology" was defined as, information knowledge gained from medicine, vaccines, devices and information proposed to solve a health problem".

There have been inventions of many drugs which aid sexuality and reproduction in women. Drugs like, **mesopristol** and **mefipristol** helps with the medical termination of pregnancy in women instead of being subjected to surgical procedures and its occasional complications. Other important drugs which help in the promotion of sexuality are Anti RetroVirals ( ARV).

> There have been inventions of many drugs which aid sexuality and reproduction in women.

As much as this plays a major role in the alleviation of suffering for many women around the world, there are problems with access to ARV treatment, to the extent that today there are about 5-6 million people (couples, children below the age of 15 and pregnant women) who still can not access the treatment. According to the latest WHO results,

217-16 Egypt
Caption: A family planning provider explains the use of an intrauterine device (IUD) to a client at a Clinical Service Improvement (CSI) project clinic in Egypt. Credit: (c) 2003 CCP, Courtesy of Photoshare

HIV&AIDS have leveled off over the past two years because of the wide use of ARVs and its availability. (ref) However, we are still very far from meeting all the needs of people living with HIV or who are potential ARV patients.

Also one can think of drugs used for infertility treatment. Technology has enabled us to manufacture drugs for stimulation of ovulation which have been widely used and been immeasurable in the treatment of infertility all over the world. The use of these drugs in assisted reproductive technology has remarkably increased the pregnancy rate from the stumbling pregnancy rate of below 10% when the technique first started to the rate of between 35% -45%. This has encouraged medical centers all over the world to widely use these drugs for the treatment of infertility as well in assisted reproductive technology.

**Microbicides**

Microbides is a new technology developed to prevent infections such as HPV and HIV in women. Some studies thus far have shown that it is effective(please check cos not in the SA trials). Microbicides may be the hope for the future in the prevention of STIs. They have been developed to protect against STDs including HIV. The ease of administration and use by the female partners make them ideal for protection from STDs. As just a simple cream foam, or jelly that can be inserted vaginally to protect women when condom use is not possible, Microbicides are now in large-scale efficacy trials and dozens more are in the pre-clinical and clinical trials pipeline. Research to develop rectal microbicides is also finally being looked into.

**Vaccines**

Technology in the aspect of vaccine has been developed to prevent cervical cancer and the Human Papillomavirus (HPV) 16 and 18 which are responsible for about 70% of all the cases of cervical cancer and other genotypes are responsible for the other forms. Technology has developed the bi-valent and quadri-valent vaccine which has become available. It has been shown that 3 shots of the vaccine can prevent about 70% of the cases of cervical cancer. The vaccine alone is not enough to prevent cervical cancer because it can only protect the girl child only for 5years according to the studies done so far, but the combination of both the vaccine and the screening programme will prevent Cervical Cancer which is the leading cause of death due to malignancies in the developing world. Every year. around the world there are around 250,000 women who die from cervical cancer and 80% are in the developing countries. However, with the new vaccine, the question of affordability and the time of application are important because the vaccine is effective only when it is administered before sexual exposure. The socio-cultural and cost barriers around the vaccine hinder its wide dissemination and application. To be effective one has to get 3 doses and all three cost $300 which will last only for 5 years. This is really unaffordable for young girls in the developing world. There have been studies which shows that the cost effectiveness of giving the vaccine and 1-3 screening per life time will be very effective in prevention of cervical cancer.

**Technology plays a role in a development of devices and procedures that have a wide application in sexuality.**

**Technology and Sexuality**

Technology plays a role in a development of devices and procedures that have a wide application in sexuality. Sexual dysfunction devices for men and women, medicated IUDs which are suitable for application in women who have heavy menstrual loses, and also implants and injectables for long term contraception are few examples. Ethical concerns exist when applying some of these devices like coercion in applying one method or another, lack of autonomy when a woman wants to stop using the method because it lasts a long period of time and also cost of the devices which may be very expensive and unaffordable.

The procedure introduced on the 25th of July 1978 by Robert Edwards & Steptoe When women for the 1st time became able to conceive without having sex, namely in vitro fertilization and embryo transfer commonly known as test tube baby. Women become able to conceive when it was impossible for them to conceive before reproductive technology e.g. women who do not have a uterus, or whose uterus was destroyed by diseases or had their uterus removed etc.. Studies have shown that infertile women have problems with their sexual functions and in many countries there is a lot of weight attached to child bearing, and this usually affects the psychology of the couples and deprives them the pleasure of enjoying sexual act because of the link of sexual acts to reproduction in many cultures in the world.

Also concerning devices, there are different modern technologies used for sterilization. This provides permanent methods of contraception for women who do not want to have children any more and therefore women can enjoy sexual intercourse without the fear of the failure of temporary contraception which they have been using before.

**Communication**

Technology also plays an important role in the field of information and communication. This is because information can be relayed through new technology like websites, internet and e-learning if information is relayed from credible sources it can be of great help to the woman for enjoying sexuality without the fear of being infected with STIs particularly HIV&AIDS, unwanted pregnancy and without the fear of exposing themselves to unnecessary risks. It also encourages interactive programme on the website for young women and girls to enlighten them on sexuality. However, in spite of all this there are problems of accessibility and affordability of having the new technology in the developing countries. Again in this regard, reproductive and sexual health education plays an important role in improving sexuality for young girls.

