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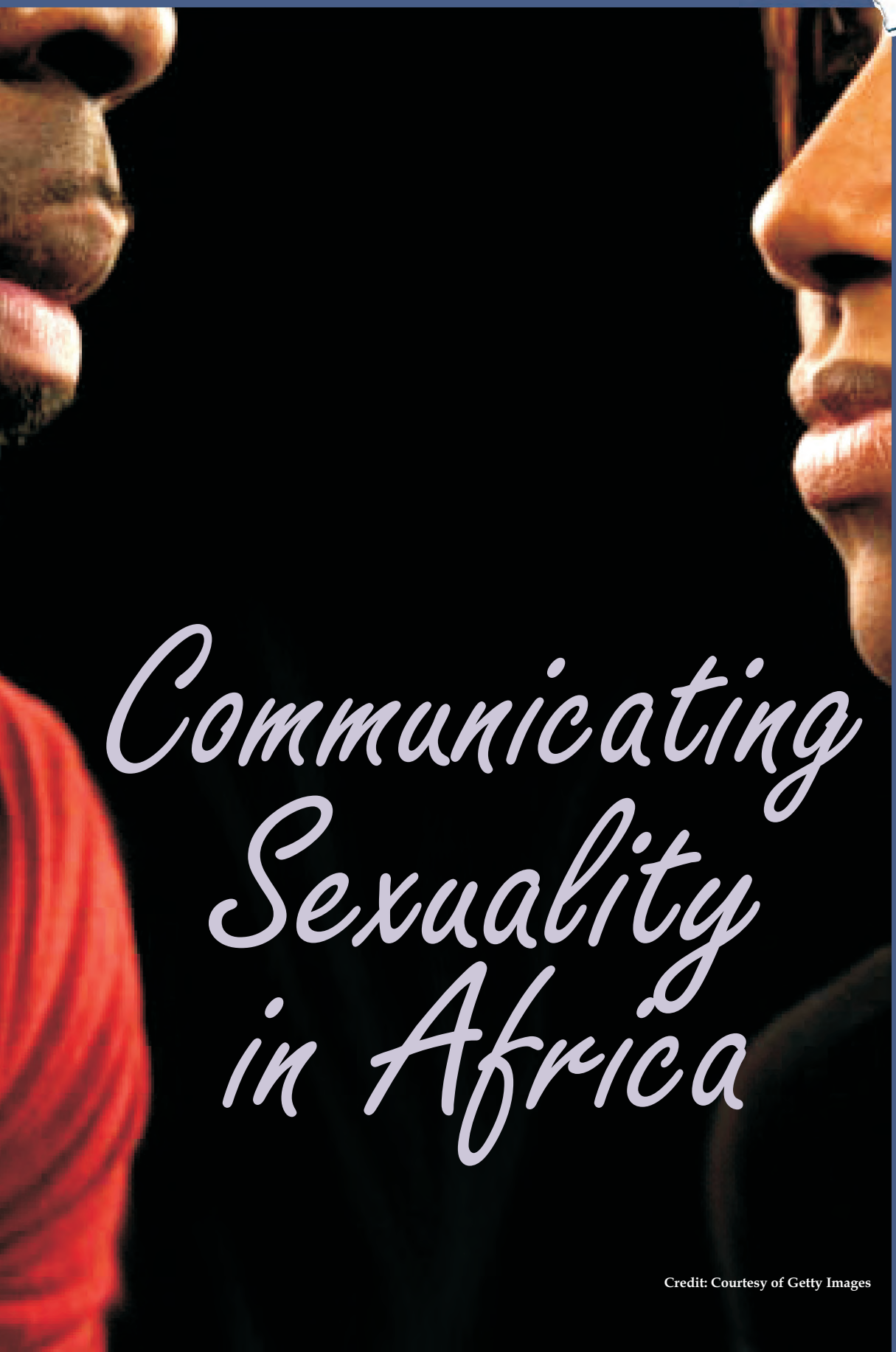
Magazine & Monographs



Communicating Sexuality in Africa

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Sexuality, Language and Communication in Africa

Taiwo Oloruntoba-Oju

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Language and communication are central to human sexuality in all its ramifications. Human sexuality refers to the gamut of human sexual experience (biological, social, cultural and psychological), and to the gamut of human sexual expression, otherwise referred to as the expression of sexuality. In the formulation by Michelle Foucault in his world famous *The History of Sexuality*, human sexual experience can be appraised in terms of the production of desire, sexual self awareness and sexual agency. These aspects of sexuality involve language and communication at every stage of the process. Like all human phenomena, sexuality generates its own language and concepts.

Sexual awareness is formed in language and is expressed through language. Child sexual awareness begins with the appreciation of anatomical differences and the linguistic identification of intimate anatomy. This may also include the definition of relevant sexual organs and the elaboration or non-elaboration of their uses. Child curiosity about sex is expressed through language and is resolved through communication.

Sexual agency on the other hand refers to the role of the individual at every stage in the sexual process, from inauguration/first contact to conclusion. The production of desire and procurement of, or participation in, sexual activity involves such as initiation, negotiation, reciprocation, rejection, participation and severance or disengagement. Since sexual activity typically involves partnering, communication is crucial to the actualisation of sexual agency and the actualisation of the sexual self. Sexual agency is also about relative power positioning in sexual relations, and this positioning reflects in the terms used to describe sex related activities.

Mediation in History, Culture and Language

Sexual experience and sexual expression are modified by factors of history, society and culture. Again in terms formulated by Foucault, subjective experience functions as 'filters' through which individuals appreciate and approach the meaning of sexuality and its associated terms. Beyond the individual, the society institutes "discourses" or languages whose aim or import is to "govern" the behaviour of members of the society. These discourses therefore reflect the power relations of society over time, while also reflecting different regional and or cultural constructions of sexuality.

The cultural mediation of sexuality occurs largely at the level of language and associated interpretations, mores, laws and practices, all of which are determined by socio-cultural perceptions of sexuality and of sex-gender relations. Both sexual predilections and cultural taboos are thus represented in language and influence sexual communication. Language and communication data certainly offers a guide to the sexual predilections, preferences and taboos of the cognate society and culture.

Universality and Particularity

While sex is often regarded as a "universal language," different ethnicities, societies and social groups may have different ways of coding and expressing sexuality. Taboo and legal restrictions may also make communications concerning sexuality less open in some societies than in others.

In discussing the issue of sexuality, language and communication in Africa, we are interested in broad topics such as sexual communication and communication of sexuality, the relationship between language and sexual orientation, sexuality education, gendering through language, culture and sexual communication, etc. However, particularistic questions also inevitably emerge: What, if any, are the peculiar terms for sex and sexuality in Africa? What are the verbal signs and the non-verbal body (kinetic, vestment and olfactory) cues? What are the underlying communication principles (e.g. to communicate "it" or not to communicate "it"), and what are the taboos or special challenges? Is the so called theory of African silence on matters of sex and sexuality myth or reality? Do certain languages inhibit or promote sexual communication and the communication of sexuality. Are some sexual terms truly non-existent in some languages? etc.

An inclusive, but not exhaustive, range of topics include the following:

- Verbal and non-verbal sexual communication
- Overt and covert sexual communications
- Public and private sex talk
- Gender and sexual communication
- Communication of sexual consent and sexual dissent
- Communication across ethnic and social boundaries, including age and class.
- Sex talk from eye contact to coition, and beyond
- Queer sex communication
- Communication and social prejudice
- Communication and sex education

- Law, sexual communication and freedom of expression
- Sexual communication in literature and popular culture

While this introductory edition cannot possibly cover the scope highlighted here, the topics do offer interesting research possibilities. The areas explored in this edition include: legal and cultural perspectives on sexual communication and communication of sexuality, as well as communication and social prejudice in relation to homosexuality. The edition also explores aspects of sex education in the formal and informal sectors, and the cultural representation of sexuality in language.

Sexual Communication and Communication of Sexuality

Sexual communication may imply the communication of sexuality, and vice-versa. However, due to the existence of different sexualities (homosexuality, heterosexuality, bisexuality, bestiality, etc), subtle differences do exist between sexual communication and the communication of sexuality. With the former, the sexual orientation of the participants in sexual communication is taken for granted, while with the latter, the fact of a different sexuality may have to be specially communicated as a form of identification and exclusion, that is, a manner of speaking that allows interlocutors to identify themselves as members of alternative sexuality groupings. In other words, there are differences between homosexual language, a sort of *homolingo*, and heteronormative communication or *heterolingo*. While heterolingo is closely modelled on normative speech, homolingo is usually an alternative language typical of 'antilanguages' developed secretly amongst minorities or suppressed populations. Examples of homolingo include Gayle or Gail, Polari and IsiNqumo. According to Wikipedia, "Gayle or Gail is an English and Afrikaans-based gay argot or cant slang used primarily by English and Afrikaans-speaking homosexual men in urban communities of South Africa, and is similar in some respects to Polari in the United Kingdom, from which some lexical items have been borrowed. The equivalent language used by homosexual South African men who speak Bantu languages is called IsiNgqumo …" *(Http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gayle_language)*

Legality and the Communication of Sexuality: Sexual education and freedom of expression

"Sexual communication may imply the communication of sexuality, and vice-versa. However, due to the existence of different sexualities (homosexuality, heterosexuality, bisexuality, bestiality, etc), subtle differences do exist between sexual communication and the communication of sexuality."

The issue of communication and sexuality is examined from the legal perspective in the paper by Babafemi Odunsi in this edition. The question raised, among others, is whether "freedom of expression" should include freedom of sexual expression or freedom of the expression of sexuality. Odunsi answers in the affirmative. From this perspective, the right to life, right to health and right to information should include the right to sex education. Sex communication and the expression of sexuality should also enjoy a privileged status, notwithstanding penal codes relating to the sexually explicit language, among other so called obscene expressions. Odunsi observes that the penal code on 'obscene' language may be a contradiction in terms, since sex education must necessarily involve sexually explicit language, which in other contexts may be regarded as obscene.

Discursive representation of homosexuality

The representation of homosexuality in Cameroon is discussed from the perspective of language by Lilian Lem Atanga and Alexandre T. Djimeli in this edition. The analysis reveals a doublespeak. While government officials make statements that sometimes border on political correctness, journalistic representation in the media speaks volumes about antagonistic tendencies towards same sex sexuality. The authors of the article demonstrate, through 'threads' of online discourse and the various lexical choices in newspaper columns and message boards, that mainstream representation of homosexuality is "indicative of the general societal rejection of this sexual orientation." However, it is also established, through a socio-diagnostic technique, that this is not a one-sided discourse: "[D]espite the impressions created by some media, there is no unanimity in the condemnation of homosexuality in Cameroon. The civil society is divided on the question as well as the journalists. Some associations defend the right of individuals to do with their bodies as they please."

Sexuality education in the informal sector

In "Peers, Porn and Boys: Communication and Learning of Sexuality in South Africa," Nolwazi Mkhwanazi, Erin Stern and Rethabile Mashale explore ways in which young adolescent boys tend to acquire "sex education" through informal channels such as the media and pornography. This is due to the absence or inadequacy of formal channels of sex education. However, what the youths take from informal channels such as pornography is not only the vocabulary of sex, but also a sense of sexual identity. Pornography feeds into, and also feeds, notions of masculinity that may not be generally agreeable to the civil society in the long run. The article suggests that formal channels of sex education should be created and or strengthened to avoid the sort of information lacuna that the media and pornography tend to exploit in youngsters.

Sexuality indices in Yoruba Language and popular culture

In "Sexuality indices in Yoruba language and popular culture," the author opines that the presence of certain usages in Yoruba language and popular culture indicates a deep structure linguistic coding of sexuality orientation, and expectation in the language, which may not be replicated in western languages and cultures. According to the author, the usages are generally gender sensitive and they therefore elaborate vividly the process of gendering through language in the society. Whereas Yoruba has sometimes been theorised as a gender neutral language, the author urges a second look at this trajectory in view of other usages in the language that explicitly suggest a systematic gendered categorisation.

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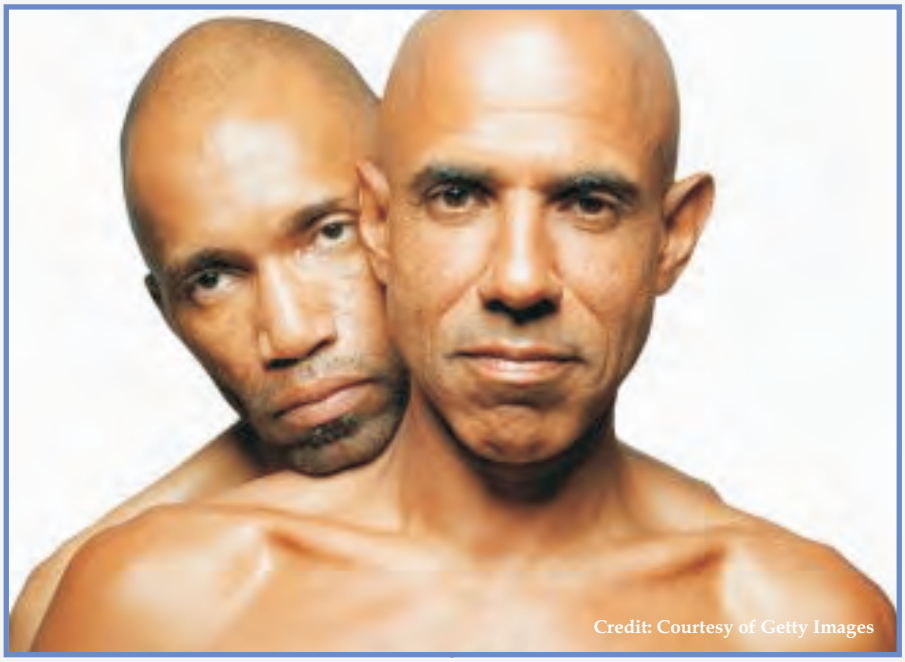
Homosexuality, Media Communication and State Action in Cameroon

Lilian Lem Atanga and Alexandre T. Djimeli



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The discursive representation of homosexuality in Cameroon reflects the dominant attitude of the government and people towards homosexuality in the country. Homosexuality is considered criminal in Cameroon. In spite of this, it had not before been an object of public debate and controversy. In 2006, the Archbishop of Yaounde in his New Year Homily stated that homosexuality is an evil practice and must be denounced in the Christian community. The Cameroon media followed up on this homily and denounced a number of public figures even in the Cameroon government. This launched a widespread debate in the Cameroon media on the issue.

