

'Juvenile' Toilet Door Posting: An expression of gendered views on sex and sexuality

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## Abstract

This paper discusses the nature of graffiti posted on toilet walls and doors in six primary schools in Zimbabwe. The researchers have noted the proliferation of discourses concerning sex and sexuality on toilet walls and doors of both boys and girls between the ages of six to thirteen. The paper seeks to disclose and account for the salient similarities and differences on how boys and girls conceptualise issues to do with sex and sexuality. The researchers relied on one hundred and twenty sample images and expressions collected from six primary schools in Gweru. These images and expressions were subjected to a thorough analysis. Interviews and questionnaires targeting the primary school teachers' perceptions or opinions regarding the nature of social clubs catering for the social aspects of pupils (e.g. drama, scripture union and debate) and how they address issues concerning sex and sexuality also helped to broaden the analysis. It was noted that in the public space, issues of sex and sexuality were censored. This made toilet door posting, arguably, the most accessible alternative in addressing these issues in a more explicit manner. Interestingly, both boys and girls were equally involved in the posting culture. Gender differences were more in terms of the degree and manner of explication than on subject matter.

*Keywords:* juvenile, sex, sexuality, graffiti, gender

### Introduction

The paper discusses the nature of graffiti posted by pupils on toilet walls and doors of six urban primary schools in Gweru. Toilet postings provide more personal and intimate data compared to those transmitted through public/communal forums. It is submitted by the researchers that boys and girls manifest different perceptions on sex and sexuality. Such perceptions include an exploration of gender dynamics in relationships of a romantic nature, general perceptions on the nature of sexual relationships and sexual intercourse itself and a fascination with genitalia. The findings of the study are compared to research on general adolescent inscriptions such as those by Gilchrist and Sullivan (2006) and Ruto (2007) on Australian adolescents' perceptions and attitudes on sexuality and the expression of sexuality by male university students at Kenya's Kenyatta University, respectively. To date minimal information is available on graffiti within the educational sphere. Ruto focuses on male attitudes on sex, sexuality and issues surrounding sexuality as revealed in toilet graffiti at Kenyatta University. She premises her choice of the university as object of 'inquiry' on two main factors. Firstly, she asserts that young people, especially males, can only express their views on sexuality issues through graffiti at university level due to the restrictive nature of the church-controlled school system. Secondly, she considers young people in lower levels of university education to be too preoccupied with preparing for university that they do not involve themselves in sexuality matters. During this period they are seen as ignoring themselves. It is the assumption of the researchers that adolescents of primary school level are not only constructing gendered and sexual identities, but are also expressing such perceptions on the private forum, such as, the toilet wall.

In her paper, Ruto (2007) notes that there were no postings on the walls of female students' toilets. She, however, albeit somewhat contradictorily, quotes Janssen (2002) who observes that although girls in Western countries produce more graffiti than boys, boys actually produce twice as much graffiti with sexual content. She does not explore whether girls, in general, do not produce any graffiti at all or they only evade subjects of sex and sexuality. The present study presents evidence of female pupils' involvement in the production of graffiti and exploration of the views on the said matters. This enables the making of comparisons of the process of gender identity formation whereby similarities and differences will be noted. The study also goes a step further by relating the pupils' graffiti to what they are formally taught at school as well as at social clubs introduced at the schools to cater for such matters.

The research finds its grounding within the social constructionist perspective which, according to Burr (2003) and Connell (2005), is a sociological theory of knowledge which considers identity as a social artefact formed within particular social groupings. One of the theory's primary motives is to unearth how individuals and groups partake in the construction of their professed social realities. As Connell observes, this entails the formation of different gendered identities both across and within cultures. The study, accordingly, explores the different gendered identities that are revealed through the pupils' posting on toilet walls in primary schools.

As previously noted, six primary schools in Gweru urban, chosen on the basis of location, were the target of this research. Three of the schools are all located in the city centre. Their constituency comprises of children from middle class families, who either stay in town or in the low and medium density suburbs of Gweru. The other three are located in the high density

suburbs whose distance from town range from six kilometres to fifteen kilometres. Data was collected in two phases. The first phase of data collection involved documenting expressions and images from the selected primary school toilets, while the second involved interviews with patrons of at least four social clubs at all the schools.