**Available evidence showed that Sex education works in improving and promoting the sexuality of young girls**

Available evidence showed that Sex education works in improving and promoting the sexuality of young girls. Sex education delays the age of first sexual intercourse, it helps with the prevention of STI and HIV and it helps with prevention of unwanted pregnancies. There are however obstacles and barriers from parents, society, about culture and policy makers at large. Talking about sex is a taboo in many societies for girls and boys and this is a major barrier to sex education.

**Sex, Technology and Acceptance**

The one which is acceptable is that which is accepted by the society based on the cultural, religious and legal state in the country. To promote sexuality one has to look at applicable solutions rather than look at ideal ideas which cannot be applied in the country. Where abortion is illegal it would be impossible to override the law as this can cause legal action. Therefore, the solutions and technology available must be made use off in the context of social, cultural, religious and legal background.

**How has the social, cultural and religious barrier affected development of sexuality and technology?**

Religious people have always been seen as the obstacle to implementation of sexual and reproductive health. However from my personal experience at Al Azhar university religious leaders are the best supporters of policies which will save the lives of women and children around the world. Their stance comes from lack of credible information, communication and credible knowledge. Once religious leaders are properly informed they are extremely supportive because they are for the benefit of humanity.

Sex education is the acceptable context for the expression of sexuality in Africa . There should be no boundaries with regards to the use of technology , as long as long as the technology is used for the benefit and welfare of humanity because all aspects of techonology are crucial to sexual well being.

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**Gamal Serour** is an infertility specialist, specialized in reproductive endocrinology. He started the first IVF in the Middle East Region in 1986. Till date his team perform around 4,000 operations a year.

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ISSUE IN FOCUS

# Mobile Phones, Internet and Sexualities

Dorothy Aken'Ova

Caption: A woman uses a cell phone.
Credit: (c) 2004 David Alexander/CCP, Courtesy of Photoshare

Sexuality has been defined as what makes us human beings, our expressions and experiences. Some of these are biological (natural) and some are socio-cultural (learned or acquired). Whether biological or socio-cultural, different facets of our sexualities are shaped and influenced by diverse factors which include an interaction of biological psychological, social, political, economic, cultural, ethical, legal, historical, religious, and spiritual.

Since the days of Foucault, there has been interest in the study of sexualities, what shapes us into who we are and factors that play a role in determining who we are, our sexual preferences and choices. As the influential factors impact on sexualities, they cause new trends and issues to emerge. Academicians and sexual rights activists have continued to observe the evolution of sexualities in the African setting, examining and assessing the influencing factors and how they influence sexualities on the continent. Some of the strongest factors are the emerging technologies. At no point in time has there been so much impact in how people are socialized and how they experience and express themselves, as it has been in this century. There has been a lot of interference in the manner in which people negotiate, and nurture relationships as a result of more sophisticated communication technologies. It will not be wrong to say that there is a "sexuality revolution" owed to modern technologies that have sped up communication, closed spaces and made the world a global village.

Even though the other arm of technological advancement responsible for liberating or controlling sexual behavior and fertility have experienced significant changes in this century, they have not had as much spread or been as globalized as communication technologies. These include new contraceptive devices, among which emergency contraceptives stand out. Others include sex toys, Viagra and other sex aids that get continually modified for more pleasure and safety.

**Technology and Sexual Health and Rights in Africa**

In Africa, sexual rights activism, began after the Cairo conference of 1994. In the last 8 years, Sexual health and rights and its activism has intensified using the concept of sexual health and rights, identifying the causes of the sexual minorities, including the LGBTQI, and women whose bodily rights are often deliberately abused.

Activism around issues of sexual rights violation, especially of LGBTI, girls and women in Africa has intensified in the past half decade. Activists have fought policies that may otherwise have had adverse effect on sexual minorities in various countries in. They have been able to coordinate, raise funds, act, and stifle the conservatives on a number of occasions by just a click. and have received backlash in few hours or days by that same click.

Technology has also played negative roles. For instance, while in Nigeria, activists were trying to kill the bill prohibiting gay marriage, there was an internet campaign by a colleague that almost cost us the effort already made. Similarly, the news report that there was a party to celebrate the wedding ceremony of a woman who was wedding three women at the same time. The news also reported that the venue of the wedding reception had been burnt.

As the influential factors impact on sexualities, they cause new trends and issues to emerge.

This was followed up and discovered in

less than 24hours was confirmed to have been false news.Also, there was a recording recently of gay men in a television studio that was supposed to be secured. Unknowing to the men, a news reporter for a print media used a camera phone to take pictures of the men and these were used in a sensationalized report in three news papers. This resulted in a lot of embarrassment, and anxiety to the men who were under threat of violence as a result of having been exposed.

**Mobile Phones ,the Internet and Dating in the African Context**

Mobile phones and emails have made it easier for some individuals to be deceitful, dishonest and opaque. I have heard some men say that the day their wife lays her hand on their mobile phone is the day she leaves the house (divorce). Some people store names in disguise in their phones and intentionally NEVER keep records of calls and messages, nor a call register. In some cases if they have to keep a call register, it would be a very scanty one which does not tell much.

