

**THE IMPACT OF LIVING WITH ZULU PENSIONER GRANDMOTHERS AS
HOUSEHOLD HEADS ON THE GENDER CONSTRUCTION AND SEXUALITY
OF THEIR TEENAGE GRANDDAUGHTERS.**


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DECLARATION

This dissertation was undertaken in the School of Anthropology, Gender and Historical Studies, University of KwaZulu-Natal, Pietermaritzburg, under the supervision of Mr. Michael Lambert.

I hereby declare that this dissertation is my own original work and, where the work of others has been used, it has been duly acknowledged in the text. The work has not been submitted in any form for a degree or diploma in any other university.

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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my family.

Abstract

African pensioner grandmothers and their teenage granddaughters constitute a vulnerable sector in our communities. Despite financial constraints these grandmothers struggle against great odds to provide a better life for their granddaughters. In such households, granddaughters are exposed to socialization strategies that are devised to cope with limitations. These strategies impact on the way they construct notions of gender and sexuality.

Using qualitative research methodology to investigate the responses to interviews and questionnaires of a selected group of five female teenage learners and their grandmothers at a secondary school in Northdale, Pietermaritzburg, KwaZulu-Natal, I discuss how these learners and their principal carers construct gender and sexuality.

I make use of postmodern principles to analyse the impact of changing household patterns and coping strategies on these young women. I discuss the gendered division of labour, their 'perceived' notions about femininity and masculinity and bodies. I focus especially on how grandmothers use their own construction of gender and sexuality in influencing their granddaughters by what they say and also by what they do not say.

In this investigation, I include Western theorizing and traditional African teachings about gender construction and sexuality. This study demonstrates that gender is not innate but fluid and that constructions of sexuality can create docile 'feminine' bodies. However, there are indications that these young women are resisting the constructs of their grandmothers to create new discourses of their own. Female agency is a mechanism that can be utilized to generate new subjectivities.

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CHAPTER ONE

1.1. INTRODUCTION

This dissertation aims to investigate the effect of living with pensioner grandmothers as household heads on the gender construction and sexuality of a selected group of female secondary school learners at Northdale Secondary School, Pietermaritzburg, Kwa-Zulu Natal.

Similar to many other urban schools in South Africa in the post-1994 period, this school has undergone many changes. Formally, the school population was drawn from working and middle-class Indian families. Now, the school population has predominantly isi-Zulu speaking learners, many of whom reside in informal settlements, for example, Happy Valley, Site 11 and Tamboville, which are situated close to the school. The school is plagued by problems of poverty, crime, violence and vandalism.

The influx of African¹ families into this suburb has impacted on the demographics of the school population. African learners are now in the majority. There are more female learners. The school fee recovery is about twenty percent as the learners enrolled are largely indigent. Furthermore, many learners reside with grandparents or other relatives.

I have been a teacher at this school since 1985 and am currently Head of Department (Languages). On a frequent basis I deal with issues of gender, sexuality, violence and poverty. Consequently, in order to understand the context of my learners more fully and to inform educators in general about the needs of a particularly vulnerable group of learners in contemporary South Africa, I have decided to embark on this small pilot study. Influenced by feminist and poststructuralist theories, I have chosen to focus on the discourses of a selected group of *female* secondary school learners. Amidst the various contending patriarchies in South Africa, women's voices are not often heard or are

1. The term 'African' will be used to identify black South Africans of African (rather than Indian or European) origins.

disregarded. As a woman, I want to ensure that these particular voices are indeed heard. My project could thus be described as standpoint research.

I have chosen to focus on pensioner grandmothers as household heads for the following reasons. A common assumption made by many throughout the world, is that the household head is a male (Brydon and Chant 1989:54, Momsen 2004:72) creating the impression that a male head is the primary source of economic support (Momsen 2004:183). However, in developing countries the nature of households is changing rapidly (ibid.:72). In South Africa, for instance, many traditional, male-headed families have been replaced by single-parent households, grandmother-headed households and child-headed households due to the HIV/AIDS epidemic and the breakdown in marriages and other social institutions (Mturi et al. 2003:52,58).

A study conducted by May, indicates that Africans make up about 90% of poor older persons in South Africa (2003:v). In this group there are more females than males. The implication of the study is that 42% of African households are female-headed and mostly by pensioner grandmothers rather than mothers (ibid.:v). Momsen has shown that there is a greater chance that female-headed households will be poorer than male-headed households (ibid.:233). Consequently, women have to re-examine traditional roles and consider new survival strategies (ibid.:175) and this holds true for South Africa as well.

It is highly likely that growing up in a pensioner grandmother-headed household will have an impact on young girls' gender construction and sexuality. The parenting role played by a grandmother, the absence of a male parent, economic constraints and the sexual division of labour are important factors that will impact on gender roles and sexuality.

In this dissertation I will base my analysis on the constructionist belief that gender is constituted in social relationships based on 'perceived' differences between the sexes. As

Parker and Aggleton (1999:66) suggest, gender is related to cultural symbols that have

multiple and sometimes contradictory representations. Discourses about gender arise from the manner and contexts in which these symbols are evoked. I will focus on discourses about femininity from two important sources, the grandmothers and their granddaughters, showing how contradictory representations of gender can, in fact, co-exist in the same household.

As far as sexuality is concerned, I shall attempt to demonstrate, following Foucault, that sexuality is not an innate drive, even though that is how it is commonly perceived, but a “dense transfer point for relations of power” (1996:103). He highlights the pivotal role played by family in the deployment of sexuality arguing that the family’s role is to “anchor sexuality and provide it with a permanent support” (ibid.:109). By ‘family’, Foucault clearly means the Western nuclear family within Western patriarchies. However, I will attempt to show the relevance of his views to a female-headed household within an apparent African matriarchy, ‘apparent’ because grandmothers, certainly within Zulu culture, have internalized many patriarchal assumptions about gender and sexuality.

1.2. STRUCTURE OF THE DISSERTATION

This research study will be organized in the following way:

In chapter two, I will discuss the theoretical framework that underpins this research. Different feminist theories will be briefly discussed and motivations given for the theory chosen to base this study on. In addition, I will discuss understandings of gender and sexuality according to Western precepts and African teachings.

Chapter three will outline definitions of households and how pensioner grandmothers come to be household heads and are entrusted with responsibility for their grandchildren.

In chapter four, the research methodology adopted for the data collection in this study will be discussed. The reasons why qualitative methodology was the preferred choice will be explained.

Chapter five will consist of a presentation of the data findings of the research study from the perspective of grandmothers and that of granddaughters with regards to their perceptions of gender and sexuality.

The focus of chapter six will be a discussion of the research findings in the light of the theory discussed in chapter two. It will include conclusions and recommendations.

CHAPTER TWO

2.1. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The focus of this chapter is to outline the theoretical framework that underpins this research study. It will highlight aspects of postmodern feminism. I have selected this theoretical framework because personal discourses emphasise the constructed nature of social realities and will afford me an opportunity to study a group of participants in a specific context and period in time. It will allow me to examine how a particular group of women experience and construct their social realities.

I believe that this framework will broaden my horizons to have a greater degree of understanding about social contexts in which individuals find themselves. I feel that I can learn from participants how they understand themselves by what they say about themselves. It creates space for me as a heterosexual, South African, Indian female educator, and now researcher, to explore the real-life experience of participants to investigate the impact of living with pensioner grandmothers as household heads on the gender construction and sexuality of secondary school girls.

The second part of this chapter will focus on the concepts of gender and sexuality. I will begin my discussion by referring to dominant discourses in the modern West which have shaped and influenced many feminist theories elsewhere.

I will also attempt to expand on traditional, African beliefs, if it is possible to generalize about such beliefs, by focusing on the concepts of gender and sexuality in South Africa, as this will have an impact on my research findings. In addition, I will show how social and historical contexts impact on understandings about gender and sexuality and effect change in traditional beliefs. In my discussion, I will focus on postmodern principles about gender construction and sexuality to demonstrate the fluid nature of identities that are determined by contexts that individuals find themselves in.

2.2. FEMINISM

Feminism is a politics which aims to change power relations between men and women (Weedon 1997:1). Feminists do not believe that women and men are naturally unequal (ibid.:1). They believe that gender relations are responsible for creating relations of inequality and subordination (Waylen 1996:6). Feminists seek to understand women's lives by examining women's experiences and how they are represented by institutions, as well as how women represent themselves (Jackson and Jones 1998:1).

However, women are not a homogenous group. They are located and represented differently in the global and social contexts in which they find themselves (ibid.:2). Many strands of feminist theory have evolved from diverse experiences of different groups of women in different parts of the world, for example, Liberal, Marxist, Socialist, Black and African feminisms (Bryson 1999:8).

2.2.1. LIBERAL FEMINISM

Liberal feminists distinguish between biological facts and social norms when they look at sex and gender. Sex is categorized as biological and gender is historically, socially and culturally determined. These feminists maintain that women's subordination is as a result of gendered norms and not biological sex (Parpart et al. 2000: 116).

Liberal feminists argue that society encourages women to take primary responsibility for childcare, nurturing tasks, the household and sexual satisfaction of husbands or partners. They assume that sexual division of labour is imposed upon women to deny them access to better paid jobs (ibid.:119).

In contrast to liberal feminism, Marxist feminists focus on the capitalist system which they maintain should be the target of political action (ibid.:121). I will expand further on Marxist feminism in the following section.

2.2.2. MARXIST FEMINISM

Marxist feminists assert that capitalism and the present form of class-based society in the Western world are responsible for the suppression of women by making them economically dependent on men (Parpart et al. 2000:121).

An alternate view to women's subordination in productive relations is that this subordination is rooted in social relations of reproduction (Jackson and Jones 1998:18). Many Marxist feminists subscribe to the teaching of Engels who makes an assumption of 'natural' sexual division of labour and that men have an innate desire to transmit property to their sons. They believe that women's oppression stems from the concept of private property (Lerner 1986:23).

A critique of Marxism is that gender issues are not addressed. Women's roles as reproducers, carers and nurturers are not investigated (Whelehan 1995:48). Many feminist activists were inspired by Marxist theories, but some felt that it was sexist and radical feminism emerged, partially in response to the perceived failure of Marxist feminism.

2.2.3. RADICAL FEMINISM

The focal point of radical feminism is the subordination of women (Bulbeck 1998:7). Radical feminists believe that women are oppressed solely because of their sex (ibid.:7). They are insistent that patriarchy, a social system based on male domination and female subordination, is the primary reason for female oppression (Bryson 1999: 27). These feminists believe that structures of patriarchy have been established to maintain male power (Bell and Klein 1996:15).

Sexuality is an area of concern for radical feminists. The relationship between biology and social norms is important to them because it influences procreation and sexuality

which are political issues, because they too, are organized by male power (Parpart et al. 2000:124).

2.2.4. SOCIALIST FEMINISM

Socialism appeals to feminists because like liberal feminism, it speaks to equal rights and opportunities for all. Socialist feminists maintain that class and women's subordination are important concerns to be addressed. They focus on men's control over women's sexuality, procreation and labour power. Social construction of gender, race, ethnicity, religion and sexual preference are incorporated in their theories (ibid.:127).

In the 1980s, these feminist theories (discussed above) were severely criticized because they view women as "a unitary and ahistorical category" (Waylen 1996:7). These theories, it was argued, were confined to addressing issues pertinent to mostly white, middle-class women and ignored the realities of black women. In response, a new branch of feminism, black feminism emerged to speak to the needs of black women (Parpart et al. 2000:131).

2.2.5. BLACK FEMINISM

Black feminists, by this I mean Black, African American feminists, focus on their own oppression using the concept of identity politics. They maintain that sexual politics under patriarchy is as influential as the politics of race and class (Eisenstein 1979:365). These feminists argue that race, sex and class cannot be separated as they are experienced at the same time. Racial-sexual oppression is neither solely racial nor solely sexual (ibid.:366). Black feminists, like radical feminists, subscribe to the principle that the personal is political (ibid.:367).

The struggles of African women are similar in certain respects to that of Black women in Western countries.

2.2.6. AFRICAN FEMINISM

African feminism acknowledges links with international feminism, but indicates specific needs and goals emanating from the realities of African societies. It is respectful of African women's status as mothers but questions the idea of obligatory motherhood and the traditional favouring of sons. African feminism respects African women's self-reliance, co-operative work and social organization (Sheftall 2003:32). Multiple jeopardy, that is, sexism, racism and class divisions, are considered important issues in African feminism (ibid.:32).

African women are subjected to gender hierarchy and female subordination (Mikell 1997: 3). Their struggle against inequality and gender asymmetry is defined according to public and private spheres. Female subordination is grounded in traditional African cultures. Since cultures are not static, these roles have undergone changes (ibid.:3).

African feminism has been influenced by women's resistance to Western hegemony and the impacts it had on African culture. It does not originate because of individualism and patriarchy. Debates about essentialism, the female body or radical feminism are not considered relevant in African feminism (ibid.:4), particularly as many of the basic women's struggles have still to be fought. African feminism is heterosexual, pro-natal and focuses on "bread, butter, culture and power" issues (ibid.:4).

I believe that postmodern feminism can be used as a tool to address issues that concern African feminists and I will highlight the key principles of this theoretical framework.

2.3. POSTMODERN FEMINISM

As a starting point, postmodern feminist research uses the notion "where there is society there is gender" (Smith in Marchand and Parpart 1995:143). Focusing on patriarchy, postmodernism highlights the gendered reality of social relations (ibid.:143). Weedon states "patriarchy is the practice, phallogocentrism the theory" (1997:174). Both

function to construct differences, usually binaries which are then ordered hierarchically (ibid.:174).

Deconstruction is a tool used to analyse binary opposites that have evolved from Western philosophy and culture. This tool is critical of binary thinking and questions how ways of thinking have been socially constructed. Deconstruction shows how more importance is given to one of the pairs of binary opposites, for example, in the binary opposite pair of male and female (Ramazanoglu and Holland 2002:88).

Postmodernism deconstructs gendered assumptions of dominant discourses, to produce new discourses about women's lives that are inclusive and ensures equal access to power and acceptance of the diversity of women. Class, race and sexual identities are considered social realities that impact on different women at different times. Postmodernists do not deny oppression of women but reveal the many locations of domination in women's lives (Marchand and Parpart 1995:144).