Among the challenges encountered during the research, three are worth noting as they contribute to the overall concern which gave impetus to this endeavour. The first challenge has to do with the blurriness, and at times absence, of posts on toilet doors and walls which suggested that entries in toilets were being cleaned off. The second concerns the reticence and at times outright denial of some interviewees on issues of 'juvenile' sex and sexuality. The term 'juvenile' captures the attitudes most adults have on child behaviour, an attitude which informs adults' disregard of children's attitudes and perceptions. For this reason, the researchers retain the term, as a way of casting pupils' involvement in toilet door posting within the realm of an adult world which wishes to discount the practice. The third challenge involved some misconceptions on some participants in the research objectives, procedure and rationale. Some dismissed the research as *zvemadhodhi* (about faeces), while in some cases children were later made to scrub the walls clean as punishment. What these challenges point to is the endemic way in which our society has decided to deny the urgent need for a forum which caters for these issues. This, nevertheless, is the subject of a broader enterprise by the researchers.

### Discussion

Psychoanalysis argues that the development of personality, especially gender development, is contingent on psychosexual stages. Whilst, as Lips (2008) observes, Freud's

theory has been largely condemned for furthering patriarchy and furthering female subordination, there has been little opposition regarding the psychosexual stages themselves. Lips also notes that Horney (1939) does not challenge the notion of "instinctual sexual drives" in her gynocentric approach to personality (Lips, 2008, p. 66). This is a view supported by Goettsch (1989) who defines sexuality as the individual capacity to respond to experiences which are capable of producing genital excitation. Sexuality is thus seen as, not only a natural phenomenon which is inescapable, but also as one that has to be 'naturally' expressed in one way or the other. It is also noted that society in general constrains the expression of sexuality. Foucault (1978) notes how sexuality was "moved into the home" where it was "carefully confined" such that the "conjugal family took custody of it and absorbed it into the *serious function of reproduction*" and thereby "reserved the right to speak [on/about sexuality] while retaining the principle of secrecy" (p. 3). It is from this background that society has kept sexuality under a veil of secrecy in which individuals, especially children, are not only forbidden from physically participating in it, but also prevented from discussing it. Oluruntoba-Oju (2010) observes that

[t]he conditioning role of culture in matters of desire [as well as sexuality] is best understood against the backdrop of the prohibitions in place in the relevant societies...Even in the absence of written laws cultural taboos impact on sexuality. Cultural mores and observances socialise us into believing what may or may not be desired, what even if desired may not be pursued, how desires may or may not be expressed. (p. 3).

He goes on to say that cultural proclivities are reinforced through society's public and private institutions such as the formal educational sector and religious institutions as well as informal society. This creates what Ruto (2007) refers to as a 'knowledge vacuum' on sexuality in youth. The youth are then left to contend with 'censored' discourse on sexuality whereby the development of gender and sexual identities proceeds along a 'stereotypical' and 'masculinised' manner. This does not, however, necessarily mean that the youth do not construct their own notions of gender. These notions, learned from a variety of sources (which include the media and peers) may or may not coincide with the adults' versions on the same subject.

Most studies on gender agree on the role socialisation plays in the lives of children. There, clearly is no doubt that socialisation is a definite process. As a result, studies focus on the various forms of socialisation and the impact of such socialisations on their target. Kambarami (2006) is concerned with the interface of culture, gender and sexuality in African societies. She concludes that the family unit, religion and marriage are all complicit in the way girls are socialised into subordinate gender identities. For Kambarami, the real task of socialisation for girls begins at puberty when female relatives exhort her about chastity and marriage. Kambarami concludes that the patriarchal configuration working against female independence is all-pervading; hence women are "ducks waiting to be shot" (2006, Patriarchal Practices which lead to the control of female sexuality by males section, para. 5). Lips (2008), basing her point on the studies by Libby and Aries (1989) who studied the gendered patterns in children's storytelling and Beuf (1974) who interviewed three to six year olds about their career aspirations arrives at the conclusion that "children learn quickly that gender categories are important and pervasive, and they develop gender schemas for processing information according to these

categories" (p. 401). One trend emerges: researchers on children and gender rely on conventional methods of data collection and make conclusions based on this conventional data. Interviewing children is not the same as reading what they write in private. Hypothetically, if the six year olds had been asked what they thought of genitals, sex and the opposite sex chances are that they would have provided the expected responses or shied away from the questions. Yet postings about these issues in toilet walls are many and they do not conform to an easily defined gender schema. They are as varied as they are crude. The girls, as the evidence shows, are not the 'ducks' Kambarami suggest they are.

To be fair to Lips, her overall perception is not so pessimistic. She notes the agency children have during their identity-formation. Connell (2005) points out that "growing boys and girls are active creators of their own lives" (p. 13). Connell explains that gender identities are not innate, waiting for a moment of revelation. Children construct such identities in the many interactions they have among themselves and the prevailing 'social order' which characterises the societies from which they derive. Because of this complex route of identity construction, gender perceptions among boys and girls are not monolithic. The same applies to identities of gender themselves. Such a view is in tandem with most of the postings in primary school toilets. As will be demonstrated later, girls and boys do not necessarily echo expected gender views and identities when it comes to sex and sexuality. Conformation is just one of the multiple responses to socialisation. This fact comes out in Foucault (1978) who points out that school children had elaborate views on sex and sexuality despite them receiving highly 'doctored' discourses.