On the bright side, some individuals are becoming more accountable and transparent in their relationships as a result of these new technologies. They have an open system where each partner has the other partner's email address and password and can use the box just as though it was theirs. They can scan through their partner's phone contact list, call register and messages and ask questions where they are unsure. Women who live in this sort of contexts are increasingly able to hold their partners accountable. Thus creating an environment where partners are responsible for their sexualities and more accountable to their partners. It has been amazing to be part of this change, where communication to the rest of the world is just at our finger tips.

It would be an understatement to say that mobile phones have had an impact on the manner in which people express or experience their sexualities in Africa today. Now, it is possible for people to initiate a date(by selecting from many chat pals),have a relationship, sexual intercourse, get engaged and marry, online!.

**Mobile phones and emails have made it easier for some individuals to be deceitful, dishonest and opaque.**

I have provided on-line counseling for a client who was living in a different sub-region of Africa. She was suffering from a broken heart because her girlfriend had been given out in marriage. and wanted to leave school. She felt like dying and contemplated suicide. After months of interaction on line, she stabilized. She met another young woman online, this time a European. They dated for a little over a year. The European came to visit her and spent three weeks and went back to Europe. They both could not bear the absence after a couple of weeks and decided online that they will get married and live together in Europe. Their marriage is two years now.

There are lots of other resources online and over the telephone if people subscribe to them. They include fashion tips, love messages, tips for seduction, etc. These have definitely impacted on individual sexualities.

I met a young man who has been chatting with four girls on the GLO chat forum. One of them said she would want to marry him. This led to a quarrel. The young man was in shock because they have not met face to face. He felt that that was not the right way to fall in love. He ended the chat with her and would not pick her calls anymore.

A couple that was living apart shared with me how the present means of communication has enabled them stay focused. Not all the stories or relationships contracted this way have a happy ending. Some of these relationships can be abusive, exploitative and dishonest as demonstrated in the following counseling cases I have managed.

A young woman had been chatting with a young man. They exchanged telephone numbers and appeared to get along well, and enjoyed spending time online together. After a number of months, they decided it was time to visit. The young woman was invited. The man and his friend went to the airport to pick her up and found out that she was obese. The young man quickly switched places with his friend and asked his friend to take on his name and role. The girl ended up staying with the wrong person. She was never told about the switch.

A young woman called me to report that she was stranded in a Nigerian city where she had gone to visit a friend. They were given telephone numbers by someone else who knew them separately. They had communicated and had agreed to date. When she arrived, she was sighted by the friend who had the advantage of recognizing the lady since she was arriving from a journey with bags and all. She found a place to squat for the night and went back the next day.

In a group discussion with some young

women, they disclosed how they got in touch with men, appear to be willing, get money sent to their accounts. When they had got enough money from a source, they abandon the Sim card and buy a new Sim.

And sometimes, there are accidents. I have counseled couples who fought over a sms (a love message) found on the other partner's phone from an unknown sender. At other times these are mischievous or mis- sent messages.

When a relationship goes sour, a bitter partner also makes good use of the internet and/or the telephone to revenge by sending threats, or making anonymous calls.False appointments, made possible by the communication technology, for organized rape, trafficking, physical assault have also been reported.

**Technology and Sexual Well Being**

For erotic justice for everyone, it is essential to ask if the development in technology be it in the area of contraceptives or sexual pleasure (tools and aids), augurs well for everybody concerned. E.g, in producing Viagra, not only should the pharmacists check on the well being of the user, but should also examine its impact on the potential spouses. This will create a balance in sexual relationships and a scenario of everyone's pleasure being taken into consideration. What has happened so far is that men, who think they need Viagra, just go to pharmacies and purchase them without counseling or a doctor's prescription. An ideal scenario would be that the couple be counseled and the prescription given to ensure that pleasure is being provided for both. If a woman was to go and obtain a contraceptive device that same way, there will be chaos. In our society, men like to control fertility and women's sexuality. The question then is how are women supposed to deal with a sexually virile partner when they are afraid they may get pregnant, yet are not allowed by the partner to obtain and use contraceptives? How do they continue to participate in pleasuring a male partner when their own pleasure is tabooed?

Virtually every stride in science has its benefits if used in a manner that is sensitive to everyone's needs. Emergency contraceptives have been very useful to women's sexualities for checking undesired pregnancies. In principle, it should have put more power into women's hands in controlling their fertility and sexuality. The question here again, is how many women know about emergency contraceptives or have access to them? To enjoy this , women need to be educated about it, and it needs to be widely advertised like the male condom. Every female should be reached with messages on emergency contraceptives without exception lesbians, bi-sexuals, women and girls with disabilities inclusive!

> It is possible for people to initiate a date (by selecting from many chat pals), have a relationship, sexual intercourse, get engaged and marry, online!.

**Acceptable context for the expression of sexuality?**

"Sexuality is a central aspect of being human throughout life and encompasses sex, gender identities and roles, sexual orientation, eroticism, pleasure, intimacy and reproduction. Sexuality is experienced and expressed in thoughts, fantasies, desires, beliefs, attitudes, values, behaviours, practices, roles and relationships..." (WHO, Working Definitions of Sexual Health[1])

If we agree with the above WHO definition of sexuality, we will agree that sexual intercourse is but a fraction of what the entire package that makes up our sexuality. Also, it would be erotic injustice to select contexts for the use of sex toys and aids for the attainment of pleasure. Expression or experience of sexual pleasure in the context of deriving sexual pleasure is open. Like other human rights, sexual rights place responsibility on the individual or the group involved, ensuring that the human rights of the sexual partner(s) are not infringed upon.