There are distinct ideas used by postmodern feminists that lead to new ways of thinking about gender (Parpart et al. 2000:136). Postmodernists question the meta-theories of the modern age, because they view these grand theories as privileged discourses that do not take into account competing, dissident voices (ibid.:136). Their argument is that there must be an analysis to explain the construction of a subject within a historical framework. People are not born feminine or masculine but are positioned by discourses about femininity and masculinity (Ramazanoglu and Holland 2002: 90).

The postmodern focus on discourse and language has attracted considerable attention in the construction of identity, and the concept of difference (Parpart et al. 2000:137). It allows feminists to examine the concepts of power, selves, knowledge production and especially how the power of language and representation operates (Ramazanglu and Holland 2002:86).

The postmodern belief is that bodies are socially constructed. Importance is focused on the kinds of meaning given to bodies and what kinds of bodies are “socially constructed in different situations” (ibid.: 94).

According to Foucault, subjectivity is an effect of discourse. Subjectivity is determined by everyday practices which are themselves discursive (Weedon 1997:175). Using case studies of psychiatry, the prison and sexuality, Foucault demonstrates that forms of subjectivity are produced on and in the body through social discourses. In his model, femaleness and femininity have no essential nature. Instead, social and historical events determine what it means to be a woman (ibid.:175).

Postmodernists express the notion that male power should not be viewed as oppressive to women. According to Foucault, power is productive in generating knowledge, instead of being repressive. He maintains that there is an omnipresence of power (1990:93). Power is everywhere because it comes from everywhere. It is not acquired, seized or shared, but it can be exercised from many points. Power is not exterior to relationships but immanent in them. Power comes from below without a hierarchy of ruler and the ruled. Power is always exercised with an objective in mind. Wherever there is power, there is resistance (ibid.: 94).

Foucault’s theory about power is used by postmodernists to produce analyses of gender power relationships through the examination of local sites (Weedon 1997:174). Some feminists do not agree with Foucault’s notions of power since they believe they need to take up a position separated from the power from which they address issues to ensure change takes place (ibid.:175). However, both males and females can use this power to deconstruct socially constructed truths about sexualities and identities. In this way new discourses about sexuality can be generated (Ramazanoglu and Holland 2002:96).

Postmodernists view agency as discursively produced in social interactions. They agree that there may be a need for identity politics as determined by forms of oppression and political agenda, but argue for recognizing the limitations of essentialism in different

forms of identity politics. Instead, they advocate a theory of identity that is discursively produced (Weedon 1997:176). Postmodern feminists are convinced that political action can be utilized to empower marginalized people by relocating the site of resistance since social relations are fluid and changing (Marchand and Parpart 1995:151).

I now intend to locate an analysis of gender and sexuality within the framework of the above discussion.

2.4. GENDER

2.4.1. WESTERN DISCOURSES

According to Beasley, the term gender is used to divide people and practices according to sexed identities. In the modern west, gender divides into two (2005:11). Gender usually refers to the division of social practices that accompany the categories of woman and man. This binary division may even become oppositional where one category is viewed as positive and the other as negative. The binary nature of gender also implies that one category exists in relation to the other (ibid.:11-12).

Although Beasley provides this meaning of gender, he acknowledges that the meaning of the word 'gender' continues to change. Prior to 1960, it was restricted to masculine and feminine. Now, some theorists describe gender as defined by social identities of woman and man, others see it as a structuring process in terms of social interactions and institutions. More recently, gender has been extended to denote personality traits, social constructions, social groups, and social practices (ibid.:12).

As a liberal feminist, Simone de Beauvoir challenges the authenticity of biological determinism and highlights the social character of womanhood when she claims "one is not born, but rather becomes, a woman". She asserts that bodily differences between women and men have no actual importance since these differences attain meaning in the contexts in which women and men live (1972:66-67).

From a socialist perspective, Ann Oakley, expands on de Beauvoir's distinction between biological sex and gender. She defines sex as determined by anatomy and physical characteristics and gender as socially constructed. She argues that masculinity and femininity are not produced by biology but by social and cultural attributes that one acquires through the process of becoming a woman or man in a particular society at a particular time (Jackson and Scott 2002:9).

In a more complex way than de Beauvoir and Oakley, Gayle Rubin maintains that every society has a sex/gender system, a set of arrangements through which the "biological raw material of human sex and procreation is shaped by human, social intervention" (1975:165). These arrangements vary in different societies and cultures. The notion of woman and man, that is sex and gender, is socially produced, not determined by nature (ibid.:179).

These theorists imply if gender is social, not determined by nature, it can change (Jackson and Scott 2002:10).

This viewpoint is supported by Robert Connell who maintains that gender arrangements may appear to be unchanging but, they are always changing (2002:10). He adds that gender is a social structure that involves relationships with bodies as determined by cultural patterns. Although Connell states that there are dominant gender regimes in different societies, he also makes provision for oppositional regimes that may co-exist with the dominant one (McDowell 1999:18). Connell also suggests that gendered positions are not merely determined by power and oppression but that people take pleasure in their subject position in the gender regime (ibid.:18).

The idea of gender regimes has been challenged by postmodern arguments about the impermanence of the categories of woman and man and the use of grand theories to explain difference and diversity (ibid.:21). Gender relations cannot just be put into categories because there are different ways of being a man or woman. There are multiple,

oppositional and hegemonic versions of masculinity and femininity. Gender is also influenced by class and ethnicity (ibid.:21).

Butler, as a postmodern theorist, maintains that gender identities are a performance, made up through repetitive acts in a social order that attempts to enforce heterosexuality (1990:140). She argues that what individuals believe to be natural about identities is in fact non-existent. This implies that gender identities can be changed by transgression (Butler 1990:338).

Butler believes that regimes of heterosexuality highlight the binary gender division of man and woman and this in turn enforces women's inferiority. Her view is that gender is not a binary division determined by biology, but an impersonation that passes for something real. Being female is not a "natural fact" but a "cultural performance." She maintains that "naturalness" is constituted through discursively constrained performances (Butler 1990:viii). The aim of this impersonation is to produce an identity based on heterosexual regulatory fiction.

For this notion, Butler is dependent on the ideas of Adrienne Rich, a radical feminist, who expands on the idea of heterosexuality. Rich believes that the extent of measures that are designed to enforce heterosexuality for women assures the male right of "physical, economic and emotional access" (1980:647). One of these measures is to deny the lesbian possibility. She maintains that there is a denial to acknowledge that heterosexuality may not be a preference for some women, but that it may be "imposed, managed, organized, propagandised and maintained by force". She defines this as 'compulsory heterosexuality' (ibid.:653).

Layton shares similar sentiments to Butler when she states that the concepts of masculinity and femininity are maintained as a result of repetitive citings of the gender practices of one's culture. These practices include the manner in which one speaks, plays and dresses (1998:50). The label "woman" is used to restrict the number of ways that a woman can be. Heterosexuality and homosexuality, masculinity and femininity have been

produced as 'discrete identities' to guarantee the continuance of heterosexuality and male dominance (ibid.:4).

In line with highlighting changes that have resulted in different definitions of gender, I will continue this discussion by focusing on African discourses on gender.

2.4.2. AFRICAN DISCOURSES

In traditional African cultures, gender determines role functions and behaviour of people. These traditional expectations are determined by stereotyped sex roles (Malherbe et al. 2000:121). Culturally, the differences between males and females are assumed to be natural and therefore cannot be changed. The assumption is that women are born into these natural roles and must be raised from childhood to fulfill these roles (ibid.:121). 'Born into natural roles' implies an essentialist perspective on sex and gender, completely at odds with the constructionist perspectives in western discourses.

In African societies, parents are considered to be the main transmitters of culture. African children are socialized from a young age to believe that prestige and power are related to gender. Girls learn from a young age that males have greater benefits of prestige and power. Girls are expected to wait on their brothers. These expectations entrench the sexual division of labour (ibid.:121). Boys are assured of being educated even at the expense of girls who learn from an early age that their role is to assist with domestic chores and care of siblings (Malherbe et al. 2000:122). Differences in gender imply differences in value (Shefer in De La Rey et al. 1997:85). Social identity is closely linked to patriarchal power relationships. Men dominate women and have greater access to wealth and political power (ibid.:94).

Some African women are beginning to reject and re-design certain of the restrictive gender options available to them (Campbell 1993:59). Arnfred recognizes the trend of women choosing not to marry as a new form of female agency influenced by social and economic transformation (2004:23). In South Africa, African women are beginning to

redefine the patriarchal family traditions although there once was tacit pressure for women to embrace the stereotypical marriage, a dominant husband, a house and children. Many of these women live in female-headed families with strong and powerful mother figures. Their mother-figures' example and the possibility of education and financial independence definitely influence thinking about gendered roles. This implies that with changing social conditions there is a possibility of constructing new identities and perhaps contributing to the transformation of patriarchal social relations (ibid.:60), thus moving away from essentialist perspectives on gender and sexuality.

According to Phalane and Sithole, gender is dynamic and varies from one social group to another. Gender patterns change with the passage of time and in time of crisis, they change rapidly (2007:2). Shefer agrees that society, culture and history impact on gender construction which implies that gender is not fixed, but can change over time and in differing locations (in De La Rey et al. 1997:84). Other social relations like class, race and sex also impact on gender construction (ibid.:84).

Just as the meanings attached to the term 'gender' change according to historical locations and social impacts, the concept of 'sexuality' has also been re-defined. I will discuss western and African discourses on sexuality.

2.5. SEXUALITY

2.5.1. WESTERN DISCOURSES

According to Jackson and Scott, sexuality includes erotic desires, practices and identities (1996: 2). They describe sexuality as fluid since what is erotic cannot be fixed. Jackson and Scott believe that sexuality encompasses sexual feelings and relationships. It also includes how we are defined, or are not defined by others as sexual and how we define ourselves (ibid.:2).

Similarly, McDowell adds that these desires, identities and practices are influenced by beliefs and ideologies that impact on specific sexual activities (1999:39).

Foucault maintains that sexuality must not be viewed as something that can be controlled by power or as something that is difficult to understand and needs to be discovered (1990:105). He views sexuality as a historical construct, a “network in which the stimulation of bodies, the intensification of pleasures, the incitement to discourse, the formation of special knowledges, the strengthening of controls and resistances are linked to one another, in accordance with a few major strategies of knowledge and power” (ibid.:105-106).

Foucault states that the family anchors sexuality and provides it with support (ibid.:108). He views the family as the most significant and active site of sexuality (ibid.:109). Foucault regards parents and relatives as the main agents of the deployment of sexuality. He describes the family as the ‘crystal’, the invaluable linchpin in the deployment of sexuality (ibid.:111).

Foucault argues that bodily pleasures and sexual practices are neither natural nor innate. In many histories of sexuality, sexual practices have been regarded as secret and unspoken (ibid.:17). He suggests that at different points in history, people concurred about what was normal and permissible and what was regarded as offensive and prohibited (ibid.:38).

Foucault maintains that in modern society the regulation of the body and sexuality are very important. Biopower is responsible for controlling the sexuality of women and children, regulating reproduction and identifying sexual perversions as individual pathology. Disciplining occurs in a variety of social locations like the home and school (ibid.:140).

In Western discourses, sexuality can refer to anything from erotic desires and sexual practices to social and cultural responses to those practices. In other words, there are

essentialist and constructionist perspectives on sexuality; some theorists even embrace both perspectives (rather like Rubin's sex-gender system). I will continue the discussion on sexuality by expanding on African discourses.

2.5.2. AFRICAN DISCOURSES

In traditional African discourses, sexuality and fertility are viewed as synonymous, and a woman's sexuality is linked to her reproductive roles as mother, wife and lover. Capitalist expansion in the African continent impacted on the system of reproduction and sexual regulation. It led to the introduction of western family structures, romantic love and sex (Meena 1992:169). The concept of African sexuality has changed drastically as a result of colonization and the imposition of a Victorian morality. It has been deconstructed and reconstructed through capitalist modes of production and this has significantly influenced African social reality (ibid.:171).

Female bodies are regarded as important in the construction of femininity. In traditional discourses, the changes in a girl's body when she reached puberty, at about the age of twelve, marked the start to the gendering process (Mager 1996:13). Menstruation became an important issue. Girls and boys were taught about menstruation and the taboos related to it (Erlank 2004:78). At this point in time a girl was deemed to have acquired sexuality. Young people were educated from an early age about sexuality (Burns 1996:80-81).

In accounts of traditional Zulu gender construction, girls did have lovers (Mager 1996:15). There was a clear distinction between sex for pleasure and sex for procreation (Arnfred 2004:16). Young adults were taught how to exercise sexual restraint. They were taught about sex between the thighs of the woman, **ukusuma** (Burns 1996:81, 88).

Constraint and self-control were expected from the couple (ibid.:80). Education about sexuality was viewed as very important, but needed to be regulated and controlled. However, according to Zulu culture, a well-bred girl would not initiate the relationship and show emotions for a man. She should not even encourage initial advances but play

hard to get (Zondi 2006:30). To be forward was to be considered unladylike (Fredman and Potgieter 1996:52).

Women were entrusted with the responsibility of girl's bodies and their sexuality. They had to investigate if a girl had a lover. However, their duty was to keep an eye over the girls, not to forbid the relationship. Women also had to examine the girl to ensure she was not sexually involved with her lover (Mager 1996:15). It was considered a disgrace for an unmarried girl to have a child at her father's kraal (Krige 1950:106). In Zulu culture, virgin brides were highly prized. The boy's family would pay an additional head of cattle as brideswealth if the girl was proven to be a virgin. A cow would be given to the mother of the bride to express gratitude for having ensured her daughter remained a virgin until marriage (Leclerc-Madlala 2003:18).

In capitalist South Africa, constraints on regular virginity testing arose as some mothers and daughters did not live in the same house and many children lived with grandparents or with relatives near schools. The absence of male authority in homes allowed girls to avoid control measures. The practice of sex between the thighs was ignored and an increasing number of girls engaged in full sexual intercourse. Urbanisation became a threat to daughters' sexuality (Mager 1996:15).