This paper analyzes the communication of homosexuality within the Cameroonian media and its impact on public action. We ask the following questions: How is homosexuality discursively represented in the media? What role do the media play in influencing government action? What is the impact of media pressure on political and social action in the de-legitimating of homosexuality in Cameroon?

To answer this question, we use a critical discourse analytical approach to analyse discourses that bring out latent and manifest opinions articulated in this medium on the subject. We also analyse the cause and effects of online discussions on social and political action relating to homosexuality in Cameroon.

Critical Perspectives on Homosexuality in Cameroon

Grawitz (2000: 210) defines homosexuality as an attraction more or less marked by persons of the same sex. Nyamsi (2007: 56) goes beyond attraction and perceives it as the desire or practice of sexual or erotic relations between human individuals of the same sex. This definition of homosexuality excludes paedophilia, transvestites and transsexuals. Homosexuality is thus typically perceived as a choice, freely consented to by adult partners, and which has as sole objective the reciprocal satisfaction of sexual desire. As such, as affirmed by Nyamsi (2007: 57), homosexuality is a way of appropriating the desire of the other, and of sharing one's desire with the other.

Homosexuality in Africa tends to be associated with ritual practices, secrecy and keeps a marginal character as is shown by Nyamsi (2007). A parallel between homosexuality and power (which in itself is also usually secret, ritualistic and marginal) in Africa has also been drawn.

Arguments for and against homosexuality

Globally, the treatment of information on homosexuality in Cameroon media is indicative of the general hostility and negative attitudes towards its practice. In situating intolerance towards homosexuality in an historical perspective in Africa, Siewe (2005: 33) affirms that the church condemned it without reserve during the colonial period because it disfavoured procreation. The Marxist regime or the one party system presented it later as 'practices against nature', a proper deviance of the bourgeoisie, a consequence of decadent capitalism, and today, it is paradoxically a return to 'African ancestral values' that makes the subject combated as a western disease (Siewe, 33).

The arguments used by the Cameroonian press against homosexuality include that it is an infraction legally reprimanded. According to Gueboguo (2007: 118), 24 African countries have discriminatory laws against homosexuals. Among these is Cameroon whose article 347 of the Penal Code punishes homosexuality with 06 months to 5 years imprisonment with a penalty of between 20 000 to 200 000 frs cfa (then between 31 and 310 Euros) all persons guilty of same sex sexual relationships.

This penal disposition comes from ordinance no 72/16 of 28 September 1972 signed by President Ahidjo during the one party system. Gueboguo (2007: 119) estimates that these laws were maintained due to societal choices of many African countries, which were conservatism and fidelity to African values. Bertoin (2005) however relativises this assertion by citing especially the work of de Boris de Rachewiltz *(Eros noir Mœurs sexuelles de l'Afrique, de la préhistoire à nos jours*) to show that homosexual practices have roots in the distant history of African people. Finally, Eboussi (2007: 5) observes that the Cameroonian ordinance reprimanding homosexuality had as first intention to keep away foreign expatriates and missionaries, and to prevent scandals (through fast and discreet expulsions), and also to keep in line certain individuals. This ordinance was not principally motivated by wish to

preserve any particular anthropological heritage.

Due to its fragility, the penal argument alone cannot explain the repulsion of Cameroonians towards homosexuality and its translation to the behaviour of the media. Abega (2007: 104) for example approaches this issue from the axis of witchcraft. According to him, homosexuality in Cameroon, especially in Yaoundé pertains to the world of witchcraft. He notes that in the invisible world of witchcraft, homosexuals have a double possession which includes a sex which is different from the visible one of the human body. The homosexual is thus a female in one dimension and a male in another. That is why they manifest a same sex attraction in the visible world.

However, despite the impressions created by some media, there is no unanimity in the condemnation of homosexuality in Cameroon. The civil society is divided on the question as well as the journalists. Some associations defend the right of individuals to do with their bodies as they please. Among such organisations are ADEPHO (Association for the defence of the rights of homosexual persons) which works towards the assistance of persons charged with homosexuality and fights to decriminalise this sexual orientation. In interviews conducted in French by Alexandre T. Djimeli during a conference (on 9 May 2006), other advocates offer similar opinions. Barrister Alice Nkom, an advocate and president of ADEPHO, claims that "homosexuality is a nature (sic). People who have such an identity should not be rejected. This constitutes human rights and human diversity." It does not then constitute of witchcraft or other occult practices. Barrister Michele Mpacko, another advocate notes the banality of this debate in daily life. For ADEPHO, charging homosexuals in any case is a violation of the Universal Declaration of human rights and the International Pact on human rights. International human rights instruments ratified by Cameroon and national laws are thus not being respected.1 In addition, the article in the Penal Code which reprimands homosexuality is not the result of a law, but a regulatory text. That is why Barrister Michele Mpacko affirms that "as soon as the functioning of the constitutional council will become effective, I will fight that this disposition be annulled."

Nyamsi (2007: 56) developed the idea of "pax sexualis". To this effect, homosexuality can be seen as the "infinite creativity of human desire". He advises that the subject be left to adults and reasonable persons to do with the bodies as they wish so long as it does not disturb the norms of justice. Aside from infractions based on paedophilia, cases of rape, and the instrumentality of homosexual practices for economic gains, Nyamsi suggests that for a society which respects the fundamental human rights and liberties of individuals, people should be left to the sexual orientation that suits them. This position however is not largely upheld by the media in Cameroon. While the media projection of debates on homosexuality in Cameroon seeks reinforcement of the repressive measures, advocates of the contrary view seek the liberalisation of the practice.

Credit: Courtesy of Getty Images

Sites of Communication on Homosexuality in Cameroon

The sites of communication on homosexuality can be found almost anywhere in Cameroon these days: at home, in the offices, cafes, conference halls, and virtual platforms. It is on these sites that journalists formulate their judgements. These judgements influence the manner in which they approach the subject following the rule which warrants that media only treats subjects in the ways that interests the public best (Kovach and Rosentiel 2001/2004). In 2006, some public debates on homosexuality took place in Yaoundé. Some participants deplored the verbal violence employed by those who were against homosexuality. In Douala, public debates seemed less violent (Djimeli 2006).

237 Media is an online interactive forum with 458 registered members (all journalists or attested journalists). This forum debates on any tpical issues relating to Cameroon and the topic of homosexuality constituted exactly one of these. These journalists on the majority are against the practice of homosexuality and strongly criticised the European Union for the financing of social practices which go against the moral and legal values of the Cameroonian society. 237 can be said to stand for the telephone country code of Cameroon.

Aside the data from 237 Media which constitutes the primary data of this paper, some of the data are speeches of the President of Cameroon, ministerial speeches and the homily of the Archbishop of Yaoundé. Although these do not constitute the main data, they are relevant for the understanding of the wider context of the debates. There is intertextual reference to these other texts in the primary data, so drawing on them is but necessary.

Methods of data analysis

We draw on critical discourse analysis (CDA) to analyse the data presented for this study which constitutes online debates on the issue of homosexuality. We especially draw on Teun van Dijk's socio-cognitive approach (SCA) to CDA which examines the link between

discourse, society and cognition. We also examine the semantic macro structures which constitute the themes drawn on in the data. The semantic macro structures can be identified, for example, through the titles (subjects) or contents of each thread. We also examine local meanings. Local meanings can be investigated through lexical choices, figures of speech, grammatical style, and the mood of the texts and the genre of the text.

SOCIO-DIAGNOSTIC CRITIQUE: The context of news treatment of Homosexuality in Cameroon

According to van Dijk (2009: 80), an analysis of discourse does not only deal with text and talk. Meaning is produced locally yet "'local' social interaction is again 'enabled' by a macro dimension such as the social cognitions collectivities". These social cognitions are analysed critcally through what Wodak (2009: 88) refers to as the socio-diagnostic critique. This is concerned with the demystification of the 'manifest or latent persuasive or 'manipulative' character of discursive practices. Here, we make use of contextual knowledge.' Below then, we carry out a macro socio-diagnostic analysis of the data. We start by presenting the very beginnings of the macro 'discourse of homosexuality' in Cameroon.

Locating the context: the homily of the Archbishop and the publication of the lists of Homosexuals

The Archbishop of the Yaoundé Metropolitan Cathedral, Mgr Tonye Bakot, in his Christmas 2005 homily opened up on a number of social ills bugging the Cameroonian society. The one that caught the attention of journalists most was homosexuality. At the beginning of January 2006, a number of publications, especially *Nouvelle Afrique, L'Anecdote and La Météo,* relayed the cry of the prelate and gave a face to homosexuality through the denunciation of *"top 50"* Cameroonian homosexuals. In this list, reproduced by several other newspapers, were university professors, bishops, many CEOs of private and public companies, but most of all, 11 government ministers. These became the object of programs in the media and conversations everywhere all over the country. Some online forums took up on these. The mass media appeared keenly interested in this subject which puts to question the sexual habits of the ruling elite of the country.

As noted, the treatment of homosexuality in the Cameroonian media feeds and is fed by passionate debates with those on one side against homosexuality and the other, those who wish for the liberalisation of the practice. Through association of representation, the media projected men of power, homosexuals and sorcerers as those who deprive a large part of the population of the right to a good life. Ministers and director generals of enterprises are presented as thieves of public property and who block the redistribution of the fruits of economic growth to the detriment of an active population which constitutes the poor and the jobless.

DISCURSIVE CONSTRUCTION OF HOMOSEXUALITY ON 237 MEDIA

Semantic macro-structures

The Threads

As observed earlier, threads are topics on which the forum members debate on. Within a single topic, many forum members post messages. We thus identify these as threads. Some of the threads2 identified in the data we downloaded include:

a. **22h mardi avec thierry sur STV** *(22hrs Tuesday with Thierry on STV)*

b. **L'homosexualite: Le Gouvernement Reagit** *(Homosexuality: the government reacts).*

c. **Homosexualite** : Le Cameroun dans le piège du populisme pré-électo *(Homosexuality : Cameroon in the trap of pre-electoral populism)*

d. **L'homosexualite: Bobokiono Contre?** (Homosexuality: Bobokiono against?)

e. **De la retenue Me Nkom !** *(to be retained from Me Nkom)*

f. **Guerre contre les pédés: Quittons les serveurs des pédés, il en a chez** *(War against homosexuals : let's quit the servants of homosexuals…)*

g. **L'homosexualité a toujours existé en Afrique et au Cameroun / Un autre mensonge !!!** *(homosexuality has always existed in African and in Cameroon/Another lie)*

h. **La lefe soutient la position du gouvernement contre le financement des associations qui vont a l encontre de nos lois** *(LEFE supports the government portion against the financing of associations which go against our laws)*

i. **Raque des homosexuels: soutien de la jeunesse au gouvernement** *(Tracking homosexuals : youth support to government)*

j. **Homophobie : à propos de la "loi"** *(Homophobia : in relation to the "law")*

k. **Alain AMASSOKA Pulverise Alice Nkom** *(Alain Amassoka pulverises Alice Nkom)*

l. **La chasse a l'homo a commence? Et la fatwa produit ses premieres victimes!** *(The hunt for homosexuals has started? and the fatwa produces its first results)*

The spatio-temporal context (van Dijk 2009) of the online discussion was triggered by the European Union's decision to finance a project on the protection of rights of homosexuals in Cameroon.

Some of the themes drawn on in the debates are:

- Homosexuality as a moral crime
- Homosexuality and its [negative] implication on public action
- Corruption of Youths
- Homosexuality as a tool for the exploitation of the poor
- Homosexuality as a commercial activity ('fonds de commerce', (business capital)

Some sample posts can be seen below:

[Le] nombre de membres [de ce gouvernement] sont accusés d'utiliser l'homosexualité non sentimentale comme arme de corruption morale et psychologique de leurs victimes - c'est celle-là qui, si prouvée, est à mon avis, grave - c'est l'instrumentalisation par toutes sortes de débrouillards de la répression des Homosexuels et leurs défenseurs comme nouveau dada pour soutenir leur demande d'asile en Europe. *Azebaze 14/01/2011*

A number of members of this government have been accused of using non-sentimental homosexuality as a weapon of moral and psychological corruption of their victims it is those that, if proven, in my opinion, are worse it is the instrumentalisation by all sorts of bad means of repression of homosexuals and the defenders as new daddies to support their asylum demands in Europe.