**Challenges**

The challenges that continue to plague the domain of technological advancement is unequal power relationships between individuals (gender power imbalance) and nation states which make access to the product of the new inventions a challenge to the disadvantaged side of the power balance. There is need to note that some of the trials take place in the disadvantaged countries using the most disadvantaged groups. Access is denied by the resources required to access these traditional taboos put in place and protected by the patriarchal systems that govern our communities and the nation states at large.

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(www.who.int/reproductive-health/gender/sexual_health.html#2)

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**Dorothy Aken'Ova** is the Founder and Executive Director of International Centre For Reprodcutive Health and Sexual Rights, in Minna Niger State Nigeria.

# Cosmetics: 'An important sexual capital, but liability for some men in Ethiopia

By Getnet Tadele

## Introduction

The technology of bodily representation, the use of cosmetics and dressing style is gendered in most societies. Norms exist that regulate the kinds of cosmetics men and women "should" use. The same also applies for dressing style, such that men and women are expected to dress differently and make different colour choices. Technological developments in the area of cosmetics have potentials to reinforce, alter or challenge conventional masculinity, femininity and gender roles. The expression of diverse sexual identities through the innovative use of cosmetics in many contemporary urban settings, challenges "conventional" gender roles related to sex. This brief study looks at how cosmetics, behaviour and dressing like 'women' among male sex workers in Addis Ababa has turned out to be a two edged sword with simultaneous benefits and disadvantages.

Feminine cosmetics and fashionable clothes are defining features for competing in an increasingly competitive sex work industry which some might argue is increasing in the face of the increasing number of male sex workers. At the same time, such flamboyant personality is a liability and has exposed them to public scrutiny in a society where homosexuality is illegal and condemned. Using feminine cosmetics also brings suspicion from their families, friends and neighbours regarding their sexuality and some young sex workers reported that they had to use their gay friends' houses to put on make-up and also to remove them before returning home. The use of cosmetics and feminine clothes not only expose these sex workers to public scrutiny but also closes the door from some prospective clients who do not want to be identified with flamboyant male sex workers for fear of exposing their own homo-?sexuality. My respondents found themselves in an awkward situation trying to balance the benefits and costs of using cosmetics and dressing like 'women'.

### The Study

The materials for this article stem from my extensive ethnographic study with 30 men who have sex with men (MSM), most of whom are sex workers in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia [1]. The study explored sexual lives, behaviours, preferences, relationships, support, safety issues, desires, fantasies, tension between personal desire and social expectations, family and community relationships (including, social networks, violence, stigma and discrimination and ostracization due to their sexuality), issues related to religion and belief in spirits, masculinity, knowledge about HIV/AIDS and condom use.

> **The technology of bodily representation, the use of cosmetics and dressing style is gendered in most societies**

### Cosmetics, Clothing and Changing Masculinity

Most of the sex workers involved in the study appeared intent on adopting feminine societal expectations in terms of their hair style, clothes and accessories they wore, the way they walk, tone of their voices, mannerisms, and public performances. They also said that they use women's make up like mascara, hair gels and body cream. Some of them wore wigs or hair extension and earrings.[1] The way they dress varies significantly but most wore white or bright coloured tee-shirts or blouses, very tight pair of trousers, canvas shoes and transparent tops like lace or other kind of clothes that exhibited their tummy.[2] The primary purpose of this style of dress as explained is to look brighter with the help of street lamps, and to be very conspicuous to their customers.

### Spirit Possession, Use of cosmetics and 'Effeminate' behaviour

Some sex workers attributed such "unmanly acts" or effeminate character and sexual desire for men as an effect of their being possessed by feminine spirits. *Tamene* a focus group participant, asserted, *...we [gays] have the same feelings, the same desires [like women]. We all like putting on make up and it is that spirit that makes us do things like that. It is her manifestation...*

*Begalu* (another sex worker) explained , "*When she [the spirit] possesses a guy, she wears that cloth and puts on her own make up herself. So you are supposed to have perfumes and all those things around. And I don't mean any cheap perfumes like the ones you can buy for 10 or 15 birrr [1-2 USD]. It is usually the expensive ones that you are advised to keep around.*

Belete (a sex worker) also stressed how such possession by spirits forced them to behave like women and use feminine cosmetics

*I can't even be with women, my spirit doesn't allow me to be with women and I might even die if I slept / had sex with a woman. I don't know if you have noticed but most of the guys who live the zega[gay] life have feminine behaviors and appearances/look, so we believe that is because there is a feminine spirit that dwells in us. We think it is because of her [spirit] that we desire men as if we were women. There are some guys who occasionally have menstruation like women ... She is very demanding and like when she takes over you [possesses you] are not even aware of the things you do, you have no consciousness of your own, she wants the guy to wear feminine clothes, perfumes and nail polishes, stuff like that. ...*

Berhe (a high school teacher) also echoed the above line of argument

*As far as I understand it, if you go to those places [if you believe in such spirits], the feminine spirits don't want you to have a woman in your life, they want you to wear makeup and perfumes and all [like a woman].*

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[1] They also address each other with a feminine suffix and most do have feminine nicknames. In other words, they address each other as "she" (*ashi*) or call one another "my sister".

