Menstruation Matters: (De)constructing menstrual preparation as reproductive labour-work in rural Zimbabwe

A dissertation submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the degree of
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY (PhD)
in Sociology

Presented

by

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PLAIGARISM DECLARATION

I declare that this is my original work. It has not been previously submitted in whole, or in part, for the award of any degree. The ideas drawn from the work(s) of others have been acknowledged or cited fully. I understand that copying the works of others and presenting them as mine is wrong. This dissertation has not been submitted in the past, nor is it being submitted at any other institution.

Signature: Signed by candidate

Date: 15 March 2021

DEDICATION

> *The body is wise and wise to the body we have become by reading it. Not just as a text but in communicating, through words and actions, the embodied knowledge stored within.*

This is a tribute to all Ndebele women, especially those that made this study possible. I dedicate it to the girls who were still girls at the time my research took place as well as the older women who were girls, too, a longer time ago. This dissertation honours them in their roles as daughters, women, mothers, wives and *omalukazana*.

This dissertation is also for all those loved and lost to the COVID-19 global pandemic and the womxn[1] who have suffered disproportionately because of it.

It is written in loving memory of my paternal grandmother, *Gogo Ma*Sibanda who never lived to see this work come to completion. Without her my understanding of rural life would be incomplete.

My little 'big' brother, Lindani Ncube. The completion of this dissertation was a bittersweet feat, but I celebrate you and what God has done.

And finally, I dedicate this to Josh – a great love lost.
Love,
Mom.

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[1] In this study the word "womxn" is used to indicate and include gender-expansive identities in the instances in which it is used.

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Laura – they say blood is thicker than water but, as I said, some blood you choose, and ours thickens with love and time.

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To each and every one of you and many others who I have not mentioned by name my thanks are hardly enough.

~ MaNcube

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[2] “Jesus looked at them and said, ‘With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible’” (Matthew 19:26 NIV). Available: https://www.bible.com/111/mat.19.26.niv

[3] “As iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another” (Proverbs 27:17, New International Version). Available: https://www.bible.com/111/pro.27.17.niv

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ABBREVIATIONS

ASRHR	Adolescent Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights
BAME	Black Asian and Minority Ethnic
BIPOC	Black, Indigenous, People of Colour
CHHs	Child-headed households
CSE	Comprehensive Sexuality Education
DFID	Department for Internal Development[4]
FGM	Female Genital Mutilation
HDR	Human Development Report
HDI	Human Development Index
IDIs	In-depth interviews
iNGO	international non-governmental organisation
IGATE	Improving Girls Access Through Education
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
FGM	Female Genital Mutilation
GAD	Gender and Development
GBV	Gender-based violence
GESIs	Gender-Equity-Sensitive Indicators
GII	Gender Inequality Index
GDI	Gender Development Index
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GFI	Girl-Friendly Index
GNP	Gross National Product
GNI	Gross National Income
KAP	Knowledge, attitudes and practices
MCPs	Multiple concurrent partnerships
MHI	Menstrual Hygiene Insecurity
MHH	Menstrual Health and Hygiene
MHM	Menstrual Hygiene Management
MHMMMs	Menstrual Hygiene Management Methods and Materials
MICS	Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey
MoHCC	Ministry of Health and Child Care[5]
MoMs	Markets of menstruation
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
NPO	Non-profit organisation
SRHR	Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights
PMS	Premenstrual Syndrome
PoC	People of Colour
RMNCH+A	Reproductive, maternal, newborn, child and adolescent health
RTIs	Reproductive Tract Infections
RUMPs	Re-usable menstrual pads
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
SGBV	Sexual and gender-based violence
SRT	Social reproduction theory
STIs	Sexually Transmitted Infections
TFR	Total Fertility Rate
UCT	University of Cape Town

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[4] United Kingdom

[5] Zimbabwe

UN	United Nations
UNCRC	United Nations Convention for the Rights of the Child
UNICEF	United Nations Children’s Fund
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
VAW	Violence against women
VHWs	Village Health Workers
WASH	Water, Sanitation and Hygiene
WHO	World Health Organization
WinS	WASH in Schools
ZDHS	Zimbabwe Demographic Health Survey

NDEBELE GLOSSARY

abafazi – women, can also mean wives (plural)

amalobolo – Ndebele bride price: also used to describe the negotiation ceremony carried out to officiate a customary marriage. *amalobolo* give the patrilineal line the right over children born in the marriage. It is often translated into English as bridewealth.

amasiko amaNdebele – Ndebele customs

amaNdebele – the Ndebele people/Ndebeles

baba – father

***babakazi* –** paternal aunt/female father (singular). Literally translated as “female father”. *Babakazi* is an important gatekeeper of menstrual knowledge and sex education in Northern Ndebele culture.

baba omdala – uncle (specifically, father’s older brother), translates as ‘older father’

***baba omncane* –** uncle (specifically, father’s younger brother), translates as ‘little father’

gogo – grandmother

icholo – a tuft of hair left on the back of the head to signify maturity and marital status in Ndebele culture, see Figure 15 (page 130)

isicholo – a bridal headdress worn to denote maturity and marital status, see Appendix A and B (page 233-4).

isiKalanga – the Kalanga language

isiNdebele – the Ndebele language (of the Northern Ndebele in this study)

isiShona – the Shona language

isiSotho – the Sotho language

isiTswana – the Tswana language

isiZulu – the Zulu language

isikhathi – time

umbondo – bush willow

imisebenzi – work, can also refer to chores

imisebenzi yamankazana – the work of girls/chores done by girls/girls’ chores

imisebenzi yabafana – the work of boys/chores done by boys/boys’ chores

isitshwala – staple food made from ground grain meal (usually maize meal) and water, has a consistency similar to mashed potatoes

intombazana – a girl who has not reached ménarche

intombi – a girl who has reached ménarche

intombi nto – a virgin girl, one who has reached ménarche

isilumo – dysmenorrhea (severe “biting” menstruation-related abdominal pain)

isintu – the African (traditional) way of doing things/tradition(s); a derivative of *umuntu* (a person) and *ubuntu* (personhood/humanity)

inhlonipho – respect

intombazana – a young girl (who has not yet reached ménarche)

le – and/with

***lobola* –** Ndebele bride price; the word *lobola* is an anglicisation of *amalobolo* and has undergone lexical borrowing into the Shona lexicon. The Shona equivalent of *lobola* is *roora*. *lobola* is arguably the most prevalent for bride price payments in Southern Africa.

malukazana – daughter-in-law, i.e., son’s wife; can also mean sister-in-law, i.e., brother’s wife (singular)

mama – mother

mamazala – husband’s mother/mother-in-law

mama omdala (mamomdala) – aunt (specifically, mother’s older sister), translates as ‘older mother’

mama omncane (mamomncane) – aunt (specifically, mother’s younger sister) translates as ‘little mother’

makoti – bride, also used to refer to sister-in-law (singular)

malume – uncle, i.e., mother’s brother (singular)

mntanami – my child

muzi – (rural) home(stead)

***Na* –** mother of

ngesikhathi – with time

ngesiNdebele – in Ndebele (the language)

***obabakazi* -** father’s sister, i.e., paternal aunts/female fathers (plural).

***ogogo* –** grandmothers (plural)

omakoti – daughters/sisters-in-law (plural)

omalukazana – daughters-in-law, can also mean sisters-in-law/brothers$^{(’)}$ wives (plural)

omama – mothers (plural)

omalume – uncles, i.e., mother’s brothers (plural)

sibare – sister’s husband/brother-in-law (singular)

ubaba – the (male) father or a specific father (figure)

ubabakazi – the paternal aunt/female father or a specific paternal aunt/female father

ubumakoti – being a wife to one’s partner as well as being a daughter in-law to the family, it could be anglicised to ‘makotiship’

ubuntu – a community-centred philosophy that collapses the binaries of you/me (self and other) and we/they (us and them) to render the individual an extension of the collective and the community. It is centred on respect and a subsequent sense of humility in relation to others.

ugogo – the grandmother/ a specific grandmother

ukubasa umlilo – lighting a fire

ukubaleka – to run away

ukubeletha – to carry a baby on one’s back (see Fig. 16, page 137); also means ‘to bear’ in the sense of giving birth to

ukubika – to report

ukubika kwesisu – the reporting of a pregnancy to the prospective/potential father’s family.

ukucola – to take paternal responsibility after impregnating a woman; is marked by a ceremony in Ndebele culture

ukuhlonipha – to respect

ukukha amanzi – to fetch water (e.g., from a well or manual borehole pump)

ukukhula – to grow up, also used to refer to (starting to) menstruate

ukungena esikhathini – to menstruate (cyclically or periodically)

ukutheza inkuni – gathering firewood

ukuthanyela –sweeping/cleaning

ukuthomba – to reach ménarche

umalukazana – the daughter-in-law specific, can also mean the sister-in-law, i.e., the brother’s wife or a specific daughter-in-law/sister-in-law/brother’s wife (singular)

umakoti – the bride/sister-in-law or a specific bride/sister-in-law (singular)

umama – the mother or a specific mother

umthanyelo – African reed broom

umthwalo – a burden

umntwana – a child

umuntu womzini – visitor/guest

umuzi – a (rural) home(stead)

umntwana omncane – a baby/small child

***uphoko* –** finger millet (a type of grain/cereal)

usibare – the specific sister’s husband/ brother-in-law or a specific sister’s husband/brother-in-law

usukhulile – you have ‘grown up’, i.e., you have come of age

Ndebele names

In a celebration of the decolonial, this glossary includes a glossary of Ndebele/Zulu names used in this dissertation as follows:

Bhekiwe – the appointed (chosen) one

Gciniwe – protected or sealed (off); kept (safe); treasured

Khanyisile – illuminate(d), bringer of light, light of God

Khathazile – troubled

Lindokuhle – wait for that which is beautiful thing; the beautiful thing awaited

Mandlakazi – the power a woman

Milisuthando – bearer of love

Nambitha – to eat something tasty and still want more; the gift of God

Nkosazana – similar to the suffix“-kazi” in Ndebele/Zulu, “-zana” genders a noun female. Therefore Nkosikazi like Nkosazana means a female chief (“Nkosi”). Chief is typically anglicised to mean king and so Nkosikazi is often translated as princess. Nkosikazi can also mean chief’s wife, it has the sense of “Mrs”.

Nomthandazo – the answer to our prayers

Nomvuyo – Mother of happiness

Ntombenhle – contracted from *intombi enhle,* the name means a beautiful girl

Sicelisiwe – the one we asked for

Sithabile – we rejoice; we are rejoicing

Sikelela – ‘to bless’. I was inspired to select this pseudonym for the fieldsite by the South African anthem “Nkosi sikelel’ i Africa” which means ‘God bless Africa’, to perhaps speak to a change I hope for this village in the face of the many adversities that the villagers in the region come up against as described in Chapter 4.

Thokozani – be happy, rejoice

ENGLISH GLOSSARY

matrifocality – the phenomenon of households being headed by women (e.g., grandmothers, single mothers, girl child)

ménarche – the first menstrual period (spelled in this study with the French accent «aigu» on the "e". In the first instance, I use «ménarche» to indicate pronunciation. Secondly, it is an act of (feminist) verbal activism in a similar way to how "womyn" is adopted by feminists a spelling of "women" that avoids the suffix "-men". Finally, I am a French speaker, and this spelling contributes to the decolonial lens by reflecting the multilingualism of many African scholars who research and write in different language as I have in this dissertation. See page 88 where I discuss the work of Foucault in *Discipline and* Punish in both English and French.

menstrual knowledge gatekeeper – a person who imparts, blocks or facilitates the flow of information on menstruation. They also govern governing Ndebele "menstrual etiquette" in different ways (see pages 34, 99 and 108).

menstrual preparation – involves prior knowledge of what to expect of menstruation, the ability to manage menstruation, and how prepared society is to fully educate girls on the nature and implications of ménarche and menstruation before ménarche takes place

puberty – the period involving the development of secondary sexual characteristics and the attainment of reproductive capability

(re)productive – reproductively mature and productive

reproductive labour-work – the theoretical framework of this dissertation, which is an inversion of Majumdar's (2018) *work-labour*, used to illuminate menstruation matters in relation to as both hyphenation unpaid labour and paid work (see page 43).

thelarche – the onset of secondary breast development that takes place during puberty

vernacular – in this study it is used as an adjective and noun modifier for the terminology used by people belonging to a specific group (e.g., the Ndebele) or engaging in a specialised activity.

nulliparity – childlessness either by never having given birth or never having carried a pregnancy beyond 20 weeks

ABSTRACT

In this dissertation I focus on the practices and socio-cultural beliefs associated with menstruation that are held by rural Ndebele women and girls in Zimbabwe. I examine the embodied experience of menstruation (*ukungena esikhathini* – in the African language, *isiNdebele*) as an in-road to locating gender gaps in international development discourse. I do this in order to highlight why 'menstruation matters'. The dissertation zooms in on Zimbabwe's policy landscape and the ways in which it treats menstruation as a problem to be solved through technical solutions like the provision of free sanitary wear without considering that indigenous peoples like the Ndebele have successfully prepared for and managed menstruation as a colonial antecedent. The study draws on the narratives of three generations of rural Ndebele women: 10 grandmothers (50-79 years), 7 mothers (30-49 years) and 11 daughters (15-29 years) in the Umzingwane District of Zimbabwe to demonstrate that even in the absence of underwear and 'modern' commodified sanitary wear like pads, tampons and menstrual cups, rural indigent women innovate their own strategies for menstruation matters. The study identifies that the treatment of menstruation as a problem to be remedied through technical solutions is part of a legacy of the historical pathologisation of menstruation in the West. It finds that menstrual preparedness is more complex than just providing menstruating women and girls with sanitary wear but is constituted by a whole system of reproductive *labour-work* that transmits information that equips girls for adulthood and its corresponding responsibilities. This labour-work is carried out by a network of female relatives, school peer educators, teachers, and even male relatives – each of whom represent gatekeepers of menstrual knowledge and practices. In so doing, I challenge heteronormative gender binaries by giving a glimpse into the female fathers (*obabakazi*) and male mothers (*omalume*) who also play a role in bringing up Ndebele girls to be healthy, educated and productive adults. Once a Ndebele girl (*intombazana*) begins to menstruate, she now represents an adolescent girl (*intombi*) and proxy adult on the cusp of womanhood, and expectations around her role within the household change. She is intentionally initiated into an intensifying world of domestic chores for girls (*imisebenzi yamankazana*) that inscribe her gendered social identity. After ménarche, *intombi* is expected to be concertedly productive as well as reproductively mature – i.e., *(re)productive*. This induction into an increasing burden of reproductive labour-work initiates girls into the world of gender and women's work that moulds them into adult women (*abafazi*); future wives (*omakoti*), dutiful daughters-in-law (*omalukazana*) and mothers (*omama*).

DISSERTATION OUTLINE

Chapter 1 introduces the problem of (poor) menstrual preparedness and defines some of its dimensions. The chapter reveals the ways in which international development discourse, focuses attention on simple technical solutions to what it identifies as the 'problem' of menstruation, and in so doing misses the significance of menstruation as an aspect of gendered reproductive work as well as implying that a Western medicalised solution is needed, where it is not. It complicates the problematisation of menstruation in order to preface the ways in which poor menstrual preparedness can be a symptom of poor parent-child communication and lead to increased susceptibility to early unintended pregnancy. It links the issue of early unintended pregnancy to Zimbabwe's primary to secondary (high) school transition rate crisis among seventh grade girls. It provides a brief background to the Ndebele People who are at the centre of this study. The chapter also presents the study's research questions and frames the problem of poor preparedness by linking it to a broader silencing of the discourse of desire in schools and a moral panic about rising trends of teenage pregnancy and single motherhood. It challenges the underpinnings of a cross-cultural (singular) menstrual taboo narrative highlighting the detriment of superimposing the Western politics of taboo on indigenous peoples like the Ndebele. It introduces a key term – menstrual hygiene management methods and materials (MHMMMs) – in the study explaining its relevance in helping us to better understand the practices and socio-cultural beliefs associated with menstruation in this study and breaking down the dichotomous conceptualisations of 'modern' single-use sanitary wear and 'traditional' re-usable sanitary wear.