Other posts claim that homosexuality is not only used by corrupt government officials to initiate young persons into their cult but is in itself a tool for the corrupting of the morals of young persons. The excerpt below is indicative of how homosexuality is seen as the rust that corrupts youths morally.

Certains prévaricateurs moraux ont tôt fait d'ériger l'homosexualité en fonds de commerce ou d'y établir un moyen d'expiation de résidus ésotériques et


Credit: Courtesy of Getty Images

rituels, en transformant des jeunes innocents en porcherie humaine. La naïveté, l'inconscience, mêlées à la précarité morale, spirituelle et surtout matérielle ont poussé ces jeunes congénères dans les bras des prédateurs, tapis dans leur manteau social, qui ont choisi d'avilir ces Etres vulnérables de leur condition humaine.

Some morally corrupt persons have instead uplifted homosexuality as a commercial base or a means of sanctioning the esoteric and ritual residues, by transforming innocent young persons into human piggeries. The naivety, unconsciousness, mixed with moral precariousness, spiritual and mostly material pushed these young men into the hands of predators, those who have chosen to trample on these human beings in their human condition.

Similar to the discourse above of homosexuality as a tool for the exploitation of the poor is a complementary discourse of homosexuality as a commercial activity. Such a discourse claims that the exploitation and transformation of young persons turns them into human piggeries where predators prey on them. These young persons however are described as innocent but at the same time greedy and morally deficient. Homosexuality is therefore described as a buying and selling of sex, the rich 'pseudo-mentors' buying from the young poor persons (see excerpt above).

Local Meanings: Lexical Choice

In studying lexical choice, we examine the choice of words used in the debates by different members of the forum. Word choice can be indicative of attitude towards the topic under discussion and the mood of the text. An examination of the nouns and verbs used in the debates for example suggests a language of war and violence against homosexuals and homosexuality. The discourse is antagonistic and presents homosexuality negatively. Lexical choice can be used also to examine negative other-presentation and positive self-presentation, here presenting homosexuality as the 'other'.

The language of war

The use of terms in the titles such as

a. '*Offensive*', *(d)*
b. '*War*' *(g)*,
c. '*Tracking*' *(m)*.
d. '*The Hunt*' *(q)*,

These words suggest that the society is carrying out a war against homosexuality and homosexuals by tracking them down, hunting them and carrying out an offensive. The use of such terminology is indicative of the degree of hostility towards homosexuality in Cameroon and such hostility definitely can have an impact on a government that seeks to win the population in a pre-electoral period as suggested in one of the threads.

- The use of the language of hostility does not end at the level of lexical choice. Menace and threats, denouncing homosexuality is also evident in the kinds of sentences used. The use of imperatives and declaratives is indicative of the fact that homosexuality is a non-negotiable business but one that must be dealt with. We present some examples below to illustrate this:

- A bas l'homosexualité et ses supporters!!!!!!!
(Down with homosexuality and its supporters!!!!!!)

- Nous traquerons et dénoncerons cette race qui ne doit pas exister chez nous *(we will track down and denounce this race which should not exist among us)*

- Protège sa jeunesse d'une excroissance dangereuse comme l'homosexualité *(we will protect the youths from this dangerous growth such as homosexuality)*

- Nous menons des campagnes de terrain qui nous permettent de dénoncer et de faire traduire ces criminels devant les juridictions compétentes.
(We will undertake field campaigns which will permit us to denounce and take these criminals to competent jurisdictions [to be dealt with]).

The choice of words and sentences presents homosexuality as a growth or a cancer that must be uprooted or even a race that must be destroyed. The general language used by those against homosexuality shows the extreme hatred to whole concept.

Effects of 237 Media on State Action

The debates in the media before and after the government decision to request the EU to suspend funding to ADEPHO for the defence of the rights of homosexuals are indicative of the impact of the media on government decisions (and sometimes policy).

One of the threads, titled 'HOMOSEXUALITE: *Le Cameroun dans le piège du populisme pré-électo*' is indicative of the fact that for government to decide to turn down the assistance of EU is a result of popular opinion. According to Alice Nkom, the main advocate of gay rights, in her interview on the 17th of January, four days after the declaration of the minister, said:

L'image du Cameroun à l'extérieur va en prendre un coup. Le ministre des Relations extérieures a plutôt suivi le déchaînement des passions qu'a suscité l'article paru dans vos colonnes.

The foreign image of Cameroon will get a blow. The minister of external relations has rather decided to follow the passions that your articles have aroused in your Columns.

This statement is clearly indicative of the role of the media in shaping government actions. Still in the interview given by Ms Nkom on the issue, she indicates that, government had previously received funding earlier in relation to the health of homosexuals, who sometimes in the speeches of government officials refer to as MSM (men have sex with men).3 How come then that government is rejecting this one when it had accepted same before?

On the ambivalent nature of the government, the thread titled 'HOMOSEXUALITE : *Le Cameroun dans le piège du populisme pré-électo*' argues that the government, following public opinion, as expressed in the media, is doing so not because it is convinced it does not need the funding but because it also has stakes at hand if the funding is granted.

Conclusion

The above media analysis is indicative of the relationship between public action and the media in Cameroon as demonstrated by the government decision not to allow this funding when they had accepted previous financing of homosexual related problems.

On a more concrete note, the effect of the media on government action can be seen at different levels especially in speeches given by the government as a reaction to media and in actions done by the government.

In concluding this paper, we observe that the media relays social debates on homosexuality in Cameroon. The positions taken by members of the society, reflected in the different columns of different newspapers and message boards are indicative of the general societal rejection of this sexual orientation. These columns are expressive of the desire of these media of not creating a rupture with their audience. Homosexuality remains illegal and criminal in Cameroon but the Cameroonian government continues to play a double game depending how it suits it. But in this professional forum of journalists, that is 237 Media, the debates are more open and transparent.

Notes

1) These texts are cited in the preamble of the Cameroonian Constitution of January 1996.

2) I have maintained the structure of the subjects of the threads and whether these are written in capital letters or not.

3) It can be observed that the question of homosexuality in Cameroon is mostly concerned with men having sex with men (gays), rather than other sexualities. The almost exclusive focus on MSM rather than WSW (women having sex with women) is an issue that requires a further interrogation.

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Legal Perspectives on Sex Education, Communication and Freedom of Expression

Babafemi Odunsi

On a broad level, '**sex education**' as a term describes or encompasses education about human sexual anatomy, sexual reproduction, sexual intercourse along with other aspects of human sexual behavior. Sex education may also be described as "sexuality education", connoting that it encompasses education about all aspects of sexuality, such as family planning, reproduction, together with information about all aspects of one's sexuality including sexual orientation, sexual pleasure, values, decision making, communication, dating, relationships, sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and how to avoid them along with birth control methods.[1]

Sex education is dispensed through formal or informal means. Informal sex education is given in situations including conversation with parents, friends, religious leaders, or through the media. Some other avenues of informal sex education are self-help authors, magazine columnists or sex education web sites. Formal sex education occurs when schools or public health bodies provide it in an official setting, usually as a component of the school curriculum. In some countries, sex education, particularly in schools is a matter of legal duty on the government.[2]

Sex education can be undertaken through any of the means of human communication. Thus, it can be projected by means of literature, images, cinematography or any other species of documentary communication. It can also be disseminated through verbal communication and even sign language.

Whatever the form or level of its dispensation, there is the tendency for sex education to entail the use of sexually explicit language. This aspect, coupled with the viewpoint that sex education can encourage sexual immorality, put sex education in a moral storm among conservative groups. Along this line, sex education and communication has faced stiff resistance which has manifested at different levels, including legal and non-legal, formal and informal fronts of resistance.

This paper considers the jurisprudential basis for sex education and the corresponding communications and expressions as a human right issue.

Credit: Courtesy of Getty Images

Legal or Jurisprudential Basis of Sex Education as Human Right

The Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria does not contain any provision expressly or specifically defining sex education as human right. Based on extensive scrutiny, it can also be safely held that sex education is not expressly defined as a human right in any of the pertinent international human rights treaties. However, sex education would qualify as or translate to an aspect of human right if it is located within the structure of some prominent human right headings that have been well recognized and expressed in national laws, international human rights documents and other consensus documents.

Right to health is a prominent human right provision within which sex education can be located. Health, according to the World Health Organisation (W.H.O), is a state of complete physical, mental and social wellbeing and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity.[3] In respect of right to health, including sexual health, Article 16 of the *African Charter on Human and People Rights* (now domesticated and enacted as a domestic legislation in Nigeria - *African Charter on Human and People Rights (Ratification and Enforcement) Act* Cap.A4 Laws of the Federation of Nigeria 2004), among others, provides:

1. Every individual shall have the right to enjoy the best attainable state of physical and mental health.
2. States Parties to the present Charter shall take the necessary measures to protect the health of their people…

In a similar vein, article 12 of *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural* Rights provides that:

1. The States Parties to the present Covenant recognize the right of everyone to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health.

2. The steps to be taken by the States

Parties to the present Covenant to achieve the full realization of this right shall include those necessary for: …

(c) The prevention, treatment and control of epidemic, endemic, occupational and other diseases…

The United Nations (UN) Committee on Human Rights together with other UN agencies and bodies have affirmed that sexual and reproductive health are intrinsic components of the right to health. Within the scope of the duty to respect, protect and fulfill the right to health, governments are obliged to ensure that high quality sexual and reproductive health information is made available and accessible without restriction (Dixon-Mueller et al, 2009: 116). The need for access to effective sex education has particularly resonated in relation to youths and adolescents who are particularly vulnerable to sex related problems. For example, as noted by Mueller et al, the Programme for Action of the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development enjoins: "Full attention should be given to the promotion of mutually respectful and equitable gender relations, and particularly to meeting the educational and service needs of adolescents to enable them deal in a positive and responsible way with their sexuality."

To sum up, sexual health is an aspect of health; the right to [sexual] health or wellbeing of citizens, would therefore encompass protection from sexually transmitted infections and diseases that may arise from sex. Sex education, being a potent means of preventing sex-related diseases, therefore falls within the scope of "measures to protect the health of their people" (African Charter) and steps to be taken for the prevention and control of diseases (*International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights*). On the platform of the broad "right to enjoy the best attainable state of physical and mental health", every individual becomes entitled to sex education as a means or component of enjoying [sexual] health.

One pertinent issue in grounding sex education as an aspect of the right to health is the question whether the right to health itself is an enforceable right in Nigeria, based on its non-inclusion among the enforceable human rights in the Nigerian constitution. This issue cannot be comprehensibly engaged in the limited scope of this paper. It however suffices to state that, with the domestication of the African Charter which guarantees right to health, there is a very strong ground to contend that right to health is an enforceable right in Nigeria (Odunsi, 2008).

Sex Education and Communication in Nigeria: Agencies and Control Mechanisms

Appreciation of the importance of sex education as a means of controlling sex-related problems can be seen in the Nigerian National HIV/AIDS Policy (2003), which is the country's central blueprint on the battle against the HIV/AIDS epidemic, and which makes copious provisions touching on sex education in different contexts (see pp. vii, 18, 27). With such a high level of appreciation of public health or other benefits of sex education, the natural expectation is that corresponding measures would be put in place to facilitate unrestricted access to sex education by the citizens. However, lack of access to sex education remains a problem in Nigeria especially in social and educational institutions where it is most needed. As will be shown subsequently, various factors still hinder the effective dispensation and free-flow of sex education in Nigeria.

"Sex education and communication has faced stiff resistance which has manifested at different levels, including legal and non-legal, formal and informal fronts of resistance."

Sexuality Education/Communication and Freedom of Expression

Another well recognized right to which sex education can be related is *freedom of expression*, which is guaranteed under Section 39(1) of the Nigerian Constitution. The section provides that: "Every person shall be entitled to freedom of expression including freedom to hold opinions and to receive and impart ideas and information without interference." By virtue of its entrenchment in the Constitution, which is the supreme law in Nigeria, freedom of expression is a justiciable right and can be duly enforced by legal actions in the courts. Apart from the Nigerian constitution, freedom of expression has also been incorporated into international human rights treaties to which Nigeria is signatory. An example is the *African Charter on Human and People Rights*. Article 9(2) of the Charter provides that: "Every individual shall have the right to express and disseminate his opinions within the law."

Freedom of expression is regarded as first among equals in relation to other rights. A commentator alluded to this point in the following words:

The right to make one's opinion known on any issue is the freedom of expression and it is this right…that is referred to as the "core freedom". It is the foundation of other forms of freedom because it is through it that the violation of other rights are made known. All other rights including the right to life, property and self dignity etc. are meaningless without that of expression (p. 40).

In terms of its phraseology, freedom expression can be classified into two: One is the right to receive or hold information as means of knowledge while the other is the right to impart or transmit information. Taken together in the context of sex education the effect is that it would be unlawful for the government or any other person, directly or indirectly, to interfere with the free-flow of ideas and information relating to sex or sexuality between individuals acting voluntarily.

Since the transmission of sex education would entail sexually explicit language or images, freedom of expression is crucial to sex education and communication. However, such "freedom of expression" in relation to sex and sexuality is also subject to a number restrictions that may be a hindrance to the full realization of the freedom.