[2] I did not come across those who completely cross-dressed. Some of them reported that they cross-dress while they are doing domestic chores at home in the presence of their "husbands".

Because of a homophobic environment, homosexual desire is an 'unwanted' sexual practice for many of my informants and they seem to have preferred to attribute their 'unwanted' sexual orientation to something or someone else (spirit possession, abusive childhood situation, nature or God). Thus, they may be using spirit possession as an excuse for otherwise 'unacceptable' behavior. In other words, spirit possession seems to have provided justification and helped them avoid guilty or ill feelings related to their sexual orientation.

**Cosmetics as an important sexual capital**

Sex workers noted that during the day they tend to spend more time working in women's spaces and doing activities socially attributed to women, such as cooking and making traditional Ethiopian coffee. Many chew *chat* (catha edulis), drink alcohol, socialize in groups, apply all the necessary make-up in ways that are intended to attract potential clients, and then leave home in the evening for sex work.

Thus, all of commercial sex workers narrated that the "business" requires looking good and dressing smartly. Jemal (a sex worker) said:

*This business requires good hygiene and attractiveness, otherwise no body sees you. So, I always try to make myself different and so clean to be picked by clients.*

Feye (a sex worker) expressed strong desire to migrate to the West or convert to heterosexuality as gay life requires a lot of cosmetics (perfumes), frequent clubbing and the like. He said that he needs a lot more money for that, which he can not afford should he decide to live as a gay in Ethiopia.

*...It is like the life itself forces you towards that. We have desires like that more than other people. And it is not just me that is how most other [gay] guys also feel. So I think it is something in us [our nature]. We want good things, we want to enjoy ourselves. I mean there is no one who doesn't want those things, but it is 'over' in our case. Like if you see other non-gay guys, there are some who like perfumes and there are others who don't. But in our case, it isn't even a choice, you got to have perfumes. ...But that is how we all feel; it is something in all of us. If I kind of become a little careless and untidy and don't look after myself, the same guys who were all over me yesterday wouldn't even want to look at me. So the life itself requires that you dress well and look after yourself. We want to appear good (nice) and we need lots of things to do that. Yeah, more than other people. ...And we need cosmetics and perfumes and other stuff like that. ...It is just that most people (gays) can't afford it that is what restrains them. Otherwise zegoch [gays] want these things more than others that is how the life is.*

**Some sex workers attributed such "unmanly acts" or effeminate character and sexual desire for men as an effect of their being possessed by feminine spirits**

Feye's strong need to leave the country cannot be explained only by economic reasons or the need for cosmetics and clubbing, which he cannot afford in Ethiopia. It is also to leave a homophobic society behind and join a supposedly accepting part of the world. The situation of feye and many other informants is doubly difficult: like any other youth in the country they must struggle to make ends meet but at the same time they must come to terms with their specific sexual behaviour/orientation in a very hostile environment. Thus going abroad, for MSM, is precipitated by reasons far more than the need for cosmetics and clubbing. His and other narratives above, however, show that use of cosmetics is an important sexual or cultural capital to attract other men.

**The downside of using cosmetics and behaving like a 'woman'**

Sex workers involved in my study reported that they spent most of the money earned through commercial sex to buy fashionable clothes, make ups, perfumes and deodorants. Jemal maintained that he keeps himself neat and clean and wears vest (bodice) and a pair of slacks in a manner to attract his clients. *I usually wear quality vest (shirt) and a pair of slacks (sportswear).* He, however, cautioned against wearing tight trousers and the use of cosmetics for fear of being identified as gay and more importantly, most clients do not like to be seen with feminine guys.

*When I get money I will soon spend it all as the business requires me to wear expensive costumes, frequent big hotels whereby your client will have high interest in you by your acts and elegant life style. He only sees you from the outside and will admire you...But you don't need to wear tight trousers that make you erotically visible as your clients may not dare to date and go out with you lest everybody looks at them and considers them as gays. ...*

Bitew (another sex worker) reported how he was terrified when his sister-in-law met him in a gay spot when he was wearing make up and feminine clothes. He further stated that the income he earns from sex work is declining, because he has stopped applying make up for fear of public scrutiny

*There is no one in my family who suspects me], but my sister-in-law saw me once wearing 'disgustingly' and standing in a place where gays frequent. I was wearing make up and mascaras like a woman. I also wore a very tight trouser and a kind of clothes that exhibited my tummy when my sister-in-law saw me... No one let you use the path unless you move from one car to another or from one car to the bar to entertain yourself. They call you names such as bushti [derogatory name for homosexuals]. I am so afraid of such insults that I can't wear clothes and make up, which I am supposed to do in order to attract my customers. As a result, the income that I get from this business is drastically plummeting ... It is just becoming harder, you know you got to be on the look for the police, we often run out of make-up and you can't go out with no make up, and there isn't that much business, so it is even becoming difficult to replace the make up we have used.*

The other issue that may expose MSM to public scrutiny is meeting and socializing openly with gays from the West with all the different cosmetics that hint toward a homosexual orientation. Jemal narrated how he is scared to be in the company of