Chapter 2 texturises the issue of menstrual preparedness in a review of related literature which highlights that the problem of poor menstrual preparedness touches both the global South *and* the global North. It reiterates the study's research questions while introducing the theoretical framework (*reproductive labour-work*[6]) and the *ubuntu* value system which guide the analysis of the data collected in order to answer these questions. The chapter concludes with a summary of the study's research objectives and the significance of the study.

Chapter 3 presents the study's research design, describing some of the reflexive processes that informed it. It discusses the study's data collection process, sampling strategy, data analysis and storage. It explains how and why the empirical chapters (Chapters 4 and 5) subvert certain stylistic conventions in order to adopt a decolonial, Africanised register. The chapter provides a roadmap of the approval processes (both at the University of Cape Town and locally in Zimbabwe) undertaken before carrying out the fieldwork in the village of Sikelela. It also describes some “insider” insights into the clothing script in Zimbabwe that may not be intuitive to foreign researchers. Chapter 3 also highlights some of the limitations of the study.

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[6] Majumdar builds on Pande's work on commercial surrogacy as reproductive labour, casting it as processual. See page 47.
for further discussion.

Chapter 4 is the first of two empirical chapters in this dissertation. It (re)introduces the case study fieldsite. In it, I present my analysis of the menarcheal narratives three generations of Ndebele women and girls’. The chapter portrays the locations and processes through which menstrual preparation is transmitted, granulating the invisible reproductive labour-work of rural Ndebele women and girls in Zimbabwe. It portrays the sexual precarity of young pubescent girls who straddle the ambiguous line of being reproductively capable but seen by kinfolk as being too young to reproduce. Chapter 4 reveals that generation gaps are not only a matter of biological age but are influenced by waves of social change, such as the rights of the ‘girl child’ that see girls having increased access to education. This chapter shows that there are other ways of indexing childhood and adulthood besides biological age, and these dimensions include literacy; physical maturity (e.g., ménarche) and social age. It teases out childhood from biological age by deconstructing childhood through social age from an Afrocentric perspective. The chapter also highlights the reproductive labour-work done by rural women that constitutes part of the social networks (mostly consisting of female kin work) deployed by women to keep young, pubescent girls safe from early sexual debut and sexual abuse. Finally, it captures some of the tensions between tradition and modernity in the passing down and use of Ndebele MHMMMs. It shows how the process of transmitting these indigenous knowledges has changed over time, gradually becoming more fragmented. The chapter gives insight into the localised community kin work that ensures that girls are able to cope with their menses, casting a light on the role of *babakazi*, the paternal aunt and ‘female father’, who is an important menstrual knowledge gatekeeper and culture-bearer.

Chapter 5 is the second and final empirical chapter of the study. It discusses the observed rise of matrifocality in Zimbabwe in order to foreground ongoing contemporary debates around marriage and the custom of *lobola* (bridewealth/bride price). Chapter 5 shows how apart from marking a body as female, ménarche also marks the body as growing older and more able to take on responsibility. After ménarche, Ndebele girls are intentionally initiated into an intensifying world of domestic chores for girls (*imisebenzi yamankazana*), and this socialises them into the world of gender and women’s reproductive labour-work that moulds them into adult women; future wives, and mothers. The chapter reveals that the gendered division of domestic labour is not always rigid but can be fluid as it is negotiated around necessity and the presence or absence of daughters and sons in a family. It critiques the Western heteronormative gender binary as an imposed legatorial understanding of the divvying up of life rhythms in (rural) Zimbabwe based research of colonial anthropologists. The chapter contributes to African scholarship on the sociology of the family while destabilising heteronormative gender binaries by giving a glimpse into female fathers (*obabakazi*) and male mothers (*omalume*) and their role in the upbringing of Ndebele girls. The chapter shows that the "double shift" does not suddenly emerge in adulthood for women, but is slowly inscribed in childhood, with the inscription being deepened when puberty begins. This inscription is then re-engraved at life events like ménarche, marriage and motherhood as Ndebele girls are initiated into proxy adults, proxy mothers and proxy wives during adolescence in order to prepare them for the reproductive responsibilities that correspond with these events. Finally, the chapter provides insights into the ways in which certain forms of reproductive labour-work can be monetised.

Chapter 6 draws out a discussion based on the key findings of this study. The chapter invokes a dialogue about the hypersexualisation of the bodies of black girls in Zimbabwe and their trans-Atlantic African American counterparts in the US. It grounds this dialogue in a discussion about the collective reproductive labour-work done by kin and community to protect girls from the dangers of early sexual debut and childhood sexual abuse following their sexual onset through puberty. The chapter also illuminates some of the incongruences between localised constructions of childhood and constructions of childhood in development discourse.

Chapter 7 is the final chapter of the study and sums up the answers to the study's 3 research questions. It summarises the different layers of reproductive labour-work described in this monograph and their implications for girls based on the findings of this study. The chapter also highlights the significance of the study's theoretical framework. It concludes with some suggestions for future research.

CHAPTER 1: Introduction

Approximately 50 million girls around the world enter into puberty every year (UNESCO, 2014). Ménarche – the “first menstrual period”[1] – takes place during puberty (Rees, 1995). At ménarche, a girl’s body evolves into one that is capable of reproduction (Fingerson, 2005a; Ramathuba, 2015). If girls are not prepared for this biological transition, they are at a higher risk of early and unintended pregnancy and disease (Ramathuba, 2015; Tamiru *et al*., 2015). This is in part because puberty is not only the time during which “reproductive potential is earned” (Yücel *et al*., 2018:353) but is also a critical stage for gaining knowledge on personal hygiene (Sommer, 2010a), menstrual hygiene management (MHM)[2] and sex education.

Puberty often coincides with adolescence, and the World Health Organization notes that “[a]dolescence is a period of life with specific health and developmental needs and rights” (WHO, 2014) These health and developmental needs and rights include menstrual preparation, and comprehensive sexuality education. Poor menstrual preparedness at the time of ménarche can also lead to a compromised quality of life because a menstruating girl may find herself suffering from menstrual cycle-related disorders like dysmenorrhea[3], without any knowledge or recourse to coping strategies (Jeyalakshmi *et al*., 2019).[4] She may also become susceptible to reproductive tract infections (RTIs) and pelvic inflammatory diseases (Upashe *et al*., 2015). For these reasons, menstrual preparedness before ménarche is essential for girls.

In recent years, the global development community has placed greater emphasis on the rights of girls. For example, in 1995, the concept of the ‘girl-child’ was addended to the 1989 United Nations Convention for the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) as it was discerned that girls experience vulnerability and forms of discrimination that are unique to their gender (UN, 1995; CSW63, 2019). As I will discuss in further detail on page 37, this emphasis on girls in global human development discourse is oddly encased by a silence on certain landmark issues (e.g. ménarche and menstrual disorders) that affect their developmental outcomes (Phillips-Howard *et al*., 2016). This introductory chapter foregrounds the issue of menstrual preparedness, highlighting some the dangers of poor menstrual preparedness. It provides a background to the country context of the monograph, situating the issue of menstrual preparedness within development fields of gender, health and education. The study proceeds to critically examine international development discourse from a gender-sensitive perspective as it sets out to make women and girls, the work that they do, and their disparate menstrual and reproductive experiences more visible. In order to reveal the social significance of menarcheal and menstrual preparation in this study I pose two questions:

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[1] The menstrual period also known as menstruation is defined as “a woman’s monthly bleeding from the reproductive (vaginal) tract, as a consequence of cyclical changes in hormonal activity” (NICE, 2007). Menstruation is a gendered and embodied experience undergone by most cisgender women and girls, and transgender men and boys.

[2] See page 5 and 13 for further discussion of MHM.

[3] i.e.: painful menstruation symptoms like abdominal cramping. The word “[d]ysmenorrhea is derived from the Greek root translating to difficult menstrual flow” (Lefebvre *et al*., 2005:1117)

[4] According to Deligeoroglou *et al*. “dysmenorrhea (also referred to painful menstruation) is the most frequent problem for which adolescents and their parents refer to a physician” (2010:157).

1. What is the scope of preparation that Ndebele girls undergo for ménarche/menstruation?
2. What role does menstruation play in socialising them to be (re)productive adult women, wives and mothers?

1.1 The problem of poor menstrual preparedness

Cross-culturally, menstruation is an important rite of passage (Coutinho & Segal, 1999) marking the graduation to a "biologically sexual adult" (Fingerson, 2005a:92). However, many girls reach ménarche with partial or inaccurate knowledge of it. This can, in part, be attributed to a discomfort and a lack of confidence that menstrual knowledge gatekeepers have about imparting menstrual knowledge. Nevertheless, it is important that when girls reach menarcheal age, they have a complete understanding of the biological changes taking place and their socio-cultural implications. This is because as alluded to above, ménarche is a gateway into reproductive capability (Yücel *et al.*, 2018). For participants in this study, i.e., rural Ndebele women and girls in Matabeleland South (Zimbabwe), puberty and menstruation also signal the activation of the unique community-based work that is undertaken not only by girls but also by their kinfolk in socialising them to be productive members of society and to prevent early sexual debut and early unintended pregnancy.

Reproduction is key to generational replacement, hence girls who are poorly prepared for menstruation (the gateway into reproduction) may encounter challenges in contributing to this national project. It is paradoxical that though fertility and reproduction are national and global issues, menstruation is largely treated as a private household issue. This study's literature review chapter (Chapter 2) reveals that menstruation remains cloaked in mystery and secrecy and straitjacketed by stress; uncertainty; turmoil and shame (see page 10). Girls are often un(der)informed and misinformed about the biological purpose of menstruation (Sinden *et al.*, 2015) and how to manage it until, and sometimes even past ménarche (Abioye-Kuteyi, 2000). My dissertation investigates ménarche as a rite of passage from the perspective of the Ndebele women and girls and is from the onset concerned with the scope of menstrual preparation that (Ndebele) girls receive and the far-reaching consequences of this menstrual preparation.

Poor menstrual preparedness increases susceptibility to societal, physical and emotional dangers. One way of unpacking the consequences that poor menstrual preparedness has on adolescents is by exploring girls' increased vulnerability to social risks and danger. In the book *Purity and Danger,* Mary Douglas articulates that, “Danger lies in transitional states, simply because transition is neither one state nor the next” (1966:97). Ménarche marks the transitional state between girlhood and womanhood often referred to as adolescence. A pubescent adolescent girl is neither fully girl nor fully woman. As such, adolescence invokes a Douglasonian sense of danger because during this period adolescent girls may be subject to knowing only in part or having inaccurate knowledge about the changes taking place (Prendergast, 2000:108) and the new expectations that may be placed on them on account of these changes.

Without clear guidance, adolescence can be a bridge into a land of dangers flagged by menstruation-related absenteeism, low educational achievement, unplanned pregnancy, early marriage, and compromised reproductive health (Ncube, 2018). While there is an inextricable link between menstruation and reproduction, it is sometimes siloed in terms of the knowledge transmitted to girls. It is important to note that menstrual taboos among indigenous communities are often distorted by their reading through the lens of Western menstrual taboos (Umeora & Egwuatu, 2008b). Misunderstood and miscommunicated taboos combined with fragmented menstrual knowledge and preparation are especially dangerous because a “[l]ack of [accurate] sexuality information can have a detrimental effect on the sexual decisions in the reproductive life of the adolescent as it can affect sexual behavior” (Ramathuba, 2015:3). Furthermore, when considering the dangers of poor menstrual preparedness, it is also worth noting that sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and RTIs may present the same symptoms, for example: white discharge (Khanna *et al*., 2005). Poor menstrual preparedness may also mean girls are unable to handle symptoms of premenstrual syndrome (PMS). Lower abdominal pain is also a symptom of STIs, RTIs and PMS.

Adegbayi argues that pre-menarcheal preparation also constitutes “an integral aspect of preadolescent sexual education” (2017:1). Menstrual preparedness is itself a form of knowledge and knowing, and without menstrual preparedness, the work of knowing can become double weighted as girls must find out accurate facts about menstruation, reproduction and sexual health in a context where the topics of sex and menstruation are concealed. Menstrual preparedness for Ndebele girls also includes an introduction to vernaculars of menstruation, and this provides them with the vocabulary to describe symptoms of PMS so that they can have recourse to treatment. Poor menstrual preparedness including a poverty of vernaculars of menstruation can be the result of different socio-cultural factors.

It is salient to note the remarks of Carol Tavris, a US psychologist and feminist on the novelty of ‘PMS’ as a new vernacular of menstruation. Tavris observes that when she was in university, the term “Premenstrual Syndrome (PMS) hadn’t been invented” (2008:558). In this way, PMS represents a historical form of epistemic injustice (specifically hermeneutical injustice) that our societies are culpable for perpetrating. Fricker categorises epistemic injustice into two forms of injustice – testimonial injustice and hermeneutical injustice. In her writing, she poses questions around "people *knowing* things and conveying *knowledge*" (Fricker, 2007:129). She states that "Feminism has long been concerned with the way in which relations of power can constrain women's ability to understand their own experience" (Fricker, 2007:147). Hermeneutical injustice is constituted by the paucity of lexicon to describe a phenomenon, in this case PMS[5]. The network of actors who equip Ndebele girls with menstrual knowledge (including the vocabulary for describing menstrual problems and reproductive complications) are the advocates of hermeneutical justice. This is because they help girls to understand and communicate their menstrual experiences in a way that others who may not experience them can understand. One important aspect of hermeneutical justice with regards to reproductive experiences emanates from the knowledge and vocabulary to distinguish normal vaginal discharge from abnormal discharge, and also abdominal pain that is symptomatic of PMS, RTIs STIs and menstrual disorders. When Ndebele girls describe a symptom, they are taught the Ndebele vernacular of menstruation that captures it (e.g., *ukuthomba*[6] for reaching ménarche and *isilum*o[7] for dysmenorrhea) and linked to what they may need to manage it; be it sanitary wear, pain relief[8] or rest[9]. As well as helping girls understand what it is going on with their bodies during menses, this study shows that vernaculars of menstruation also normalise menstruation.

In this dissertation, I contest the minimisation of the problem of menstruation-related schoolgirl absenteeism to one that can be remedied by the provision of commodified sanitary wear like disposable pads. The study shows that even in the absence of underwear and 'modern' commodified sanitary wear like pads, tampons and menstrual cups, rural indigent women are able to innovate their own strategies for managing menstruation. The study identifies this minimisation as a legacy of the historical pathologisation of menstruation in the West. This medicalised discourse that emerges in the 1800s and was shaped by the framings of male physicians[10]. Julie-Marie Strange traces "moments in the medicalisation of menstruation, from the growth of gynaecology in the 1850s to the confirmation of a link between ovulation and menstruation in the 1930s" in the UK (2000:608-9). The discourse sets a precedent for the framing of menstruation as one of 'the diseases of women' (Strange, 2000:609) – a 'disease' in need of remedying rather than comprehension.