Missionaries condemned Zulu youthful sexual practices (Burns 1996:85). Educated blacks who converted to Christianity accepted the lessons on the evils of premarital sex, and polygamy (ibid.:86). Those who belonged to youth cultures in the Christian religion were forbidden from any sexual activity (Mager 1996:4).

These Christian teachings undermined local African practices related to teenage sexuality without providing alternatives. Urban youth dismissed rural customs (Burns 1996:89). They became critical of cultural knowledge and constructed meaning that varied from that taught by their elders (Mager 1996:13).

Christian norms for social conduct became dominant in areas where missionaries gained power. Norms for female and male sexual behaviour developed differently (Arnfred 2004:17). A man could have sexual relations with multiple partners to whom he was not married and this had positive connotations as it was viewed as a sign of masculinity and manhood, **isoka** in the Zulu context. Women were not allowed to have more than one partner (ibid.:17).

In addition, the apartheid government ensured strong censorship and repressive policing on sexuality (Posel 2004:53). After 1994, more prominence was given to sexuality. The variety of ways in which sex has been portrayed in public produced many discourses about sexuality (ibid.:55), which politicized sex and sexuality more publically (ibid.:56).

In post-apartheid South Africa, the practice of virginity testing has been increasing (Leclerc-Madlala 2003:17). Some parents and child advocates view virginity testing as a quick fix. They believe that virginity testing carries with it a destructive message and potential danger for girls. Violation of human rights is one objection. Another disadvantage is that some girls who are publicly declared to be virgins are raped because of the myth that sex with a virgin can cure AIDS (Murphy 1999:1).

In the past, virginity testing was related to **lobola** and family status in Zulu families, today it is claimed to be carried out to assist in the battle against AIDS, sexual abuse and teenage pregnancies (Rankhotha 2004:85).

Where virginity testing is rife, doctors have noted an increase in trauma associated with anal sex among young women. This occurrence suggests that girls may be indulging in anal sex as an alternative to vaginal penetration (LeClerc-Madlala 2003:21). Some teenagers also engage in oral sex as they do not view it as sex. Many teenagers think oral sex is safe with no risks attached to it (Badat 2004:12).

South African gender activists are calling for debates on female and male sexualities with the aim of reflecting female sexual agency and resisting hegemonic male power (Arnfred

2004:75). According to Shefer, “sexuality gets framed as a male domain, in which men control and set the terms, and to which women must be inducted and guided” (cited in Arnfred 2004:75). She calls for development discourses that challenge the negative opinions of female sexuality and sexual desires and acknowledge women as sexual agents (ibid.:75). Proof of female agency is already evident in African isi-Zulu speaking women’s new knowledge about sexual matters and recognition of new rights to sexual assertiveness and pleasure and the right to resist male advances (Posel 2004:62).

The above discussion outlines the theoretical framework adopted for this study and meanings attached to the terms ‘gender’ and ‘sexuality’. I have attempted to trace changes that have occurred in the field of gender and sexuality to demonstrate that these concepts are discursively constructed in specific historical localities. This is significant in my study since I aim to identify patterns in the gender construction and sexuality of secondary school girls living with Zulu pensioner grandmothers as household heads.

In the next chapter, I will discuss female-headed households and the implications for children living in these households.

CHAPTER THREE

In this chapter, I will discuss the concept of a household. I will trace the changes that have occurred with regards to what was perceived as the norm, in order to situate my research in context, in keeping with the postmodern theoretical framework I have adopted. I will focus mainly on female-headed households as these are relevant to my research study. My discussion will include reasons for pensioner grandmothers assuming the role of household heads. I make this distinction of pensioner grandmother-headed households because women-headed households are not homogeneous.

3.1. THE HOUSEHOLD

3.1.1. WESTERN COUNTRIES

According to Moser, in the West, the assumption is that the dominant form of a household structure is that of the nuclear family which consists of a husband, wife and two or three children (1993:16). Nuclear families may be dominant in industrialised countries, as well as in some developing countries, but other types of households do exist (ibid.:16). The extended family and the female-headed household are examples of non-nuclear family structures (ibid.:17).

The existence of these different types of households supports postmodernists' rejection of generalizing the issue of household because they maintain that households must be viewed as units that have specific significance in different societies since households are 'sources of identity and social markerslocated in structures of cultural meaning and differential power' and not only places where people live, eat, work and reproduce (Chant 1997:35).

Family structures in Africa, in particular in South Africa, are also dynamic and constantly undergoing change.

3.1.2. PRE-CAPITALIST AFRICA

In contrast to western family models, in pre-capitalist societies in southern Africa, a homestead was made up of “a man, his cattle and small stock, his wife or wives and their children, grouped in their different houses each with its own arable land” (Walker 1990: 34). There was a distinct sexual division of labour under the control of the husband. Men were responsible for animal husbandry. Arable land was allocated by the husband to his wife or wives who were responsible for agricultural labour (ibid.:34). It was deemed important that a woman bears sons who would assist in animal husbandry and daughters to help with domestic and agricultural tasks (ibid.:41).

These family patterns were disrupted and altered in capitalist South Africa.

3.1.3. CAPITALIST SOUTH AFRICA

Apartheid policies in capitalist South Africa contributed to the change in household organization among Africans (Adato et al. 2005:4). Male and female adults were forced to leave their families and homes in search for employment. Due to migratory labour patterns, divorce and non-marital births increased. Parents came to rely on family members, rather than spouses, for economic support and rising children. Kin fostering led to children experiencing the “death of a social parent” even when biological parents were alive. Many women became *de facto* heads of households (ibid.:4).

3.2. CHANGES IN HOUSEHOLD STRUCTURES IN SOUTH AFRICA

Social and political changes in South Africa have impacted on family structures (Mturi et al. 2003:45). In the African context, families are generally large and include relatives (ibid.:46). In Kwa-Zulu Natal, family is viewed as a large group of individuals bound by lineage. The family is viewed as extended and is inclusive of patrilineal relatives (ibid.:49).

In contemporary South Africa, in addition to nuclear families, there are extended families, single parent families, child-headed families and skip generation families (Mturi et al. 2003:51). In skip generation families, grandparents assume responsibility for grandchildren (ibid.:56).

In some cases, children are left alone because parents have died or moved away in search of jobs. As a result, elder siblings are left in charge of the household creating child-headed households (Mturi et al. 2003:52). A survey conducted in 2005 by the General Household Survey (GHS) identified about 118 564 children living in 66 556 child-headed households. Thirteen percent of these households are located in Kwa-Zulu Natal (Meintjies et al. 2006:69).

3.3. HOUSEHOLD HEADS

Related to households is the concept of headship (Moser 1993:16). The assumption about families, regardless of whether they are nuclear or extended, is that they are headed by men who play the role of primary breadwinners. However, as has been mentioned above, there are many families who do not fit this model. Public policy needs to take cognizance of this and meet their special needs (Stromquist 1998:227). A female-headed household is one such example.

3.4. FEMALE-HEADED HOUSEHOLDS

Two types of female-headed household exist.

3.4.1. *DE JURE* FEMALE HEADED HOUSEHOLDS

In the *de jure* female-headed household, there are permanently no adult males present and the women are legally single, divorced or widowed (Moser 1993:17).

3.4.2. DE FACTO FEMALE –HEADED HOUSEHOLDS

In the *de facto* female-headed household, the majority of economic support is provided by women (Stromquist 1998:227). The male partner is temporarily absent (Moser 1993: 17). The woman is not the legal head. She is often regarded as a dependant, although she may have total responsibility for the household with regards to finances and organization (ibid.:17).

Stromquist asserts that the likelihood is that female-headed households may be poorer than male-headed households because female-headed homes may have fewer adults contributing to economic welfare or there may be many children present who increase the dependency burden on the household. Women are more economically vulnerable because they are generally concentrated in poorer paid jobs than men. They may be vulnerable to poverty since they may be constrained by child-care demands and thus accept poorer paid jobs (1998:230).

3.5. FEMALE-HEADED HOUSEHOLDS IN SOUTH AFRICA

One of the most serious problems facing women in South Africa is poverty since it impacts on almost all aspects of their lives. Approximately one third of all households in South Africa are headed by females, often as a result of migration (Whitman 2000:140). Poverty results in physical hardship and deprivation, but also can dehumanize people and undermine their self-respect. In South Africa 66.7% of all rural households and 39.8% of all urban female-headed households are affected by poverty (ibid.:141).

3.6. IMPLICATIONS OF FEMALE-HEADED HOUSEHOLDS FOR CHILDREN

According to Stromquist, it may be assumed that children who live in female-headed homes are negatively influenced because of financial constraints. However, this is not

always the case. For example, expenditure patterns in these households advantage children. Similar patterns apply to children's nutrition and education (1998:231).

Studies conducted by Buvinic and Gupta in Kenya, Malawi, Guatemala and Chile support this viewpoint that women are more likely to spend a greater percentage of their income on items for children (ibid.:232). An explanation for this occurrence could be that in male-headed households women are unable to fulfil their preferences, but in female-headed households they can, since they are not involved in a power struggle with men (ibid.:232).

Using data gathered from studies conducted in Mexico, Kenya and Zambia, Chant maintains that women are inclined to spend a larger portion of their income on children's items for example, food, than men are. In male-headed households more money is spent on items like alcohol and tobacco (1997:57).

Buvinic and Gupta have found that, despite the fact that in female-headed households there is a greater demand for domestic labour as well as income, which could result in children having to stay at home to care for siblings or to engage in work for wages, children's welfare is considered and they are encouraged to continue their education (Stromquist 1998:232).

Research carried out in Mexico indicates that children in female-headed households are encouraged more than children in male-headed households to advance their education. Girls are encouraged to fend for themselves. Fluidity in gendered division of labour is exercised, and boys are encouraged to assist with housework and care of siblings (Chant 1997:235, Bozalek in De La Rey et al. 1997:9). This ensures that girls have an opportunity to better themselves (Chant 1997:235). Girls do not end up with the majority responsibility for household chores or care of siblings (ibid.:253). It is expected that male children will assist in household tasks. There is a greater degree of sharing domestic tasks in female-headed households (ibid.:205).

Research findings from the same study indicate that girls in female-headed households perform well at school, sometimes even better than girls from other types of households (ibid.:235). This kind of progress stems from the concern of female heads who are keen to ensure that girls are equipped with survival skills and the fact that they can encourage girls' education, since they are not accountable to a man about household decisions and finances (ibid.:253).

Buvinic and Gupta's conclusions also suggest that in female-headed households women have the decision-making power and resources are shared equally between boys and girls (Stromquist 1998:232). Chant refers to studies conducted in Mexico and the United Kingdom to forward reasons for the lack of gender differentiation. Female-headed households are more child-oriented because women do not have to take into account the food needs of a partner (1997:57).

Studies carried out in Mexico indicate that in female-headed households, conflict is resolved for the benefit of collective interest because women control almost all the income. In male-headed households the likelihood is that violence will be used in conflict situations (ibid.:57).

The findings that have been discussed are important to my research study as they will be used to inform and support my conclusions. I will refer to them again in chapter 7. I will continue with a more detailed discussion of pensioner grandmothers as household heads in South Africa.

3.7. GRANDMOTHER-HEADED HOUSEHOLDS IN SOUTH AFRICA

It is a common occurrence in many areas of South Africa that children are left with grandmothers especially when parents work away from home (Mturi et al. 2003:56). This is described as "granny fostering" (Brydon and Chant 1989:55). Grandchildren are left with grandmothers because their mothers have migrated for employment, or they cannot cope with the demands of work and childcare at the same time (Chant 1997:24).

Sometimes, the mothers remarry and do not want to take their children to their new home and they are left with grandmothers. Death is another reason why grandchildren are left with grandparents (Mturi et al. 2003:56).

Tembe asserts that grandmothers play the role of disciplinarian and are strict with girls to ensure they become lady-like, well-groomed and respectable. Grandmothers do not want their granddaughters to be seen as inferior in a social context where it was a given if you are black and a woman, you are inferior (2004:126). In African families, elders are accorded great respect. They are viewed as wise and transmitters of culture (Bozalek in De La Rey et al. 1997:12).

In some provinces of South Africa, about 82% of the elderly are the breadwinners for their extended families (Ntshingila et al. 2005:8). The HIV/AIDS pandemic has created a burden for the elderly, mostly women. About 60% of orphans are being cared for by their grandparents. Attempts to obtain foster care grants are not always successful (ibid.:8).

I will continue this discussion on grandmother-headed households by focusing on pensioner grandmother-headed households in South Africa.

3.8. PENSIONER GRANDMOTHER-HEADED HOUSEHOLDS IN SOUTH AFRICA

In South Africa, households with older people are very disadvantaged (Brome 2005:1). Pensioners transfer their pension to family members who are not being directly targeted by the Old Age Pension (OAP) scheme. This sharing contributes to household income. It occurs especially in poor black households where resources are pooled (ibid.:1, May 2003:vi).

According to May, pensions are like a magnet for “economically weaker family members” (2003:21). Many children and grandchildren cluster around the pensioner and form the core of many urban multigenerational households (ibid.:21). Ardington and

Lund maintain that 85.1 % of pensioners live in three generational households. This implies that a greater section of the population than the 4.5 % who receive it, actually benefit from it. It is clear that pensions play a vital economic and social role, assisting African households in poverty (cited in May 2003:24).

Forty two percent of all South African households are female-headed (May 2003:14). About 17% of these households are granny-headed households (ibid.:15). Some of the financial needs of pensioner grandmothers include money for transport to take persons with HIV/AIDS (PWAs) for medical attention, money to pay for grandchildren's schooling and money to buy funeral insurance for dying PWAs (ibid.:vi). They also meet the basic need of food, clothing and health care for grandchildren (ibid.:21).

May maintains that old-age pensions increase the self-respect of older women as a result of self-reliance and creditworthiness. Caring for the family instills in them a sense of purpose. They get pleasure and self-esteem in pension sharing. Sometimes, they feel frustrated that their needs get neglected for that of family welfare. However, they accept that family needs are more important than personal needs like contributions to *stokvels* and burial societies (ibid.:20).