Four major patterns associated with sex and sexuality emerged from the primary toilets visited: a profound fascination with male and female genitals, an intense preoccupation with the



sex act, the disclosure of cross-gender relationships and the classification of sexual behaviour. It is worth noting that both boys' and girls' toilets exhibited these motifs as will be disclosed below. The results, it is hoped, can be useful in understanding how young, school going children in the urban environment conceptualise sex and sexuality from varying perspectives.

### Fascination with male and female genitals

As already noted, both girls and boys demonstrate a fascination with genitals. So profound is this interest that in most toilets visited terms such as *mboro* (penis), *mhata* (vagina?<sup>1</sup>) and *mudhidhi* (anus) are found scribbled on walls and doors (see FIGURE 1).

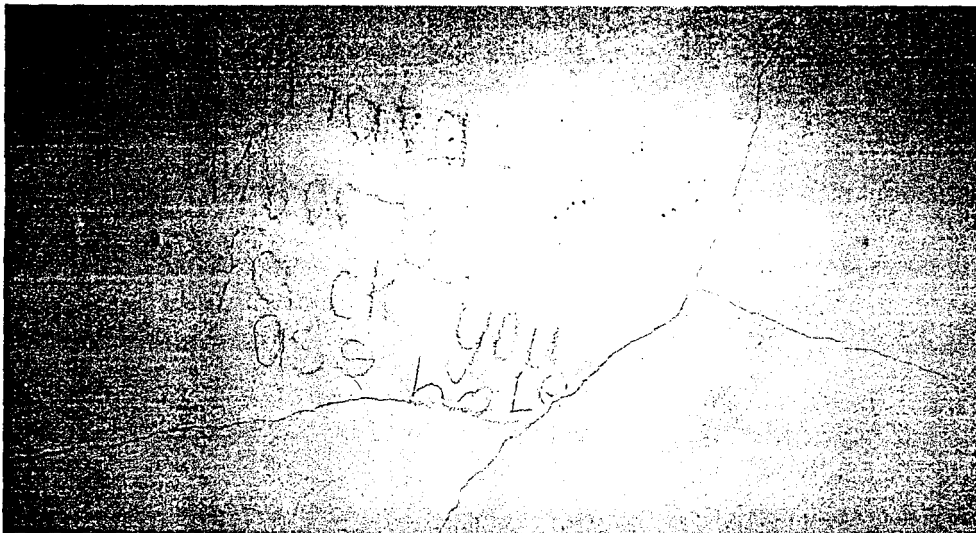


FIGURE 1 Genital terms 'mhata' (vagina?) and 'mboro' (penis) on toilet wall.

<sup>1</sup> There is a tendency to refer to the vagina as *mhata*, which in actual fact is translated anus. The proper term for the vagina in Shona is *beche*. Because in all labeled drawings the vagina was labeled 'mhata', we had to settle for that wrong definition. Interestingly, some adult Shona speakers are unaware of this slip.

For children of both sexes this is considered premature and, quite frankly, 'juvenile'. For boys, as a gender, this is quite adventurous and playful. Coming from girls as a gender group, this is just implausible. Society would be happy to suggest that naughty boys are in the habit of writing inside girls' toilet walls than concede that girls are scribbling on their own. This only goes to show how deep our prejudices run. Terms for penis and, supposedly, vagina, which is mistakenly considered the female sexual organ instead of the clitoris (Lips, 2008, p. 293), are the most popular apparently because they denote the two most significant sex organs.

Oddly, there was neither entry on breasts nor buttocks, both whose exposure is usually associated with issues of sex and sexuality. Perhaps, this is more to do with the breasts' nutritive role and the buttocks' excretory role, although the latter would raise questions about the penis. Nevertheless, the notion of fertility symbols may also come into play. In some African cultures, breasts are not considered sexual. This explains why in the said cultures women can walk around topless and still raise no eyebrow. At least by intent, boys appeared to post terms for male and female genitals unlike girls. For girls, terms for female sex organs were unpopular. Exceptions were there, obviously, but the stark absence of terms referring to female genitals was quite striking. It raised the question whether or not pupils had access to these terms. Even in the few instances where the researcher settled for a term supposedly referring to female genitals (*mhata*) it still did not, by definition, signify neither vagina nor clitoris. The term for penis was spread in all female toilets. Save for the many instances where the term was written in isolation, there were instances where the term was part of a larger discourse on sex and sexuality. For instance, what emerges from the statements is that, sexually, girls are drawn towards the penis.