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**Introduction**

Zee Virtual Media is a centre in Nigeria which sells a variety of adult Sex Products for the benefit of the public. The product range caters to 3 major areas of human need:

- Sex Products (for Adults only)
- Sex Education( for Kids and Teens)
- Sex Education ( For Kids , Teens and Adults)

**Mission**

**Sex Education**

Sex education has been a very difficult subject especially in Africa thus the increase of unwanted pregnancies, HIV/AIDS and other STDs. Despite all the effort put into all this, it is clear that more needs to be done in this area. Zee Virtual Media sees the need to delve more into the subject of sex with the aim of familiarizing people with comfortable and helpful sexual information, intended to enlighten and hopefully shape individual habits. Some of the products cater to different kinds of sex education, which goes beyond dissuading the public from unprotected and indiscriminate sex. In recognition of the fact that there are no programmes in universities educating adults on how to understand and pleasure each other for mutual benefits. There are books and audio visual media to fill these gaps. The aim is to re-orient the public by gradually eliminating the embarrassment, reservations and shortcomings in this area through the educational books, pamphlets, films and other products.

> The Media is an essential arena where success in promoting sexuality to the target audience can be crucial

**Sex Therapy And Revitalization**

'Relationships don't just work. You keep working on them'. It is common knowledge that some are often unable to tend to the relationships, especially the love lives as life can be hectic and very demanding and this can affect tending to each other's every need. ZEE Virtual Media recognizes that in addition to performance problems such as erectile dysfunctions and general lack of interest in sex, there are other causes of sexual performance anxiety and inadequacy which go beyond the mere physical. Often times, there are psychological especially among victims of abuse, rape and persons that experience painful intercourse (Vaginismus). Zee Virtual Media is committed towards a sustained and rigorous healing and revitalization of individual sex life through information and treatments which can be obtained from books, films, drugs, lotions and many other products specifically tailored to serve each individual's specific need.

**Sex Products**

Sex was designed as an avenue through which couples could bond and get some sort of relief from the cruel demands of modern life. Zee Virtual Media believes that great sex can not flourish without external help as people eventually run out of ideas and enthusiasm. Since we live in a society where not very many people discuss their sexual problems and solutions to such problems are certainly not taught in schools. Sex toys, lotions and aids, are provided which could help spice up an individuals sex life without feeling embarrassed about it.

**Ordering Products**

Their products can be viewed and purchased primarily at the online store or through the catalogue or compact disc which can be requested via phone , email or sms.

**Contact**

For more information, please visit the website at
http://www.zeevirtualmedia.com/

VIEWPOINT

# The Future of Sex

James Hughes

**What happens when we can transcend erotic desire, romantic love and the human body?**

The trouble of celibacy has made me think a lot about my time as a Buddhist monk. Shortly after I'd left robes, the abbot came to visit me in my modest bungalow to patiently explain that there was little of any lasting importance in the secular world. Holding up his finger he said, "This is all sex is." I half believed him and was convinced there was no point to living without the frequent expression of holy union through erotic love.

Lying in my cot as a monk after a day of begging, meditation and study, I had vivid fantasies about my girlfriend off in Japan. Now, a married middle-aged man with half the libido of my 20-year-old self, I can return to the question with a little more dispassion. As we begin to transcend the body and its clamouring demands and limitations, what of erotic love and sex?

What aspects of sex and romantic love will we inevitably transcend as we become post human, and which are intrinsic to the liberated self-aware mind?

**Transcending vagaries of erotic desire**

Culture assumes that happiness requires a healthy sex drive. Depressed or sick people tend to lose their libido, and many people who want a sex life are made miserable when circumstances make one unavailable.

Fortunately, in the past few decades we have made enormous progress in overcoming the physical and psychological barriers to active, guilt-free sexuality. We now assume that sexual activity is normal for everybody and we openly discuss sexual dysfunctions.

We now have booming use of Viagra and several drugs that give men erections. Research is progressing on the use of testosterone patches to increase libido in women and drugs that directly increase vaginal lubrication and sensitivity. Medical therapies that suppress libido are being replaced by alternatives which maintain sexual function.

As we learn to control the brain chemically, genetically and mechanically with nanotechnology, it seems certain that everyone who wants sexual desire will be able to turn such desire on and off.

In a growing number of countries, rapists and sex criminals are given the option of reducing their sentences and being released into the community if they undergo chemical or surgical castration. Eliminating testosterone production by removing testicles or giving regular injections of testosterone-suppressing drugs eliminates sexual fantasies and urges for almost all violent sex offenders. One German study found that while 43% of untreated sex criminals were repeat offenders after release, only 3% of those who had been surgically or chemically castrated committed another sex crime.

With more detailed mapping of brain function , we will be able to reroute sexual desire from inappropriate or unattainable targets. Such therapy will aid the rehabilitation of sex criminals and also redirect our unrequited passions. Genetic predispositions for homosexual or heterosexual desire will be "fixable" before or after birth

> Culture assumes that happiness requires a healthy sex drive

Not just lust, but the amorphous ball of feeling called "love" itself is a biochemical phenomenon, amenable to manipulation. In Anatomy of Love, anthropologist Helen Fisher summarizes research, arguing that love is composed of three biochemical process. The first process, driven by testosterone is lust. The second, infatuation, is controlled by dopamine, norepinephrine and phenylethylamineamphetamine-like chemicals that produce feelings of euphoria. The lust and infatuation chemicals peak after a year, and for the lucky few relationships that survive their decline, a new biochemical response emerges based on oxytocin, vasopression and endorphins, which produce feelings of intimacy, trust and affection.