Female recipients are more likely than male recipients to contribute to the family. In particular, granddaughters benefit if they live with a pensioner grandmother (Brome 2005:2). Brome refers to a study by Ester Duflo, which indicates that there are significant gains in height and weight for granddaughters under the age of five who live with pensioner grandmothers (ibid.:15).

3.9. THE HOUSEHOLD AND GENDER RELATIONS

The household, despite the many ways in which it is defined, is a common form of social organization and generally represents the primary site for the structuring of gender relations (Brydon and Chant 1989:8). It is an "arena of subordination" (ibid: 9). The household is an important area for analyzing gender roles and relations. It is a key area of

the sexual division of labour (ibid.:10). Within households there is a division of labour among men, women and children (ibid:49).

Changes in household form have affected responsibilities that were traditionally ascribed for men and women (ibid.:151). These changes can enable easier female emancipation by freeing women from patriarchal expectations and allow them to participate in different forms of employment (ibid.:151).

Grandmother-headed households play a pivotal role in keeping families together. It can be said that the relationship between grandmother and grandchild is mutually beneficial. Grandmothers are not alone and isolated and the basic needs of grandchildren are met. However, this does not sum up the considerable contribution made by grandmothers to raise their grandchildren. They contribute more than just financial aid. The experience of growing up in a grandmother-headed household impacts on social relationships that can ensure that granddaughters are given an equal opportunity to take their place in society without the prejudices she may experience in another type of household. This may impact positively on her, as masculinist gender bias is not an obstacle in the way she constructs her gender identity and sexuality.

However, if one assumes a postmodern view of the family and identifies how it transmits cultural meaning and exercises differential power, one has to ask whether the grandmothers in any way undermine patriarchal power relations by socializing their granddaughters in households without a male head. In traditional Zulu society, grandmothers were often regarded as honorary men and assisted the men in upholding patriarchal power relations. If the family is a 'dense transfer point for relations of power' (Foucault 1990:103), it could be that a grandmother-headed household could be as conservative and patriarchal as a male-headed household. I shall return to this point in my concluding discussion of the data collected.

In the next chapter, I will discuss the research methodology adopted for the data collection.

CHAPTER 4

4.1. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In this section, I will discuss the research methodology used to investigate the impact of living with pensioner grandmothers on the sexuality and gender construction of secondary school girls. I will discuss the method that I used for the data collection namely, qualitative data collection. I will clarify the use of focus group discussions as well as interviews. I will outline the procedures that were followed in the data collection.

The data collection for the research took place during September, 2005.

4.1.1. FEMINIST RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

My interest lies in feminist research methodology. This kind of research involves the study of women from the standpoint of women's experience. Gender is an important aspect in feminist research. It is of paramount importance in the process of self-identification and influences perceptions of the world. Thus researchers must question and explore cultural patterns relating to gender (Jarviluoma 2003:2).

Jarviluoma asserts that the meaning of gender is culturally constructed. Meanings impact on our understanding of self and relationships with others. Generally biological reasons are used to differentiate between what it is to be a man or a woman. Socio-cultural understandings of these categories of man and woman are based on place, period and personal situation (ibid.:3).

There are different methodological understandings of gender. It can involve what men and women are perceived to do, how genders are hierarchically organized, how genders are socially and culturally produced in language, social action and cultural products, or how gender ideologies can be changed (ibid.:6).

In this study I will use interviews and focus group discussion to analyse the impact of living with pensioner grandmothers as household heads on the gender construction and sexuality of secondary school girls. Spoken and written texts will be used for this purpose, reflecting my view that gender is discursively constructed in language.

Language is powerful in shaping our experiences. It is used to understand ourselves. It influences the way we act as men and women and helps us define our cultural identity.

We depend on shared meanings to make sense of what we say (Burman and Parker: 1993:1).

4.2. REASONS FOR DATA COLLECTION METHODOLOGY

4.2.1. QUANTITATIVE RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In quantitative research methodology, the researcher collects data in the form of numbers. Statistical data analysis is used. When using this method, the researcher starts with a number of predetermined categories for data. A variety of statistical analyses are then used to make broad, general comparisons (Terre Blanche and Durrheim1999:43). This kind of research methodology is underpinned by a particular view of reality: that this is knowable and measurable. However, as I believe that realities are constructed by human agents in discourses, quantitative research methodology is unsuitable for my field work.

4.2.2. QUALITATIVE RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Qualitative research methodology is suitable for understanding the experiences of others through interaction and listening to their real life experiences. It allows the researcher to use rich detail and descriptive language to describe this first hand experience. Language is the most important medium which helps us to understand the social world (ibid.:124).

This methodology allows one to obtain detailed information about a small number of people and cases. It develops understanding of these cases. The source of raw data is the

direct, spoken words of respondents. These words show us participants' feelings, thoughts, experiences and perceptions about their world (Patton 1990:24). One can learn to appreciate what is happening through the eyes of people themselves (ibid.:33).

Qualitative researchers look for patterns that emerge from data. They try to understand these patterns within a particular context (Maykut and Morehouse 1994:13). They strive for understanding people's experiences in the natural setting (ibid.:45). The social context plays an important role in understanding the social world (Neuman 1994:319).

Buchanan asserts that qualitative research is important because 'its quality lies in the power of its language to display a picture of the world in which we discover something about ourselves and our common humanity' (cited in Miller 1997: 9).

4.3. FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION

Focus groups are typically made up of people who share similar experiences but do not exist as a naturally constituted group (Terre Blanche and Durrheim 1999:388).

A focus group discussion is a conversation with a purpose. This method is similar to individual interviewing and participant observation. It creates the opportunity for the researcher to observe a group of participants engaging in a topic of interest to him or her. Participants can listen to each others' ideas and this can help them to develop their own ideas or develop new understanding. It assists in bringing to the fore information that may not emerge in an individual interview (Maykut and Morehouse 1994:104).

The purpose of this method is to bring participants with different perspectives into contact with each other to help the researcher obtain data about peoples' experiences and perceptions (ibid.:103). Focus groups are beneficial in that real-life data is gathered in a social environment. Authentic data is obtained quickly and with minimum costs (Babbie 2002:300). The disadvantage of this method is that the number of questions is limited. There is a possibility that conflicts may also arise (Patton 1990:336).

For the purpose of this study, five targeted participants, secondary school girls, constituted the focus group. All participants were willing to participate in this group discussion.

4.4. INTERVIEWS

An interview is a natural form of interaction between people. The researcher can get to know people well, so that their thoughts and feelings are understood (Terre Blanche and Durrheim 1999:128). It should be based on the format of a conversation instead of a question and answer session (ibid.:130). The purpose is to find out what is in and on an interviewee's mind and to determine his or her perspective (Patton 1990:278).

Interviews are a form of discourse. They are a product of what the interviewer and interviewee talk about and how they talk to each other. This adds to knowledge building (Maykut and Morehouse 1994:80). Time frames and repeat interviews allow the researcher to develop a deep understanding of the phenomena being studied (ibid.:81). Interviews are important when one wants to learn about participants' perspectives, language and meanings (ibid.:82).

This method of qualitative methodology allows the researcher to concentrate in depth on a small group of participants. The shortcomings of a small group could be that findings are not really representative statistically (Terre Blanche and Durrheim 1999:45). The possibility of interviewer bias is ever present. However, the advantage is that there is flexibility in that a skilled interviewer can ensure that the participant understands the question and purpose of the research impacting on a high response rate. Furthermore there is a 'richness and spontaneity of information' (Oppenheim 1996:32) that far outweighs the disadvantages.

This interview was semi-structured. An interview schedule with a list of key questions was formulated (Terre Blanche and Durrheim 1999:128). The motivation for this choice is that the researcher is a beginner. Preparing questions prior to the interview boosts

confidence and provides a guideline if the interview is not free-flowing. Open-ended questions were designed to invite participation and yield in-depth answers, not just “yes” and “no” answers (Maykut and Morehouse 1994:88). Questions were asked about experience, feelings and opinions (ibid.:91). These questions were organized in sequence according to certain categories (ibid.:94).

4.5. FIELD PROCEDURES

4.5.1. OBTAINING ACCESS TO SAMPLE GROUPS

Before the research process could begin, consent was negotiated with the gatekeeper, the principal of the secondary school identified, to approach learners who fell in the category for study. The researcher is an educator at this school. The topic to be researched was explained and assurances were given that neither the learners nor the school would be identified in the writing of the thesis. Permission was obtained easily.

Once a sample group of learners was confirmed, these learners were asked to approach their pensioner grandmothers to seek permission for their participation.

4.5.2. SAMPLE GROUP

The sample group for this research was drawn from an urban area, Northdale, in Pietermaritzburg KwaZulu-Natal. It comprised of five isiZulu-speaking African female secondary school learners between the ages of fourteen and eighteen and their pensioner grandmothers who are the household heads.

Learners who were known to the researcher were used to identify prospective fellow learners who qualified as a target group. According to Terre Blanche and Durrheim (1999 :383), word of mouth, or the friend-of-a-friend approach is very successful in identifying a target group. The researcher made contact with the learners to gain their co-operation. Once it was ascertained that they were indeed suitable candidates, they were invited to

participate after the research topic was explained to them. As informed consent is an ethical requirement of the University of Kwa-Zulu Natal, learners were requested to inform their grandmothers about the scope of the work and to seek permission from them to be participants. They were also requested to make enquiries whether their grandmothers were willing to participate themselves.

For the selection of a target group, the purposive, judgmental sampling technique was used. The reason for this choice of sampling was because the researcher was looking for a particular type of participant, namely, secondary school female learners who are living with their pensioner grandmothers who are also household heads. This type of sampling allows the researcher to choose information-rich cases for in-depth study. Much can be learnt about issues important for the research study from this sampling technique (Patton 1990:169 ; Neuman 1994:198).

All learners were willing to participate.

4.6. DATA COLLECTION

4.6.1. FOCUS GROUP

Five targeted African, isiZulu-speaking, secondary school girls made up the focus group. The learners were involved in the data collection process at the school during school hours, after permission was obtained from their educators. A room away from the rest of the school population was set up with chairs around the researcher. This was done to eliminate possible disturbances and to create an informal atmosphere where learners could face each other as well as the researcher. Refreshments were served before the commencement of the focus group discussion to create a relaxed and informal atmosphere. It was believed that this would be conducive to learners sharing ideas freely. Learners were given a letter introducing the researcher and the topic, as well as reassuring them of confidentiality and anonymity. They were informed that their assistance was needed for completion of the study and they were thanked for consenting

to participate. It was impressed upon the learners that there was a need to be honest in responding and that there were no wrong or right answers.

The use and advantage of a tape recorder was explained to the learners to put them at ease. They agreed to have their responses taped. The researcher/interviewer asked questions and the learners responded.

Participation was encouraged to avoid marginalisation or non-involvement by calling out individual names to prompt the participants to respond. The researcher displayed interest by asking for clarification and elaboration. This part of the research proceeded without problems. There was no need to translate questions for the learners since they all have a good understanding of English.

The researcher listened for similarities and differences in the participants' contributions. It was positive to note that there was no fear of disagreeing with opinions if the participant felt differently.

4.7. INTERVIEWS

Grandmothers were approached at their homes. Some grandmothers agreed to participate immediately. Due to time constraints appointments were made with other grandmothers. The translator introduced herself, the researcher, the topic and explained the purpose of the research. Confirmation was sought to establish if they were willing to participate. Once this was determined, the process went ahead with the translator as the interviewer. All grandmothers agreed to be participants. However, many were concerned about the presence of the researcher as they initially assumed that their grandchildren were in some kind of trouble at school. However, the interviewer reassured them about the purpose of the study, the presence of the researcher and explained that the study was totally divorced from the school.

The researcher was present during the interviews in the event of clarification. The translator explained that there were no right nor wrong answers so that respondents could relax and answer honestly.

For the interviews a tape recorder was used, after explaining to the respondents the purpose of such a device and ensuring that they were comfortable having their responses taped. Questions were asked in isiZulu to ensure clear understanding. The translator was later responsible for translating the responses from isiZulu to English.

All grandmothers were willing to answer all questions. Clarifications were given when the need arose. This process was efficiently completed. The duration of this section of the data collection lasted about thirty minutes each.

Undertaking this form of data collection, focus group discussions and interviews, was very enlightening and rewarding. Interacting with the participants about their experiences revealed interesting findings about their lifestyles and opinions. Close interaction created the opportunity to observe the participants' body language and facial expressions which also "told a story" about them. Most grandmothers seemed very confident. One even answered in English. They were enthusiastic about answering and smiled and laughed occasionally. The learners seemed excited to be part of this process and seemed quite sure about what they were saying.

4.8. TRANSLATOR

The assistance of a mother tongue isiZulu speaker was obtained to translate questions from English to isiZulu for the questionnaire, as well as for the interviews with the grandmothers to avoid problems of misunderstanding on the basis of language. The same translator was not available to complete the questionnaires and interviews. Another mother tongue isiZulu speaker was employed to assist in this regard. She served as translator as well as interviewer for the grandmothers. The topic and purpose of the research was explained to her. It was impressed upon her to explain clearly to the

grandmothers that this work was not related in any way to the school and to assure them of confidentiality. The choice of both the translators was as a result of the researcher's personal interaction and relationship with them. Both women are known to be very professional and have good communication skills and inter-personal relationships.

4.9. PRESENTATION OF SELF

The researcher and translator/interviewer were suitably attired as self-presentation can influence field relations (Neuman 1994:341).

4.10. ANALYSIS OF THE DATA

After data collection, the taped interviews for the grandmothers were translated and transcribed in English. The focus group discussion that was taped was recorded. Transcriptions were done exactly as the participants answered without altering any responses. A content analysis of this data was done.

4.11. PROBLEMS ENCOUNTERED

There were no major problems encountered. However, translations of the questions into isiZulu had to be double checked as the researcher discovered that there were subtle differences that could occur in translating.

The results of the data collection will be used to investigate the impact of living with pensioner grandmothers on the sexuality and gender construction of secondary school learners. These findings will be recorded in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 5

5.1. DATA FINDINGS

I will outline my data findings to investigate the impact of living with pensioner grandmothers as household heads on the sexuality and gender construction of secondary school girls. The contributions of the respondents from focus group discussions and interviews will constitute the main points.