Statements such as 'I love *mboro*' (I love a/the<sup>2</sup> penis), '*mboro inonaka*' (a/the penis is pleasurable) and 'Ropafadzo said *mboro* is nice' (a/the penis is nice) exclude the possibility of different sexual objects for women. Two issues are pertinent here. The idea that girls are drawn towards the penis conforms to the dominant heterosexual beliefs about gender expectations, while the mere mention of such desires subvert the same expectations. The fact that girls express 'obscene' words runs straight into the face of gender socialisation.

The question of heterosexual preference is nevertheless denied by Adrienne Rich (1980) who argues that women are forced towards heterosexuality. In her words "women have been convinced that marriage, and sexual orientation toward men, are inevitable, even if unsatisfying or oppressive components of their lives" (p. 640). Rich argues that there exists a whole apparatus, in the media, in marriage and in chastity rites, among others, for indoctrinating women thus. Patterns emerging in girls' toilets in relation to the penis reflect that in early childhood, even when the societies from which they belong are patriarchal, girls do not necessarily share a homogenous perception expected of them.

Divergent statements in some girls' toilets might point to the unconscious and conscious repulsions the male organ generates among some women. '*Kushata semboro*' (you're as ugly as a penis) and '*mboro yako Chipo*' (your penis Chipo) subvert the traditional as well as popular conceptions about the penis as popularised in the media where, for example in pornographic film, the woman is portrayed as idolising the penis through fellatio. The male organ, extolled in some instances is derided in others. Clearly, sexualities are complex and there is no chance of a

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<sup>2</sup> In Shona (which is the language mostly used in the toilets visited), nouns do not have articles. For that reason, it will remain speculation whether the writer meant to use 'a' or 'the', any of which would suggest a meaning different from the one suggested when the other is used.

monolithic female or male sexuality. Among the Shona males evoking the vagina<sup>3</sup> of one's mother is the way to go when reproaching him/her. The term for penis, on the other hand, does not invite so many invocations. In a patriarchal tradition where the penis is king, the instances where the penis is extolled would be considered 'penis-envy', while the latter would be considered 'aberrations.' We argue that rather than narrowly assigning labels to the inclinations suggested by these postings, we should acknowledge the existence of multiple sexualities, not only evidenced by the varied messages but also by the social processes involved in shaping such sentiments.

In the boys' toilets similar patterns emerge. The Shona term for penis at times indicates an object of slander. For the boys, however, the mistaken term for vagina is also used similarly. The abhorrent teacher is vilified through statements such as 'mboro yako ms Gumbo' (your penis ms Gumbo) or 'mhata yenyu mesipiri' (your vagina Miss Phiri?). Genital terms are therefore used interchangeably, regardless of the fact that in growing up the term for the vagina is made the 'natural' term for slander. An isolated entry which reads 'I love mboro he is my mother' exhibits a phallic worship associated with various forms of masculinities. The vagina is also praised as something enjoyable in boys' toilets.

Apart from the statements about genitals, there are also drawings which signify various sex parts. From the drawings, it is apparent that the pupils have a muddled awareness of their bodies. This does not discount the fact that at primary level, boys and girls are yet to perfect their drawing skills. Boys and girls, who happen to draw, improvise the genitals by drawing anything in the shape of a circle or a heart for the vagina, and pointed shapes for the penis (see

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<sup>3</sup> Still, the term '*mhata*' is used.

FIGURES 2 and 3). In some cases, a simple circle will suffice.