Legal Prohibitions on Obscene Language and Communication

The factors militating against sex education and communication of sexuality in Nigeria can be categorized as legal and non-legal. The legal factors consist principally of statutory provisions, subsidiary legislation and policy statement which in their respective operations can exert restrictive effect on sex education. As noted earlier, sex education, in some respects, would entail explicit sexual language considered as obscene, corruptible and objectionable by conservative members of the society (Esiet et al, 2001). In combating the dissemination of perceivably obscene materials, Nigeria has in place some

statutory provisions. In this respect, section 233 D (1) of the *Criminal Code* provides:

Subject to the provisions of this Chapter, any person who, whether for gain or not, distributes or projects any article deemed to be obscene for the purposes of this Chapter, commits an offence punishable on conviction by a fine not exceeding four hundred naira or by imprisonment for a term not exceeding three years or by both.

At section 233C(1), an article is deemed to be obscene "if its effects taken as a whole is such as to tend to deprave and corrupt persons who are likely, having regard to all relevant circumstances, to read, see or hear the matter contained or embodied in it." This provision, apparently to ensure that some other means apart from direct distribution or projection of obscene materials are plugged, finds reinforcement in the provision of section 170(b) of the *Criminal Code* which provides:

Any person who knowingly sends, or attempts to send, by post anything which…encloses an indecent or obscene print, painting, photograph, lithograph, engraving, book, card, or article, or which has on it, or in it, or on its cover, any indecent, obscene, or grossly offensive words, marks, or designs; is guilty of a misdemeanour, and is liable to imprisonment for one year.

It is worth clarifying that the Criminal Code provisions on obscene publication apply to only the states in southern part of Nigeria but not the northern part. However, the Penal Code applicable in the states of the northern part has similar provisions on obscene publication. On a more comprehensive level, a specific legislation, the Obscene Publications Act (Cap. 530, Abuja) has anti-obscene publication provisions for the jurisdiction of Nigeria's Federal Capital Territory of Abuja. These provisions are substantively along the line and format of the Criminal Code and Penal Code provisions respectively. In a nutshell, anti-obscene publication provisions operate across the whole of Nigeria.

Since, as noted, the transmission of sex education would entail sexually explicit language or images that are typically perceived as obscene and offensive, sex education can get enmeshed in the web of the criminal law statutes on obscene publications. Quite true, there are various genres of legal defences to charges of obscene publication under the different statutes (See e.g. section 233D(2-4) Criminal Code, section 4(2-4) Obscene Publications Act (Abuja). However, in the absence of clear judicial pronouncements on the scope of the defences, it remains a matter of speculation the extent to which they can avail someone disseminating sexually explicit, and perceptibly obscene, articles under the canopy of sex education. Whatever the case is, the provisions, vis-à-vis the dread of prosecutions and sanctions, are likely to dissuade many from undertaking sex education at a public level.

"The extent of the abhorrence of sex-related discourses in 'modern' times is perhaps best highlighted by the tendency of intellectuals to avoid the subject of sex in the belief that such engagement could tarnish their moral credentials."

In 2001, a radio advertisement on condom promotion was suspended by the Advertising Practitioners Council of Nigeria (APCON) on the ground that it was promoting messages capable of corrupting public morality.[4]

Following on that, in 2006, APCON started to enforce stricter regulations on condom advertisements to prevent ones that might encourage 'indecency'(See report by Integrated Regional Information Network (2006)). In the circumstance, sex education, which would often entail the promotion of condoms as means of guarding against STDs/STIs or unwanted pregnancies respectively, suffers a set-back. This is one of the ways by which mechanics and agencies of control of sexuality communications may have the unintended effect of inhibiting sex education.

The condom promotion and censoring scenario is also a poignant picture of the approbation and reprobation of the Nigerian government in the context of sex education. In one realm, the government makes a lofty policy statement on promotion of condoms and in another realm, the same government, through its agencies seeks to suppress the promotion of condoms. Moreover, the drive for the promotion of condoms in the absence of legislative or other form of legal support appears to be mere window-dressing. This is because any policy however well-designed or intended does not have the effect of law and anyone can summarily disregard it without any legal sanctions.[5]

This conceivably explains why APCON cannot be questioned in the suppression or restriction of condoms advertisement.

Non-Legal Inhibitions

Non-legal factors that militate against sex education and sexuality expressions are grounded in socio-cultural, moral, religious and related factors. For long, indigenous Nigerian communities had standards as to what was culturally acceptable in matters pertaining to sex and sexuality. It was typically a taboo to discuss sex and sexual matters outside the realm of marriage. Particularly, it was a forbidden to discuss sexual matters in the presence of children until they were ready for their passage into adulthood. Generally, sex related issues including sex education were shrouded in mystery and ambiguous languages (Ikpe, 2004).

Even in 'modern times' starting from the colonial era, the taboo surrounding sex subsisted, with the infusion of foreign values of 'civilized' social etiquette and decorum. In the framework of these values, the notion of respectability, among others, connotes the avoidance of seemingly vulgar language of sex talks. Apart from some restricted free-spirited settings such as beer-parlours where sex talk is undertaken in the form of ribald jokes or banters, people are generally apt to regard sexual discourses as repulsive exercises and abominations that should be unheard of (Esiet et al, 2001).

The extent of the abhorrence of sex-related discourses in 'modern' times is perhaps best highlighted by the tendency of intellectuals to avoid the subject of sex in the belief that such engagement could tarnish their moral credentials. In the words of a writer: "This desire to remain morally clean, has made sexuality in Nigeria a taboo subject not to be touched by respectable academics unless of course it has to do with the spread of diseases when it is discussed as a public health issue" (Ikpe, 4). In different ways, religion has also contributed to the inhibition of access to sex education. Some religious bodies purport to undertake sex education; however what such bodies engage in can best be described as moral education in light of the predominant emphasis on abstinence for youths or unmarried people and utmost fidelity in

the case of married persons (Esiet et al, 2001).

Conclusion

Despite its integration within the human right framework, sex education remains prone to some vitiating socio-cultural elements in Nigeria. The regulatory positions and policies of the government also have negative impacts on the free flow of sex education and communication, just as there are laws which in some forms have restrictive effect on sex education and the corresponding communications.

The Nigerian government, as the directing mind of the nation-state, can be rightly held culpable for the unsatisfactory state of sex education in Nigeria. It is the responsibility of government to take requisite measures to remove the religious, socio-cultural and other factors obstructing the free flow of sex education. That these inhibiting factors operate to impinge on sex education, arguably, indicates that the government has not taken the requisite measures to combat them or tacitly acquiesce in their operation.

Perhaps, the prevailing scenario on sex education is permitted to operate because it is perceived in some quarters as a potent catalyst for moral corruption, especially among the young. However, moral disagreement with sex education and expression of sexuality cannot change its human right core. It is thus vital that it should be appreciated as a human right issue which the government has a legal obligation to respect, protect and fulfill and for which it can be held *accountable* and *responsible*,[6] for any default or non-performance in respect of the obligation.

Notes

(1) Wikipedia the free encyclopaedia online at

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sex_education (accessed on 21/5/2011).

(2) Ibid.

(3) Preamble to the Constitution of the World Health Organisation as adopted by the International Health Conference, New York, 19 June - 22 July 1946; signed on 22 July 1946 by the representatives of 61 States (Official Records of the World Health Organisation (no. 2) 100 and entered into force on 7 April 1948.

(4) Avert International HIV and AIDS Charity, 'HIV and AIDS in Nigeria' online at *http://www.avert.org/aids-nigeria.htm* (accessed on 6/5/2011).

(5) See the Botswana case of Botswana Building Society v Rapula Johnson, Botswana Court of Appeal- unreported Civil Appeal No. 37 of 2003.

(6) For a discussion of state responsibility and accountability see: A.A. An-Naim "State Responsibility Under international Human Rights Law to Change Religious and Customary Laws" in R. J. Cook (ed.), Human Rights of Women, National and International Perspectives (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1994), 168-185. See also R. J. Cook, "State Accountability under the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women" in R. J. Cook (ed.), Human Rights of Women, National and International Perspectives (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1994) at 228-253.

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Sexuality Indices in Yoruba Language and Popular Culture

Taiwo Oloruntoba-Oju

Yoruba language, popular culture and the associated literature offer interesting examples of the intersection between language and sexuality. Numerous usages in the language suggest a deep-structure linguistic coding of sexuality, sexuality orientation and socio-cultural expectation among the Yoruba. The usages, which we refer to here as sexuality indices or pointers, often entail a differentiation of female and male sexuality patterns within the language and the associated discourses. This article draws examples from some core Yoruba usages, some of which occur interestingly at below the word level, and also from Yoruba oral forms and the associated contemporary literature and music, to illustrate the manner in which the language reflects and projects differential cultural attitudes towards male and female sexuality. Some of the illustrative oral forms, such as proverbs, aphorisms, pithy sayings and sundry nuanced expressions, being fixed and somewhat frozen over time, do offer insight into ancient Yoruba socio-cultural constructions of sexuality.

It has been observed elsewhere in a different context that Yoruba usage is not at all bashful about sexuality (Oloruntoba-Oju, 2011), hence the projection of the intersection between language and sexuality occurs quite explicitly in the language and at various levels of the theoretical appreciation of the topic of sexuality. The point is emphasized in this paper that, at these various levels (including sexual agency and the production of desire), the language tends to reflect and project Yoruba cultural understanding of and differential attitudes towards male and female sexuality.

There have been disputations as to whether Yoruba language is gendered or not. The claim of Yoruba "gender neutrality" has relied largely on the absence of generic pronouns distinguishing male from female (e.g. in contrast to the English pronouns he/she), as well as the absence of gender marked sibling terms (e.g. in contrast to the English terms 'brother'/'sister'). Arguments, as to whether this interesting linguistic absence translates to actual gender neutrality on the sociological and cultural planes or not, have also been advanced in the literature (See Oyewumi, 1997; Yusuf, 2002; Bakare-Yusuf, 2004; Oloruntoba-Oju, 2009; 2010; 2011). Perhaps the safest claim to be made for Yoruba language in this regard remains that its pronouncements on this issue are sometimes ambivalent. Nonetheless, this article demonstrates that some elements of Yoruba language and its associated literature appear to correlate with dominant cultural attitudes towards male and female sexuality in the culture.

Credit: Courtesy of Getty Images

The usual caution about the dangers of reading directly from cultural expression to socio-cultural praxis must be observed here; however, these forms do give some indication of traditional African inscription of the body (female and male but especially female), into various elements of discourse. The representational forms and related cultural expressions are continually appropriated by writers and culture

workers; hence the forms are perpetuated in contemporary literary and popular culture, including contemporary music, dance, theatre and film.

It will be noted, finally as a preliminary point here, that the appropriation of indigenous usage at various levels of language and aesthetics is neither new nor unexpected. Such appropriation is indeed a major defining characteristic of African literature; a substantial infusion of originally African cultural elements in the literature is generally regarded as a mark of authenticity. What is in issue here, however, is the tracking of such cultural linguistic elements within the specific context of sexuality.

Language and Male and Female Sexuality

Differences in male and female sexuality occur inevitably at the level of biology, where there are obvious anatomical differences, with a few grey areas in the case of the hermaphroditic and the transsexual. However, it has been well established that sexuality is not just a biological fact, but also a psychological, social and cultural orientation. This leads inevitable to disputation as to whether there are non-biological differences in male and female sexuality and what these really are.

A number of distinguishing features of male and female sexuality have been identified beyond the anatomical/biological differences, but these psychological features are often regarded as mere stereotypes. The stereotypes include the characterization of female sexuality as passive and its association with romantic love (Lamanna & Riedmann. 1997), where male sexuality is considered to be 'free-wheeling.' Active and even aggressive sexual agency, as well as multiple sexual partnerships, is also regarded as a preserve of the male, while initiative-taking sexual behaviour on the part of the female is typically condemned (Basow, 1992). Some researches reported by *Science Daily* (2010; 2011) have also claimed differences in female and male arousal patterns, including greater male susceptibility to visual stimulation, relative ability to separate emotions such as love/hate affection/disaffection etc from sex, and congruence between body and mind indices of arousal (where tests of females show conflict in body and mind indices) (Chivers et al, 2000, reported by *Science Daily* 2011). Differences in male and female coital patterns have also been relentlessly pursued and projected in the research literature.


Credit: Courtesy of Getty Images

In issue here however is not the presence of these differences, some of which are fairly obvious, but the propensity of elements of language and discourse to both project and perpetuate the associated notions of female and male sexuality. The crux of the matter is not that differences in male and female sex physiology are normally reflected in language, but that this reflection is not just by way of a factual identification or cataloguing of the differences. Rather, language and discourse also reflect cultural perceptions of these biological differences and the manner in which sociological values are assigned to them. In the process, language and discourse reinforce the names assigned to sexuality phenomena as well as the associated perceptions. A well-known example of this assignation of sociological value and its reflection/replication in language use is the 'stud'/'slut' paradigm. These terms describe similar sexual behaviour but carry different connotations, with gender being the only distinguishing factor. In short, societal sexual double-standard is well ingrained in language.