The data will be presented in two parts. I will initially examine the grandmothers' responses in terms of the impact of raising their grandchildren, coping strategies and cultural teachings about sexuality and gender construction. The latter half will focus on the responses of the teenage granddaughters.

5.1.1. THE IMPACT OF RAISING GRANDCHILDREN

Grandmothers felt happy to be the guardians of their granddaughters as they felt that in the absence of parents it was their responsibility to take care of these children. This is indicated in the following statements:

I see myself as a parent and a happy grandmother to have my grandchildren with me (Nokwazi).²

I forced myself to retire early from work because I wanted to take care of them myself (Primrose).

I am happy to have a grandchild, yet it is not easy financially. I enjoy to have a grandchild because she is the only child in my life. All my children passed away a long time ago (Hazel).

2. For the purpose of this study, I am using the actual first names of the respondents with their permission. I am citing the original words, in English, as recorded and translated.

I see myself as a parent and a happy grandmother (Nokwanda).

Most grandmothers felt that playing the role of a parent was difficult. Nonjabulo sums this up when she says:

It is very difficult to be a parent because it needs much of your time. It makes you talk all the time. Sometimes you end up scolding them and also to guide them to do the right things.

Some grandmothers have to take care of more than one grandchild. In most cases these grandmothers were entrusted with the care of their grandchildren as a result of the death of their parents. Time is a factor that impacts on this relationship. Grandmothers felt that additional demands were made on their time as is indicated in the following statement:

It is very difficult because days are not the same to them. You need more time and money. Since I lost my daughters I am now getting more sicknesses (Nokwanda).

Some grandmothers felt that instilling discipline was problematic as they are not really the parents but guardians. This can be deduced from the following comments:

It is hard to guide them because when you are scolding them, they will think that it is because you are not their parents (Nonjabulo).

Things are different for them. If you scold them it's not that you don't love them (Nokwazi).

All grandmothers felt that their tasks and duties in their households changed since they have taken responsibility for their granddaughters. It is evident that granddaughters reduce their grandmothers' household chores. Granddaughters assist with cleaning, cooking, washing and gardening. Grandmothers say they do this willingly.

All grandmothers considered financial constraints a very big problem. This will be discussed in greater detail under coping strategies.

5.2. COPING STRATEGIES

All grandmothers expressed similar sentiments about the difficulties they face with coping with very limited finances. Making ends meet is clearly the greatest problem they are experiencing.

Pension money is spent on food, clothes, school fees, medical fees and lights and water. Only one grandmother indicated paying for use of the telephone. What is remarkable is that they have purchased their homes. No-one indicated paying rent.

Grandmothers spend about four hundred to five hundred rand per month on food. The amount spent on clothing varies as this is not purchased on a regular basis. The average amount spent is one hundred and fifty rand per month. No definite pattern could be identified in amounts spent for medical fees and lights and water. This can be attributed to the fact that there are different numbers of members in each household.

What is very surprising is that most grandmothers do not receive concessions for school fees from their granddaughters' school. They do not even seem aware that they can qualify for an exemption or even a concession for the payment of school fees. Most grandmothers are aware of the child support grant and foster care grant but only one grandmother receives a child support grant.

Some grandmothers have started vegetable gardens to cope with limited resources. This is what one grandmother had to say:

Growing vegetables helps me a lot because I am saving the little money I have (Nonjabulo).

One grandmother showed signs of entrepreneurshship as a coping strategy as is indicated in the following statement:

I am trying because I am a sangoma, so I am helping people and I get that little money and share it with my grandchildren. I buy vegetables to sell them to my neighbours (Nonjabulo) .

Grandchildren are expected to assist with household tasks. This helps to ease the workload of their grandmothers. They assist mainly in cleaning the house and yard, cooking, washing, and ironing. According to all grandmothers, they would ask both boys and girls to help with the same kind of household chores. They would teach their grandchildren that boys and girls can do the same types of work.

5.3. CULTURAL TEACHING ABOUT GENDER CONSTRUCTION AND SEXUALITY

All grandmothers indicated that they teach their grandchildren traditional values about what is it to be a man or woman and how they should relate to the opposite sex. Their responses about cultural teachings about males and females are as follows:

It teaches them that a male and a female can do household chores. For example, if a male grandchild marries and it happens that the wife gets sick, he can cook for the family. According to our culture, when the wife gives birth, she is not allowed to go to the kitchen for about three months, that is why it is important to learn to do everything at home. And a female grandchild needs to be clean - clean the house, do the washing and cooking, fetch water and collect wood from the bush (Nonjabulo).

It teaches us to work and know that the work is not for certain people. Everybody at home must work, to respect each other, younger and older (Primrose).

Similar sentiments about sharing household chores were expressed by all grandmothers.

All grandmothers indicated that they teach their grandchildren to obey cultural beliefs. Only one grandmother indicated that the Christian church plays a greater role in her home than traditional, cultural teachings, so this is not very influential in her family. Other grandmothers emphatically expressed their support for tradition and culture although they also go to church. According to grandmothers, learning these values is important because the young are exposed to many influences outside the home and they need to be guided in the right direction. Their thoughts are revealed in the following statements:

Yes, I am teaching them. My mother used to tell that you don't have to run away from your culture. If you obey your culture it will help you to guide your children the right way (Nonjabulo).

We are still doing our cultural and traditional things like sending my grandchildren for virginity inspection (Nokwanda).

Grandmothers emphasized the importance of respect. They believe that this is the foundation for a strong family. Respect is essential for a good upbringing and to ensure a successful future. Most grandmothers are convinced that because their grandchildren adhere to cultural and religious teachings, they do not display behavioral problems. All grandmothers indicated that they do not experience problems with their granddaughters' behaviour. They express their beliefs as follows:

Yes, they follow these teachings. We are going to church together. When we are following our traditional rituals they obey it so well. They wear the bangles that are made of the skins of animals we slaughter at home. They also eat everything we prepare in that ceremony. I am doing the virginity testing myself as a grandmother (Nonjabulo).

They are trying to follow these teachings because they are joining the youth groups in church to keep them strong morally and spiritually (Primrose).

With regards to the kind of advice to be given to a granddaughter about becoming a woman, respect was once more emphasized. Love was also highlighted as an important characteristic as can be seen in the following comments:

To be a woman, you need to love the people, respect them. If it happens that you get married you must look after your in-laws because they are your parents too. To love and respect your husband is to become a woman (Nonjabulo).

Grandmothers mentioned that granddaughters should not frequent places like discos, or loiter on streets or become familiar with boys. They would warn granddaughters about pregnancy and being infected with diseases. The following statements reflect the kind of advice given:

I would advise her not to go to the wrong places like going to dances at night, discos. She needs to be at home all the time. She must do household chores. I don't want her to loiter on the road because it is not safe (Primrose).

I would tell my female grandchild not to fool around with the boys before marriage. I'll also tell her I won't be able to look after her and her child. I will warn her about incurable diseases and pregnancies. I will advise her to abstain completely (Nokwazi).

I will advise my granddaughter not to mix herself with boys. She also needs to finish school, respect people, older and younger and to look after herself (Hazel).

All grandmothers shared similar sentiments about the advice to be given to granddaughters about the opposite sex. They were unanimous about advising girls not to

get close to boys and not to have sexual relations before marriage. This is clearly indicated in the following responses:

As a granddaughter you do not need to give your body to the boys. You need to abstain so as to protect yourself in unwanted pregnancy and incurable disease. You must wait until you get married so you can give your body to your husband. (Nonjabulo).

I would like my granddaughter not to get too close to the boys because she can be cheated. She needs to get married first before getting the boy to become her friend (Nokwanda).

I would advise them not to make it easy to be with boys, making home visits with them. They must get used to keeping themselves away from that situation. If possible they can talk but it is not important because I don't want them to get tempted and sleep around with the boys. I don't like that to happen (Primrose).

From the above discussion, it is clear that grandmothers have taken responsibility for their granddaughters. They experience financial constraints, but they do manage to cope with limited resources. It is disappointing to note that they are not aware of concessions and exemptions for school fee payment.

It is clearly indicated that they impress upon their granddaughters the importance of adhering to cultural beliefs. Virginity testing seems to be important to grandmothers. It is evident that grandmothers advise their granddaughters about acceptable behaviour, relationships with boys and what it is to be a woman.

In the second part I will examine the responses of secondary school girls to determine what effect growing up in a female-headed household has on their sexuality and gender construction. This will be done by examining and assessing their responses to questions posed to them on the following aspects, parents, grandmothers, agents in gender

construction and sexuality, household tasks, behaviour and character traits.

5.4. PARENTS

The girls expressed fairly clear childhood memories about their parents. Two of the girls seem to have had a disturbed family background as a result of alcohol abuse by fathers. This was expressed by Primrose as follows:

They always fought all the time because my father was drunk most of the time and if he wasn't drunk he would threaten to do something to us unless my mother gave him money to buy alcohol (Primrose).

Well, I've never been with my mother and father together, so I wouldn't know but from what I hear, they lived a very typical life as they usually fought a lot and my father was a drunk. But it happened that he stopped drinking, but he didn't get back with my mother (Hazel).

The other girls seem to have had a more stable family background in that they describe the relationship between the parents as loving, respectful and supportive. This can be seen in the following responses:

They were good parents. They had a good relationship. The thing I love is that they respected each other. They worked together (Nokwanda).

They showed respect to each other. They loved one another. They were helpful to each other. They went to church together. They were good people (Nonjabulo).

They respected each other a lot, but my dad was the one who always had the last say. Other than that they always trusted each other and were equal. They enjoyed going out for lunch and being a happy family (Nokwazi).

The feelings of the two girls who did not have happy childhood memories was that it is the father who enjoys authority, power and respect in a home. This was expressed as follows:

I would say my father, well, because he was male, he liked his home to be respected. He liked everyone who stayed with him to see him as the head of the house. I could also say because people from the outside respected him and felt he was a powerful man (Hazel).

My father, because in our culture the father is the head of the house and what he says is final (Primrose).

The other three girls felt that both parents share authority, power and respect in a home. This can be deduced from the following statements:

They are the same in my house. They think the same thing. They have the same power and respect (Nonjabulo).

I think both parents have power. Everyone has their own power (Nokwanda).

Both. My parents taught me to respect others as I would like in return. Everyone is equal (Nokwazi).

The responses of the girls indicate that they have different opinions about who is supposed to show love, respect and obedience in a home. These are their responses:

Both mother and father. I say both because feelings are for both males and females. It's not that one has to love and the other has to just receive the love and not love in return. If both parents show love and respect the relationship grows stronger and the child learns a lot from them (Hazel).

Mother. She shows you how you must respect yourself and how you have to take care of yourself and how you must respect each other (Nonjabulo).

In my opinion every person must show their love, but the mother is the best person to give love (Nokwanda).

The mother because the father thinks she must do it (Primrose).

With regards to who in the family should be responsible for childcare, more girls felt that both parents should share responsibility for this task. Some of the reasons given for this response are as follows:

Females and males are responsible because if you want to be called daddy and mummy and the child really means it, you must be able to take care of them (Primrose).

Both. Because the father was not the only one who wanted a child but the both of you made a decision so the both of you should make an effort or take pride for your responsibility. We all look to the father for most things (Nokwazi).

Mother and father because it is good to be loved by both parents. Both must show love for a child (Nonjabulo).

Two girls expressed different feelings about this aspect for the following reasons:

The mother, because she is good with the child. She is responsible for the child (Nokwanda).

Obviously the mother because women know very well how children are brought up. Basically they are the ones who give birth to them so they feel much better

bringing them up the way they feel is right (Hazel).

5.5. AGENTS IN GENDER CONSTRUCTION AND SEXUALITY

Most girls indicated that religious organizations, family members and grandmothers were influential in their understanding of what it is to be a male or female. Educators, community members and peers seemed to be less influential.

Girls indicated that the media, religious organizations, educators, family members and their grandmothers were influential in the way they relate to the opposite sex. Peers and community members have a lesser degree of influence in this regard.

With regards to virginity testing girls responded negatively. It seems as if these young girls do not approve of virginity testing. The impression is created that there is a violation of privacy in the process. However, girls do participate in the virginity testing process as a result of social and family pressures. This is evident in the sentiments expressed:

I don't like that virginity testing because every mother can see your private parts. Parents think that virginity testing is good for their children because they want to show other parents what type of children they have (Nokwanda).

I don't think virginity testing is the right thing to do. I think each and every girl should know her own status. But the only reason our parents like it is because they don't trust us. Since our parents also used to go for testing, they like their children to do the same (Nokwazi).

I feel that virginity testing is not right because as a young girl you should know how to carry yourself. Parents like virginity testing because it is a safe way to keep their children away from having sex at an early stage. It makes them proud (Hazel). I have been for virginity testing. It's very embarrassing. Firstly, it is not comfortable for a person to look at your private parts and sometimes the people with long nails

hurt us. It is important to parents because they want to boast about their daughters because it is very rare these days for young girls to get married while they are still virgins (Primrose).

Sometimes your parents force you. If they find out you are not a virgin it's embarrassing for the parents because the other person who was testing you needs a cow to wash her hands because she checked you and you weren't a virgin. And when they find out which boy took your virginity they are gonna go to that person and like a whole lot of people, males and females take sticks from the tree and hit you with it. You have to go and show them the person who took your virginity and that person has to pay for ruining you. Ja (Primrose).

Girls indicated that if virginity testing for males was introduced it would create equal standards for males and females. They were very vocal about their feelings as can be seen in the following statements:

I think it's fair that boys and girls must be tested because we will know that a boy is still a virgin and we must not rush for sex (Nonjabulo).

I think it's the right thing to do because it is fair. They only had virginity testing for girls, not for guys, So now I think it's fair because you can also find out if the guy is a virgin before marriage (Nokwazi).

It is fair to have virginity testing for boys because people of the community can know that this boy is looking after himself because he is abstaining from sex because of HIV (Primrose).