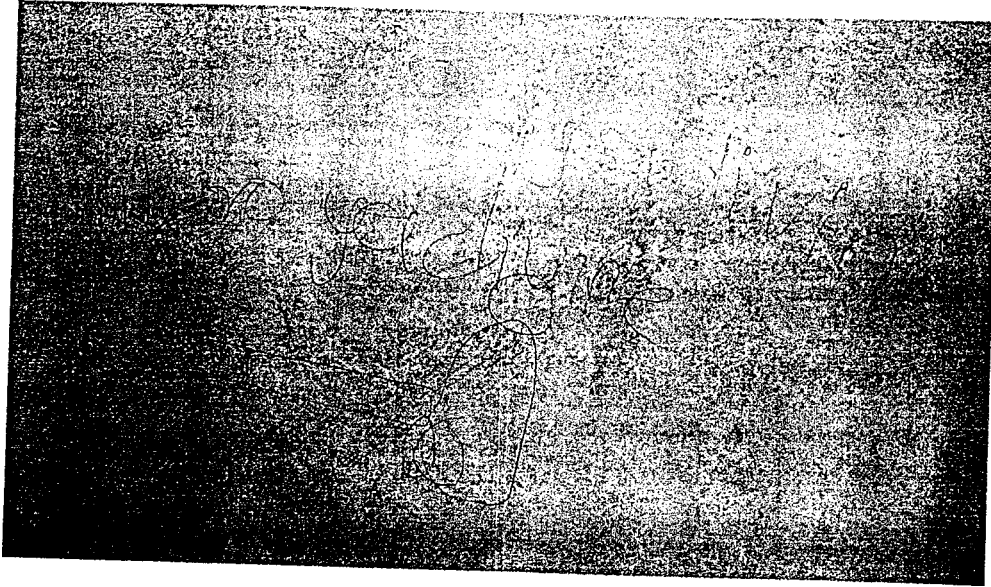


FIGURE 2 Drawing of male genitals in a boys' toilet

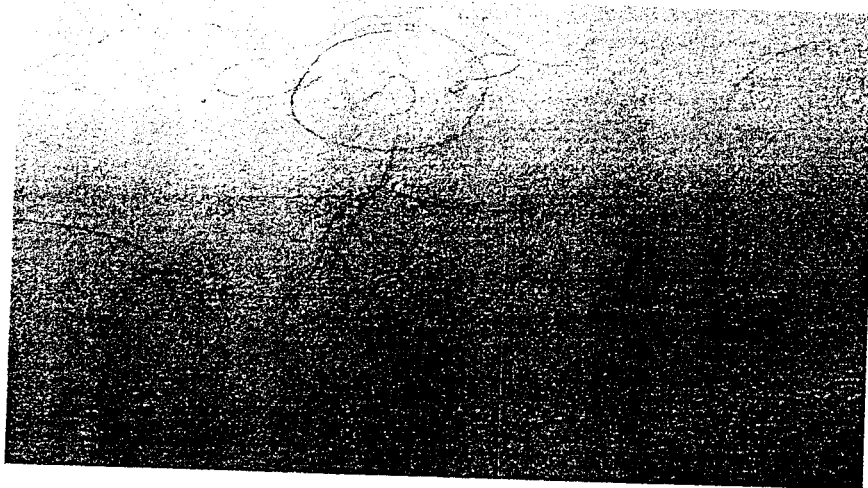


FIGURE 3 Drawing of female genitals in a girls' toilet

Without refuting the lack of drawing skills at this stage, one can still conclude that both sexes have a hazy understanding of either sex.

### **Preoccupation with the sex act**

The common social clubs at the primary schools visited are Drama, Scripture Union, Girl Child Network, and Youth Alive. In their various ways these clubs are involved in some kind of sex education. According to the patrons of these clubs, much of the formal education children get on sex comes from the clubs. When asked if it is possible that pupils get their subject matter for sex from the lessons they get most of them were quite defensive. They would not be associated with what pupils wrote on walls. At Scripture Union, children are taught that premarital sex is a sin. Drama club, Youth Alive and Girl Child Network predominantly emphasise the relatedness of sex with HIV/AIDS, STIs, abuse, rape, teenage pregnancies and prostitution.

The underlying message in these teachings is that sex is something to be wary of, thereby engendering some sort of genophobia. The school's approach involves an association of sex with disease, death (Ruto 2007) and moral decadence. Girls, more than boys learn that sex creates victims of them. Apart from HIV/AIDS and the STIs, all said consequences of sex have a bearing on girls. No discourse exists that names the male who indulges in sex for the love of it or for money. No discourse exists for the sexual abuse of men in primary schools. The bias is always towards girls. Whether its prostitution or rape, the girl learns that it has something to do with her acquiescence to sex. Even as these clubs relay the sex-should-be-avoided message, it is fragmented, something Ruto (2007) observes of public schooling in Kenya. There is no co-

ordinated method on how to address pupils' increasing interest in sex and sexuality. A gap exists between what is consumed during club sessions and what is posted onto toilet walls.

Obviously, as Foucault (1978) demonstrates, sex cannot be successfully repressed. The more efforts are made to make it something to be mum about, the more interest it generates among the pupils. As the toilet walls reflect, the sex act is probably the topic of choice. Patterns that emerged in both boys' and girls' toilets reveal that we cannot afford to imagine as Foucault's Victorians that "children [have] no sex" (1978, p. 4) and forbid its discussion. In one girls' toilet was the inscription 'sex is very important for us as children.' Following along these lines at the same school were statements such as 'sex is good for us' and 'I like sex because it is good for me.' These statements did not go unchallenged in the same toilets. A rare 'sex is bad' would be found just below the 'sex is good' inscription. At a different school was the question '*munotinetserei toda kutosvirwa zvedu?*' (Why bother us? We want sex). The question was presumably directed to the school. These posts in girls' toilets are declarations of a perceived importance of sex. This motif lacks in boys' toilets. Where some girls declare the importance of sex for both sexes, the boys are more interested in their fantasies.