Language thus enters the gendering process in a complex, dynamic and cyclical pattern. It is involved in the process of assigning names to biological differences, thus rendering them susceptible to discourse and to gendering in the first place; then it helps to reinforce the associated perceptions, naming the related concepts and keeping them in constant focus, and finally it is involved in iterating or repeating the cycle. The gendering process is therefore self-reinforcing, through its constant *performance* in language and entrenchment in the socialization process, as already well elaborated in the literature (Garfinkel, 1967; Goffman, 1977, 1979; Butler, 1993, and further). This process is attested among the Yoruba through their language and popular culture.

Phonosemantic, Morphosemantic and Lexico-semantic representation of Male and Female Sexuality in Yoruba[1]

In *Women Creating Patriliny*, Audrey Smedley observed that among the Birom of Nigeria's middle belt, *bwa,* "the term

> **"Yoruba usage is not at all bashful about sexuality, hence we find in the language a naked projection of the intersection between language and sexuality."**

for woman and wife are the same, and no distinction is ever made conceptually between the two, and the roles are not separated in Birom thinking" (Smedley, 2004, p.158). It is worth observing that a similar linguistic occurrence is attested in some European languages. An example is German, where the terms *Mann* and *Frau* refer to "man"/"husband" and "woman"/"wife" respectively, possibly with the same sociological connotations in traditional German society as in the African Birom situation observed by Smedley above.

The terms for "woman" and "wife" are different in Yoruba; however, the language presents complex and somewhat intriguing examples of the conflation of language and gender roles. For example, *the term, ẹ̀lẹ̀,* which is the Yoruba word for vaginal tract, is also used to refer to a very beautiful girl, albeit within contexts that will be clarified below. Equally interesting is the fact that, whereas the case of Birom and German noted above occurs at the level of the word, a sex-gender connection between language and the associated socio-cultural perceptions of sexuality and gender can be observed even at below the word levels in Yoruba. As tentatively observed earlier elsewhere, the Yoruba terms for "man" and "woman" appeared to derive through morphological processes from the terms for "penis" and "vagina" (Oloruntoba-Oju, 1989; 1998). Further observation confirms that indeed all related sex-gender terms, e.g. "male"/"female," including terms for coital practices, can be appraised at a phonosemantic level (in terms of the relationships between certain individual sounds and perceived symbolisms and meanings); morphosemantic level (in terms of apparently gendered meaning bearing segments), and lexico-semantic level (in terms of the gendered variation in the meaning of words). Some of such connections are highlighted below:

Yoruba terms for intimate anatomy in relation to Yoruba terms for male and female

okó - "penis"
ọkùnrin - "boy"/man"
ọkọ - "husband"
akọ - "male"

òbò - "vagina"
obìnrin - "girl"/woman"
abo - "female"

The pattern indicated by the male terms above is complemented by the observation that the item, /k/, as realized in morphological forms such as [*kó*] appears to convey the sense of "hardness" in many Yoruba words and contexts. Indeed, *[kó]* is the Yoruba morpheme/term for turgidity, as also shown in the following expressions:

ila kó "the okra has gone turgid"
kokó (igi) "tree knot"
konko "knuckle"
ìkó "knock on the head"
Ó le koko "it is hard"/ "tough"
Ó le koko bí ojú eja "it is hard"/tough" as the eye of a fish

Other words in which the item /k/ appears to suggest hardness include

òkúta "stone"
Ó kùtà "hard to sell"
Eyin ká/kán "the tooth is broken"
Ó ká a "to pluck"
Ó ki "it's thick"
[*Bata mi a dun*] *kokokà* - "firm, confident steps"

I would demonstrate later below that this consonant /k/ also appears distinctive with regard to male and female names.

On the other hand, the consonant that appears distinctive in Yoruba feminine phono- and morphosemantics is [*b*] or [*bi*]. For example, from the term vagina (*òbò*) come the morpho-lexico-semantic derivatives *abo ("female") and obìnrin* ("woman") as shown above, as well as various reproductive and kinship terms as shown below:

Òbí - "parent"
Òbímọ - "who gives birth"
Ìbí - "*birth/birth circumstance*"
Ìbímọ - "childbirth/delivery"
Èbí - "childbirth/delivery"
ọ bí - "birth relation"
Ìbátan - "birth relation"

The terms for "wife" *aya* and *ìyàwó* also construct morphosemantic and lexico-semantic relations with the term for "mother" *ìyá, thus* constructing a conceptual continuum with reproduction, motherhood, and kinship (*ìyàwó* (wife) *ìyálé* (senior wife, mother of the house) *ìyá* (mother).

aya - "wife"
Ìyàwó - "wife"
Ìyá - "mother"

This sort of morphosemantic and lexico-semantic continuity between female terms and reproductive roles is absent from the corresponding male terms *akọ ("male"), ọkọ* ("husband"), *bàbá* (father), *baálé* ("head of homestead"). While this is not to suggest that "husband" is not expected to be "father,"[2] it does suggest that the sexuality continuum in the female category (i.e. *female body sex motherhood*) is closely constructed within the structure of Yoruba language in a way that the male category is not. Interestingly, the matrilineal kinship phrase in Yoruba is also rendered such as to suggest a female body motherhood continuum; hence, we have:

ìdì ìya - literally, "from the bottom of the mother" to indicate matrilineal, but,

ọ̀dọ̀ bàbá - ("from the father side") to indicate patrilineal in the corresponding male term.

In other words, the item "bottom" is intriguingly avoided in the latter male term.

Two other Yoruba terms whose usage is also interesting in the present context are *ẹ̀lẹ̀ and ọmọge.*
The term, ẹ̀lẹ̀, is the Yoruba word for the vaginal tract but it is also used to refer to a very beautiful girl, as noted above. The usage is non-abusive and non-offensive but is rather adulatory and accepted, although it is not clear whether this use is old or modern. It does appear very much like a slang term, given its wide currency and general acceptability especially among male and female youth. The acceptability may also be due to the fact that many may not know its other and original referent. However, this original referent is unambiguous and it is very much evident in another Yoruba proverb that has both literal and metaphorical applications:

Okó tí ò le kò lè wọ'nú ẹ̀lẹ̀ -
"the penis that is not turgid cannot enter (penetrate) the vaginal tract"

For its part, the term *ọmọge is an original term for a young unmarried girl or virgin. Its literal meaning is "child of beauty." There is no equivalent male term. This term is another example of how male and female are coded differently in Yoruba language in relation to cultural appreciation of gender and sexuality roles.*

Masculinities, Femininities, Language and Sexuality

On a general level, and as observable from the foregoing, Yoruba language would seem definitive about the separation of man and woman into binary masculinity/femininity frames. As will be further illustrated later, the corresponding sexuality tropes are respectively those of virility and fecundity. With regard to language and Yoruba masculinities in general, the following proverbs are declarative, direct and apparently unapologetic about this binary division into the virile male.

Ọkùnrin làdá - "The cutlass is male"

Ibi to bá le là n bá ọkùnrin - "It is in tough spots that we find men"

The occasional female masculinity is without doubt acknowledged through a number of proverbs, sayings and related expressions in ancient Yoruba folklore:

Obìnrin bi ọkùnrin - "A woman like a man"

Ayá rorò j'okọ lo; Oyá rorò ju Sango - "The wife is fiercer than the husband; Oyá is fiercer than Sango"

Iyawò gb'ọ́ kọ sanle ọkọ́ yo'ke - 'Wife throws husband, husband develops a hump'.

Bi ọkùnrin r' ẹ́jò t'obìnrin pa, k'ejò sa ti má lọ ni- "It is more important that a snake is killed, less important whether this was accomplished by a man or a woman." However, the presumed egalitarian purport of some of these proverbs, especially the one immediately above, has been the subject of disputation in the literature. Yoruba culture itself has not helped matters by its ambivalence on the issue as inscribed in proverbs that tend to discourage female masculinities:

Àsejù ni n mu ewure hu irugbon - "Excessive and unruly behaviour is what makes a she-goat sport a beard" (*àsejù* - literally overdoing things)

Worse still, male sexuality as potentially a mechanism of control and measure of dominance is inscribed in other proverbs, an example being the following:

B'obìnrin ba rorò a fa m'abe "A fierce woman is best pulled to the groin"

Sexualities, Masculinities and Femininities in Yoruba Naming

Names for Yoruba males and females frequently occur in mutually exclusive morphosemantic and lexico-semantic fields. For example, the item /k/ observed above in male anatomy and identification terms is again distinctive in male names, as in the following examples:

Akin
Akínmọ̀ọ́nrìn
Akinọlá
Akinlolú
Akínkúnlé
Akínsegírí

Semantically, the names above refer to bravery or to the valiant, attributes that are stereotypically associated with masculinities. However, there are other male /k/ names such as the following:

Akerékorò
Àkàno
Àkànni
Kòsọ́kọ́
Kòkúmọ́
Kàróunwi
Kàyòdé
Okè
Ọkẹ́

One interesting point regarding the set of names immediately above is that they formally maintain the /k/ masculinity feature but without indicating any peculiar masculine semantic attribute. On the other hand, in the following group of male names, the item /k/ features within the morpheme [*oke*] that indicate the semantic attribute "[go] high [up]" or "triumph," features that are hardly present in female names:

Adégòkè
Ọlagòkè
Adélékè
Ọlálékè
Ọlọ́rùnlékè

The item /k/ does not generally occur in female names, but where it does, the occurrence is usually modified by the vowel /ẹ́/. In the relevant examples, the item *kẹ́* or *ikẹ́* means 'to care for' or 'to pet,' that is in a semantic environment which again is stereotypically feminine. Other feminine or feminized semantic environments in which Yoruba female names typically occur include those of *ẹwà* ("beauty"), *ẹ́bùn* ("gift") and *adùn*

Female names in feminized semantic environments *ẹ́bùn*

ìkẹ́ ("care"/"pet")	*Ẹwà* ("beauty")	*ẹ̀bùn* ("gift")	*adùn* ("sweetness"/"culinary delight")	*ìfẹ́* ("love")	*tutù* ("coolness"/ "peaceableness"/ "tranquility.)"
Àbíkẹ́	Ẹwà	Adébùnmi	Ibidùn	Ìfẹ́dapọ̀	Adétutù
Àríkẹ́	Adéṣewà	Fúnmilọ́lá	Adùnọlá	Ìfẹ́pàdé	
Àkànkẹ́	Ọmọléwà	Osábùnmi	Ọmọ́ladùn	Ìfẹ́olá	
Àpèkẹ́	Motilẹ́wá	Ogunbùnmi	Ọlawùmí	Ìfẹ́olú	
Aríyíkẹ́		Ọ̀súnfúnkẹ́	Ọlátúndùn		
Àsàkẹ́		Ẹ́bùnlọmọ	Oyindàmọ́lá		
Kikẹ́lọmọ			Moróuntódùn		
Kẹ́mi			Ládùnmóyin		
Làbákẹ́					
Sikẹ́mi					

("sweetness"/"culinary delight"), *ifẹ́* ("love") *tutù* ("coolness"/ "peaceableness"/ "tranquility." Some examples are shown in the following table.

Sexual Agency Indices: Cognomens, Metaphors, Proverbs

The different cognomens and aliases recorded in Yoruba folk usage and the associated literature appear to reflect ideas of active male sexual agency and a corresponding passive female agency, thus projecting stereotype ideas of masculinities and femininities. A number of cognomens for penis can be observed in Yoruba folk usage:

Alalalulù/alùlùla - (onomatopoeic) "plumb the waves/strike the drums wildly"
Òjòlá Òfurunàgbọ̀n - "bearded snake"
Afàitanná aríran òru - "pathfinder, without lights clears a path through the dark"

The item "snake" has universal phallic symbolism; however, the anthropologist Talbot did observe the uniformity of the snake phallic symbolism and variety of related analogies across the West Africa sub-region. On the other hand, cognomens for the vagina frequently adopt culinary references

*ládùnmóyin (*sweet plus honey)
Adùnmádẹ̀ẹ̀kẹ́("sweetness not of the cheeks [tongue]"), etc.

As noted earlier these culinary references are typically associated with femininity. There are also euphemisms for both male and female genitalia in Yoruba such as *kini/kini un* a "thing"/"that thing" or *tibí* something'/'that thing'). However, the female genitalia is additionally inscribed through anatomically salient metaphors such as:
ojú ara "eye of the body"; ilẹ̀kùn (ara) "door to the body"; *ẹnu ìsalẹ́* the mouth below *ọsàn/orombo* "orange"/"lemon" (for breasts)
kengbe wàrà "gourd of milk" (for breasts)

Although it has been noted that the female body can hardly escape cultural inscription (Linden 2005), over-inscription of the female body seems to be the case in Yoruba language and culture.

Male and Female Coilect

Whether there is a female language distinguishable from a male language in general has been a subject of dispute in the literature (see Newman et al 2003 for a review of some of the arguments). It is even less clear whether the communication of sexuality (in terms of expression of desire and description of sexual acts and sexual pleasure) can be distinguished along the lines of gender.

However, it has been observed at a general level that female expression of sexual desire and sexual consent often takes indirect forms.