5.6. HOUSEHOLD TASKS

Most girls felt that household tasks should be shared except for cooking and washing which were identified as tasks for girls. They indicated that other household tasks like child-care, cleaning, cultivation, repairs and shopping should be done by both girls and boys. They identified gardening as a task for boys.

This line of thinking is consistent with what all the respondents expressed about what roles males and females play in the home. Although some still mention that it is the responsibility of the males to earn an income to provide for their families, they also believe that males must play a more meaningful role by participating in child-care. While they admit it is the female who does most household chores, they feel she must be able to access opportunities outside the home. Hazel had this to say about male and female roles at home:

Usually they (males) are the ones who look after the family, make sure that everything happens according to their rules. I think that males can also play a role in loving their families, as in to feel free to talk to their children about life because usually moms play that role and I think a child should hear from both parents. I think that females have become more stronger than men in terms of taking care of their families (Hazel).

Nokwazi states that:

A male is normally the breadwinner and the handy one at home. But life has changed. Women are also breadwinners. Some males don't have the luck of finding a job and the female is the breadwinner. A woman is also capable of helping her husband with the bills. Females should go out and earn their own money. A female is not only a person who stands behind a stove and cooks for you (Nokwazi).

Primrose sums up what Hazel and Nokwazi feel by saying:

In my home males and females play equal roles. Everyone is capable of doing what the other person is doing if they put their minds to it. Females are capable of doing what a male can do if they put their minds to it. Males and females are equal (Primrose).

Although the girls have expressed their opinions about roles males and females play in the home, it seems as if there is a distinction in the allocation of household chores to girls and boys. This is shown in the responses of the following respondents:

Well, I clean the house and cook for supper. It is totally different. Most boys do gardening and clean the yard. They feel that cleaning the house is kind of girlish. It is an everyday job which they can't handle. Plus to kneel down on the floor and mop is too complicated (Hazel).

Primrose agrees with this and says:

Washing dishes, cleaning, cooking, washing and ironing clothes. The boys do gardening and maybe helping by painting and fixing up things (Primrose).

There was a unanimous feeling that both males and females are responsible for bringing in an income into the household. These are the comments expressed to motivate their viewpoints:

Many people say it must be the male because they are regarded as the head of the family but I say both parents are responsible because if two people help each other it's much easier (Hazel).

They think it is the father but in my opinion everyone has the responsibility to bring income into the house (Nonjabulo).

Both the parents are responsible because nowadays we all want to be equal. Some husbands don't get jobs and the wife is the breadwinner (Nokwazi).

Both the male and female should work to bring an income into the home to help the family (Primrose).

5.7. ACCEPTABLE/UNACCEPTABLE BEHAVIOUR

Girls shared similar sentiments that holding hands, kissing, showing love, care and respect, getting jealous, using pet names and writing letters are acceptable acts that occur when a girl and boy are attracted to each other. All girls agreed that using a condom, being faithful and revealing HIV status to partners were important.

They strongly disagreed about showing each other body parts, having sex before marriage, insisting on having sex and becoming violent. They felt that having multiple partners was unacceptable.

Opinions were divided on the issue of girls being attracted to rich boys and on the issue of attraction between girls or between boys.

Primrose is very matter of fact in expressing what emotions are considered acceptable for boys and girls when she says:

Girls have to feel inferior, they are considered weak, soft-hearted and emotional.
Boys have to be tough (Primrose).

Her sentiments are shared by Hazel who says:

Okay, boys and girls react in different ways. Girls are very emotional, they have a soft spot for everything. For boys everything is possible, no matter how bad the

situation is. What happened has happened and there is no turning back (Hazel).

Differences between girls and boys are evident in the socialization of girls and boys. When asked to respond to what girls and boys are taught about how to sit, dress, play, and help at home the following answers were given:

That a girl should sit properly, close her legs, don't sit like a boy. Don't play violently because they could get hurt badly. They are also taught how to treat females, how to respect elders and everyone around them (Primrose).

A girl should never sit with her legs open because a boy sits like that. Girls have a different time to be back at home and a boy can come home at any time. A girl is not allowed to wear pants and to play with boys. Boys sit anyhow, and can dress anyway. And if you are in a relationship don't change partners because these days HIV/AIDS is a big problem (Nokwazi).

They (girls) should sit in an orderly manner, dress like a lady and the clothes you wear should always be clean. To play with boys has always been regarded as unhealthy because boys play rough games. When it comes to cleaning they should always give a hand. Most of the time boys are found playing on roads. I think they are taught some other behaviour like to respect women (Hazel).

You must sit like a girl, not like a boy. You must dress like a girl. Don't show your backside. You must help around the house. Boys are taught a lot of things. They are taught how to treat women (Nonjabulo).

You must sit like a girl. You must play with girl's things in a responsible way. You must dress in nice clothes and help around the house. Boys are taught to be responsible men and how to act around women (Nokwanda).

These girls are taught that menstruation is a time when girls must take extra special care of themselves. This includes having regular baths. It is a time when they must distance themselves from boys. This is what they had to say about menstruation and their bodies:

Our bodies are the most special. It needs our loving and caring. No one else is responsible for looking after our bodies. The body is private. Everyone should have pride in their bodies. Menstruation is natural and we should be clean about it and we are taught never to be with boys at that time of the month (Nokwazi).

If you are menstruating you must not sit around boys. You must bath about three times a day (Nokwanda).

The girl must work hard and don't go with boys. Have a bath at least two times a day (Nonjabulo).

Well, about menstruation girls are taught that it comes along at a certain age and that you are not to have sex during that cycle. During this cycle you have to be clean (Hazel).

All girls agreed that if a girl is attracted to a boy, she will not make the first move. However, if a boy is attracted to a girl, he will approach her to let her know his feelings. The reasons given for this kind of behaviour are explained as follows:

Yes, girls don't show how they feel about a boy. Boys are free to tell a girl how they feel (Nonjabulo).

The boy just goes to the girl and tells her that he loves her. But the girls don't do the same thing. The girl does not go to the boy and tell him she loves him. Why not? It is because the boy will not respect you (Nokwanda).

If the female tells the male how she feels, the male would take advantage and make

the girl do things she does not want to do, like pressurising her to have sex and if she refuses he will tell you that you claimed you loved him and you have to show him how much you love him (Primrose).

I believe in my grandparents' culture that the boy is the one who makes the first move and the girl is never the one who goes and tells the boy. When a girl approaches a boy it seems as if the girl is a whore and the boy intends to ask for more than what you want in a relationship. If you like a guy, well, too bad if he is not willing to make the first approach. Then I'll just have to forget him (Nokwazi).

With regards to what girls and boys do to show their attraction to the opposite sex, the following were their responses:

I'll try to be close to him, but I won't tell him about my feelings. Maybe by that he will know how I feel about him (Hazel).

Maybe if I go and tell him, he will take advantage of it and want me to do things I don't want to do. Like pressure me to have sex. Sometimes when a boy gets a girl pregnant and she tells him, he won't take responsibility because the girl came to him (Primrose).

I won't tell him anything. I will wait for him to tell me that he likes me. If you tell a boy you like him he won't respect you enough. He will think you tell every boy you see the same thing (Nokwanda).

I think the girls start hugging the boys, kissing and playing with them. Some girls give the boys presents. Some of the boys play with the girls and get them pregnant. And the girl comes to the boy and tells him she is pregnant. Then he says I didn't force you. You were not in love with me only. You got some other boyfriends, not only me. They play with the girls (Nonjabulo).

On the issue of confiding in grandmothers about their attraction to the opposite sex, all girls emphatically indicated that they would not. They outlined reasons for this viewpoint as follows:

No! Grandmothers really don't care how old they are - they got the power to hit you if you are not over twenty one or if you are older and not married , you can never talk to your grandmother about a boy. They are very strict. Grandmothers are people to talk to when you are having family problems. And they give you advice when you are getting married, advice about how to behave in your new home (Nokwazi).

No, because for me as an African girl you are not allowed to have feelings for boys. When you are older and independent you can do what you want, but while you are in your grandparents house you have to follow their rules (Primrose).

No. I feel I am too young to be talking to my grandmother about relationships. The only thing I should be asking about is advice about how to live my life at a young age. It is like letting her down after she has brought you up (Hazel).

No! My grandmother does not like to talk about that stuff. It would not be good to talk to my granny. Why not? It will feel like I do not respect her. Where will I start? (Nonjabulo).

All girls indicated strongly against having sex before marriage and being involved with more than one sexual partner:

I think it is not good for the body because before marriage you will have different partners and by the time you reach the marital stage, you will be useless, so they say (Hazel).

Having more than one sexual partner is not good. I think that you are spoiling your

reputation. You start not being attractive anymore and when it comes to your relationship in a marriage, your partner starts having affairs because he feels you aren't a good person anymore (Hazel).

I think sex before marriage is not right because there are too many sexually transmitted diseases and you can be infected. It also goes against the way I was taught that a woman should have sex when married (Primrose).

It is not right to have sex before marriage because you can lose your virginity at an early stage. You might have an unplanned pregnancy. It is not right to have more than one sexual partner. It should not be allowed. It leads to diseases and when you fall pregnant, you will not be able to determine or figure out who is the right father because of having more than one partner (Nokwazi).

To have more than one sexual partner is not good at all. If you respect yourself and learn to love yourself, you will see it is not a good thing. You must love one person and have one sexual partner (Nonjabulo).

On the issue of how relationships male and female teenagers have are viewed by others, all girls indicated that boys could have relationships but if a girl had to inform her family about having a relationship, it would be considered unacceptable:

No, they don't accept it. In these times that we are talking about they feel that we must concentrate on our studies. If they see you with a boy they think that you will get pregnant and he will not be able to support you. If a boy has a relationship with a girl, they do not react badly (Hazel).

No. When a parent finds out that a girl has a boyfriend she'll get a scolding and she'll get a hiding but when the parents finds out that a boy has a girlfriend it is not like that (Primrose).

My grandparents, they believe in the olden days so they don't allow us to have boyfriends until we reach twenty one or we start working and then they allow us to have boyfriends (Nokwazi).

No they don't allow us because they think the boys can do something to the girls, like make them pregnant. They think it's wrong (Nonjabulo).

Some parents like the boy's family do allow the boy to have a girlfriend, but for the girls it is different (Nokwanda).

5.8. ROLE MODELS

5.8.1. GRANDMOTHERS

Most girls indicated they do not miss a male head in their homes. It seems as if all the grandmothers advise their granddaughters about their lives and the girls do follow this advice as they accept their grandmothers as authority figures. Girls feel that they should be contributing towards household finances to assist their grandmothers

These are the responses of the girls when asked about what lessons they have learnt from their grandmothers about what it is to be a man or a woman:

She taught me how a girl must act around people. She must not act funny.

She mustn't scream, run around the road at night (Nokwanda).

She taught me if you are a girl, you must be a hard worker. You must carry yourself in the right way, For example if a man wants to ask you out, and have sex with you maybe something bad will happen, like you will get pregnant and you will have a problem (Hazel).

You must always respect other people (Primrose).

To be independent and not look up to a man to do everything for you but also to stand up on your own (Nokwazi).

The girls were questioned about their acceptance of advice given by their grandmothers and peers. This is what they had to say:

My grandmother because she is more experienced about men and women than my friends (Primrose).

I would say my grandmother because she knows much more than my friends (Nokwazi).

My grandmother because she speaks from experience (Hazel).

My grandmother because she gives me good advice (Nokwanda).

Grandmothers featured prominently as role models to emulate acceptable behaviour as women:

My grandmother because they told me how women must act, speak and dress and what you must do and not do. Like I mustn't drink, smoke, run around. The things I must do is go to Church and do my things in my own time, like when I am finished with my responsibilities in the house (Nokwanda).

My grandma teaches me how to respect other people and the right and the wrong. To behave well as a girl. Not to party around, not to drink and smoke in public. If you do drink it can be an occasion, it is not for others to see (Hazel).

My granny because she told me not to smoke when you get married, not to drink. You must respect and you must not fight. You must talk to each other nicely. You must learn to respect (Nonjabulo).

My grandmother because my grandmother taught me that a lady is a person who takes care of herself, who doesn't do things she doesn't feel comfortable with just because other people want her to do it. A lady makes people around her comfortable (Primrose).

5.8.2. SIGNIFICANT OTHERS

In the absence of a father figure girls have used a variety of other males as role models:

I learnt from my grandfather that there must be respect and honour for one's roots and to look out for the people in the home. I never lived with my father for lots of time so I didn't learn from him (Nokwanda).

My father was responsible but I didn't learn something nice about him because he was a player, like he used to change girlfriends and I think that men are like that . My grandfather was a respectable man. He knew a lot about culture and was respected (Hazel).

My brother because by looking at him I can see how other men feel. Like when their girlfriends hurt them that they can hurt just like girls (Primrose).

Well, I wouldn't say much. I don't know much but I normally learnt what I know from my grandfather and he normally told me how boys are. That boys may be cool sometimes and boys are not everything in life (Nokwazi).

My neighbour because I see sometimes when he is angry. He shouts at his wife and hits his child. And he does everything wrong and he drinks and gets drunk and shouts and swears (Nonjabulo).

5.9. ACCEPTABLE /UNACCEPTABLE CHARACTERISTICS

5.9.1. MALES

The girls were asked what qualities they consider acceptable in a man and what qualities are unacceptable to them. This is what they said:

Respect, responsibility and honour. And he must be caring and loving. He must not be disrespectful, jealous and abusive. An understanding person who loves me for what I am and he must not try to change me (Nokwanda).

He must not be disrespectful, a sex addict and not an angry person and just expect the wife to do everything, ja. A husband must be loyal, respectful, kind enough to take care of a family. He must be like a friend. Whenever there is a problem we can both sort out the problem without any arguments (Hazel).

I would like to see he must have care, respect others and show me love and when I need something he must get it. He mustn't fight and shout and swear my child and me and he mustn't hit us. I don't want to see him drinking and sleeping in the streets. He must come home and drink at home but he mustn't shout (Nonjabulo).

I want a husband who would love me for me. I want him to be fun. He must be exciting. He must also spoil me. He must buy me gifts. And he must do something big for my grandmother. No violence. He mustn't drink. Oh, smoking is fine and he must like children and especially me. He mustn't be disrespectful to older or younger people. He mustn't hit the kids or hit me, ja (Nokwazi).