Better control of our brain chemistries helps to maintain or suppress lust, and also modulate the neurochemical bases of the subtler emotions we associate with love. Pills might be available for sustaining feelings of romantic love and induce feelings of intimacy, or suppress them when they are directed at the unattainable.

The question with these new technologies is not if they are good or bad in themselves, but if they can be used by free individuals in a free society, or when necessary on sex criminals. Testosterone to overcome sexual dysfunction in women is great, until it become obligatory for women who don't want to have sex with their husbands! If that means some people suppress desires while others jack up desires in situations we find disturbing, that's the price to pay for knowledge, freedom and happiness.

**Transcending romantic love**

According to some accounts, the idea of romantic love was only invented 900 years ago by French poets, who bamboozled the rest of the world with their mythology of eternal, monogamous love. The majority of all human societies have been polygamous and in most monogamous cultures, men, at least have been expected to pursue extramarital relationships of varying degrees of openness.

Some ethological and sociobiological research suggests that both human males and females, like our primate and mammal cousins, are genetically inclined to have multiple partners.The modern victory of monogamy can be seen as a very unnatural suppression of our non-monogamous biological natures and as a power of culture over nurture. Why not return to some modern version of polygamy, some form of open, acknowledged sexual sharing, as advocated by the sexual revolution and the polyamory movement? I suspect that the attractions of polyamory will grow in the future, however because some people's lives are so busy and complicated that partial, non-exclusive relationships are all they want. Constitutionally laws against polygamy will also eventually fall, since they are clearly based in religious discrimination.

Eventually, I foresee co-housing and co-parenting contracts replacing civil marriage, contracts which recognize the bonds between small groups of people who have made commitments of some duration.

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Many people will still say vows in front of priests and rabbis for centuries to come, pledging their eternal love, hopefully the democratic state will stop treating these dyads as the only legitimate lifestyle option.

**Transcending body gender**

Another thing we are already transcending is biological gender.

For those who feel they were born in the wrong gender, we can give or take away breasts, construct new genitals and add appropriate hormones. Gene therapies make it possible to ramp up testosterone or estrogen production, and selectively suppress sex-linked genetic traits, making hormone treatments unnecessary.

Once we have perfected tissue cloning and genetic engineering, we will be able to craft new, fully functional sexual and reproductive organs for transsexuals. In the 21st century all the aspects of sexual dimorphism are up for mix and match to suit our psychological needs and aesthetic preferences.

We already have women getting penile implants, and men having cosmetic surgery on their genitalia. Why stop with just a cosmetic enhancement, or swapping your genitals for those of another sex, when you could have a penis with the responsiveness of a clitoris, or some entirely new sexual organ? The possibilities will be endless.

**Transcending body sex**

Body sex itself is likely to become a minor and infrequent aspect of our erotic experience. While we struggle to conquer infectious diseases, the threat of AIDS and future sexually transmitted plagues will keep body fluid contact a hazardous pastime. Also, until we have therapies that make seniors as healthy and horny as young adults, the growing senior population will reduce the average number of sex acts per head. As reproduction becomes divorced from sex, through contraception, in-vitro fertilization and artificial wombs, those who want children can have them without getting involved with body sex.

Body sex itself is likely to become a minor and infrequent aspect of our erotic experience

The growth of electronically mediated sex will also presumably reduce the number of flesh-to-flesh sex acts. There are millions of people in the industrialized world who spend significant amounts of time and money on Internet porn, sex chat, voyeur cams and interacting with sexual partners through Web cams and audio interfaces.

These media will soon be joined by "haptic" and "teledildonic" equipment that will communicate a partner's caresses and allow you to feel them. Extrapolating to the latter 21st century, when full nanotechnology-based virtual reality is in use, we will be able to have as high-bandwidth a sexual relationship electronically as in the flesh. That will probably mean a lot more casual and commercial e-sex. But for those special some ones, it will also mean more profound sex.

Doing the nasty in nano-neuro VR will be far more intimate than in the flesh. We will be able to morph our genders, species, ages and numbers in VR, and open ourselves up to forms of tactile and emotional sharing that are impossible in the flesh-to-flesh. We can hold an orgy on the moons of Jupiter, on lambskin rugs, with cherubim as an attentive audience. When we are fully wired into one another's brains, body sex may seem no more intimate than a handshake, something one does for exercise with casual acquaintances. We will reserve fully immersive mind-melds for only those special half-dozen folks in our plural marriages.

Direct control of our brains will also mean that masturbation will be a lot more direct than the current manual methods as invisible direct stimulation of our sexual pleasure centers would be possible . Luckily we won't have to drive our cars manually anymore, or things could be very dangerous on the road!

James J. Hughes. The future of sex. Betterhumans. February 9, 2003. Http://ieet.org/index.php/IEET/more/hughes20030209/ This is an excerpt of the article The Future of Sex. Published in 2007. Reprinted with permission.