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[5] Even so, the term PMS is not without its problems as it is part of the pathologisation of menstruation by classifying the natural effects brought about by hormonal changes as a 'syndrome' (Tavris, 1991).

[6] See also page 32, footnote 23 (page 71-2) and page 106.

[7] See page 102-6.

[8] See pages 91, 94, 105 and 107.

[9] See page 105.

[10] e.g., Edward John Tilt, Henry Maudsley and Béla Schick

1.1.1 Menstrual hygiene management methods and materials & dichotomies

This dissertation uses the findings of the study to demonstrate that menstrual preparedness is more complex than just providing menstruating women and girls with sanitary wear but is constituted by a whole system of reproductive *labour-work* that transmits information that equips girls for adulthood and its corresponding responsibilities – an ecosystem of 'growing up'. This information is both theoretical and practical, as is exemplified in Chapter 4 where I discuss the use of natural remedies *umbondo* (willow bark) and *iporridge eyophoko* (*rapoko*[11] porridge) relieve pain and regularise menses. It is for these reasons (i.e., the wide scope of preparation for menstruation) that I expand the term MHM to MHMMMs in this study. MHMMMs refer to menstrual hygiene management *methods and materials*. To expand the term MHM complicates the problem labelled by international development discourse as 'menstrual hygiene insecurity' (MHI[12]), by unpacking the complex system that informs the choices and decisions around the management of menstruation. Though lengthy, the concept of MHMMMs is accessible to scholars; public health and development practitioners who are accustomed to this sort of development studies "shorthand"[13] (Patel, 2020). Bobel also problematises the second 'M' in Menstrual Hygiene Management. In her view, "Managing menstruation means keeping it under control, or contained so that it does not get in the way – of school, of respectability, of a good time" (2019:33). She argues that this translates to the over-policing of girls' bodies in a way that places a heavy burden on girls to 'manage' menstruation without necessarily empowering them to know *and* enjoy their bodies (Bobel, 2019). In presenting *umbondo* and *iporridge eyophoko* as MHMMMs it presents ways in which the Ndebele 'managed' menstruation as a colonial antecedent, whereby menstruation was not treated as problem from the onset but one in which these interventions were taken only when a girl's quality of life was compromised, and her productivity inhibited within the home and outside of it.

By expanding MHM to concertedly consider MHMMMs, there is an opportunity to draw attention to the menstrual strategies that precede colonisation; ones deployed in the absence, unavailability, inaccessibility, unaffordability and even in tandem with the abovementioned contemporary MHM. MHMMMs therefore encompass both commodified and uncommodified sanitary wear materials such as cotton wool, rag cloth, dung and leaves; and is not limited to (commodified) pads, tampons and menstrual cups. The term MHMMMs breaks down the hierarchy often implied by a dichotomisation of 'modern' single-use sanitary wear and 'traditional' re-usable sanitary wear. In helping us to understand the hierarchies invoked by dichotomies, I turn to Grosz who argues that:

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[11] *Rapoko* is the name commonly used in Southern Africa (e.g., Zimbabwe and Zambia) for finger millet, see Fig. 14 (page 122)

[12] Caruso *et al*. (2020) define menstrual insecurity "the suite of social, environmental, and biological concerns and negative experiences resulting from menstruation".

[13] See page 76 for further discussion.

> *Dichotomous thinking necessarily hierarchizes and ranks the two polarities so that one becomes the privileged term and the other its suppressed, subordinated, negative counterpart. The subordinated term is merely the negation or denial, the absence or privation of the primary term, its fall from grace; the primary term defines itself by expelling its other and in this process establishes its own boundaries and borders to create an identity for itself* (1994: 3).

The term MHMMMs breaks down anachronistic dichotomisations that oversimplify aspects of the human condition which shape the way menstruation is experienced. Dichotomisations such as modern/traditional; public/private; body/mind; material/spiritual; economy/culture (Ncube, 2015:10); production/reproduction; periphery/core; First/Third World; global South/global North; developed/developing; high-/low-income countries; the West/the Rest; pre-/post-colonial are used by development studies and sociology to theorise global stratification. While they unlock a certain explanatory power, these dichotomies are as much conceptually imagined as they are real. They flatten the world into a hierarchical polarities, often with little to no regard for 'empires within empires' (Rivera Cusicanqui, 2012:98). The three-world theory has been proposed as way of complicating the duality of the First World and the Third World[14] by positing that there is a "Second World" (Andersen & Taylor, 2007). The concept of a Second World emerged out of the Cold War (tensions) and is predominantly used to describe former communist countries of the Eastern Bloc neo-colonised by the USSR, China and their allies. Over time, however, three-world theory has evolved from its political underpinnings to take on a more economic definition describing countries with polarised localities of poverty and prosperity.[15] Three-world theory has been criticised for its appropriation of colonial thinking wherein Western societies are pitted against others and idealised as the quintessence of development (Silver, 2015). This has seen replacement terms such as developing, developed and un(der)developed take a firmer footing in the theorisation around development. However, no consensus has been reached. The work of proposing new lexicon to destabilise development theory binaries is no small challenge. We may perhaps take one step closer to developing such a new vocabulary by making the admission that, "It is, in a very large sense, due to the failures of history or, indeed, our failure to grasp this history, that we have arrived at the current unequal global order" (Barakat Chami, 2019:9) and using terms mindfully. In the meantime, three-world theory continues to be cited despite its definition being increasingly contested. Giddens (2006) points to the fact that these contestations lead to the concept of a 'second world' being used to describe not only a state or region's political system but also the structure of its society. For example: the second world describes countries like South Africa and India with high economic inequality measured by the Gini co-efficient in human development discourse. So, though they are considered to be third world countries, their class stratification leads to them being described as second world. These inconsistencies suggest that there is a first, second and third world in every nation.

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[14] See Silver (2015).

[15] I argue that all countries are characterised by polarities and not just Second World countries.

Arnfred argues that dichotomies can be 'dangerous' as they apply a 'dark continent discourse' that misrepresents Africa as different and less than (2004:8). Giaquinta concludes that "development discourses extinguish diversity of experiences, histories and representations, and consequently produce singular [or binary] ways of practicing and conceptualizing this field. As a result, complex colonial histories overlap with notions of culture, religion, ethnicity, [gender,] modernization, class, globalization, and development, imposing 'neutral' categories in contexts with messy histories and social realities" (2016:1). I concur with both, and in particular, Arnfred (2004) who points out that it is necessary not only to expose these dangerous dichotomies but to completely break them down in order to conceive of lived realities, in which parallels and not just polarities exist within the same locale along a spectrum of other categories (Arnfred, 2004). Uniquely, the intergenerational narratives in this study span over adolescent menstrual and reproductive experiences that prelude, straddle and postlude colonisation in a way cannot be fully understood through a binary of commodified *modern* single-use sanitary wear and 'uncommodified' *traditional* re-usable sanitary wear materials (e.g., cotton wool and rag cloth). Through the narratives of grandmothers in this study, the monograph contributes to a literature that casts an "epistemological and methodological gaze on elderly women's experiences of gender and sexuality lived within lives which span the colonial and post-colonial era in Zimbabwe" (Batisai, 2013:i). Taking into account intergenerational changes around vernaculars of menstruation and sanitary wear usage, the study demonstrates that the choice of MHMMMs is complex; shaped not only by quantitative factors like affordability, access and availability but also qualitative factors like *isintu* (tradition) and specific patterns of knowledge transmission. In this way, the narratives also reflect the personal agency influencing the uptake and use of MHMMMs.

Burke (1996) helps us to appreciate the economic systems that underlie the development sector and are also powerfully yet silently engrained in terms like MHM and MHI. He does so by examining the commodification of products like soap and highlighting how this commodification manufactured new ideals of hygiene for Zimbabweans to aspire to (Burke, 1996). I am asserting in this dissertation that the same processes take place with commodified sanitary wear, giving rise to tensions between traditional and modern; African and European, that invoke a hierarchy whereby the black body must strive towards "a white Western standard" (Burke, 1996; cited in Bobel, 2019:215) of hygiene. Burke (1996) considers how the black body, and its hygiene are racialised and problematised in coloniality so as to make indigenous Zimbabweans "come to need the products they never knew they wanted". Drawing on Burke (1996), I contend that the application of MHM as a universal solution to MHI is an extension of this same problematisation that "cast[s] the body of color as unwashed and in need of intervention" (Bobel, 2019:215). These 'solutions' "opened the door to multinational corporations who ingeniously created markets" for their products (Bobel, 2019:215), driving development and the economics that continue to make it viable. These interventions often neglect to factor in the agency that people of colour have (to continue) to innovate solutions for their own problems. The interventions and manufactured markets are part of a development discourse that devalues people of colour and their bodies; recasting them as the poor, powerless, impassive recipients of development aid.[16]

This study reveals that the positing of modern MHM as the panacea[17] to MHI is a superficial (mis)reading of the geopolitical and socio-economic landscape in Zimbabwe. Gordon (1996), in her writing on gender and development in Zimbabwe, deconstructs the paternalistic logics that underpin development discourse. She underscores how such binaries and hierarchisations in development discourse translate to development aid solutions that assume that:

> *[t]he causes of the lack of development in 'developing' societies are perceived as endogenous, arising from adherence to traditional folk-ways and mores and non-scientific orientation, and thus, to an absence of 'modern' rational attitudes, values and orientations which are considered necessary conditions for development* (Gordon, 1996:215-6).

In this dissertation, I challenge the subordination of traditional folk-ways as being non-scientific by highlighting the use of the different Ndebele MHMMMs like *umbondo* (willow bark)[18], which is contemporarily referred to as "nature's aspirin". The study underscores the fact that indigenous knowledge should not be dismissed from the onset as unscientific by development discourse, because these knowledge systems can be co-opted to employ sustainable solutions to social problems like MHI in ways that conserve and honour the environment. It examines ‘tradition’ as a social construct invented and reinvented, revealing that Ndebele culture as a conglomerate of Zulu and other dominions infusing past and present; old and new.

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[16] See findings of Bornstein (2001) on page 162.

[17] See page 39.

[18] See page 124.

The study breaks down the binary between ‘tradition’ and ‘modernity’ in order to visibilise the importance of traditional MHMMMs that continue to contribute to modern-day menstrual preparedness. In *Social dynamics of adolescent fertility in sub-Saharan Africa,* Blesdoe and Cohen dichotomise traditional and ‘modern’ contraceptive methods; the latter of which they list as “pills, IUDs, injectable, condoms, vaginal methods, and male and female sterilization” (1993:20) with little recognition that sometimes both traditional and modern methods are used alongside one another. They also reduce the knowledge on traditional contraception methods in sub-Saharan Africa to a footnote stating that “traditional methods include abstinence, rhythm, withdrawal, and the use of ritual charms or potions” (Blesdoe & Cohen 1993:20). This footnote uses a lexicon that evokes superstition and yet there are “emmenagogues[19], consisting mainly of herbal substances with the reputation for inducing menses, has been recognized in societies, both past and present” (Walle and Renne, 2001:xxx-xxxi). Renne noted that among “rural Ekiti Yoruba women in southwestern Nigeria, abortion is considered to be one among a continuum of birth control options, which include the use of traditional medicines prepared by local herbalists and ‘patent’ medicines obtained from pharmacies [i.e., emmenagogues]” (1996:483). On the other hand, Levin (2001) found that Guinean women used emmenagogues to promote regular menstruation and fertility rather than to induce abortion. This ambivalence surrounding the use of emmenagogues urges Renne (2001) to consider the multiplicity of their uses. Emmenagogues can be used as (or in tandem with) aphrodisiacs and fertility remedies (Evans, 2014). Social anthropologists have tended to interpret and explore emmenagogues solely as abortifacients whereas they were also remedies (Evans, 2014), and indeed types of MHMMMs. The work of Renne (1996; 2001) and Levin (2001) reminds us that traditional African knowledges such as the knowledge of MHMMMs (including emmenagogues) and how to use them constitutes aspects of menstrual preparedness that are still relevant to this day.

Many studies of menstruation in indigenous communities have tended to focus on the tradition-modernity dichotomy, superstition and taboo in such a way as to construct a monolithic, racialised notions of African culture (Roxburgh *et al*, 2020; Field-Springer *et al.*, 2018; White, 2013; Montgomery, 1974). In line with

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[19] The adjective used to describe something that stimulates blood flow in the pelvic region and bringing about menstruation is emmenagogic.

Risling Baldy, this study critically examines this notion of cross-cultural menstrual taboo(s); demonstrating that, “The Western menstrual taboo not only influences theories of Indigenous menstrual customs but also relies on settler colonial rhetoric to help support a continuing politics of taboo” (2017:23). The Western menstrual taboo oversimplifies indigenous perceptions of menstruation. However, through the lens of MHMMMs, this study unsettles colonial rhetoric by focusing on the localised experience of MHM and the use of MHMMMs by Ndebele women and girls in Zimbabwe. It does so by analysing their intergenerational narratives of menstruation without isolating the traditional from the modern. The study relates these narratives to a globalised development discourse. It is an exploration of the private issue of menstruation in conversation with the public agenda of sustainable development that challenges the separation of local interests from global interests. By connecting the broad with the intimate (Murphy, 2017), the study constitutes a deliberate effort to break down the binaries[20] that are complicit in perpetuating gender blindness and reductionist progressivism in development discourse, particularly as concerns the gendered issues of menstruation and reproduction; a process that I describe as ‘sweeping gender under the rug’.

1.1.2 Menstrual preparedness in Zimbabwe

In Zimbabwe, as in many other sub-Saharan African countries, reproductive health knowledge is often shared too late and relates to the physical rather than emotional aspects of growing up. Menstruation in particular is often discussed post-ménarche. In these instances, the focus is placed on personal hygiene, rather than the future risk of pregnancy and the transition towards adulthood (FACT, MoHCC & UNFPA, 2017; Langhaug, Cowan, Nyamurera & Power, 2003). Ndlovu and Bhala (2016) highlight that sometimes the knowledge (or lack thereof) transmitted to girls amplifies feelings of anxiety around MHM; therein affecting their performance at school. In this way, girls do not receive adequate information about menstruation as it concerns their new reproductive capability (Sinden *et al.*, 2015). Consequently, many do not know or understand what is happening to them when they begin menstruating, and instead of being a well-explained and well-understood rite of passage, menstruation becomes a time of stress, confusion, and shame (Sinden *et al.*, 2015; Chang *et al.*, 2010; Koff *et al.*, 1981; Ruble & Brooks-Gunn, 1982). Adding to this, Schooler *et al.* stress that historically, “less attention has been focused on how [women’s] feelings about their bodies and reproductive functions affect these processes” (2005:324). This study contributes to this lacuna in the literature by demonstrating the interface between emotions, the body and reproductive functions (e.g., ménarche and menstruation) among Ndebele women in Zimbabwe.