You will have to find the right one because if you get married, you will have to spend the rest of your life with the person. It's pretty hard for us Africans to divorce your husband because you pay a lot for her. So you have to make the right decision because there is no way back. A husband must never beat up his

wife no matter how wrong she might have been. That's why you can never marry someone for his appearance but for what's inside (Nokwazi).

He must love me, he must be caring. He must show me that he still loves me like he loved me the first time He mustn't drink. Alcohol makes people mad and they start a fight and beat up the wives. He mustn't smoke, do drugs and he must be able to manage his anger. When he is angry, he mustn't take out his anger on other people or undermine people (Primrose).

He must be honest and helpful, help in the house with cleaning and cooking. He must be helpful because when he knows how hard it is to do housework and cooking he won't order you around like a maid but he will be understanding (Primrose).

5.9.2. FEMALES

These were the girls' responses when asked about the qualities a husband would find attractive in them:

The way I dress, speak and the way I act. The responsibilities I have, like what I do at home, like I don't go to jam, party all night long. I cook and do housework (Nokwanda).

I'm a responsible person in taking care of the family and I'm a fun loving person. I am free to talk about anything to anyone (Hazel).

I can respect and I'd be with him through thick and thin. I'd love him, ja. I'd be honest and faithful (Nokwazi).

I shall love him and I can take care and I can respect him, even in the hard times and bad times (Nonjabulo).

I'd love him, care for him and if he needs me I'd be there for him. I'd like him for what he is on the inside, not for his appearance (Primrose).

These were the girls' responses when they were asked what they think are qualities men find acceptable and unacceptable in women:

A wife must be respectful, loving and a good mother. But some husbands want their wives to only work at home and not to find a job. A wife must never go without the husband's permission. The husband is always the one who has the last say (Nokwazi).

Well, from what I hear, they prefer a wife who is a hard worker, respectful and faithful to her husband. The wife is not supposed to have male friends. She is not to be found hanging on roads with friends. She must not be lazy and disrespectful (Hazel).

A good wife must be understanding, responsible and hardworking. She must not tell lies, drink and smoke (Nokwanda).

Respectful, beautiful, caring, loving, hardworking, honest. She must not be tough, argumentative, cheating, gossiping and idle (Primrose).

5.10. APPEARANCE

With regards to opinions about what kind of body is considered to be feminine and what is masculine the following thoughts were expressed:

A feminine body must not be too fat or too thin. It must be well developed and attractive. You must take care of it so that it stays attractive. A masculine body must be tough. The person must exercise so that he stays tough and also be attractive to girls (Primrose).

It's a belief I'll never agree on. You can never change your body or how you were brought up. People should accept you the way you are and if they can't then too bad. If you were born thin or fat, a person shouldn't love you for how you look or how fat you are (Nokwazi).

You must accept what God gave you. Don't wish for another body. They believe a masculine body must be hard and strong. I don't believe that because we have different types of bodies (Nokwanda).

All girls expressed similar opinions about equality between men and women:

I believe that we all are equal. We think the same, just our bodies are different (Nokwanda).

I believe that men and women are equal but we think differently (Hazel).

Women are not inferior to men because they can do everything that a man can (Primrose).

These responses sum up the data findings. In chapter seven, I will analyse the data findings outlined above. This analysis will be the basis on which I will make conclusions about the impact of living with pensioner grandmothers as household heads on the gender construction and sexuality of secondary school girls.

CHAPTER SIX

6.1. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

In this chapter I will relate the data findings recorded in chapter five to the theoretical framework and the theories about gender and sexuality analysed in chapter two and the discussion on household heads in chapter three. The intention is to suggest how living with pensioner grandmothers has shaped the gender construction and sexuality of their teenage granddaughters.

To facilitate this discussion, I will examine how grandmothers and their granddaughters construct gender and sexuality, and the similarities and differences between the two. In addition, I will attempt to analyse the influence that grandmothers exert on the gender construction and sexuality of their granddaughters.

6.2. HOW DO ZULU PENSIONER GRANDMOTHERS AND THEIR TEENAGE GRANDDAUGHTERS CONSTRUCT GENDER?

To provide a simple definition of the concepts of gender and sexuality is impossible. As has been outlined in chapter two, there are many variables that impact on and influence the meanings attached to gender and sexuality. In the light of contributions made by western discourses and in particular in the South African context, I will try to determine how a select group of Zulu pensioner grandmothers who are household heads and their granddaughters construct gender and sexuality. I will engage in this task from a postmodern perspective which is the theoretical approach I have adopted for this research study.

6.2.1. HOW GRANDMOTHERS CONSTRUCT GENDER

The findings suggest that pensioner grandmothers who are household heads do not subscribe to the sexual division of labour. They claim to teach their grandchildren

consciously that both males and females are equally responsible for carrying out household chores. Grandmothers do not distinguish between tasks exclusively reserved for males and females but they do place emphasis on sharing.

This observation is contrary to traditional African teachings that females are inferior, that males have greater prestige and power and that girls are expected to wait on their brothers (Malherbe et al. 2000:122).

However, this observation is consistent with research that was carried out on female-headed households in Mexico by Chant (1997) which revealed that there is fluidity in the gendered division of labour, supported by the evidence that girls were not burdened by housework, because boys were encouraged to share household chores and care of siblings.

The observation about fluidity in the gender division of labour is in keeping with a postmodern perspective on gender as is discussed in chapter two. This viewpoint is supported by postmodernists who maintain that there is no essential femaleness or femininity but that society and history determine what it means to be a woman. The implication is that gender is not innate, but that it changes in response to changing circumstances, for instance, in this study, socio-economic necessities result in a change in gender constructions.

Another deviation from traditional teachings is the issue of education. Grandmothers ensure there is no discrimination between what is expected for a girl-child and a boy-child. Instead, it seems as if there is a belief that girls should be educated at all costs. Education is linked to the need for empowerment of girls and gaining of independence.

A similar scenario was observed by Chant (1997) in her study in Mexico where female heads encouraged girls' education with the intention to equip them with survival skills.

As is indicated in chapter two, traditional African patriarchal belief has a divergent view about the education of girls and boys. Following the discussion in chapter two, in patriarchal societies, power is vested in the hands of males. Foucault (1990) would argue against this assertion as he maintains that power is not repressive. In this study, this assertion would hold true with regards to grandmothers breaking with normative values to ensure they empower their granddaughters and encourage independence. In this sense, the grandmothers could be said to be generating discourses of resistance to patriarchal discourses.

Whilst there may be a divergence from traditional African patriarchal beliefs about education and the sexual division of labour, there are other aspects that remain congruent. Respect is highlighted as an important characteristic that should be developed in both males and females. It is viewed as essential for building strong family relationships and ensuring success in life.

According to grandmothers, respect and love are two attributes one must have to be 'womanly'. It is interesting to note this distinction for females, where love is considered a trait they must have. Grandmothers do believe that granddaughters should be nurturing, caring, loving and respectful. In this regard it is clear to observe that grandmothers believe that these characteristics are feminine. The implication is that grandmothers construct sex and gender as synonymous. In other words, they themselves have essentialist notions of sex and gender in some respects, but seem (unconsciously perhaps) aware of the constructed nature of gender in others. Grandmothers reveal a viewpoint which is linked to the African notion of motherism, itself an essentialist perspective, which contrasts with the Western feminist notion that motherhood is a patriarchal construct.

These beliefs are congruent with the postmodern view that truth is not universal, but related to discourses that are influenced by historical and cultural position and change. It supports the postmodern view that truth and knowledge cannot be separated from the place of production and power relationships that impact on it. In this particular research

study, it allows me to accept that social change can occur in one aspect while other norms remain static. For example, there is a difference in the way grandmothers in this study view females and education and the gendered division of labour in comparison to traditional expectations. On the other hand they subscribe to traditional norms about the issue of respect and females as nurturers and carers.

The data findings imply that grandmothers sometimes construct gender along binary lines and traditional norms. However, when the need arises, they can diverge from traditional teachings.

6.2.2. HOW GRANDMOTHERS CONSTRUCT SEXUALITY

The findings reveal a policing of granddaughters' sexuality by grandmothers. They understand sexuality as sexual activity and the taboos and expectations surrounding it. They advocate a very strict, autocratic control and restriction over their granddaughters' sexuality. It is clearly revealed in the various ways that grandmothers try to curtail their granddaughters' movement and communication with boys.

Girls are encouraged to remain indoors and occupy themselves with household chores. In fact, it seems as if the home is associated with safety. So, the converse would hold true, that to be outdoors is dangerous. Thus, girls are not allowed to stand on streets. Neither are they allowed to go to discos. It can be deduced that space is gendered in traditional terms, females occupy the private and males the public domain.

Girls are warned against fooling around with boys. Even talking is discouraged as this type of contact may lead to them being tempted to sleep around. Home visits by boys are strictly prohibited. It is clearly obvious that these control measures are used to prevent contact with boys and discourage any form of relationship with boys. Relationships with boys are prohibited if a girl is not twenty one years old. The implication is that grandmothers are very afraid that their granddaughters will indulge in sexual relations

and ruin their lives. Furthermore, the possibility of unwanted pregnancies and of contracting sexually transmitted diseases is clearly communicated to granddaughters.

In the light of my discussion in chapter two, this extreme control over the sexuality of granddaughters by grandmothers differs from that which occurred in traditional Zulu homes where girls were allowed to have relationships with boys. However, there are some similarities to what missionaries taught converts to Christianity about abstinence until marriage. These findings illustrate postmodern perspectives about local history and context impacting on concepts of sexuality.

Grandmothers use the institutions of the church and traditional values to define and so control sexuality. Christian teachings and traditional African norms and values have merged to socialise the young girls into what they consider acceptable behaviour. Both are considered important regulators of standards of behaviour that will ensure moral and spiritual sustenance. Granddaughters are encouraged to join youth groups to resist negative influences and be guided in the right direction. They are also expected to participate in cultural ceremonies to strengthen family ties. Grandmothers expect their granddaughters to participate in virginity testing.

Grandmothers place great emphasis on cleanliness with regards to women. This expectation includes their personal hygiene. The notion of cleanliness for females emanates from traditional teachings about how a female should conduct herself. Cleanliness and menstruation are issues that define femininity and further reveal how constructions of gender and sexuality are deployed in the family to police women's bodies.

Chapter two also includes a discussion on Foucault's (1990) theory that subjectivity is produced on and in bodies through social discourses. The findings about the way grandmothers control their granddaughters' sexuality fits in with the theory of Foucault about Jeremy Bentham's design of the Panopticon and surveillance resulting in the production of docile bodies (Bartky 1988: 61-83). Using the idea of the Panopticon with

regards to the cultural construction of women's bodies, Foucault implies that women are complicit in their self-surveillance and actually resort to policing themselves.

The research findings of this study support this claim. The grandmothers' expectations and teachings about the female body result in the production of docile bodies, thus illustrating Foucault's assertion that sexuality is a dense transfer point for relations of power. To teach girls to sit, dress and walk in certain ways produces a traditional, patriarchal version of a 'feminine' body, respectful and submissive, especially towards men. Grandmothers seem to believe that this type of female body will keep men away, in that their granddaughters are not 'loose and available', but the production of the docile female body is in keeping with what traditional Zulu culture expects from a good, loyal, and docile wife. In this respect, grandmothers reinforce traditional patriarchal constructions of femininity and female sexuality.

6.2.3. HOW GIRLS CONSTRUCT GENDER

Girls believe that their grandmothers have an impact on them with regards to how they should conduct themselves as girls. The respondents felt that they would be guided by their grandmothers' advice because of their experiences and wisdom. They indicated that grandmothers taught them acceptable codes of behaviour and responsibility.

Girls construct femininity with conservative behaviour in terms of posture and dress. They are socialised to believe that they must sit conservatively, with legs together, as sitting with legs apart, is a characteristic attributed to males and is not 'lady-like'. Dress also impacts on femininity. Females wear dresses because they should not expose their bodies. The grandmothers' production of docile bodies thus seems to have been internalised by the girls.

The analysis of how girls construct gender, suggest that the girls associate femininity with love, respect, responsibility, honesty, obedience, and being family-oriented. In this

regard the suggestion is that they are nurturers and carers. Females are perceived to be sensitive, emotional and soft-hearted. They sit, play and dress in a conservative and lady-like manner which is regarded as feminine.

Femininity is related to remaining close to home, occupying oneself with housework and going to Church. It excludes loitering outside the home with friends, attending parties, drinking and smoking. A girl should not be out of doors at night. She should not be partying, drinking, smoking and getting involved in relationships. Being respectful, responsible, independent, hard working, taking care of one self and others and attending church are positive attributes.

They felt that positive characteristics in a wife were responsibility, honesty and respect: furthermore a wife was expected to be hard-working, faithful, family-oriented and loving. A wife should not have other male friends or spend time away from the home with friends loitering on roads and partying. In addition, drinking, smoking and being argumentative are viewed as negative characteristics.

All the girls believe, significantly, that a female is the dominant figure who shows love, respect and obedience. They reveal that there is a difference in the emotional make-up of males and females. Females are generally emotional and soft-hearted while males are tough, determined go-getters. This finding is in keeping with the way in which their grandmothers conflate sex and gender, and construct traditional binaries by emphasising what is 'expected' of a male and a female.

The girls' responses indicate that they feel that while the common assumption is that it is a male responsibility to provide for the family, a female must be given the opportunity to do so if she desires.

Girls believe that masculinity is related to being respectful, tough, determined and assertive. Respect was a characteristic that all girls indicated is a requirement in a husband. Love and care were also highly rated. They felt that equality between males and

females should be accepted. Anger, violence, abuse, drinking and disrespect were highlighted as negative and unacceptable for a successful relationship.

In contrast to beliefs held by their grandmothers, girls believe that there should be a difference in tasks allocated to males and females. They believe that gardening should be the responsibility of males and females should do cooking and washing. However, other tasks like child-care, cultivation, shopping and cleaning should be shared.

This discussion indicates that there is a change from some traditional teachings about the perceived natural roles of females as carers and nurturers. While certain teachings remain similar, others change in keeping with the dynamic nature of societies.