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such clients or partners who may give reasons for suspicion.

*And we have come across scary ferenjis at times, you know with their noses pierced and stuff. And I refuse to go out with those types because people would be suspicious if they see you with them out on the streets and I don't want people to know that I do that kind of stuff. We habesboch [Ethiopians] are a long way from that you know. So I ask them if we can just chill in side the house, but they usually want to go out and have fun. But I won't be okay with that and I would leave. You know, I am in this life that I can't help, but I don't want to bring shame to my family by being seen with such people and giving people reason to be suspicious.*

Jemal seemed to be preoccupied with maintaining loyalty and obedience to his family by avoiding actions that would bring disrepute to his family. He said that *"I don't want to put my family to shame"* thereby implying that to his family and society at large being gay is shameful. He strives to strike a balance between his sexuality and familial responsibility by being discreet and avoiding his flamboyant clients, which in turn disgruntles such clients.

In the South African context, [2] argues that a hyper-feminine performance can be used to social and economic advantage. This seems not to be the case when it comes to my informants. They argued that it is not appealing to be hyper feminine, as clients do not want to be seen in the company of such feminine persons.

Those informants with good social and economic background (those who claimed not to be involved in sex work) seemed to be overcautiously avoiding being identified as gays, and among this group, I did not observe significantly different styles of clothing from the general public or 'conventional' norms. I also did not notice a lot of make-up or cosmetics except very pleasant perfume. They showed disgust for other effeminate MSM for making no attempt to look like men. They advised them to tone down such overt forms of feminine expression in everyday life [3]. This means that acting feminine threatened their hegemonic masculinity. It implies that "gender norms and practices are one of the ways in which traditional values are evoked and performed" [4].

Thus it was not easy to identify those MSM not involved in sex work by the way they are dressed or their mannerisms, since they try their best to appear straight and avoid detection of their gay identity. They appeared unready to publicly claim an unpopular and potentially incriminating socio-sexual identity. Sex workers on the other hand seem to have understood that men who are attracted to other men should behave feminine.

**Conclusion**

It seems that the use of cosmetics and feminine behaviour is to some degree economically beneficial, and even necessary for some male sex workers to get clients. There are, however, problems with homophobia (insults from family, friends, neighbours and the public at large). The homophobic disadvantages thus outweigh the benefits for many. As a result there is a new trend emerging in which some male sex workers do not find it necessary to present themselves in feminine ways.

Overall, use of cosmetics and behaving or dressing like women left most of my informants with ambiguity, ambivalence and contradiction. Such ambivalence implies the deep tension between desire and social expectations. It also shows how 'hegemonic masculinity' [5] and femininity are at play in every day life of my informants. The above narratives illustrate how masculinity/femininity and growing up with essentialist masculine/feminine gender scripting affect use of cosmetics and behaving like a 'real' man or a 'real' woman.

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# NOTES TO CONTRIBUTORS

## Guidelines for Submission

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**Programme Feature**: Best practices from programme implementers.

**Research Notes**: Focus on research and methodologies

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

**Length:**

Feature article : 1,000 - 1, 500 words
Research issues: 800 - 1, 000 words
Opinion articles: 400 - 500 words

**Pictures:**

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

**Presentation:**

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

**References:**

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

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

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

# Sexuality Resources

**Young, People, Sex and The Media: the Facts Of Life**
**Authors:** David Buckingham & Sara Bragg
**Publisher**: Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke, 2004
This book draws on an extensive research project, involving children and parents. It considers how young people interpret sexual material in television dramas, talk shows, music videos, advertisements, tabloid newspaper, magazines etc; and how they respond to public and parental concerns about these issues.

**Human Dignity And Reproductive Technology**
**Authors:** Nicholas C.Lund-Molfese & Michel L.Kelly
**Publisher:** University Press of America, New York,2003

This book is made of the essays of the participants (Theologians , Lawyers, Scientists, and scholars) of the 2002 symposium on *Human Dignity and Reproductive Technology.* It approaches the topic from different view points like cultural notions, philosophical perspective , political and legal context.

**Selected Practice Recommendations for Contraceptive Use**
**Author** : World Health Organisation, 2004
Www.who.int/reproductive-health/publications/rhr_02_7/index.htm
This document provides selected practice recommendations based on the best available evidence and is intended to be used by policy-makers, program managers, and the scientific community. It aims to provide guidance to national family planning/reproductive health programs in the preparation of guidelines for service delivery of contraceptives.

**Kizunguzungu (FILM)**
**Author:** Mwangaza Paul Kang'anga, 2006
**"Kizunguzungu"** which means giddiness in English , is a 35minutes feature film set in Dar es Salaam. It was written , directed and produced by Mwangaza Paul Kang'anga and was screened at the fourth Lola Kenya Screen Film Forum in Nairobi on March 27, 2006. It shows the relation between the emergence of mobile phones, sex and the spread of HIV/AIDS in Africa.

**Beyond Tolerance :Child Pornography and the Internet**
**Authors:** Philip Jenkins
**Publisher:** New York University Press, New York, 2003
This book takes a deep look into the myths and realities of child pornography and the multifaceted process of eradicating criminal activity on the web. It also contains lessons on human behaviour and the law we can not help but pay attention to.