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[20] cf. page 6

The study also examines the processual flows and stagnations of menstrual knowledge as well as the underpinning reasons for either. For example, it was found that there is an “absence of knowledgeable adults who are willing to discuss menstruation and can provide accurate information” in Zimbabwe (SNV, 2014:12). Delius and Glaser (2002) note that in Southern Africa, parents are uncomfortable broaching the subject of sex, and poor menstrual preparedness. In this way, parents are menstrual knowledge gatekeepers as they are able to block or facilitate the flow of menstrual information. In Zimbabwe poor menstrual preparedness can be linked to slow uptake of adolescent sexual and reproductive health and rights (ASRHR). In 2017, a study on the determinants of teenage pregnancies in the District of Hurungwe, Zimbabwe found that more than a third (39%) of the parents were not comfortable with parent-child communication around ASRHR issues with their adolescents. Also, 17% did not feel well-equipped with the information themselves, and also in some instances “feared sending the wrong message” (FACT, MoHCC & UNFPA, 2017:2) and promoting sex. In this same study, 64% of teenagers aged 12-19 years indicated that their parents neglected sex education information relating to reproduction issues and contraception (FACT, MoHCC & UNFPA, 2017:2). High education level, expansive personal menstrual knowledge level, and openness of menstrual knowledge gatekeepers may increase menstrual knowledge transmission from adults to children. Further to the knowledge gap among adults, gender is also a barrier to knowledge transmission on menstruation in Zimbabwe. A study in Masvingo, Zimbabwe found that that while “84% of schools reported having teachers to counsel menstruating girls, 63% of these schools had male counsellors, creating a barrier to girls obtaining the counselling and knowledge they need” (SNV, 2014:12). There is need to interrogate such statistics because gender would pose a barrier only if the 63% of schools with male counsellors only had male counsellors and no female counsellors – a fact that is not specified in the SNV report. The factors of knowledge and gender do intersect in Zimbabwe to reveal that in men in Masvingo “displayed limited knowledge of the common physical effects of menstruation” (SNV, 2014:12). It is important to note that Masvingo is a Shona-speaking province. There may be some differentiation in Ndebele-speaking provinces like Matabeleland South because “Ndebele literature/oral traditions […] boasts riddles, folktales, proverbs and wise sayings and even praise poetry, which are so rich in sex education” (Bhebhe, 2018:1). Therefore Bhebhe (2018) challenges the mistaken, yet pervasive, belief that “it is a taboo to discuss issues of sex with teenagers” in Zimbabwe. This dissertation examines what processes of knowledge transmission on menstruation and sex takes place in the rural village of Sikelela (the fieldsite of this study), in Matabeleland South.

There are sectors of any society that treat adolescent sexuality as dangerous and therefore police it (Moran, 2004:740). One way in which this policing is done is through the disapprobation of formal sex education. As such it is unsurprising that the formalising of home-based sex education (Bhebhe, 2018) through parent-child communication is met with resistance. This is because, traditionally, parents "have little or no role in sex education" (Muyinda et al., 2003:160). In Zimbabwe, the paternal aunt assumes this role. For girls she is responsible for preparing girls for adulthood, focusing on issues such as menstruation, future sex and marriage. There is a 'Let's Chat!' Community Level Training Manual for parent-child communication on (A)SRH developed by the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)[21]. I was involved in the update of this manual in 2017. A trainer of trainers (ToT) is trained in parent-child communication and goes on to train a community cadre known as the Behaviour Change Facilitator who in turn trains parents on how to chat openly with their children about around ASRHR. I attended a ToT training workshop in 2017 where the stakeholders highlighted the divisive tension around contraceptives. The development community (e.g., UNFPA, UK Aid, Irish Aid) is transmitting the message that contraceptives and sex should be discussed openly by parents and children. However, some schools and churches contest this. Hodes (2017), Mkhwanazi (2014a; 2014b) and Macleod (1999a) alike all iterate that there is a collective societal anxiety akin to a moral panic[22] around what Macleod describes as "teenage pregnancy and its 'negative' consequences" in South Africa (Macleod, 1999a). The same is true for Zimbabwe. To better understand this collective anxiety in Zimbabwe, we can turn to Hof and Richters who state that:

> *In order to understand why teenagers become pregnant, and whether they are willing to use contraceptives to prevent this, teenage sexuality must be explored in detail. The willingness to use contraceptives is dependent on the kind of sexual behaviour that is socially acceptable to men and women. […] Men are hardly blamed for the occurrence of sexual intercourse since they are believed to have an uncontrollable need for sex. […] Their sexuality is seen as the fulfilment of male sexuality* (1999:58).

Male (teenage) sexuality is promoted whereas the opposite is true for adolescent girls and unmarried women, who must strive towards maintaining their purity and suppressing their sexuality. Sexuality in girls and women is equated with loose morals (Pande, 2020a). According to the Zimbabwe National Adolescent Fertility Study this sentiment is echoed by adolescent girls (MoHCC, 2016). It found that 77% of adolescent girls see "contraceptive (condom and pills) use is a sign of promiscuity" (MoHCC, 2016:56). It is therefore unsurprising that schools and churches are weary of such intergenerational dialogues like parent-child communication for fear of promoting early sexual debut and promiscuity.[23] Discussion around menstruation and menstrual preparedness are a gateway into further dialogue about sex and sexuality. Thus, it follows that when adolescent sexuality and ASRHR is shied away from and silenced, gender is subliminally swept under the rug.

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[21] https://zimbabwe.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/Parent%20Child%20Communication%20Mentors%20Manual%20final.pdf

[22] Cohen in his book "Folk Devils and Moral Panics" coined the term *moral panic* defining it as "a condition, episode, person or groups of persons [that] emerges to become a threat to societal values and interests" (Cohen, 2011:1).

In their study, also in Masvingo, Ndlovu and Bhala (2016) highlight that sometimes the knowledge (or lack thereof) transmitted to girls leads to amplified feelings of anxiety around MHM. This is said to affect their performance at school. There is also knowledge, attitudes and practices (KAP) that uphold that painful period pains are a signifier of infertility or that blood-stained materials ought to either be disposed of (by burning) or dried privately to avoid witchcraft (*ukuloywa* in Ndebele/Zulu). This in effect leads to "unhygienic practices like drying [underwear or re-usable menstrual pads] under the bed"[24] when there is need for sun-drying to ensure that germs and bacteria are destroyed do not breed in the material (Ndlovu & Bhala, 2016:4). Mtigwe *et al*. (2014) in a study for improving access through transforming education (IGATE) led by a Netherlands Development Organisation (SNV), found that 5% of rural girls in Zimbabwe do not have underwear and that even with access to sanitary wear they are still likely to miss school during menstruation. Muduma (2014) concurs; stating that in Bulawayo (a provincial city adjacent to Matabeleland South province of Zimbabwe; see Fig. 1 on page 15) there are girls who lack both underwear and sanitary wear for effective MHM. Where girls cannot afford commodified sanitary wear like disposable pads, they manage their menses in other ways, for example: by using cloth or re-usable menstrual pads (RUMPs)[25]. A baseline study in Masvingo, Zimbabwe found that 80% of the girls in the study would be open to using RUMPs and this was taken to be "an indication that the majority were not happy with what they termed 'homemade materials' in their current quality" (Bhala *et al*., 2014:16). RUMPs are a form of MHMMMs. The use of RUMPs is pertinent in revealing that even in the absence of single-use sanitary wear such as disposable pads and tampons, women and girls still have recourse to alternative MHMMMs. This suggests the aforementioned fixation on sanitary wear as an intervention in the modern construct of the global development agenda around "menstrual hygiene management" (Bharadwaj & Patkar, 2004; Kirumira, 2004; Dasgupta & Sarkar, 2008; House, 2012; Caruso *et al*., 2013; Long *et al.*, 2013; Anusree *et al.*, 2014; Bhala *et al*., 2014; Patavegar, 2014; SNV, 2014; Sinden *et al.* 2015; Tamiru *et al*., 2015; Hennegan & Montgomery, 2016; Kgware, 2016; Ndlovu & Bhala, 2016; Phillips-Howard, 2016; Sommer *et al.*, 2016;

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[23] See page 40-2 for further discussion around formal education in Zimbabwe, where the discourse of desire is found to be missing for girls.

[24] A UNESCO report on MHM highlights that "Drying in the sun has been promoted as good practice to kill bacteria. But as the link between MHM and infection has not been studied sufficiently, the possible risk of not drying in the sun has not been quantified" (2014:33).

[25] Ndlovu & Bhala, 2016; Mtigwe *et al.*, 2014

Sommer *et al.*, 2017) fails to take into account localised MHMMMs that precede the global development agenda. As a consequence, interventions such as the solitary introduction of sanitary wear without engagement with local KAP fail to meet the need for multi-tiered holistic menstrual preparedness for girls; the needs of which are nuanced from one locality to another.

1.2 Ndebele girls & global development

The Ndebele people[26], also as known as the Matabele, are a minority group in Zimbabwe who are descendant from the Zulu people of South Africa. The provinces of Matabeleland and North and South are homelands to the Ndebele of Zimbabwe. The fieldsite of this study is located in Matabeleland South. It is important to make a distinction between the Northern Ndebele of Zimbabwe and the Southern Ndebele of South Africa. The Ndebele herein referred to are the former. Both the Northern Ndebele and the Southern Ndebele speak a language by the same name -: Ndebele (*isiNdebele*). Northern Ndebele is closely related to Zulu (*isiZulu*). The Ndebele are in fact an offshoot of the Zulu who established themselves as a separate chiefdom from the Zulu and King Shaka under King Mzilikazi. Historically, the Ndebele are born out of a dispute between the two kings about the conquest of the Sotho chief Ranisi[27]. After conquering the Sotho, the Ndebele absorbed Ranisi's youth regiment. Northern Ndebele and *isiZulu* are both Nguni languages and share a certain degree of mutual intelligibility. With this in mind, it follows that dialectically when one begins to access the deeper, more abstract Ndebele vocabulary there is a commensurability with *isiZulu*. Southern Ndebele, however, is closer to the Sotho languages such Sotho and Setswana (e.g., *isiSotho* and *isiTswana*). There is an overall cultural and linguistic distribution across Zimbabwe's geography as can be seen Figure 1 below.

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[26] I do not use "tribe" as a descriptor for the Ndebele because it serves to essentialise them as a people when the study will in fact reveal that experiences of ménarche and menstruation are among Ndebele youth are in many ways similar to those of European youth.

[27] https://www.sahistory.org.za/people/king-mzilikazi

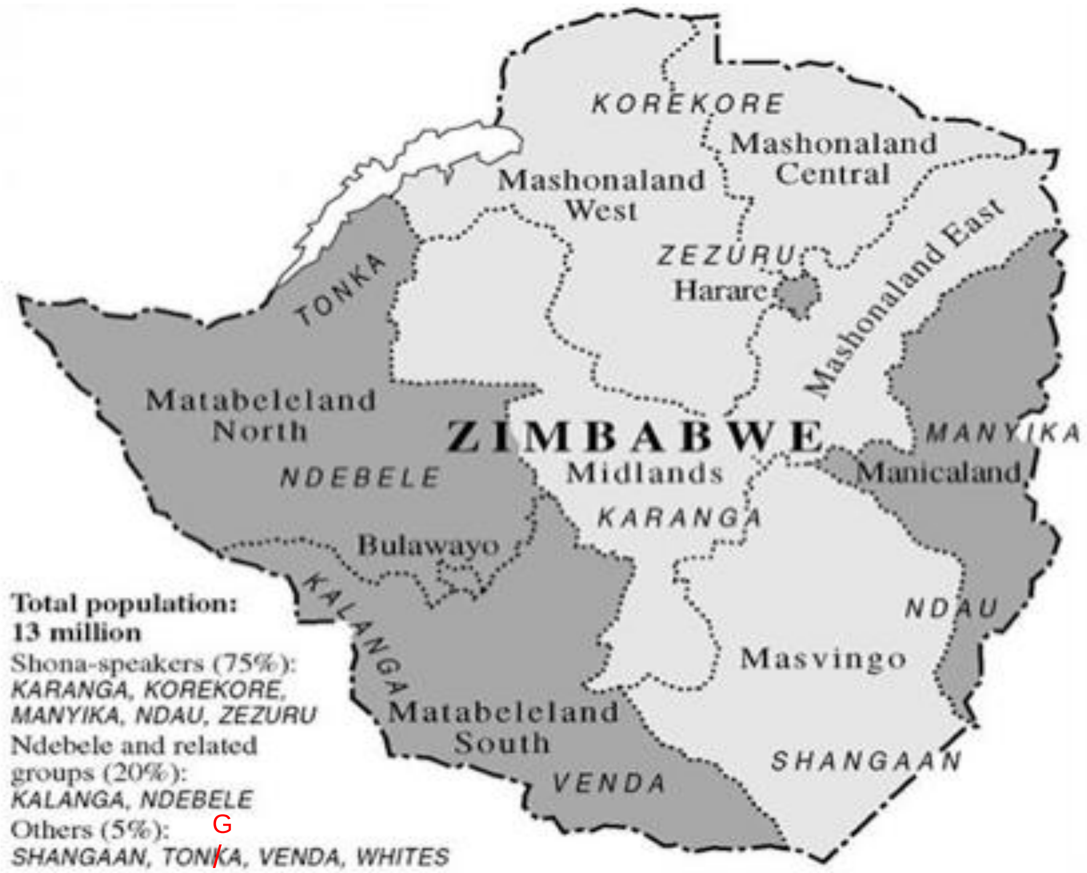
KOREKORE
Mashonaland Central
Mashonaland West
ZEZURU
Harare
Mashonaland East
TONKA
Matabeleland North
ZIMBABWE
MANYIKA
NDEBELE
Midlands
Manicaland
KARANGA
Bulawayo
KALANGA
NDAU
Masvingo
Matabeleland South
SHANGAAN
VENDA
Total population: 13 million
Shona-speakers (75%): KARANGA, KOREKORE, MANYIKA, NDAU, ZEZURU
Ndebele and related groups (20%): KALANGA, NDEBELE
Others (5%): SHANGAAN, TONKA, VENDA, WHITES
G

Figure 1: Historical distribution of Peoples in Zimbabwe by province

Source: News of the South, 2015[28]

As can be seen in Figure 1, the Ndebele and related groups are a minority make up approximately 20% of the total population[29]. As illustrated overleaf in Figure 2, Matabeleland South is a province made up of 6 districts: (i) Insiza, (ii) Umzingwane, (iii) Bulilmangwe, (iv) Matobo, (v) Gwanda and (vi) Beitbridge. Matabeleland South shares borders with Botswana and South Africa (Ndhlovu, 2019).

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[28] http://newsofthesouth.com/85-of-zimbabwes-matabeleland-north-is-poverty-stricken/
I have amended the misspelling of the Tonga people in red ink on the map.

[29] The Worldometer estimated (based on UN data) that the population of Zimbabwe was 15.1 million in December 2021.