In Yoruba language such indirectness is inscribed in a proverb/saying such as (roughly translated):
"When a woman slaps her man on the back, she is not necessarily looking for a fist fight"

Yoruba usage and use again tend to differentiate what may be termed male and female *coilect* (terms describing sexual desire, coition and related acts) along the active/passive axis. The basic term for coition in Yoruba is *dó* and it is gender neutral, hence the female *dó'kó* (mate with penis) while males *dó'bò* (mate with vagina). However, in use, males employ coital terms in the active/subjective but females in the passive/objective voices as shown in the table below. Apart from the term, *dó,* in use, contemporary slang varieties (*gé/re* ('cut'), *lo* (use), *je* (eat), *ponmi* (fetch/pour water) *se ọmọ* "do the babe") are also exclusively male and also indicate active male agency or male as doer, while sometimes connoting male sexual aggression.
The term, *damira,* is interesting because the cognate female term, *dami* or *damira* is used only within the context of

Some Coition Terms in Yoruba

Neutral		Male Coilect	Female Coilect
dó [with])	('copulate'/'mate'	*Mo dó o* – I copulated [with] her	*Ó dó mi* – he copulated [with] me
dó'bo vagina"	"copulate [with]	*Mo ba sun* – I slept with her	*Ó ba mi sun* - He slept with me
dó'kó penis"	"copulate [with]	*Mo ba lo pọ* – I had intercourse with her	*Ó ba mi lopọ* – He had intercourse with me
		(slang) *Mo rẹ ẹ* – I cut her *Mo ge e* – i cut her *Mo je e* – I ate her *Mo ponmi fun un* – I fetched/poured water for her/on her. *Mo se e [omo na]* I did her	
		Mo fe damira – I want to ejaculate (have sex; literally "expel body (sexual) fluid")	

childbirth. For the female it carries no sexual meaning but rather it means to "expel body (natal) fluids;" otherwise referred to as "breaking waters," usually as a prelude to the delivery of the baby.

Territoriality and Sexual Multiplicity

Male sexual dominance is expressed in Yoruba terms that signify territoriality and male "ownership." One important such term is the term for 'virginity,' *ibale*. Virginity as 'sign of property' is inscribed in this core Yoruba term that literally means to be 'met at home' *by the husband*. In other words, the term in Yoruba is also an index or sign of territoriality. Jane Millet has noted in her *Sexual Politics* that "all patriarchies have hedged virginity and defloration in elaborate rites and interdictions" (Millet 1969). Ajibade (2005, p.111) in his study of Yoruba epithalamium points out a number of sayings that castigate the girl not "found at home" on the night of her wedding, including:

Ìbálé kì í fò, kilo mú tì ẹ se? - "Virginity has no wings; where has yours flown to?"
Dọ́kọdọ́kọ abòbò pẹ́tiẹ́ … ("Promiscuous girl with a loose vagina …") (Ajibade's translation).

It is interesting to note, too, that the Yoruba female ornamental wear, *ìlẹ̀kẹ̀* ("waist beads"), which is often underwear, is also inscribed in the language as a territorial seal in expressions exhorting against female infidelity:

Ìlẹ̀kẹ̀ ja sile ma ja sita "*Ìlẹ̀kẹ̀* beads may break in the home never outside

On the other hand, terms for female sexual multiplicity or female amplified sexuality are usually pejorative in use. The basic Yoruba term for term for promiscuity *òdọ́kọ* applies only to the female and has no male equivalent. There is a general, neutral term, *onisekuse* (promiscuous person) which, while being theoretically applicable to both male and female, is in practice mostly applied to the female, in addition to the gender specific term, *òdọ́kọ*.

Such projection of a male-centred perspective of sexuality and sexual agency, condoning of male sexual multiplicity and male sexuality as control mechanism is also attested in established proverbs such as: *Olobinrin kan o kuro l'apọn (*"A man with one wife is still a bachelor"); *A ki idagba ma laya, ibi ti aiye ti ba ni la tii je (*"Age is no barrier to taking a wife; where/when the good life comes is when/where one enjoys it").

On the other hand, amplified female sexuality or female sexual activity is generally inscribed in negative word indices such as *òdọ́kọ*, meaning a promiscuous woman, as noted above. The negativity inscribed in this term is, as it were, reinforced through lexical reduplication in the cognate term, *dọ́kọdọ́kọ*, which also indexes the promiscuous woman. As noted earlier, there are no core Yoruba terms for male promiscuity. The gender neutral term, *onisekuse*, which also indexes sexual promiscuity is applicable to both male and female but is typically applied in usage to the female. To all intents and purposes, sexual double standard is encoded in core forms of this language.

Body to Language Indices

It is clear from the foregoing that Yoruba language and usage inscribe male sexuality in relation to virility and female sexuality in relation to fecundity. The related indices represent a sexuality-eroticism-procreation continuum. However, the indices of female sexuality particularly emphasize the procreation principle. Examples of such body-to-language indices occur profusely in Yoruba proverbs, sayings and other oral forms. For example, cognate female body parts are singled out for spiritual (procreation-bound) supplications uttered mostly during nuptial ceremonies:

Wàá fínú soyún, wàá f'ẹ̀yìn pọnmọ (literally, may you with your stomach [womb] carry a pregnancy and with your back carry a baby)

Ẹ̀yìn ìyàwó o ni mọ ẹni - (literally, may the [new] wife's back not get accustomed to the mat (i.e. may she become pregnant in no distant time hence cutting short the duration of her residency on the house mat).

One particularly intriguing saying in this context is the one that insists that the death of a child foists extra and pressing conjugal obligations on the mother (*Ọmọ tó kú ló ni ki wọ́n bá ìyá oun sun* literally "the child that dies invites urgent coital action on its mother)!

Sexual Incompetence

Usages in Yoruba language suggest that *sexual incompetence* is not well tolerated in the culture. Female sexual incompetence is largely indexed through the term àgàn ("barren woman") which seems to conjoin female sexuality with motherhood. As shown above, many rhetorical usages suggest that female sexuality is largely perceived through the prism (pun intended) of procreation. There are no core lexical items for the infertile male in the language. The core Yoruba terms for male *sexual incompetence* are *òkóbó* and *akúra,* which are overtly deprecatory terms for impotence:
Òkóbó literally "one with a faded or blighted penis"

Akúra literally "one who is dead in the body" This deprecation is extended in scathing rhetorical usage:

Òkóbó ní oju oun mú oun le bọ abẹ́rẹ́ lóòkùn, bẹ́ẹ̀ ọ̀tọ̀ ni nkan ta ni ko bọ̀ lóòkùn
("the impotent man boasts that he has a sharp sight and can thread a needle in the dark; well, it is something else we expect him to thread in the dark." Note that in the language itself, the term, *bọ̀*, is three ways ambiguous: "thread," "[put] into" and "boil"; which enhances its pun effect within the context.)

Here again it will be noted that there are differences in body to language realizations for male and female *sexual incompetence* in the language. While it is realized in the form of physical or physiological competence for the male, thus also incorporating the pleasure principle, for the female it is realized solely in the form of biological or reproductive competence, thus emphasizing the procreation principle.

However, one lone rhetorical usage that does link male sexual incompetence to procreation is:
Òkóbó ki i l'ọmọ si'tosi "the impotent man never claims that his 'child' is in the vicinity"

In general, procreation is indexed in Yoruba language as an indispensable part of sexuality.

From language to literature and popular culture

The various realizations of sexuality in the language as well as the associated sexual duplicity noted above are appropriated in popular culture, in music and in literature. Examples are numerous and conspicuous in the music of leading Yoruba musicians in the various categories (*juju* Ebenezer Obey, Sunny Ade; *apala* Haruna Ishola, Ayinla Omowura; *fuji* Ayinde Barrister, Kolawole Ayinla, as well as the numerous new generation Yoruba hip-hoppers). To cite an interesting example, in one of the lyrics of Ebenezer Obey, popular in the 70s and 80s, he sings that if a husband should find his wife with a lover, then she should go down on her

> **Usages in Yoruba language suggest that 'sexual incompetence' is not tolerated in the culture.**

knees and plead, but if the wife should catch the husband with a lover, he should maneuver his way out of the jam, using ancient wisdom (*ogbọ́n àgbà*), and where this fails he should simply bluff his way out of the incident, because such is allowed for men, while the good God has ordained only one man for a woman. Such duplicity is also well reflected in early Nigerian literature of English expression, with female sexuality frequently realized as acceptable only if passive and bio-functional, but unacceptable if active and erotic.

Conclusion

Yoruba language, and the representation of sexuality in the associated cultural forms, vividly illustrates the intersection between language and sexuality, as briefly illustrated in the foregoing. The foregoing has been a survey of some of the levels of language at which Yoruba appreciation and understanding of the issue of sexuality can be appraised. The examples highlighted suggest that, although gender is not attested in Yoruba pronouns and kinship terms, the ancient Yoruba appear to have consciously coded their perspectives of gender and sexuality in other core usages of the language, in a very interesting and sometimes novel manner. The relevant extended usages in the language suggest a skewed gender perspective, which may well provide a background for the pervasive gender bias that is evident even today in the cognate Yoruba society and culture. The insinuation in the research literature referred to in the foregoing, that Yoruba language or the associated culture is 'gender neutral,' can hardly be sustained in view of examples such as those highlighted in the foregoing.

Notes

[1]Phonosemantics and Morphosemantics are specialties within Linguistics that study meaning bearing units of language respectively at the levels of phonemes and morphemes. However, this is not intended to be a comprehensive analysis. What is offered here is merely a guide and a range of possibilities.

[2]Interestingly though, as also pointed out by Oyewumi (1997, p.52), the term "father" is not necessarily coterminous with paternity or biological procreation in Yoruba culture

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Sex Education in Egypt: Sources, Attitudes and the Effect of Gender

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Sexuality education is a lifelong process that begins at birth. It should provide life skills that can help people build self-confidence and make informed choices. The content needs to be comprehensive, addressing the biological, socio-cultural, psychological and spiritual dimensions of sexuality (Adrienne et al, 2007, p.27). All information on which it is based must be scientifically and ethically sound. Added to that, the design and content of sexuality education needs to pay attention to gender bias and gender power relations and, subsequently, a gender dimension can be introduced into school-based programs. The World Association for Sexual Health declaration in Montréal (2005), pointed to the importance of providing universal access to comprehensive sexual information and education for all individuals including youth. WHO's (2000) list of important life skills for young people to acquire for achieving good sexual health includes the ability to make sound decision about relationship, the ability to recognize situations that might turn risky or violent and how can adolescents negotiate safer sexual behaviors.

Unfortunately, such sexuality education is so far from being universally available. Though sexual and reproductive health education is crucial to achieving good sexual health targets, sex education is neither compulsory nor uniform in the school curriculum and there is no monitoring of the standard of sex education delivered by schools in Egypt. The reality is that sexuality images are everywhere on the internet, in advertising, on film and television but reliable, appropriate information about sexuality is not readily accessible.

As Egyptian boys or girls reach puberty, they are given little if any information about sexual and reproductive health, and no comprehensive sexuality education (Ragab and Mohamoud, Ragab A, Mohamoud 2006, p.559). It is strongly opposed by our religious leaders though at time of Prophet, comprehensive package of sex education was given side by side with other teachings of Islam (Ragab, 2009, pp.55-60). Medical and educational services for youth are often scarce, under-funded and of poor quality. Teachers and health professionals are not prepared to address sexuality and understandably bring their biases, fears and misinformation to the subject. In term of proper sexuality education, there are no researches that can serve as the ground for evidence- based public policy. For example, school curriculum in the 9th grade provides a small chapter that focus mainly on the biological aspects of sexuality. Though this chapter is small, it is neglected by many teachers and students alike, and even in the few occasions, when the teachers open these topics, the student was discouraged from discussing details or taking them in at length.

Credit: Courtesy of Getty Images

This research work was embarked upon to assess: (1) the attitude of participants toward sex education, (2) the sources of sexual and reproductive health information among participants, and the perceived credibility of these sources and, (3) differences in sexual attitudes linked to gender.

Sample Population and Sampling Method

The survey included randomly selected samples of males and females (age 15-25), at middle preparatory (age 12-14), secondary (age 15-17), and high schools (above 17). It was carried out from April till July 2009. A cross sectional descriptive community based survey was designed. The study sample was selected from some governmental (middle preparatory, secondary and high) schools in Dakahlia Governorate. Five hundred and twenty persons (210 males and 310 females), were asked to participate in the survey. Four hundred eighty eight complied with the survey, while only twenty two refused to take part, i.e. a 95.6% response rate. The selected age of participants was between 15 and 25 years, mean age for females was 19.7 years, and for males 18.7 years. About 55.8 %(272) of the participants were in the middle preparatory and secondary schools, while 44.2 %(217) were in the high schools.

To determine the size of the sample in terms of a statistical approach, the Epi-Info version 5.01, 1990 formula designed to estimate the minimum sample size for health surveys was used. By this formula, five hundred and seventeen individuals should be surveyed to achieve the study objective. To fulfill the above requirement, five hundred and twenty students were asked to respond to the survey format. An anonymously self-administrated 11-item questionnaire survey was conducted among participants after obtaining their consent or that of the persons in charge, e.g. headmasters of schools. The format was filled by the participants themselves with no pressure or coercion, and the data was collected in person. The format included some socio-demographic characteristics such as age, sex and year of graduation. It also included participants' sources of sexual information and assessment of any received sex education

“Both males and females in our survey either agree or strongly agree on the importance of health education at schools. However, females were more ambivalent on the importance of sex education compared to males.”

through the years of graduation. Data was collected, coded and statistically analyzed and interpreted.