Sexual relationships, as reflected in boys' and girls' toilet walls are predominantly heterosexual. Overall, girls perceive sex as an act performed on them by some male. Either the penis is portrayed as actively performing the sex act as in the statement '*mboro yaTapiwa inonaka inonyatsobaya*' (Tapiwa's penis is pleasurable, it penetrates effectively); or the man is the active player as in '*baba vangu vanofarira kundisvira*' (my father enjoys having sex with me). There is also a tone of abuse in the latter statement. Besides suggesting an incestuous act, it also poses questions of girl child sexual molestation. There is a point where this statement

would oscillate between the agonized plea for help and naïve prattle. It is precisely because ;  
will never know which it is that society cannot remain in denial.

Boys, as if to complement girls, perceive sex as something males do to females. Both drawings and statements portray the male as active during the sex act. Drawings from separate schools show the female bending while the penis or a male is positioned behind for action. The female is positioned to receive the active penis (see FIGURE 4). What can be observed in some of these drawings and expressions such as 'T-Unit *inokara mhata. Florence tiza watosvirwa*' (T-Unit is craves vagina. Florence run away you are about to get fucked) is the reproduction of "the double standard" (Lips, 2008, p. 257). According to Lips, the double standard holds that males are sexually aggressive while females have a weaker sex drive, on the one hand, and then absolves the male of this sexual aggression while assigning responsibility on the same female. 'T-Unit', which represents a phallogentric group identity in this case, is rendered as beyond self-control and the girl has to deal with that 'fact.'

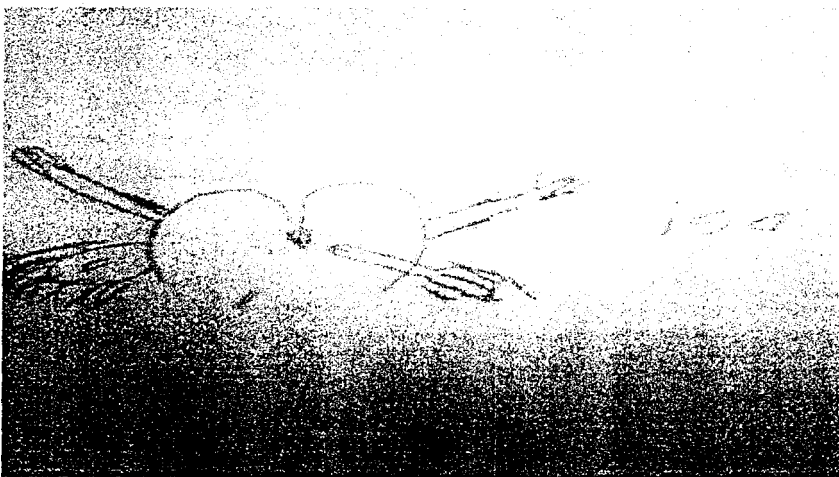


FIGURE 4 shows drawing of a female bending over to receive the penis accompanied by the verb '*tisa*' ('insert')



The double standard is implicated in much of society's sexual violence to which the victim is subsequently blamed. We can conclude that among children, this perception borrows from the teachings during club sessions where the girl is largely at the receiving end of the sex disease. This is not to discount the part played by other institutions such as the family and the media in perpetuating the same.

The entirety of sex victimhood is not followed through, however. For schools that profess to teach children about the dangers of sex it is paradoxical that there is nothing about HIV and AIDS, STIs or unwanted pregnancies on toilet walls. The formal education process, social clubs and the media in general are dominated by moralistic and didactic discourses on the dangers of 'irresponsible' sex. Pupils are sensitised, subtly and otherwise, on such issues as HIV and AIDS, STIs and unwanted pregnancies. As already indicated, some of the girls actually bring to focus the importance of sex. Contrary to cultural and religious socialisation, sex, as imagined by the children, has nothing to do with reproduction. Neither is it part of a greater goal: marriage. Interest in sex is not perceived as irresponsible behaviour.