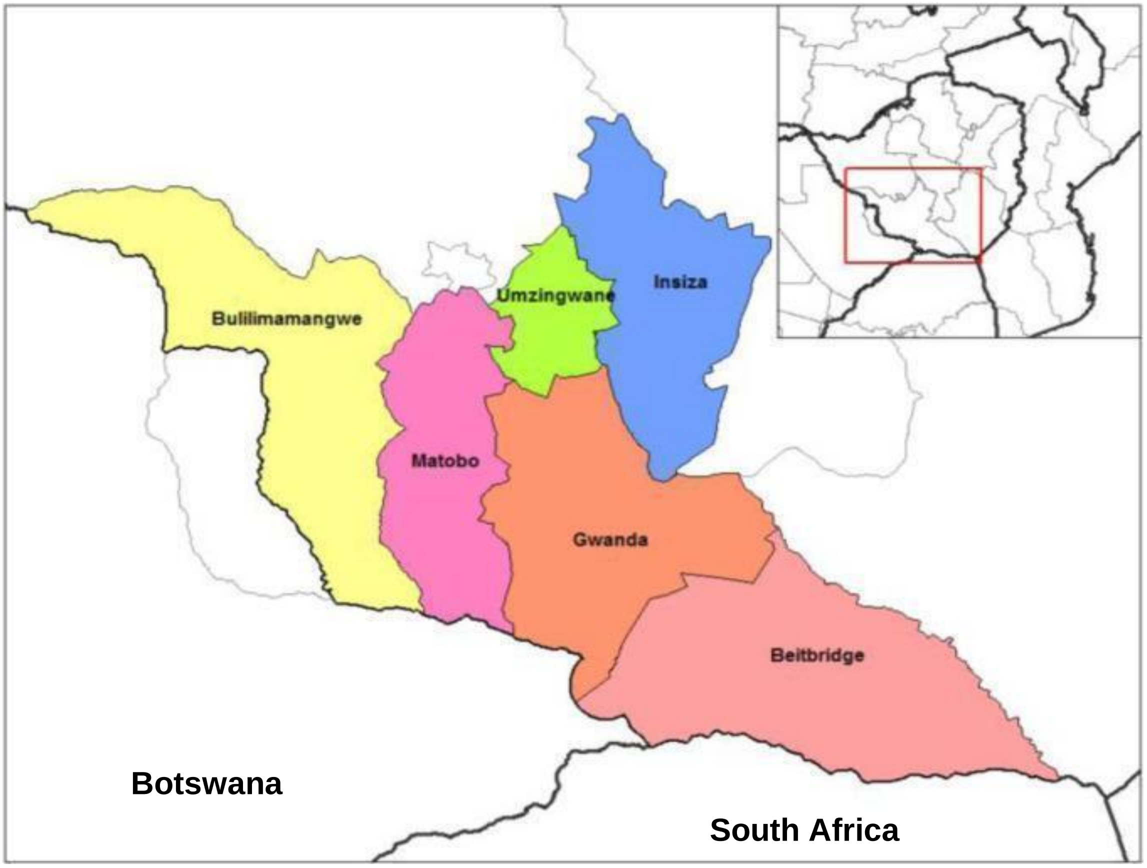

Figure 2: Matabeleland South by district

Source: ZIMSTAT, 2012

In recognising the turn towards advocating for the rights of the girl child in international development discourse (cf. page 1), it is worth considering the status of women and girls in Zimbabwe. The Zimbabwe 2019 Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS) gives us insight into this. According to the 2019 MICS, 4.8% of Zimbabwean girls and women aged 15-49 years were married before their fifteenth birthday (ZIMSTAT & UNICEF, 2019). Of these women who married before the age of 15 years, 6.4% are rural women compared with a cohort of 2.1% who are urban women. The 2019 MICS reports that 5.4% of young women married before the age of 15 fall within the 20-24 years demographic bracket. The percentage of rural young women aged 20-24 years married before the age of 15 is highest at a rate of 8.0%. Following this trend, we find that 10% more of rural young women aged 20-24 are married before the age of 18 than urban women at 33.7% and 43.7%, respectively.

Matabeleland South makes up 4.6% of the MICS general sample population and within the province of Matabeleland South, 2.1% of girls and women aged 15-49 years. However, when disaggregated by age, we find that 1.7% of women 20-24 years married before the age of 15 while 20.3% married before the age of

18 (ZIMSTAT & UNICEF, 2019:254). There is a correlation between early marriage and low levels of education. We find that 22.1% of girls married before the age of 15 have pre-primary school or no formal education (ZIMSTAT & UNICEF, 2019). Similarly, 12.1% only these women received only a primary school education. The rate of women married before the age of 15 attenuates sharply to 2.5% of women with a secondary (high) school education and 0.2% of women with higher education. Besides the obvious implications on the right to education as enshrined by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights[30], early marriage for girls also affects health outcomes. For example, the Zimbabwe 2019 MICS reports that:

> *Women who marry before the age of 18 tend to have more children than those who marry later in life and are less likely to receive maternal health care services. In addition, pregnancy related deaths are known to be a leading cause of mortality for both married and unmarried girls between the ages of 16 and 19"* (ZIMSTAT & UNICEF, 2019:253).

The maternal mortality rate in Zimbabwe is highest for young women aged 20-24 years at 0.56% (ZIMSTAT & UNICEF, 2019:112). It is 0.3% lower than the national average for girls and women aged 15-49 years, which stands at 0.53% (ZIMSTAT & UNICEF, 2019:112). The proportion of female deaths that are maternal is highest for young women aged 20-24 years at a rate of 20.8%. Maternal mortality is a leading cause of death for this cohort. We can thus conclude that the social determinants of health for adolescent girls aged 16-19 years and young women aged 20-24 years include education, pregnancy and marital status.

The village of Sikelela[31] is located 5 kilometres from the nearest health facility. In the way of public transport, there are only two commuter omnibuses that travel this route (one in the morning and one in the evening). Women often have to walk this distance and back on uneven dust roads to access maternal[32] and Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) services. American economist, Lawrence Summers, proclaimed in 1997 at the 8th Annual General Meeting of the Pakistani Society of Development Economists in Islamabad that for each year of education that a girl receives, her future fertility declined by 5-10% (Murphy, 2017:10). If we were to follow the economic modelling of Summers, it could be assumed that the education of girls has the potential to decrease future fertility and in the case of Zimbabwe may also drop the rate of (future) maternal mortality. This is, however, a neocolonial and Malthusian[33] approach to development to reduce the advantages of educating girls down to lowering their fertility. In her book, *The economization of life*, Murphy points to "a regime of valuation" (2017:5-6) which arises in after the Second World War that ascribes a monetary value to life (population) through economy. The proposals of Summers suggest a valuation of the lives of poor girls as being less valuable and less capable of meeting their respective consumption needs (e.g., access to food, water and healthcare) and therefore in need population control. Hence there is need to consider other advantages regarding educating women and girls. Yet there is no denying that Summers and Murphy agree with Bobel when she argues that "investing in girls is smart economics" (2019:50).

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[30] Declared by the UN General Assembly in Paris on 10 December 1948.

[31] Not the real name of the village; the village has been given a fictional name in order to protect the confidentiality and anonymity of the participants.

[32] During one of my trips to Sikelela, I witnessed a woman who had given birth the previous day walking this distance with her newborn and accompanied by her mother. The conductor of the omnibus I was in asked the passengers to make room for them to board.

Pande found the same in India where she ascertained that mother's level of education had "a significant, positive and independent effect on daughters' education" in India (2006:22)[34]. In the bid for gender parity in education it would be pragmatic to explore the mother-daughter link as a means of improving educational outcomes for girls. The impetus to push for the highest levels of educational attainment for women and girls is doubly underscored as a positive effect can also be anticipated generationally. Pande's case study helps us to understand that the role of women (and by extension, girls) at household level ultimately has a transformational impact at national level (Pande, 2006; Davala *et al.*, 2015[35]). This dissertation details forms of the invisible reproductive labour-work done by women that shape human development, and yet is overlooked in considerations around human development.

Data trends in Southern Africa also reveal that the economic modelling done by Summers is an oversimplification of the benefits of investing in girls and women through education. Marteleto, Lam and Ranchhod (2006) found that in South Africa, girls who fall pregnant and deliver while in school are just as likely to graduate from school as the ones who do not. A study funded by the UK Department for International Development (DFID) on girls' education in Mberengwa, Zimbabwe found that there are "patterns and sequences of events linking pre-marital sex, pregnancy and marriage to girls dropping out of school" (2016:1). The report draws attention to a phenomenon known as the 'revolving door' of pupils' education (DFID/Coffey International Development., 2016:18). This refers to the 'stop-start' cycles that repeatedly disrupt the school of girls (DFID/Coffey International Development., 2016:18).[36] Among the reasons cited for these disruptions was the failure to pay school fees and various levies. In late 2019 and throughout 2020, in particular, the speed of revolving door was quickened by the Coronavirus (COVID-19) global as school terms were interrupted to curb the spread of the virus. As I witnessed during my fieldwork – which coincided with the start of a new school term – many children milling around the village having been turned away due to non-payment. In painting a picture of the invisible kin work done Ndebele women in preparing girls for menstruation in this study, we are able to trace the links to the aforementioned sequences of sex and reproduction that are a piece of the drop-out trend puzzle. The findings of this dissertation suggest that menstrual preparation (through localised community kin work) is key to promoting positive developmental outcomes.

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[33] Malthusianism is the idea that population growth is potentially exponential while the growth of food supply and other resources is linear (Malthus, 1798).

[34] Similarly in the US, Crenshaw, Ocen and Nanda (2015:27) report the dependence of "many Black children on a female wage earner" and point to high drop-out rate of girls as a critical socioeconomic concern thereof. In Zimbabwe too, matrifocality is prevalent among Black Zimbabweans, see pages 81, 102 and 127.

[35] See also Kambhampati and Pal (2001).

1.3 The Zimbabwean policy landscape: Girls, early unintended pregnancy, education, menstruation & WASH

The status of women and girls in Zimbabwe is shaped by Zimbabwe's policy landscape. What follows is a discussion of Zimbabwe's historical, political and economic and development landscape. It paints the backdrop to the intergenerational narratives in this study. Zimbabwe (see Fig. 3 overleaf) is a former British colony, which gained its independence on 18 April 1980.

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[36] It is important to remember that not all pupils are privileged enough to re-start school after stopping or being pulled out.

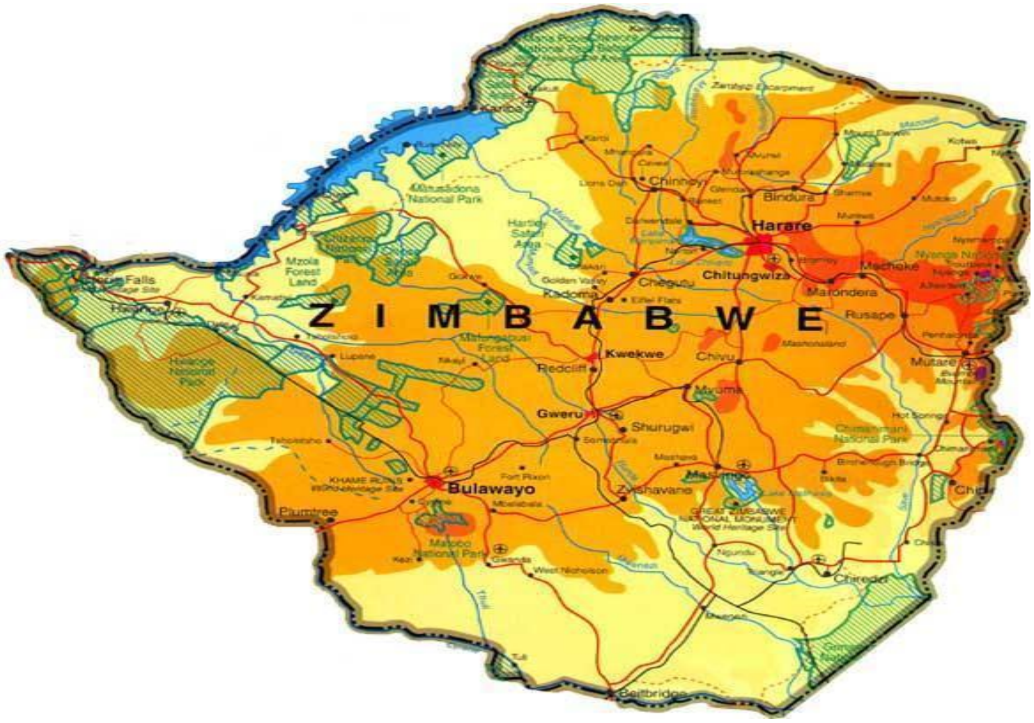
Z I M B A B W E
Harare
Bulawayo
Gweru
Kwekwe
Mutare
Masvingo
Chitungwiza
Chinhoyi
Bindura
Marondera
Kadoma
Zvishavane
Beitbridge
Chiredzi
Plumtree
Shurugwi
Redcliff
Rusape
Chegutu
Chivu
Mvuma
Hwange
Kariba
Victoria Falls

Figure 3: Map of Zimbabwe

Source: Wikimedia Commons[37]

The 1976 Education Amendment Act No. 2 of 2006 [Chapter 25: 04] made provisions for WASH – Water, Sanitation and Hygiene – in Schools (WinS). At present it is obligatory that every school have separate ablution facilities for girls and for boys at an average of at least one pit latrine toilet per twenty-five pupils (SNV, 2014). Zimbabwe has an active national Rural WASH Project that is coalesced by the national *Strategy To Accelerate Access To Sanitation and Hygiene 2011-2015.* Section 3.10 of this policy document on ‘Gender, Equity and Inclusion’ makes only one reference to menstruation. It states that “school girls starting their menstrual cycle are unlikely to use school latrines that have no doors”, however proposes no minimum standards for ablution facilities in schools to make them more girl-friendly by promoting sanitation and privacy for sanitary wear change. The United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) Rural WASH Programme from 2012 to 2016 does not consider menstruation management on the agenda for “sanitation and hygiene promotion”. However, the needs of girls and women around MHM were given prominence in the 2017 draft of the *Zimbabwe Sanitation and Hygiene Policy* (UNICEF, 2017). Section 3.2 on Minimum Standards makes provisions for WinS, stating that “[a]pproved, adequate age-sensitive separate facilities for staff, boys and girls as per approved ratios” and “[f]acilities for females [are] to have appropriate Menstrual Hygiene Management packs” (UNICEF, 2017:12). Under Section 3.5 on “Social

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[37] https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Atlas_of_Zimbabwe

Inclusion" (UNICEF, 2017:9). The Policy also makes mention of the fact that, "[a]ttention to the special need of women and girls and those in vulnerable situations" will be taken into account in line with Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 6 – a commitment to ensuring water and sanitation for all by 2030.

1.3.1 Girl-centred policy in Zimbabwe

The 17 United Nations SDGs constitute a shared intergovernmental Post-2015 Development Agenda, known as *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*. SDG 5.6 in particular:

> *focuses on targets that will require gender-disaggregated data, including:*
>
> - *Ensuring universal access to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive health and rights as agreed in accordance with the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development (1994) and the Beijing Platform for Action (1995) and the outcome documents of their review conferences* (WHO, 2017).

The importance of gender parity in education and the country's commitment to inclusive education for all (SDG 4) and gender equality (SDG 5) was shown in the five-year plan to accelerate progress towards the country's goals for universal primary education (UPE), equality, equity and empowerment through education. This was undertaken through the 2005 *National Strategic Plan for the Education of Girls, Orphans and Other Vulnerable Children*. The policy denoted Zimbabwe's acknowledgement of the primacy of the girl child in education. However, girls go on to be decentred and swept into the broader category of orphaned and vulnerable children in the subsequent five-year plans launched in 2011 and 2016 under the *National Action Plans for Orphans and Vulnerable Children* (NAP II and NAP III for OVC). They were re-centred in 2019 when an attempt was made to amend the Education Bill to make primary school education state-funded and obligatory. Parliament did not accept "a clause imposing an obligation on schools to provide the girl child with the sanitary wear", and propositions were made in favour of a clause stating that "Every school shall endeavour to provide sanitary wear and other menstrual health facilities to girls"[38].

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[38] Section 4 of the Education Amendment Act of 2020 [Chapter 25:04] states that "The State shall ensure the provision of sanitary ware and other menstrual health facilities to girls in all schools to promote menstrual health."