6.2.4. HOW GIRLS CONSTRUCT SEXUALITY

Girls understand sexuality to be linked to feelings about their bodies and how and where female bodies relate to male bodies. Their perception is that sexuality must not be displayed, either verbally or through performance. It must be secret, hidden and controlled. Sexuality must never be spoken about to grandmothers. It must be controlled with regards to boys because it can become dangerous.

All girls emphatically stated that they would never under any circumstances discuss any issue about attraction to a boy with their grandmothers. They felt that if they did raise this subject it would be perceived to be disrespectful. Grandmothers are very strict and their rules about no relationships with boys have to be followed. Girls are encouraged to concentrate on their studies and not get involved with boys.

This strict control over a girl's sexuality is in keeping with traditional and Christian norms. However, it is in contrast to what occurred in postcolonial South Africa with the advent of urbanisation and migration.

All girls indicated they would not reveal their feelings of attraction to a boy, but rather wait for him to realise that she does feel an attraction. They would expect the boy to make the first move because if the girl does that she would not be accorded respect, she will be viewed as forward, a whore and will be pressurised into having sex. If the girl became pregnant, the boy would accuse her of having other boyfriends, he would not want to support the girl and would deny being the father of her child. While they have these opinions, they also indicate that once a boy declares his attraction to the girl first, certain expressions of sexuality are acceptable.

With regards to relationships with boys, these girls felt that having sex before marriage was unacceptable. One should not expose one's body. They did not disapprove of activities like kissing and holding hands before marriage. All girls unanimously indicated that they did not accept the idea of multiple partners. They felt that having more than one partner implies one does not have a good reputation, and one would become less attractive. They expressed fears of pregnancy, sexually transmitted diseases and loss of respect. They agreed that being faithful, using a condom and revealing ones HIV status were important.

This discussion highlights a difference between the responses of these teenage granddaughters and the observed behaviour of the youth in various media in post-apartheid South Africa, where sexuality is openly on display.

All respondents expressed negative opinions about virginity testing. They object to the extreme control exercised through virginity testing. Those girls who do participate in virginity testing do so as a result of social pressures exerted by elders in the family. One criticism against virginity testing is that it robs one of privacy. Virginity testing is painful and they do not like exposing themselves. Girls are forced to participate by parents who want to show off to others by boasting to others that their daughters are virgins. They felt that if virginity testing is to remain the norm then males should also be subjected to it.

Girls accept their grandmothers' teaching that menstruation is a time when girls must maintain a distance from boys and ensure strict standards of cleanliness.

They felt that females should be comfortable with their physical appearance. This suggests implicit resistance to the production of docile bodies. With regards to males, they expressed the view that males must be tough, hard and strong, which implies acceptance of very traditional constructs of masculinity.

6.3. SIMILARITIES BETWEEN HOW GRANDMOTHERS AND GRANDDAUGHTERS CONSTRUCT GENDER AND SEXUALITY

Grandmothers and granddaughters share similar sentiments about respect. It is a characteristic that is highly prized in males and females, young and old. It is regarded as a building block of successful relationships and one's future.

In Zulu culture respect is viewed as a building block of society (Ntuli 2000:33). It keeps the family together and determines the hierarchical structure in the family (ibid.:32). Respect is mutual between elders and children. It is important in moulding character (ibid.:34). Men are to be accorded more respect than women (ibid.:33). This view is in keeping with the patriarchal nature of Zulu culture.

Granddaughters are encouraged to love and care for their husbands and family members. They are taught that love is a womanly trait. The girls' responses indicate that they agree with their grandmothers. They indicate that both mothers and fathers should express love but that mothers show a greater degree of love and care.

Both groups of women agree that bodies are special and care of bodies must be exercised in a responsible manner. Girls adhere to standards set for cleanliness and menstruation. They also accept lessons from grandmothers about conservative dress and the restrictions imposed on their space.

One of the key characteristics that grandmothers would like to inculcate in their granddaughters is independence. This is one of the reasons why they strive so hard to ensure that their granddaughters are educated. Granddaughters respond positively to this expectation. They do want to be independent and earn an income. In addition, they make note of changing social, economic and political circumstances impacting on males and females. They believe that traditional roles that males and females played are changing and they must also change. It must be noted that while independence of females is promoted by grandmothers as a means of financial stability, their sexuality is heavily policed, creating contradictory messages. Both grandmothers and granddaughters agree on abstention from sex before marriage.

6.4. DIFFERENCES BETWEEN HOW GRANDMOTHERS AND GRANDDAUGHTERS CONSTRUCT GENDER AND SEXUALITY

Three major differences were noted with regards to the differences between how grandmothers and granddaughters construct gender and sexuality. These differences relate to virginity testing, relationships with boys and allocation of household chores.

Household chores are not an issue of contention, but seem to be viewed in contrasting ways by grandmothers and granddaughters. The data findings suggest that grandmothers do not subscribe to the gendered division of labour. They would allocate similar tasks to both male and female grandchildren.

However, it is interesting to note that granddaughters are more conservative and they believe that certain tasks should be solely allocated to males, others only to females and only some should be shared. The suggestion is that girls are more conservative than their grandmothers about the sexual division of labour. They tend to be more traditional while their grandmothers are definitely moving away from traditional beliefs. This movement away from traditional norms by grandmothers is in keeping with what was discussed in chapter two about gender patterns changing in times of crisis. In this study, the challenges faced by changing household structures and economic constraints constitute the crisis.

Relating to the issue of virginity testing, there is a vast difference in the opinions between these two groups of women. Grandmothers feel that it is non-negotiable. They believe strongly that it is a very necessary part of tradition and culture, it defines family bonds and is a mechanism that assists in controlling the sexual activity of their granddaughters. Virginity testing is completely supported by grandmothers.

Teenage granddaughters do not share these sentiments. They regard virginity testing as demeaning and painful, an unnecessary requirement that they are compelled to participate in to pamper to the whims of elders who hold up the results as a trophy proclaiming their own prestige in a virgin girl-child. They also express concern about the importance that is placed on virginity testing for females while the status of males seems to be insignificant in comparison.

Granddaughters' relationships with boys are totally prohibited by grandmothers. They are convinced that such a relationship will definitely ruin their granddaughters' lives as they can lead to pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases.

On the other hand, granddaughters do not consider relationships with boys as detrimental to their lives. They seem to think that they can have a relationship, but not indulge in sex before marriage. They disagree with the idea that a girl could have multiple partners.

6.5. CONCLUSIONS

The above discussion shows that grandmothers adapt to their living conditions and circumstances. On the one hand, they are extremely conservative, for example, with regards to sexuality. On the other hand, they seem to agree with the radical feminist viewpoint that the personal is political and indicate that they are progressive and capable of diverging from traditional norms, as they do with the sexual division of labour in the household and the education of girls.

These grandmothers have internalised the traditional norms of patriarchy, yet they are capable of re-inventing and re-defining them to cope with the situation they find themselves in as household heads in very dynamic times. It is clearly indicated that they can assume headship of a household and cope well, if not better than male-headed households.

The concept of a female-headed household is at variance with traditional norms that a male is always the household-head. Yet this study, as have various other studies, reveals the widespread phenomenon of changing patterns in household structures.

This development impacts on the question of agency. The role played by grandmothers suggests that women have an enhanced position in their societies and communities. Older African women have always been accorded respect. They have always been regarded as transmitters of culture and now also play the role of creators of culture. These grandmothers need to be lauded for this progressive move in bringing about change that is beneficial to women in that they are not restricted by patriarchal norms and are allowed to exercise economic independence by pursuing careers.

The young girls, granddaughters of pensioner grandmothers, are growing up in an urban environment and are exposed to experiences and circumstances not blue-printed by tradition and culture. This in effect has created the opportunity for the generation of new discourses about life, in the case of this research study, gender and sexuality.

This development has also resulted in tensions and contradictions, whereby it is evident that while granddaughters have internalised the teachings of their grandmothers, they resist certain aspects of these teachings. For example, they believe that sexuality must be policed, but they disagree with the extent of the policing. The grandmothers seem to collude with patriarchy in the production of docile bodies (aided by virginity-testing), but the girls seem to resist this. The grandmothers seem to endorse the agency and independence of the girls (especially where education is concerned), but police this independence harshly when relationships with men are concerned. The grandmothers

seem to be preparing the girls for a life without men by endorsing old-fashioned constructs of 'femininity'. Furthermore the grandmothers attempt to guide their granddaughters about sexuality on the one hand, but forbid the discussion of it on the other. Foucault (1990) would identify these tensions and contradictions as examples of resistance and the exercise of power, two variables essential for the generation of discourse.

Related to the issue of agency, there seems to be a sense of independence and individuality displayed by these girls which suggests that they are empowered and can exercise decision-making skills with regards to their bodies and what they want in life. It seems that they have greater access to freedom and personal power as a result of their grandmothers and in resistance to their grandmothers' discourses of gender and sexuality. This is very interesting as it suggests that the girls, because of being raised in grandmother-headed households, can create *new* discourses of gender and sexuality which are hybrid combinations of traditional beliefs and their more contemporary reactions to them. The girls' sense of independence also implies that they have not been entirely determined by the discourses of their grandmothers, but have agency, important in postmodern theory for the production of any meaningful identity (Weedon 1997:176). These girls may well have learned that women are not the objects of patriarchal discourses, but can be the subjects of their own female-generated discourses.

In this sense, pensioner grandmothers do have a positive impact on the gender construction and sexuality of granddaughters. Living in a female-headed household has other, more obvious, positive effects. For example, in these homes there is a lack of aggression that is characteristic of some male-headed households where violence is used to resolve problems. As noted earlier, female household heads tend to resolve differences and conflicts by negotiation and dialogue. The implication is that the children, both females and males, from this kind of household this will adopt similar coping strategies to resolve their own differences. This could very well result in the creation of a more tolerant and less violent society.

These lessons, coupled with the emphasis on respect could lead to relationships that are relatively free from authoritarian, patriarchal and male-dominated role models. In turn, this could influence how individuals construct masculinity and femininity. The change in the sexual division of labour could mark the beginning of the dissolution of binaries in normative gender patterns. The female-headed household may just possibly become the site for the construction of alternative forms of gender and sexuality. This could mark the beginning of greater male involvement and commitment in the home as sons, husbands and fathers, and consequent changes in the constructions of masculinity.

The transformation of the traditional Zulu family that existed in post-colonial South Africa could result in changes in hegemonic Zulu gender ideologies and, ultimately, in a more tolerant and peaceful society in KwaZulu-Natal.

6.6. SCOPE FOR FURTHER STUDIES

The findings of this brief pilot study have identified issues that need further investigation.

I suggest further investigations into the gender construction and sexuality of teenage grandsons living with pensioner grandmothers. As gender and sexuality are deeply relational, greater understanding of the constructions of 'masculinity', 'femininity' and 'sexualities' in grandmother-headed households will result if similar studies of grandsons are made.

Additional research examining the impact of being raised by grandmothers on gender roles of adult males and females could serve to confirm and support these findings. Investigations about the impact of education on the quality of life of granddaughters raised by pensioner grandmothers would also be beneficial to monitor whether education has really empowered them.

Finally, discourses of gender and sexuality are important aspects of identity construction. How these contribute to the identity of these learners as South African Zulu-speaking women needs to be investigated.

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Appendices

Appendix 1

This questionnaire is part of a research to study gender construction and sexuality. The information that you are contributing will remain confidential. Your identity will not be disclosed to anyone.

Please answer honestly. There are no right answers or wrong answers.

QUESTIONNAIRE: (Designed for pensioner grandmothers)

1. How did you start caring for your grandchildren?

Children's parents are deceased

Children's parents are divorced

Children's parents have moved away for work reasons

2. Do you ask your grandchild/children to help with work at home?

Yes

No

3. Who would you give indoor household work to?

Boys

Girls

4. What do you teach your grandchild/children about work?

Certain work is only for girls

Certain work is only for boys

Girls and boys can do the same type of work

5. What do you teach your grandchild/children about education?

Boys must be more educated

Girls must be more educated

Boys and girls must receive equal education

6. Who should be allowed to take part in activities outside the home?

Boys

Girls

Both boys and girls

7. What do you spend your pension fund on?

food

accommodation

clothing

school fees

medical fees

lights and water

transport

other (specify) _____

8. How much do you spend on these items? Indicate your answer in rands.

- food
- accommodation
- clothing
- school fees
- medical fees
- lights and water
- transport
- other (specify) _____

9. Do you receive money from any one else?

Yes No

10. Who gives you this money?

- Grandchildren
- Relatives
- Friends
- Welfare
- Government

11. Do you get school fees concession from your grandchild's school?

Yes No

12. Is the government addressing financial problems you experience?

Yes

No

13. Can the government help you in any way?

Yes

No

14. Do you receive a child support grant/foster care grant?

Yes

No

15. Do you know about the child support grant/foster care grant?

Yes

No

Appendix 2.

QUESTIONS FOR INTERVIEWS: GRANDMOTHERS

1. How do you feel about being a parent to your granddaughter?
2. How did your duties change since you began raising your grandchildren?
3. How do you cope with limited money and the financial running of your household?
4. What type of work do you ask your granddaughter and grandson to do at home?
5. What advice do you give your granddaughter about how a young woman should / should not behave?
6. What do you teach your granddaughter about tradition and religion?
7. What would your reaction be if you discovered your granddaughter has a boyfriend?

Appendix 3

1. Describe your memories of the relationship between your mother and father.
2. Describe how your parents related to each other.
3. What would you consider acceptable behaviour in a relationship between two individuals?
4. What is your opinion about sharing household chores equally between grandsons and granddaughters?
5. Describe some of the lessons you have learnt about how girls and boys dress, sit and play.
6. What has your grandmother taught you about your body?
7. What is your opinion about virginity testing?
8. How do grandmothers react to the news that a grandchild is in a relationship?
9. What has your grandmother taught you about appropriate behaviour for women and men?
10. In the absence a father, who would you consider an appropriate male role model?
11. Do you regard your grandmother a good role model?
12. Identify the qualities you regard as positive in women and men.
13. What value do you place on attractiveness in women and men?