Egyptian Youth Attitude towards Sex Education

Both males and females in our survey either agree or strongly agree on the importance of health education at schools. However, females were more ambivalent on the importance of sex education compared to males, which shows a statistically significant gender difference in attitude to sex education (Table 1). [1] The survey also shows that a small percentage of the males and females surveyed considered themselves as having excellent information on sexuality; however, the gender difference here was also statistically significant. In addition, most respondents agree on the importance of including all relevant topics in the curriculum of sex education.

More than 50% of the respondents felt most of the various topics covered by the research are important and they should be covered during sex education, but there was a highly significant gender difference in the perception of the last three topics: more that 60% of males compared to 48% of females considered them important (see Table 7 for the topics and the attitudinal differences).

Male students felt that their teachers were not embarrassed during teaching or discussing sexual issues, but this was not the case for the female students, 46.4% of whom felt their teachers were uncomfortable. This difference was also highly significant. The survey also shows that teachers encouraged males more than females to ask questions about sexual health. This gender factor was also highly significant.

What the survey highlights therefore is that sex education curricula in Egypt were mainly concerned about the biological aspects of sexuality (e.g. pubertal change, pregnancy and birth control methods), rather than the psycho-social aspects of sexuality (e.g. sexual coercion, abuse and healthy sexual relation). According to students' opinions, sexual health education provided through school curriculua suffered significant shortage compared to the information they pointed out as needed for their peers.

For example, most males and females agreed that sex education should include biological, behavioral and psychosocial aspects of sexuality. However, gender variability regarding the need for coverage of the psychosocial aspect of sexuality was great because this aspect of sexuality education was highly significant for males. Though 50% of males and females have received sex education at school, nearly half or more of them considered themselves as having insufficient sexual and reproductive health information. Only 10% of males and less than 4% of females considered they have excellent information, which again shows a statistically significant gender difference.

Sources and Perceived Credibility of Sexual and Reproductive Health Information among Youths in Egypt

For males, the broadcast media (cinema and TV) ranked first as source of sexual information, followed by newspapers and magazines, then comes preparatory and secondary schools. On the other hand, for females, newspapers and magazines ranked first in credibility, followed by preparatory and high school education, and lastly by the broadcast mass media.

Both males and females agree that sexual health education should be provided in schools, However, the percentage of males who strongly agree was nearly double that of the female one. Again, both males and females consider secondary school as the best time for providing sexual and reproductive health information, but males rather than females, considered middle preparatory school as a suitable time for sexual health education. Most males and females agree about the concept of shared responsibility of school and parents for providing sexual health education, but with significant difference between males and females here as well (63.9% of males and 82.4% of females agree on this concept).

Nearly half of male and female respondents have received sexual health education at school, but the sex education at school covered mainly the biological aspects of reproductive health. However, males, compared to females, were more oriented towards topics that cover sexual coercion, effect of sex on psychological health and on marital relationship. Again the gender difference was highly significant.

The survey highlights the fact that the broadcast media has more impact on males than females (64.2% vs. 17.5 %), who prefer newspapers and magazines (35.6 % vs. 19.8%). This may be related to the fact that, in our society, males have more freedom and time to watch cinema and television. Sex education at schools therefore represented only one third of their sources. Other studies have shown that the broadcast mass media also plays an important role in the socialization of youth in general and that, due to its expanding nature, Internet comes in the forefront. However, in the Egyptian community, and elsewhere, television is seen as an increasingly influential agent of socialization that produces its effect through children's propensity to learn by imitation. Internet was not a major source of information among males and females alike (12% & 10% respectively) in the studied group.

However, the extent of the impact of Internet on adolescent sexual attitudes and behaviors is not yet known. One study showed that, among its participants 96% had Internet access, and 55.4% reported ever visiting sexually explicit web sites (SEWs).The study recommended that SEWs can serve an educational purpose and create an opportunity for adults to engage adolescents in discussions about sexual health and consumption of Internet material (Debara et al, 2009).

This study and the previously mentioned studies raise an important question: In Egypt, how can we link youth to sex education at schools and at the same time provide them with the appropriate sexual knowledge through mass media, newspapers, and magazines?

Sex education program is designed to help parents become more confident and competent in communicating with their

children about sex and sexuality, and it may increase parent-child communication about health, sexuality, and values. For example, parent-child communication has been linked to greater sexual knowledge and more conservative sexual attitudes (Fisher, 1986). Similarly, of researchers that have measured relations between closeness and sexuality, most have found that parent-adolescent relationships, mother-daughter in particular, made an impact on adolescent sexual behavior (Somers et al 2001). In the present study, both males (63.9%) and females (82.4%) look positively for their parents' share in responsibility of sex education with no gender difference, but among the small percent who disagree (3.9%), more males were strongly against parental share, with statistically significant gender difference. Probably this reflects the double standard of rearing in our society, where males deal with sexual stuff as an issue that should be kept outside the family context, while females need their family and social support as well as validation in term of expressing their sexuality.

Gender and Sex Education in Egypt: Comparative Remarks

Some studies in Middle East and North of Africa have shown results similar to the situation in Egypt. For example, in Jordan, a study found that sexual knowledge was lacking and that experts seeking sex education were needed for the sex education curriculum (IPR, 2008). In Yemen, sex education topics are rare due to political and religious opposition (UNISCO, 2005). However, Algeria, Morocco, and Bahrain have included human reproduction and health education modules in their national school curricula. The courses are aimed at high school students, but there are not enough researches available to determine how effective these programs are (DeJong et al, 2007).

With regard to gendered differences, half of Tunisian males aged 17-24 and 70% of females believe that using contraception can be dangerous to health (Soweid and Manayan, 2004). In a study from Iran, where twenty eight percent of the sample reported engaging in sexual activities, boys (aged 15-18) were able to answer an average of only three questions correctly about when a woman can get pregnant; three of ten questions naming contraceptive methods, and four of nine questions about HIV/AIDS,STDs and 1.5 questions about condom use (Mohammadi et al, 2006).

As regard when to start sex education, several studies abroad reported that sex education that works starts early, before young people reach puberty, and before they have developed established patterns of behavior (Mueller et al, 2008; Kirby et al, 1994). The precise age at which information should be provided depends on the physical, emotional and intellectual development of the young people as well as their level of understanding. What is covered and also how, depends on who is providing the sex education, when they are providing it, and in what context, as well as what the individual young person wants to know about (UNICEF, 2002). In addition to gender difference in sexual attitude which has been extensively studied. Egyptian studies in this field are scarce.


Credit: Courtesy of Getty Images

In the current study, gender showed variable responses toward different items of the survey. For example, most males (71%), and females (72%) agree about the importance of sex education at schools. Added to that, 42.6% of males and 38.2% of females agreed about secondary school as the best time for providing information about sexual and reproductive health, but males (31.5%) more than females, wanted early sex education, i.e. at preparatory schools. This can be explained by the more liberal attitude of male in our society who usually wants early access to sexual information to cover his desire for early expression of his sexuality, a demand which is strongly restricted for females.

As shown in the foregoing with regard to the situation in Egypt, the gender of the recipients affects most of the other research parameters. Another example is the level of teacher's comfort during teaching sexual topics. For example, males, more than females, felt their teachers were comfortable and encouraging while discussing sexuality issues. Whether this is related to the teacher's gender or not is not clear, as our teachers teach both males and females with no gender discrimination, although, in Egypt, students' separation according to their gender occurs in the middle preparatory and secondary schools. It is possible that the teachers were not embarrassed by the presence of the other gender students in classes of preparatory and secondary schools. Similarly, a study in Yemen showed that sexual and reproductive health topics are often skipped because teachers are unprepared or embarrassed to teach those topics (UNISCO, 2004). Moreover, in schools, the interaction between the teachers and young people takes different forms and is often provided in organized groups of lessons. A high positive response rate (more than 95%), and a positive attitude toward discussing sexuality issues was generally found.

Conclusions

The knowledge of sexual attitudes and behaviors is important to health planners and programmers, policy makers, and service providers, because such attitudes underlie virtually all of the conditions that their program would address (Dixon-Mueller, 1993).

From the current study it can be concluded that sex education at schools was not the main source of sexual and reproductive health information for Egyptian youths. Most respondents in the study wanted sex education at schools, and wanted their parents' share in sex education; however, only half of the respondents received sex education at school, and half of them rated this knowledge as insufficient or unclear. Most of them expressed their need to have information on all the surveyed topics. Most of the respondents also felt their teachers embarrassed and not encouraging regarding the discussion of sexuality issues.

In view of the situation described in the foregoing, there is a need to revise the sex curricula in Egypt and to examine its reliability and its impact in order to make it more acceptable for teachers and students. Researchers are required to determine what are the most effective ways to implement high quality sex

Both males and females in our survey either agree or strongly agree on the importance of health education at schools. However, females were more ambivalent on the importance of sex education compared to males.

education programs? And how does the health system integrate sexuality into service delivery? Researches need to address the role of proper religious believes on sexual attitude of students and teachers alike and how to integrate positive religious view about sexuality in our sex education programs for youth.

(1) Editor's Note

Most of the eleven tables provided in the article could be accommodated in this edition due to space constraints.

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Table 1
Number and Percent Distribution of the Respondents by Gender and by their Approval of Sex Education to be Provided in Schools

Respondent's Opinion	*Females*		*Males*		*Total*		*P .049*
	N	%	n	%	n	%	
Strongly Agree	54	17.6%	65	33.0%	119	23.7%	<0.001
Agree	167	54.6%	79	40.1%	246	48.9%	0.002
Not sure	31	10.1%	24	12.2%	55	10.9%	0.472
Disagree	32	10.5%	16	8.1%	48	9.5%	0.384
Strongly Disagree	13	4.2%	10	5.1%	23	4.6%	0.664

Table 7
Number and Percent Distribution of the Respondents by their Gender and by the Topics Covered During Receiving Sexual Health Education at School

Respondent's Opinion	*Females*		*Males*		*Total*		*P*
	N	%	N	%	N	%	
Changes of puberty.	210	68.6%	127	64.5%	337	67.0%	0.333
Reproduction and how pregnancy occurs.	173	56.5%	126	64.0%	299	59.4%	0.098
Birth control methods.	121	39.5%	102	51.8%	223	44.3%	0.007
Safe sex practices and sexually transmitted infections.	149	48.7%	101	51.3%	250	49.7%	0.573
How to prevent child sexual abuse.	77	25.2%	56	28.4%	133	26.4%	0.418
Sexual coercion and sexual assault among women and how to prevent them.	86	28.1%	62	31.5%	148	29.4%	0.419
The impact of good sex on psychological health of men and women.	69	22.5%	90	45.7%	159	31.6%	<0.001
The effects of healthy sexual relation on marital relationship.	70	22.9%	76	38.6%	146	29.0%	<0.001
The adverse effect of sexual coercion within marriage upon couple	50	16.3%	77	39.1%	127	25.2%	<0.001

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Peers, Porn and Boys: Communication and Learning of Sexuality in South Africa

Nolwazi Mkhwanazi,
Erin Stern and Rethabile Mashale

Listening to young boys talk about sex and sexuality raises the interesting question of how and where they obtain their information. While many studies have noted that peers are a primary source of information on sex and commented on the dangers of this in terms of communicating incorrect information, there is also concern about the lack of information about sex or the appropriate source of information, which may generate unhealthy outcomes. A young boy narrated his experience in the following terms:

I reckon I was in standard five [when I first learnt about sex], whatever age that is. I gripped [kissed] a chick [a girl] and I told my one mate who is much older than me. I said "hey bro, I kissed this chick." And then he said "hey bro, do you know about the birds and the bees?" I didn't know what he was talking about. Then he told me about vaginal penetration and I had no idea what this ou [boy] was talking about. Then a couple of years later, [when I was] about 15, the one oke [boy] got hold of a porno and he was like "hey, let's check this video". And then I realised that hey, the thing [penis] actually goes inside (Peter)

When young men discover sex through peers and pornography, they are often left to make sense of the 'mechanics' of it all by themselves. Not only does this have major implications for HIV prevention but it may also shape how young men come to understand masculinity.

This article draws on interviews conducted with six young men between the ages of 18-24 years. The research was part of a larger study on sexual and reproductive health in the life worlds of South African men conducted by the Center of AIDS, Development, Research & Evaluation (CADRE).1 We have chosen to report on this particular age group because findings from the study suggest that, despite the development of the new "Life Orientation" curricula in campaigns, peers and pornography remain the primary sources through which young men learn about sex and the communication of sexuality.

While the article is exploratory and is based on a few interviews, it does however suggest that peers and pornography have been critical in the development of young men's sexuality. Furthermore, it suggests that young men do not have adequate information about the act of sex prior to experimenting sexually. These findings have implications for the development of HIV prevention initiatives that may successfully target young men.

Credit: Courtesy of Getty Images

THE "OPEN COMMUNICATION" AGENDA: Formal and institutional structures for communicating and learning about sexuality

A key priority for HIV prevention initiatives in South Africa in the last two decades has been to provide sexuality education to young people. In the late 1990s, "Life Orientation" was introduced in all South African schools as part of the new Outcomes-Based Education (Nakabugo & Sieborger, 2001). Life Orientation provides learners with one of the modules of Life Orientation, specifically addresses issues regarding HIV/AIDS prevention.

Outside of schools, mass media campaigns, non-government organisations, faith based organisations, churches, nurses, community health care workers and families have, in various ways, provided information to young people on HIV prevention.