In so doing, both boys and girls are defining sexuality, not as something obtained within committed relationships, but something which can be practised casually and whimsically to satisfy one's sexual desires. If imagining sexual pleasure for married women is a total subversion of cultural expectations, what term would define imagining sexual pleasure in the case of primary school girls? Clearly, there is an overt rejection of the sex as disease and death design. The celebrations of sex and recognition of its importance is openly articulated by boys and girls at primary level. Such is the gap existing between sex education at home, school and church on the one hand, and children's lived and imagined experience, on the other.

Furthermore, posts in girls' toilets demonstrate a willingness among some girls to assert the importance of female sexual desire in its own right. While traits of male sexual aggression are present in male postings, they are not equally matched by the conservatism, embarrassment or self-consciousness expected of girls. Where postings of desire are made by the girls, there are no inhibitions whatsoever. This, in part, is due to the privacy afforded by the toilet wall. That young women's attitudes and behaviours towards sex have changed has been documented by Wells and Twenge (2005). However, the insinuation behind the documentation is that girls have at some point been dormant. We pose the question of agency to such insinuations and suggest that there is simply no single defining mode for the way individual girls and boys perceive their sexualities.

#### **Disclosure of cross-gender relationships**

The data collected from the schools reveals an abundance of posts where couples are disclosed. Such declarations run along the formula X vs. Y or X is in love with Y; where X and Y represent the names of the girl and boy involved. Of the schools used in this research, only one did not have such declarations. Typical in the girls' toilets are posts that exhibit declarations of love for boys. Insinuations of cross-gender relationships at this stage disrupt societal expectations which hold that children should not have romantic relationships. Kambarami (2006) notes that among the exhortations directed towards girls "[d]on't play with boys' is a favourite phrase that characterizes the puberty stage" (The Family section, para. 6). She adds that "the Shona culture is very conservative to the extent that sexual issues are not discussed openly" (*Ibid*). As Kambarami explains, such forms of advice result in girls supposedly regarding boys with a wary eye. Evidence gathered in toilets runs contrary to these expectations.

Most posts on these cross-gender relationships are presumably by third parties. The researchers appreciate that there could be various reasons for the proliferation of such declarations. Firstly, the relationship may not necessarily be intimate in nature. It may be that the concerned parties are just friends. This may be the case especially in light of the fact that it is during this stage, when the pupils are in their primary school, when most of them begin to develop cross-gender friendships. In explaining this phenomenon Connell (2005) says "earlier findings have revealed that friendship in early adolescence is typically within the same gender, but over time cross-gender friendships become more common...[i]s one of the most 'dramatic' changes" (p. 17). These new kinds of relationships, which may be the transition from same-gender to cross-gender friendships, may be misconstrued by fellow pupils as intimate ones.

Secondly, the researchers also appreciate that the declared pupils may in actual fact be involved in a romantic relationship. It is a possibility that pupils are actually engaging in such relationships and since adults turn a blind eye to such relationships, it is left to other pupils to bring them to the open. This is also evidence to the fact that girls and boys of primary school-going age are defining their sexuality in terms of intimate relationships. Interviews carried out with patrons of social clubs, such as the scripture union, girl child network and safe journey, demonstrated that cross-gender relationships are openly discouraged because the pupils are regarded too young and immature.

Posts on declarations of cross-gender relationships are systematic in nature. In girls' toilets, they almost consistently begin with the name of the girl in question. From the data it is hypothesized by the researchers that the girls do not view themselves as subordinate in the relationships. By beginning with the girl's name, they reposition the girl as the locus of cross-

gender relationships (see FIGURE 5). Its importance becomes more apparent especially in light of Kambarami's observation that women, in the Shona culture, are defined as dependent and subordinate to men. It is obviously apparent that this is not the case with these girls.

The prevailing formula for gender descriptive noun phrases which include the conjunctives 'and' as well as 'or' consider the male as primary and the female secondary. For example, in 'he/she', 'him/her', 'male and female' and in 'boys and girls,' the said formula is apparent. Such a formula is retained in boys' toilets but, nevertheless, subverted by girls. In the posts made in boys' toilets boys' names come first, such as in "Kennedy vs Anna". This seems to suggest that the notion of agency is central to both boys and girls.

Each sex is defining its world, in this case, gender relations in heterosexual relationships, as evolving around the female, where female pupils are doing the writing and around the male, in the case where a boy is doing the inscribing.