This renders access to sanitary wear in schools tentative. Nonetheless, towards this end the government allocated $200 million[39] (Zimbabwean dollars) of the 2020 budget[40] for the provision of free sanitary wear for school-going rural girls attending school from the fourth grade up to the sixth form[41] (see Fig. 5, page 23). This budgetary allocation reveals the State's involvement the seemingly private matter of menstruation. The policy changes represent what Hayhurst refers to as "the girling of development" (2011; cited in Bobel 2019:45). This introductory chapter has begun to make more explicit some of the overlooked connections between health (i.e., menstrual and reproductive), education and development. I do this in order to support my central hypothesis that the intermittent centring of girls in conversations around development without attending to the specious assumption that these issue-areas are unconnected. we will not be able to propose adequate solutions to improve the status of women and girls.

1.3.2 Zimbabwe's education system

The global community has identified education as a field in which girls have been left behind. It is important to be aware of the structure of the Zimbabwe education system and the official expected age of learners in order to understand the complexity of the moral dilemma surrounding menstruation and menstrual preparedness of girls in so far as it intersects with education outcomes and *lebenschancen*[42] (Weber, 1922; cited in Abel, 1991). Zimbabwe has a five-tier education system as seen in Figure 4 below:

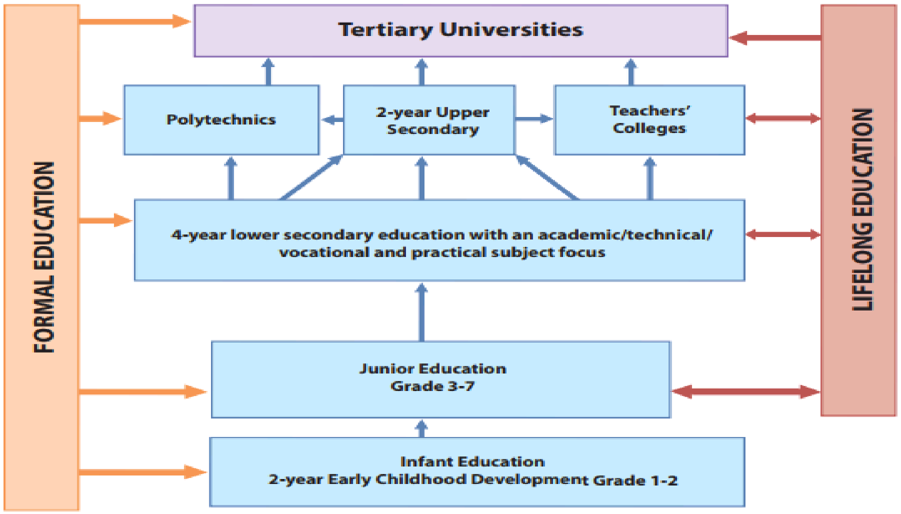
Tertiary Universities
Polytechnics
2-year Upper Secondary
Teachers' Colleges
4-year lower secondary education with an academic/technical/ vocational and practical subject focus
Junior Education Grade 3-7
Infant Education 2-year Early Childhood Development Grade 1-2
FORMAL EDUCATION
LIFELONG EDUCATION

Figure 4: Zimbabwean educational system

Source: Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education *2016-2020 Education Sector Strategic Plan*

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[39] an equivalent of $1.2 million US dollars at the time the budget was shared

[40] Total budget is $63 billion Zimbabwean dollars; an equivalent of $3.9 billion US dollars in early 2020.

[41] https://www.timeslive.co.za/news/africa/2019-11-14-zim-losing-resources-through-corrupt-activities-says-finance-minister-as-he-tables-us39bn-budget/

[42] *lebenschancen* are often translated into English as 'life chances' (life opportunities)

Further to this, Fig. 5 below illustrates the official expected primary school starting age (first grade) and high school starting age (first form), and the respective official expected ages of learners in Zimbabwe.

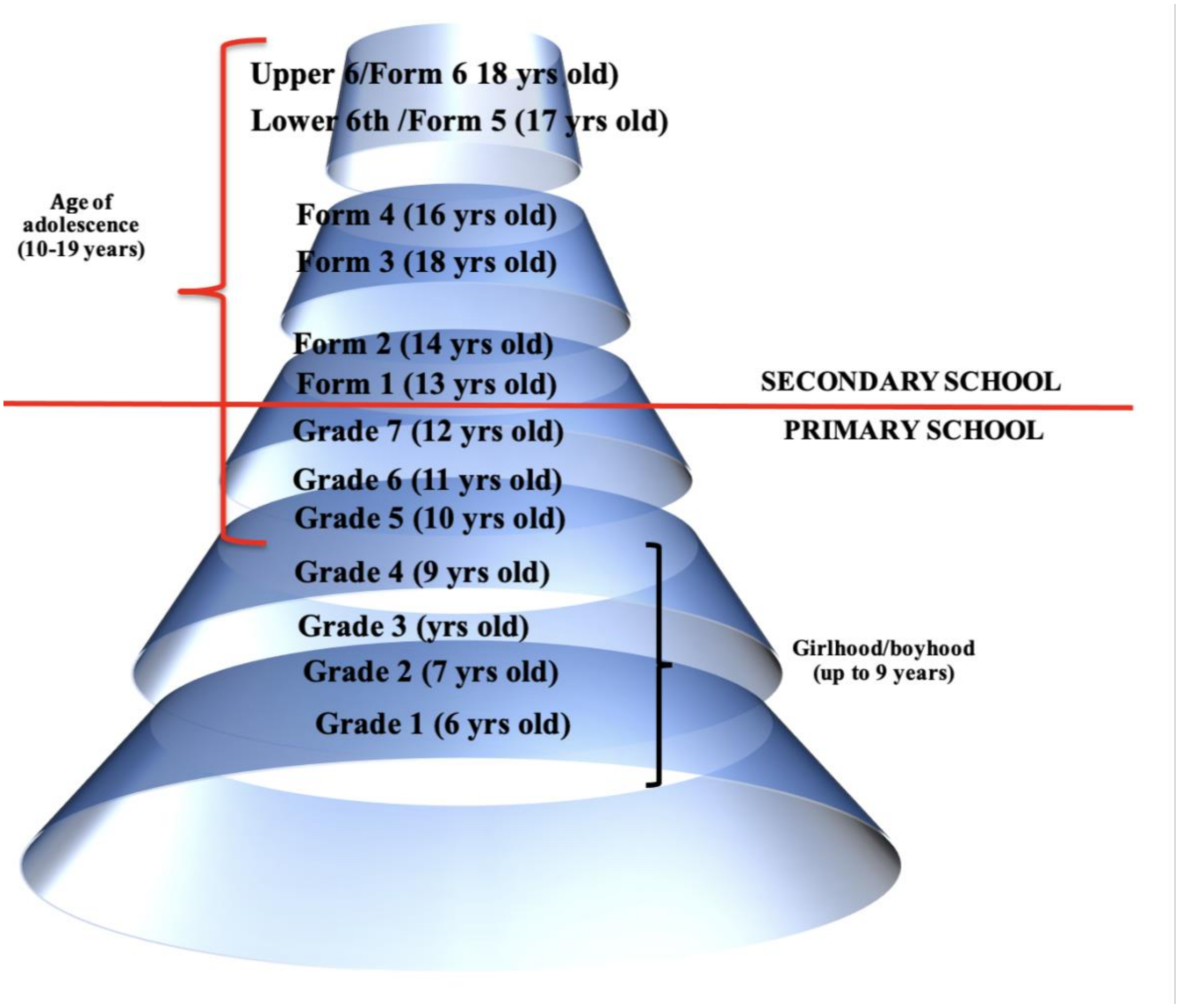
Upper 6/Form 6 18 yrs old)
Lower 6th /Form 5 (17 yrs old)
Age of adolescence (10-19 years)
Form 4 (16 yrs old)
Form 3 (18 yrs old)
Form 2 (14 yrs old)
Form 1 (13 yrs old)
SECONDARY SCHOOL
PRIMARY SCHOOL
Grade 7 (12 yrs old)
Grade 6 (11 yrs old)
Grade 5 (10 yrs old)
Grade 4 (9 yrs old)
Grade 3 (yrs old)
Grade 2 (7 yrs old)
Grade 1 (6 yrs old)
Girlhood/boyhood (up to 9 years)

Figure 5: Official expected age of learners at each level of primary and secondary school

1.3.3 Seventh grade transition rate crisis for Zimbabwean girls from primary and secondary school?

UNICEF notes that "Gender disparities disadvantaging girls in primary education persist in Africa, the Middle East and South Asia" (UNICEF, 2020). In Zimbabwe, transitions from primary to secondary school for girls (DFID, 2005; UNESCO, 2004; 2005; UNICEF, 2003; 2006; cited in Sommer, 2010a:521) warrant attention. Adolescent fertility rates have risen by 2.1 percentage points from 9.9% in 2006 to 12% in 2014 (UNFPA, 2016; cited in UNESCO, 2018:9). At the end of 2016, Zimbabwe's Minister of Primary and Secondary Education released a disconcerting ministerial statement (Murwira, 2016). It was noted that out of 329 549 candidates who had written their Grade Seven Zimbabwe Schools Examination Council exam, 24 000 would not enrol in secondary school. Of the seventh-graders who allegedly did not enrol, 4 500 (18.8%) were girls who alleged to be dropping out due to pregnancy and marriage. As Figure 5 on page 23 shows, the official expected age of a seventh-grader is 12 years. Similarly in 2018, the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education reported that one in eight of 57,500 dropouts across the country were due to pregnancy or marriage (Aljazeera, 2020).

Zimbabwe's 2014 Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey found that the percentage of girls and women aged 15-49 years who marry before the age of 15 is 4.9% (ZIMSTAT, 2015). This figure has remained stable with a slight decline of 0.1% to 4.8% in the 2019 MICS Findings Report (ZIMSTAT & UNICEF, 2019). At 7.3% – almost double the MICS rate – the Ministerial statistics indicate a need for further interrogation of the situation. While there may be repeaters above the official expected age for a seventh-grader, perhaps the crisis is unbeknownst to us because this demographic falls outside of age disaggregated databases such as the MICS and the Zimbabwe Demographic Health Survey (ZDHS). Almost a quarter (24.1%) of young women in Zimbabwe aged 20-24 years "have had a live birth before 18", while 17.6% of adolescent girls aged 15-19 have had a live birth (ZIMSTAT & UNICEF, 2019:9). These figures have declined since the 2014 MICS which revealed that 22.4% of young women in Zimbabwe aged 20-24 years and 19.1% of adolescent girls aged 15-19 have had a live birth (ZIMSTAT, 2015). At a rate of 24.6% for live births among girls aged 15-19, Matabeleland South ranks third highest out of Zimbabwe's ten provinces, indicating a high adolescent fertility rate. The rate has decreased from 120 (ZIMSTAT, 2015) to 108 births per 1,000 women aged 15-19 (ZIMSTAT & UNICEF, 2019). The urban to rural birth rate ratio is more than double at 62 and 136 (ZIMSTAT & UNICEF, 2019:74). Based on this data, the picture is obscure. Could it be that there is a lack of menstrual preparedness that translates to girls reaching ménarche but not knowing that if they engage in unprotected sex without taking contraceptive measures, they may fall pregnant?

In countries such as the United States (US) and South Africa (cf. page 18), girls who give birth while in school have the same likelihood of completing their schooling as the ones who do not (Upchurch, McCarthy & Ferguson,1993; Marteleto, Lam & Ranchhod, 2006; 2008). This suggests that there are more complex factors contributing to the education crisis that are unique to Zimbabwe. For example, educational policy implementation in the country mirrors cultural norms. Unlike the US and South Africa, school policies in Zimbabwe penalise schoolgirls who fall pregnant with exclusion without applying the same principle to schoolboys who are equally responsible in cases where both parties are school-going. Pregnant girls are forced to drop out of school while they are expecting, and this affects their likelihood of returning to their studies. It may also substitute their education with labour participation or unemployment (Cantet, 2020).

According to the earlier mentioned ministerial statement, pregnancy heightens their vulnerability to early marriage and low educational attainment. The Education Act [Chapter 25:04][43] of 1976 is under review through an amendment bill around which policymakers have begun to debate introducing a 'maternity vacation' for expecting schoolgirls that allows them to return to their studies after birth. The Education Minister, Professor Paul Mvima, argues that excluding girls from school because of pregnancy is discriminatory as it violates the right to education enshrined in Section 75 of Zimbabwe's Constitution on the basis of gender. Countries like the US have pregnancy schools devoted exclusively to pregnant girls. While South African schools do sometimes exercise the same school policy as Zimbabwe (of excluding pregnant pupils), the South African Schools Act of 1996 criminalises the exclusion of pregnant girls from schools. South Africa has one pregnancy school, the Pretoria Hospital School.[44] There are no such provisions for pregnant girls in Zimbabwe.

School policies that permit the expulsion of schoolgirls without applying the same principle to schoolboys who are equally responsible in cases where both parties are school-going re-enforce asymmetrical[45] consequences that disempower school-going girls who fall pregnant by forcing them to drop out of school.[46] They also mitigate the successful transition from school to work by preventing women from obtaining the necessary qualifications to compete with men for jobs and attain the same earning potential. In Zimbabwe, like Kenya and Malawi, the policy guidelines for re-entry of girls following pregnancy are in draft. The Zimbabwean Ministry of Education Circular P35 (1999) entitled, 'Discipline in Schools: Suspension, Exclusion and Corporal Punishment' (UNESCO, 2018). The Circular states that pregnant learners are permitted to take time off from school and places the responsibility of ensuring re-entry for girls on School Heads, in so far as is possible. The majority of the population are not aware of this circular and United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) has pointed to the need to 'raise awareness on the contents of the circular' (2018:xix). The fact that this Circular is has still not been formalised as a parliament-approved policy document is yet another instance of gender being swept under the rug.

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[43] amended in 2004

[44] https://learningenglish.voanews.com/a/south-africa-school-for-pregnant-teens/2412382.html

[45] See also Gordon (1996) and MoHCC, ZNFPC and UNFPA (2016).

[46] For example, in 1981 the Ministry of Health, at the time known as the Ministry of Home Affairs "expelled 45 students from a nursing college because they were pregnant" (Seidman, 1984:432). After the submission of this dissertation, I learned that the Education Act was amended in 2020 to illegalise use the expulsion of girls from school because of pregnancy. See: https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2020/8/25/its-now-illegal-for-zimbabwe-schools-to-expel-pregnant-girls and Education Amendment Act of 2020 [Chapter 25:04].

1.4 Conclusion

To summarise some of the findings of this chapter, it is important to note that in 2005 there was focus on girl-centred policy in Zimbabwe. However, in the subsequent 5-year national action plans of 2011 and 2016, girls zoomed out of the focus. In the process, their visibility was lost as they were absorbed into the broader category of orphans and vulnerable children. I have argued in this chapter that girls need to be centred in development discourse because without doing so, we will not find the right solutions to poor menstrual preparedness and its far-reaching implications. By focusing on girls, we are able to make ostensibly unrelated but key connections between gender, health and education. This chapter has defined the problem of poor menstrual preparedness and introduced the fieldsite. It has provided a background to the problem by painting a picture of the country's education system, policy landscape and gender disparities disadvantaging girls. It prefaces the interrelation between early unintended pregnancy, early marriage, educational, pointing to a seventh-grade transition rate crisis for Zimbabwean girls from primary to secondary school and how this crisis may be linked to poor menstrual preparedness. The chapter has demonstrated that the long-term effects of investing in the education of women and girls cannot be ignored.