One of the organisations particularly dedicated to providing sexuality education to young people is called Love Life. The organisation was founded in 1999. At its inception, Love Life had the ambitious goal to halve the HIV infection rates among young people aged 12-17 years old in five years (1999-2004). "They proposed that this could be done through initiating 'more open communication about sex, sexuality and gender relations" and subsequently encourage behaviour change among young people (Harrison et al 2010). However, this has not happened. Despite a total of 92.5% of the population being reached by national HIV/AIDS communication programmes, according to the 2006 National HIV/AIDS Communication Survey, HIV prevalence among young people in South Africa remains one of the world's highest and young people remain the group most vulnerable to new HIV infections.

Kelly and Ntlabati (2002) write that there is a great need to better understand early adolescent sexual activity in South Africa as a foundation for engaging in HIV prevention programme development among youth. Bhana and Pattman point out that "currently, we know very little about the world inhabited by young adults, how they see themselves, what they wish for, their desires and passions, their fears and the ways in which the performance of masculinities and femininities are constructed, how it is advantageous and how it can inhibit other potential experiences and how it is vulnerable to disease" (2009: 69).

INTIMATE EXPOSURE: Peer learning about sex in young age

All the six young men interviewed spoke about learning about sex through friends who were a couple of years older or older brothers. For instance, Jabulani a 23 year

about sex in young age

All the six young men interviewed spoke about learning about sex through friends who were a couple of years older or older brothers. For instance, Jabulani a 23 year old Pedi man living in Johannesburg recalled that that he knew that he needed to have a girlfriend just like his older friends who already had girlfriends. Nkosinathi, a 24 year old male, who grew up in Ulundi, KwaZulu-Natal, learnt about sex through accompanying his older friends to visit their girlfriends.

I grew up having friends who were older than me. So at that time I was in grade 7....They were about one or two years older. Basically I grew up with people who were older than me. So I knew about dating girls and stuff. But then I had not yet developed those feelings at the time. By just dating a girl I was happy, but not to have sex with her. By just meeting her and kissing that was enough, I did not have such strong feelings. But I knew it that as a boy I had to date. That is how I found out that a man and woman should unite. ***(Jabulani)***

While I was growing up, I used to like soccer, I played soccer and everything, and I had friends who were exposed to dating at that age. When they went to check their chicks, I went with them and sometimes obviously at night in boarding school you would see people kissing and everything, and something just happened and I said okay, maybe I have to try it as well. ***(Nkosinathi)***

Both Nkosinathi and Jabulani discovered sex through their friends who had girlfriends and they decided that they too should have girlfriends. Lionel, a "coloured" male living in Cape Town spoke about the pressure to conform to what his peers were doing. The pressure, according to him, "did contribute to an extent, actually in a big way contributed to my first sexual intercourse … for me it was a learning curve."

Sometimes the boys were not eager or voluntary learners, but they learned from their peers through pressure anyway. Richard, an English male living in Johannesburg spoke about how he was introduced to sex and put off sex by his brother.

I didn't really want to have.... I knew I was just a bit too young

One of the communication tools was the use of stories, perhaps even tall tales about sexual excapades. Richard would recall that his brother would always tell him "all these stories about all these girls he's got and had."

Media and Porn

Aside from peers, the other source of information about sex and sexuality for young men was the media, and porn, in particular. In fact for some men, media was the single most important source of learning about sex.

Yah, there was a TV at home... there was a movie called uFix....Fix and Xola, that is they are lovers, so when I was watching that movie at that age and at that time, you will see of love, you will see of kissing, you will see of people maybe under the blanket, so my brain my mind would be thinking that they are doing sex, you see. So I knew that there was no sex without going under the blanket. So I came to understand that if I too want to do sex, that first things is I'm gonna go in the bed, you see, with the girl that I love, you see, ya, thereafter that gooi gooi [quick quick], do some sex, you see, no sex without bed, you see ***(Yongama).***

"One implication of this narrative is that communication of sex and the corresponding learning about sex through pornography and through stories from peers did not prepare these young men for their first sexual experience."

Peter had similar "education" through "thumping under the blanket" scenarios on the TV when he was "about 14, 15." His supplementary "education" came from seeing dogs in the streets and trying to cross-match what he saw of the dogs with what he didn't quite see under the blanket on TV.

However, all the informants were, at some point, exposed to pornographic films or magazines before they experienced sex themselves. Both Jabulani and again Peter attest to this exposure as one of their concrete learning experiences which also activated sexual feelings in them.

And then you hear stories of mates boning cherries on the beach and thumping two chicks at once and you're like jis, I want to do that. You think that is the best thing ever, and then you watch more and more pornos and look at more and more pornos and yeah, I can't wait until I get this. You watch it [pornographic films] and your head nearly blows off your penis because all you want to do is do what they are doing on TV. Peter)

While watching pornography and listening to stories from peers gave these young men certain ideas about sex, these ideas did not particularly match what the actual experience of sex would be like. For all the young men, what happened at their sexual debut was different from what they had expected. Sometimes there is a feeling of guilt. Lionel confessed that although he was "desperately looking forward to it," and when it happened it was "very interesting", it also left me him "feeling guilty." For some others, like Peter, it was an anti-climax as it appeared stupid, boring:

…the first time I went down on her and she went down on me. I was like eish, I don't know if this is right. It's crazy, but it was nice, so you just carried on until the sex part. I was like this is stupid, boring. Obviously you were laaities [young] you didn't know what you were doing. … [Sex] But it was Kak! Jis bro, I thought it was the most overrated thing I had ever experienced. I expected there to be fireworks and lightning bolts… It was two okes [guys] having no idea what they are doing. One is going out, the other one is going in. It was like trying to dance with someone and you kept on standing on their feet…. I was like is this what all the stories are about?... I'm like come on, it's got to be more than this!

From watching pornography, seeing women and hearing the vocalisation of pleasure, Jabulani said he did not understand why women would agree to sex if they were in pain. After his first sexual experience however, he realised this was not the case:

At first I thought that she was feeling pain because she was screaming and crying. But then later as time went by I realized that it was not that she was in pain, she was in excitement. Because she came back to me and said let us do it again. That was where I realized that I was wrong in thinking that I was hurting her. She was actually enjoying and it is natural. ***(Jabulani)***

One implication of this narrative is that communication of sex and the corresponding learning about sex through pornography and through stories from peers did not prepare these young men for their first sexual experience. Lionel greatly anticipated his sexual debut, but he was not prepared for how he would feel afterwards, which in his case, was feelings of guilt and worry

about the sexual risks, while, for his part, Jabulani did not yet understand women's sexuality.

Porn Communication and the Construction of Sexual Identity

Another implication is that from a young age all the participants were aware that sex is intimately tied to a construction of male identity. As Jabulani stated earlier "But I knew it that as a boy I had to date." Jabulani said that after his first sexual experience, he immediately went to talk to his friends about his performance even though he didn't know the right words to describe what had occurred. The response from his friends was to quantify his performance they want to know how many times he ejaculated rather than how he felt inculcating the idea that sex is about about performance and not emotion.

….obviously you have to go back and say to your friends 'I have done one, two, three.' They were asking me did you ejaculate? And I didn't know what that was about. I said yes, and then they said how many rounds? So I said four. I was answering questions about things I didn't even know what they meant at that time, because obviously there are things called rounds, there are things called cum and ejaculation and all those things. I just answered the questions, but some of the guys could tell this is a lie.

Similarly, 21 year old Yongama from Grahamstown described the shame and inadequacy he felt when reliving his sexual debut experience with his friends who teased him because the girl, and not him, had initiated sex. His friends told him that men must always be initiators of sex and be in control of sexual encounters.

Young men were pressured and told by their peers about sex. Peers also encouraged young men to perform to certain expectations around sex. Exposure to pornography and media reinforced these messages. This does not leave much space for alternative education about or communication of masculine sexualities, or for allowing men to explore and discover their own sexuality.

Conclusion

From the experience of these representative youngsters, there is no doubt that the primary source of concrete information about sex and the communication of sexuality is through peers and pornography. None of the interviewed boys seem to recall any parallel impact on their learning experience from formal and institutional structures of imparting sexuality education. The apparent inadequacy of these structures suggests that they should be strengthened and diversified so that young men could have adequate information about the act of sex prior to experimenting sexually. This article has not concerned itself with the morality of porn itself, but with the fact that porn 'education' tends to thrive in a situation of information lacuna. As noted earlier, these findings do have implications for the development of HIV prevention initiatives and programmes that may successfully target young men.


Credit: Courtesy of Getty Images

Notes

1. The study used sexual biographies to analyze the subjective, cultural, social and environmental dynamics of male sexual agency and risk. Twenty two sexual biographical interviews were conducted with men and eighteen interviews with women in Grahamstown, Johannesburg, Cape Town and Pietermaritzburg. The sample consisted of both urban and rural participants, from a wide range of cultural backgrounds, and from the ages of 18-79 years.

2. The Life Orientation syllabus deals with four major modules: health promotion, social development, personal development and physical development and movement. Life Orientation classes start as early as Grade R (5 year olds) and progress to Matric (16-19 year olds). Learners have a minimum of two Life orientation periods a week.

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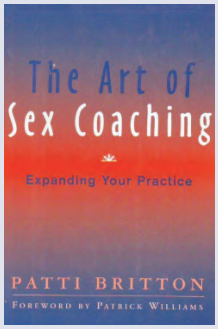
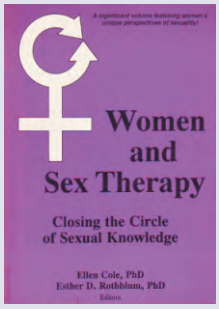
Sexuality Resources



THE ART OF SEX COACHING: EXPANDING YOUR PRACTICE

Author: Patti Britton
Publisher: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc.
ISBN: 0393704513

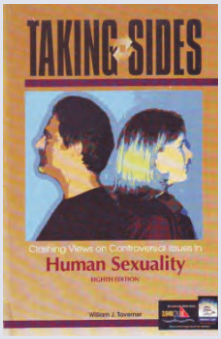
The book is a major contribution to the field of sexology. It is a cutting edge guideline to a new way of treating clients that will enrich and expand any professional's skills and practice. The author's honest description, instructions and cases are impressive. There is no doubt that the book will help make sex coaches a household term. It is a valuable resource for life coaches and clinicians alike.



WOMEN AND SEX THERAPY: CLOSING THE CIRCLE OF SEXUAL KNOWLEDGE

Editors: Ellen Cole, PhD and Esther D. Rothblum, PhD
Publisher: Harrington Park press, Inc.
ISBN: 0-918393-54-X

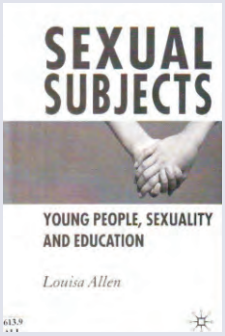
The book in a comprehensive fashion covers the broad topic of female sexuality. It intermingles historical views and theoretical approaches with practical approaches to sexual counseling and related to significant aspects of women's physiology. Several chapters of the book deal in depth with minority issues, lesbianism, and bisexuality as well as sexual effects of sexual abuse and the role of sexuality and mores in the lives of divorced women. The book is one of the major works to examine seriously women's issues pertaining to sexuality.



TAKING SIDES: CLASHING VIEWS ON CONTROVERSIAL ISSUES IN HUMAN SEXUALITY

Author: William J. Taverner
Publisher: McGraw-Hill Companies, Inc.
ISBN: 0072480629

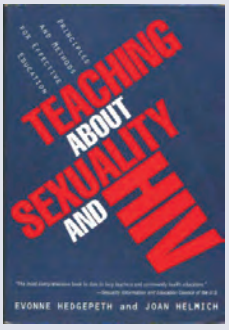
The book is a debate-style reader designed to introduce students to controversies in human sexuality. The readings, which represent the arguments of leading sexologists, educators, and social communicators, reflect a variety of viewpoints and have been selected for their liveliness and substance and because of their value in the debate framework. By requiring students to analyze opposing viewpoints and reach considered judgments, the book develops students' critical thinking skills. It is this development of critical thinking skills that is the ultimate purpose of each of the volumes in this widely acclaimed bookians, the elderly, teenagers of both sexes, gay and straight men, the disabled and incest survivors.



SEXUAL SUBJECTS: YOUNG PEOPLE, SEXUALITY AND EDUCATION

Author: Louisa Allen
Publisher: Palgrave Macmillan Ltd.
ISBN: 1403912831

Drawing from young people's own accounts, the book analyzes their negotiation of gendered sexual identities in relationships, their prioritization of certain sexual knowledge and experiences of desire, pleasure and the sexual body. These findings point to a radically new way of teaching about sex and sexuality that re-conceptualizes the effectiveness of sexuality education and proposes the inclusion of a 'discourse of erotics' within teaching programmes.estations can be prevented and smaller molestations can be avoided.



TEACHING ABOUT SEXUALITY AND HIV

Author: Evonne Hedgepeth and Joan Helmich
Publisher: New York University Press
ISBN: 0814735355

The book combines theory and practice in such a thorough and comprehensive way. It is so extensive in building the understanding of how and under what conditions students learn best. The authors have managed to strike a rare balance: addressing the needs and questions of newer educators/trainers while still providing the more seasoned professional with useful information, background and insights. The book provides a much-needed text for the field and will become a daily companion for all those who are committed to providing education that enables people to understand, make wise decisions about and celebrate their sexuality.