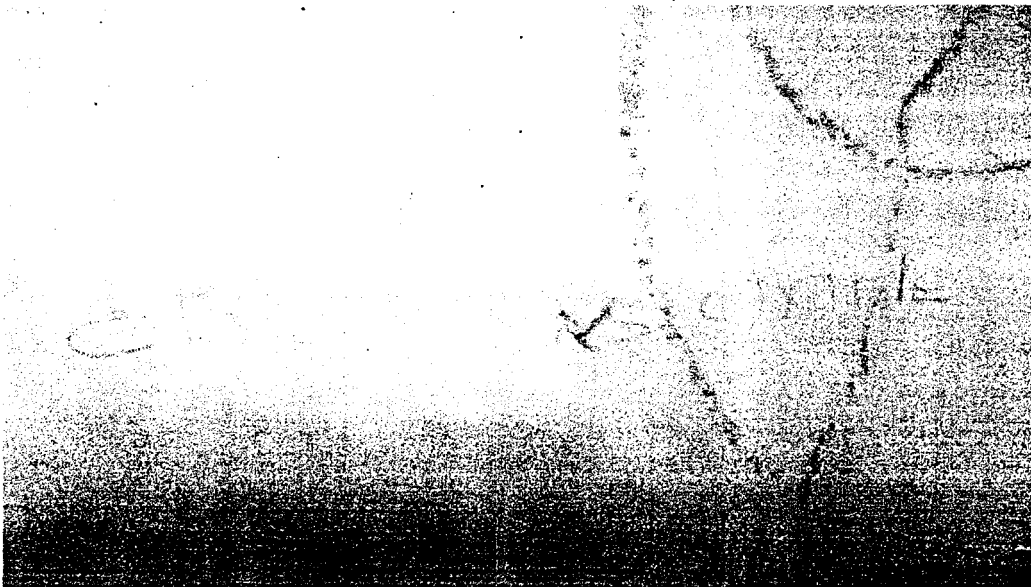


FIGURE 5 'Chido vs Charles' in one girls' toilet.

Though their socialisation may demand subordination, girls consider themselves as the primary factor in cross-gender relationships. Connell (2005) observes that "the adult world confronts young people as fact, as a world already made, not as the product of their own desire or practice. Yet adolescence is, by definition, the process of becoming a participant in it" (p. 16). Thus, the pupils both realise and exercise their right to interact with their social environment as active participants and also shape their own relations in it thereby providing important evidence for the agency of youth in making their own lives. Since romantic relationships are both discouraged and suppressed, pupils are formulating their own perceptions of gender relations in such relationships.

The declarations reinforce the 'naturalness' of heterosexuality in African culture, in general. Connell (2005) identifies three main patterns of sexuality and identity. These are gay, fluid and transgender (heterosexual). Goettsch (1989) states that "cultures construct the manifestations of sexuality, the sexual enactment, which includes norms, beliefs, values and behaviours – all the elements that underlie the discourse for regulation of sexuality" (p. 250). The emphasis on heterosexual relationships can now be best understood in this light. Socialisation in terms of sexualisation is also reinforced in both the formal education process and in clubs such as the scripture union where heterosexual relationships are adopted as the normative pattern.

#### **Classification of sexual behaviour**

Another common pattern in terms of the perception of sexuality by primary school pupils relates to the classification of sexual behaviour along normative lines. It is admitted that some of the lessons imparted to children through socialisation catch on. While there are instances where sex is glorified, there are also cases where those who glorify it become objects of slander. Within

such discourses, one finds classifications of sexual behaviour in terms of appropriateness and inappropriateness. Such classifications were mostly pronounced in girls' toilets. Those girls who were seen as indulging in sexual intercourse, associating or, at the very least, popular with the boys, were automatically labelled 'sluts'. This normative group can be accounted for based on the orientation of some girls to value committed relationships above everything else. These girls do not expect any female to associate with boys. The implication of this bias of sexuality is that it restricts femininity in terms of how freedom of association is exercised. As far as this group is concerned, femininity entails a constrained form of association when it comes to keeping male liaisons. The formulation of this kind of sexuality can be best understood in the context of the Shona culture which values femininity in terms of chastity and faithfulness. Kambarami (2006) notes that many cultures demand chastity from girls, while being lenient towards male sexual behaviour.

As a result, some girls end up putting a lot of value on sexual reputation whereby they value femininity in terms of keeping one committed relationship and not indulging in sexual activity before the expected time. Exemplars of this self-consciousness can be slightly noted in girls' sexual slander where the term for prostitute (*hure*), as in 'Davidzo *ihure*' (Davidzo is a prostitute), is considered the ultimate form of rebuke. In all such cases, the prostitute is female. This notion of sexuality is congruent with Gilchrist and Sullivan (2006) in their research into the construction and attitudes of sexuality in both Australian youth and adults. One of the conclusions they come up with is that girls are sensitive to how their friends as well as peers regard their sexual behaviour. Boys, on the other hand do not feel the same pressure as girls

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### **Bio Data**

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