CHAPTER 2: Literature Review

The following chapter begins by reviewing existing literature to paint a picture of the state of menstrual preparedness of girls and perceptions of menstruation in communities across the globe and in Africa. It highlights why girls need to be prepared for menstruation and the implications of poor pre-menarcheal preparedness. The chapter summarises the objectives of the study and illuminates the contribution to this body of literature. This chapter also situates the study within a wider discursive context of international development discourse that characterises menstruation as a problem in need of a technical, commercial and biomedicalised solution. This discourse fails to consider some of the broader contextual meanings of ménarche and menstruation and localised solutions that indigenous people proffer to combat menstruation-related problems. In this chapter, I present the dissertation's theoretical framework and point to these indigenous solutions as part of that menstrual preparation that constitutes reproductive labour-work.

2.1 Menstrual preparedness

Chapter 1 defined the problem of poor menstrual preparedness in Zimbabwe and established that menstrual preparedness is constituted by an awareness of reproductive capability; conveying what happens (physically and biologically) to a girl when she begins menstruating. We have also established that poor menstrual preparedness translates to girls being uninformed, underinformed or misinformed about the biological function of menstruation and how to manage it. This can subsequently lead to menstruation-related absenteeism, dropping out of school, unplanned pregnancy, early marriage, compromised reproductive health, and an inability to manage PMS symptoms. This first section of Chapter 2 will now texturise our understanding of the different dimensions of menstrual preparedness, drawing on country-specific contexts. The chapter frames the problem of menstrual preparedness not only in Zimbabwe, but also in sub-Saharan Africa and globally.

2.1.1 The state of menstrual preparedness globally

Prendergast (2000) studied the experiences of ménarche and menstruation in 474 English secondary schoolgirls in the 1990s. She found that "more than one in ten girls in the study still had not known about menstruation in advance of it happening" (2000:107). This indicates a lack of menstrual preparedness before ménarche, which remains a pervasive issue two decades after Prendergast's study. A study of adolescent girls in Afghanistan, Bolivia, Burkina Faso, Eritrea, Ghana, India, Indonesia, Kyrgyzstan, Mongolia, Niger, Nigeria Pakistan and Zambia found they too do not receive adequate information about menstruation prior to ménarche (Sinden *et al.*, 2015). As a result, many do not know or understand what is happening to them when they begin menstruating (Sinden *et al.*, 2015).

As I highlighted in the introductory chapter, menstrual preparedness includes *managing* menstruation, *understanding* the physiology of menstruation and *tracking* the menstrual cycle. Mansour and Mubarak's study in Saudi Arabia (2018) help us to identify different ways of managing menstruation. They report that Saudi students prepared for menstruation by consuming hot drinks (14.7%), taking warm baths (24.2%) and exercising (10.9%) and relieved menstrual pain through exercise (6.1%), pharmacological medication (16.4%) and herbs (65.8%) (2018). The study shows that menstrual preparedness also consists of knowledge around MHMMMs that help girls cope with menstruation-related problems like dysmenorrhea (Mansour & Mubarak, 2018). The literature on menstrual preparedness globally reveals a number of key factors that affect the level of menstrual preparedness: namely marital state and maternal education. In Saudi Arabia menstrual preparedness and marriage are closely related. Karout found that married Saudi nursing students were more likely than unmarried students to "increase their awareness towards the physiology of the reproductive system to prepare them for future pregnancy" (2016:28). Karout also found that mothers are a key source of information on menstruation for their daughters in Saudi Arabia (Karout, 2016). However, mothers may sometimes fail to provide emotional support with regard to the biological changes that come about at the onset of menstruation (Karout, 2016). Costos *et al*. (2002) found the same to be true in the US, where they found that mothers tend to focus on how to manage the technical aspects of menstruation but often neglect to provide emotional support at this confusing time. This can lead to a sense of isolation. A study by Yücel *et al*. (2018) in Turkey shows how emotional support is part of menstrual preparedness. Yücel *et al*.'s (2018) study among girls aged 9-18 years in Turkey determined that out of 1 274 (post-)menarcheal girls, 11.4% reported "feeling that nobody cares about their [menstruation-related] problems", while another 9.5% did not know who they could confide in regarding these problems (Yücel *et al*., 2018:352). Therefore, poor menstrual preparedness can have physiological, emotional and psychological implications.

Khanna *et al*. (2005) and Patavegar *et al*. (2014) uncovered a correlation between mothers and their level of education and daughters' menstrual preparedness, which was consistent with the trend seen in Saudi Arabia (Karout, 2016). This may be the reason why some mothers focus on the practical aspects of menstruation and its management. These studies have shown that education level is a key determinant in providing menstrual knowledge, as mothers of lower socio-economic backgrounds feel ill-equipped in this area because their own knowledge on the physiology of menstruation may be limited (Karout, 2016; FACT, MoHCC & UNFPA, 2017). There is a congruence between these findings and those of Pande (2006) mentioned on page 18 that stress the role of mothers and their level of education in shaping the well-becoming of their daughters. Mothers are menstrual knowledge gatekeepers, and, when confided in, they can play an important role in helping girls cope with menses so that they can have a high quality of life uncompromised by pain and engage in physical activities (Yücel *et al*., 2018). It is for these reasons that I stress the importance of menstrual preparedness before ménarche. Menstrual preparedness therefore includes, but is not limited to, equipping girls to manage menstruation (including tracking the menstrual cycle and other technical aspects) and the problems that may accompany it. It also includes maintaining a good quality of life and being able to engage in physical activities (Peacock, Alvi & Mushtaq, 2012; cited in Yücel *et al*., 2018) if and when a girl so chooses.

With poor education about menstruation, girls are at risk of a variety of menstruation-related problems (Manson & Mubarak, 2018). Menstrual complaints like dysmenorrhea, endometriosis[1] irregular bleeding (amenorrhea/oligomenorrhea[2]), excessive bleeding, bleeding between periods and pain are widely reported among women globally (Harlow & Campbell, 2004; Lefebvre *et al*., 2005; Seear, 2009; Yücel *et al*., 2018;[3]; Jeyalakshmi *et al*., 2019). The same is true for adolescent girls (Hillard & Deitch, 2005; Deligeoroglou *et al.*, 2010). Other problems include RTIs as earlier mentioned om page 1, and Khanna *et al*. also report that girls who exercised 'unsafe' menstrual practices were three times more likely to incur RTIs (2005:98).

2.1.2 Global approaches to improve menstrual preparedness

India, Kenya, South Africa and Scotland are arguably among the most progressive countries in addressing the issue of menstrual hygiene insecurity (Ministry of Drinking Water and Sanitation Government of India, 2015; Republic of Kenya, 2017; DoW, 2017; Lennon, 2017). In 2015, the Indian government launched its MHM National Guidelines. The World Bank describes this as a response "to nearly 113 million adolescent girls' at risk of dropping out of school due to the start of menarche (their first period)" (Lusk-Stover *et al*., 2016). Scotland made history as the first country to pass a bill for provision of free sanitary products. I participated in the public consultation of the "proposal for a bill to ensure free access to sanitary products" (Lennon, 2017). In 2019, the *Period Products (Free Provision) Bill* was introduced. It became an Act in 2021[4], making Scotland the first country in the world to articulate "the general right to and free supply of free period products" (SP Bill, 2019). This legislation is part of a wave of MHI policy, including a law passed by the City of New York in 2016, which set a precedent in expanding reproductive healthcare access through the provision of “free tampons and pads in public schools, homeless shelters, and prisons” (Anzilotti, 2016). Kenya is a pioneer in MHI legislation. In 2004, the government repealed the value added tax (VAT) on sanitary pads in and removed import duties on the same in 2011. In 2017, Kenya mandated the provision of free sanitary wear to schoolgirls through an amendment to the Education Act (Welham, 2020). South Africa has also made strong strides to unblind gender in development discourse by priming MHI as a social issue. Also in 2017, the South African Department of Women drafted the *Sanitary Dignity Framework*. Further to this, the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education in Pietermaritzburg issued sanitary pads in 2017 (Dawkins, 2018). The Framework was finalised in 2019 by the Department of Women, Youth and Persons with Disabilities.

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[1] Endometriosis is caused by endometrial cells that are growing abnormally outside of the uterus. The shedding of these cells during menstruation causes pain and scarring and can lead to further reproductive complications.

[2] Both conditions refer to infrequent menstrual periods; amenorrhea being the absence of one where as oligomenorrhea describes menstrual cycle longer than 35 days.

[3] Yücel *et al*. argue that "Problems related to menstruation are common in adolescent girls all over the world. […] Approximately 75% of adolescent girls have menstrual problems, such as delayed menarche, irregular menstrual cycle, or dysmenorrhea" (2018:353).

[4] https://beta.parliament.scot/bills-and-laws/bills/period-products-free-provision-scotland-bill

In spite of these measures put in place by the MHM guidelines,[5] the global COVID-19 outbreak still led to what has been reported in the media in 2020 as “a sanitary pad crisis in India”.[6] As this dissertation elucidates, MHI policy often points to educational institutions as key sources of menstrual products across the globe – in developed and developing countries alike. It is therefore unsurprising that during the COVID-19 Pandemic “In some parts of India, schools are a critical part of the supply chain, providing a pack of pads to girls each month. With them closed, along with other supply chain issues, as few as 15%[7] of girls had access to sanitary pads during the lockdown” (Garikipati, 2020). The Pandemic has revealed that although progress has been made from a policy planning perspective, the menstrual health of women and girls remains an important issue for prioritisation in the global development agenda.

2.1.2.1 The Indian case study

India is a particularly relevant case study to understand these multifaceted implications of poor menstrual preparedness. As was the case in the US (Costos *et al*., 2002) and Saudi Arabia (Karout, 2016), Khanna *et al*. (2005) found that in Rajasthan (India), mothers are the first sources of menstrual knowledge for girls. Teachers are also important menstrual knowledge gatekeepers. In Pulpralhadpur, New Delhi, Patavegar *et al*. (2014) found that for the majority of Indian girls, teachers were their first informants about menstruation. This is because – of the 1.2 billion adolescent girls in the world – almost half are in India (Anusree *et al*., 2014; Vashisht *et al*., 2018). Menstruation and menstrual preparedness are well-researched areas in India. A study reported that 71% of girls in India report having no knowledge of menstruation prior to ménarche

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[5] As mentioned before, affordability is a key obstacle to sanitary wear usage in India. For women and girls in more remote areas, accessibility is a further impediment. The MHM National Guidelines in India recommend the use of low-cost, locally produced sanitary wear.

[6] https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-india-52718434

[7] ibid.

(Dasra, Kiawah Trust & USAID, 2014). Similarly, 70% of women in India say their family cannot afford to buy sanitary pads (Dasra, Kiawah Trust & USAID, 2014). However, some years later, Garikipati and Boudot found that development initiatives had deeply penetrated India so much that 56-64% of women in the slums of Hyderabad reported sanitary pad usage (2017:32). With regard to MHM, Omidvar and Begum (2010) found that the type of sanitary wear used by girls in south India differed according to age, with older girls more likely to use disposable pads than younger girls. They also found that younger girls were also more likely to reuse soiled sanitary wear (Omidvar & Begum, 2010). Ignorance is suggested as the cause (Omidvar & Begum, 2010). Dhingra *et al*. (2009) discerned that the vast majority of Gujjar adolescent girls in south and south-eastern India have incomplete and inaccurate information on menstruation before ménarche. They also found that the girls exercised unhygienic practices in terms of MHM: (re-)using dirty cloths, or not washing and drying menstrual cloths thoroughly (Dhingra *et al*., 2009). As few as 3% used a fresh cloth each day (Dhingra *et al*., 2009:46). Dasgupta and Sarkar (2008) observed that almost one-third of Bengali adolescent girls (32.5%) in east India did not know about menstruation at the time of ménarche. A study in north India determined that two-thirds of girls were entirely unprepared for menstruation when they had their first menstrual period (Sharma *et al*., 2018). Khanna *et al*. (2005) found that in Rajasthan, north India, 90% of girls also did not know about menstruation when they first began menstruating. Lack of knowledge and understanding is often accompanied by fear. Jeyalakshmi *et al*. (2019) also found that, among adolescent girls in India, 79% suffered from severe stress during their menses as they were ill-prepared apropos coping strategies for managing primary dysmenorrhea. It is therefore unsurprising that as many as 68% of girls in north India consider menstruation as an affliction or a curse inflicted by the gods (Sharma *et al*., 2018).

2.1.3 Menstrual preparedness in sub-Saharan Africa

A study carried out in Ethiopia, South Sudan, Uganda, Tanzania and Zimbabwe investigating the menstrual hygiene management of schoolgirls revealed that “few girls in any of the countries are prepared for menstruation before it occurs, so that menarche is a distressing experience of fear, pain and shame” (SNV, 2014:10). In a study in Nigeria, out of 187 post-menarcheal girls, 10% had no knowledge of what menstruation is or its significance (Abioye-Kuteyi, 2000). A further 40% had incorrect information about menstruation. This means that more than half of the menstruating girls in this study were not prepared for menstruation in terms of knowledge, even though they may know how to manage their periods materially (Abioye-Kuteyi, 2000). According to Umeora and Egwuatu (2008b), the topic of menstruation is a source of discomfort among Igbo women in Nigeria. They note the reluctance of Igbo mothers in preparing daughters for ménarche and the cycles of menstruation that would follow (Umeora & Egwuatu, 2008b).

The Southern Ndebele have a female initiation ceremony known as *iqhude* or *ukuthombisa*. It takes place when a Ndebele girl reaches puberty and starts before the first full moon.[8] The word *ukuthombisa* in Southern Ndebele is commensurable with the Northern Ndebele word for reaching ménarche (*ukuthomba*). The Ndebele *iqhude* ceremony is not unlike the Xhosa *intonjane* which is "a female rite of passage performed at menarche" (Padmanabhanunni *et al*., 2018:705). It signified "the transition from childhood to adulthood and eligibility for marriage owing to the girl having reached biological sexual maturity" (Padmanabhanunni *et al*., 2018:705). The ritual consisted of eight days in which they would be secluded from men and boys and, at this time, "Girls are also provided with information regarding sexual and reproductive health and how to manage menstruation". The initiates ranged between 11-16 years (Padmanabhanunni *et al*., 2018). The practice of *intonjane* was opposed by missionaries, so girls are initiated variably in modern South Africa, particularly in the Eastern Cape province – a homeland to the Xhosa people. Though acknowledged as a transition into adult status, the Northern Ndebele do not have a formal initiation rite associated with ménarche.

In a study carried out in the Vhembe district of Limpopo province in South Africa, it was found that among the Vha-Venda, only 27% of 273 girls had no knowledge of menstruation at ménarche, while another 27% "reported knowledge of the physical changes that relate to menarche" (Ramathuba, 2015:4). Of the 73% who claimed to have knowledge on menstruation, only 27% of these girls understood the physical changes that came with ménarche (Ramathuba, 2015:4). For these Vha-Venda girls, *Vho-Makhadzi* (like Ndebele girls' *babakazi*) is the paternal aunt who prepared girls for menstruation; shaping and helping manage menstrual practices at a household level (Ramathuba, 2015). Menstrual preparation vis-à-vis understanding the physiology of menstruation when once ménarche is reached, the body becomes reproductively capable is integral to serves as a link curbing early unintended pregnancy.

In Zambia, similarly, "there is a lack of understanding among girls around the biological purpose of menstruation" (Sinden *et al.*, 2015:49). As a result, many girls in Zambia do not know or understand what is happening to them when they begin menstruating (Sinden *et al.*, 2015). UNESCO (2018) notes that in the Zambian rural areas in particular, there are especially high rates of early unintended pregnancy, revealing a connection between menstrual knowledge and early unintended pregnancy. Miiro *et al.* (2018) state that in Uganda parents found it difficult to have open dialogue about menstruation and MHM with their daughters because of cultural norms. Unsurprisingly, Ugandan girls report that insufficient knowledge on menstruation and its management prior to reaching ménarche triggered anxiety about ménarche (Miiro

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[8] https://southafrica.co.za/ndebele-initiation-and-rites-of-passage.html

et al., 2018). Grant *et al.* (2013) explain that female students in rural Malawi may feel poorly prepared to deal with menstruation because they lack information. A glimpse into early unintended pregnancy is captured in the Demographic Health Survey Data for adolescent girls aged 15-19 years. In Zambia and Uganda along with Tanzania and Malawi the proportion is high at over 25% (UNESCO, 2018:xii).

Zimbabwe is not far behind with the 2015 ZDHS revealing an early childbearing rate for adolescent girls aged 15-19 years of 21.6% (ZIMSTAT & ICF International, 2016). The unintended pregnancy rate for the same cohort is 37.6%. The survey reports that 37.8% of girls aged 15-19 years in primary school compared with 17.3% of girls aged 15-19 years had their first birth (UNESCO, 2018). This suggests that girls with lower educational outcomes (primary school repeaters or pupils whose yearly progression from one grade to another has been impeded for external factors), are at increased risk of falling pregnant in Zimbabwe. This crystallises the need to address the transition rate crisis and grade succession for Zimbabwean girls. The proportion of rural girls (27.2%) having the first birth between 15-19 years is more than double that of urban girls (10.3%) in Zimbabwe (UNESCO, 2018). Consequently, UNESCO has recommended focusing on rural communities where early unintended pregnancy rates are highest. I have highlighted the consequences of exclusion of girls from school as a factor compromising gender parity in education (see page 21). UNESCO has spoken of the need to "strengthen re-entry monitoring framework" for girls following early unintended pregnancy in Eastern and Southern Africa (UNESCO, 2018:xix).

This dissertation frames menstrual preparedness as girls having both the prior knowledge of what to expect of menstruation and the ability to manage menstruation, as well as how prepared society is to fully educate girls on the nature and implications of ménarche and menstruation – before ménarche is reached. It creates a link between menstrual preparation and early unintended pregnancy, a crisis that is also touching the village of Sikelela. Therefore, menstrual preparedness is not just information about menstruation at the time of the first period. McMahon *et al.* (2011) raise an important aspect of menstrual preparedness from their research in Kenya. They suggest that teaching girls how to track their periods is a menstrual preparation strategy that could lessen fear and anxiety around starting one's period while at school and better equip them to cope with menstruation. School is a terrain that makes girls especially nervous about menstruation. This is because this private issue of menstruation must be negotiated in the public space of school (Fingerson, 2005b). Prendergast points to another layer of menstrual preparedness that complicates our understanding of the problem when she explains that:

> *Interwoven through all of this [i.e., managing menstruation in school], girls also acquire informal social knowledge about menstruation: how it is viewed and dealt*

> *with in the world, to whom and how she must speak about it, and the practical arrangements that must be made so that rules and etiquette as to its visibility and management are not contravened. Using appropriate strategies for managing menstruation, they must negotiate their time, the adult world telling them when to go to the bathroom, and their menstrual supplies* (Prendergast, 2000:108).

The above is what I describe an ecosystem of 'growing up'. As I mentioned on page 29, the practical aspects of menstrual preparedness include access to use sanitary wear and knowledge on how to use sanitary wear. Ménarche is a gateway into knowledge about MHM (Sommer, 2010a; Yücel *et al*., 2018) and an introduction into the tacit code of conduct governed by a code of "menstrual etiquette" (Laws, 1990). This menstrual etiquette dictates the concealment of menstruation and menstrual products. It is like a prism in which light is absorbed from the outside world but is refracted internally, and this light represents societal views on menstruation. Without proficiency in the vernaculars of menstruation and the literacy on how to read this social script of menstrual etiquette, girls are doomed to (albeit unintentionally) commit contraventions as they blunder unknowingly through this ecosystem.

This section of the chapter has reviewed the related literature on menstruation and menstrual preparedness globally. It has outlined the problem of poor menstrual preparedness and the dangers that may arise out of poor menstrual preparedness, for example: early unintended pregnancy; STIs (including HIV/AIDS); unhygienic MHM practices that can lead to RTIs; stress, anxiety, and the inability to manage the problems accompanying menstruation, e.g., dysmenorrhea. It builds on the introductory chapter by highlighting some of the reasons for poor menstrual preparedness. It has texturised our understanding of menstrual preparedness and its different dimensions -: from knowledge on the physiology of menstruation, to the ability to navigate the world of menstrual etiquette; to tracking one's cycle and being physically and emotionally prepared through knowledge of MHMMMs and how to use them. Menstrual preparedness also consists of knowing who to turn to information and emotional support around the changes that accompany the passage into ménarche.

2.2 Menstruation and international development discourse

Sommer argues that menarcheal age is a "missing indicator in population health from low-income countries" (Sommer, 2013). This is noteworthy because ménarche and menarcheal age help us to understand the links between biological development *and* human development. Ménarche is a social determinant of adolescent health that has a bearing on educational attainment. Ménarche interrelates with development outcomes like nutritional status; early sexual debut; uptake of alcohol and other substances;

and school dropout rates (Resnick *et al.,*1997; Windle *et al.,* 2004; Sommer, 2013). Yet this link between ménarche and development is largely overlooked. In Zimbabwe, much of the recent demographic data, including menarcheal data, is collected as part of smaller independent studies, many of which are carried out by development agencies and not collated at a national scale to provide us with a national menarcheal age as an indicator in population health. For example, Ibitoye *et al.*'s systematic review of early ménarche and its effect on SRH in low- and middle-income countries had "no overall measure of central tendency" for Zimbabwe (2017:6).

Smaller independent studies like that of Mbizvo *et al.* (1995), in their study of reproductive biology knowledge and behaviour of teenagers in East, Central and Southern Africa where they found the average menarcheal age to be 13.5 years in Zimbabwe. A study of adolescent girl nutrition in the Mangwe and Tsholotsho districts of Zimbabwe found the average age of ménarche to be 14.3 years (Reese-Masterson & Murakwani, 2015). Whereas Ndlovu and Bhala, in their study of menstrual hygiene in Masvingo district, indicate that, "Girls start menstruating as early as 8 years of age" (2016:4). These variances point to the need for 'big data' that can paint the national picture, especially in light of global trend that point towards a steady and significant decline in menarcheal age (Talma *et al*., 2013). Big data on ménarche, alongside other smaller studies on ménarche and its relationship with sexual debut; vulnerability and disclosure of STIs (e.g., HIV) to sexual partners; schooling can be used to inform policy by pin-pointing the areas that need to be targeted for to advance the position of girls. For example: a study of HIV disclosure patterns among HIV-positive women in Zimbabwe found the menarcheal age of women who disclosed their HIV status to their current sexual partner was 14.6 years, compared with 13.8 years for women who did not disclose (Patel *et al*., 2012). This divergence of HIV disclosure relative to menarcheal age was not attributed to a specific factor. However, the participants in the study who had a higher menarcheal age were also likely to have had a later sexual debut, although delayed sexual debut did not influence HIV disclosure. It is thus assumed that later sexual debut "signaled more emotional maturity and, therefore, a higher likelihood of disclosing to partners" (Patel *et al*., 2012:365). This builds onto what I argue on page 20, that menstruation matters are largely missing from development discourse and where it is addressed, the issue is treated as a (new) problem in need of technical solutions.

In the words of Roxburgh *et al*., "Menstruation, and 'menstrual hygiene management' (MHM), have become increasingly recognised in the water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) development sector as an important and gendered aspect of sanitation and health" (2020:2). The focus of MHM is largely on sanitary wear and WASH standards (Sommer, 2015; Mahon & Fernandes, 2010), thereby perpetuating the silence on menstrual and reproductive health and their link to early unintended pregnancy. This study draws out some of these links. It reveals the scope of menstrual preparation Ndebele girls undergo before and after ménarche. In so doing, it reveals the role of menstrual preparation at a household level in delaying early sexual debut and subsequent fertility which affect national-level development indicators like Gross National Product, Total Fertility Rate (TFR), maternal mortality rate and promoting "reproductive success" at a community level. It does so in order to highlight why menstruation matters. Goldsmith defines reproductive success as "having both parents invest time and energy in defense of breeding grounds, and the care of the young, the survival chances of the offspring increase" (1991:41). This study demonstrates the far-reaching consequences of the seemingly 'private' work of menstrual preparedness of girls done by women and kinfolk that evince the interplay between household parental care and broader developmental outcomes of children (Klug & Bonsall, 2014).

Zimbabwe's national *Strategy To Accelerate Access To Sanitation and Hygiene 2011-15* only makes passing mention of menstruating girls, without any specific provisions for them. The UNICEF's global *Strategy for Water, Sanitation and Hygiene 2016–2030* perhaps signals an improvement that we may witness at country level in coming years. The global strategy acknowledges that WinS facilities must meet needs of menstruating girls in order to promote attendance and achievement in schools. It also encourages innovations such as "emergency supply kits that allow women and girls to maintain menstrual hygiene" (UNICEF, 2016b). Yet the emphasis still remains on commercial offerings such as emergency kits and ablution facilities (cf. page 20) without considering the broader context and meanings of ménarche and menstruation.

Despite framing menstruation as a problem, menstrual dysfunctions – which are increasingly reported – are not included in estimates for the Global Burden of Disease (Harlow & Campbell 2004). In the UK almost 3 out of every 4 adolescent girls suffer from menstrual disorders such as irregular periods and acute abdominal pain (Peacock, Alvi & Mushtaq, 2012; cited in Yücel *et al.*, 2018). Coutinho and Segal explain that menstrual cycle-related disorders are referred to as "catamenial diseases to indicate their monthly recurrence. They are caused by immunological, hemodynamic,[9] hormonal, and metabolic changes that occur during menstruation" (1999:81). Catamenial disorders are conditions that flare up cyclically, for example, primary dysmenorrhea (e.g., backpain, abdominal pain and cramps caused by menstruation) and secondary dysmenorrhea (e.g., endometriosis, fibroids[10] and other reproductive conditions). Knowledge of these menstruation-related problems, i.e., catamenial disorders (Coutinho & Segal, 1999) and the ability to articulate them constitutes a fluency in the vernaculars of menstruation – a kind of 'menstrual literacy' – that affords them hermeneutical justice. This type of hermeneutical justice is especially important because adolescents in developing countries frequently report irregular bleeding in the form of amenorrhea, oligomenorrhea and abnormal uterine bleeding (Harlow & Campbell, 2004).

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[9] i.e., related to the dynamics of blood flow

[10] According to the UK National Health Service, "Fibroids are non-cancerous growths that develop in and around the womb (uterus)". See https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/fibroids/

Chronic conditions such as endometriosis are reported to have lengthy delays in diagnosis (Seear, 2009). These delays are as long as 7.96 years in the United Kingdom (UK) and 11.73 years in the United States of America (Hadfield *et al.*, 1996). It is evident from these diagnostic delays that the pathways to diagnosis for reproductive conditions such as endometriosis need to be improved (even) in developed countries. "An estimated 89 million women worldwide suffer from the condition, according to the Endometriosis Association (2015)" (Peracullo, 2017:314). Endometriosis is a reproductive condition a where endometrial cells that are shed during menstruation grow outside of the uterus; in the cervix, and bladder and sometimes in other locations in the pelvis. These cells, known as endometrial implants, will still follow the same menstrual pattern they follow in the uterus thickening, disintegrating, and bleeding (Peracullo, 2017:315). Complications thus arise as the blood they produce cannot flow out of the body due to the abnormal location of the implants. "This can lead to the formation of scar tissue and cysts as well as difficulties getting pregnant" (Peracullo, 2017:315). Despite the prevalence of menstrual problems, "[m]enstrual dysfunction, like other aspects of sexual and reproductive health, is not included in the Global Burden Disease estimates" (Harlow & Campbell, 2004:6). Menstrual disorders are a pertinent health concern relating to overall reproductive and menstrual health. Deligeoroglou and Tsimaris assert that, "Abnormal uterine bleeding (AUB) and especially the subtype of dysfunctional uterine bleeding (DUB), is the most urgent gynaecological problem during adolescence" (2010:157). AUB is also common among pre-menopausal adults and menstrual bleeding is reported to affect 30% of women during the course of their reproductive years (Singh *et al.*, 2013). All of these menstrual conditions have an impact on the quality of life of girls and women. Yet these menstrual and reproductive health issues glaring in their absence in international development discourse.

Though uterine and cervical cancer treatment were included in the universal health coverage effective coverage index (Wang *et al.*, 2020) in 2019, the Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation still does not include menstrual health in the Global Burden of Disease estimates. The Lancet 2019 *Global Burden of Disease Study* recognises that education attainment and the provision of reproductive health will determine whether or not global TFR drops below replacement fertility levels (Vollset *et al.*, 2020:1297) but there continues to be a siloing of menstrual health from reproductive health. It is not in the interests of ensuring the good health and well-being of women and girls if menstrual health to continue to be largely absent in international development discourse, particularly given its direct link to fertility. Harlow and Campbell (2004:12) assert that, “Traditional cultures of silence often surround menstruation and may inhibit women from obtaining information about menstruation or from seeking care for menstrual morbidities”. Could it be that the development discourse persistently mimics the very same cultures of silence on menstruation by treating menstruation almost singularly as a problem?

Addressing menstruation holistically is key to closing the gender gap in education and health. Ménarche is the entry point into reproductive maturity and fertility and is itself a girlhood experience. Girlhood is largely missing in Zimbabwean gender discourse and yet “[a]n appreciation of girlhood concerns can presumably reshape, in significant ways, the gender agenda in Zimbabwe” (Ngoshi, 2010:242). Girlhood is a useful “analytic lens” through which the three generations of girls and “women represent their experiences” (Batisai, 2013:83) in this study. The global and local findings in the first section of this chapter on ‘Menstrual Preparedness’ underscore the importance of menstrual preparedness in terms of information about MHM, sexual socialisation and sex education and are issues under which the neglected, yet related, topics of pregnancy; STIs and HIV/AIDS can be addressed so as to prevent early unintended pregnancy and transmission of STIs, including HIV (Ramathuba, 2015; Tamiru *et al*., 2015; Patel *et al*., 2012).

Bearing in mind the framing of menstruation as a (new) problem in development, it should not be taken for granted that menstruation is a new phenomenon. What is relatively new, is its packaging as a human rights issue. In addition, relatively new vernaculars of menstruation such as PMS force menstruation more visibly into public discourse as a social justice issue. This study reveals that though the process of developing a detailed vernacular for diagnosing conditions is one that lags behind the existence or prevalence of a condition, the indigenous remedies for managing and treating the condition does not. This dissertation gives insights into some of the localised Zimbabwean remedies for menstrual-related problems that have been employed long before any articulation of these problems in public discourse. It also redirects the myopic problematisation of menstruation by spotlighting ménarche as a rite of passage into adulthood – *ukukhula* – and a gateway into reproductive capability.

In elucidating this new rights-based approach to menstruation, I turn to Cornwall and Nyamu-Musembi (2004) who state that a rights-based approach to a social issue is one that is aligned with ideals of a future envisioned through development and that these ideals shape the goals of the global community. The rights-based approach to development has ethical and moral underpinnings. It can also be distinguished from the ‘needs-based’ approach which is oriented around “securing additional resources for delivery of services to particular groups, [whereas] a rights-based approach calls for existing resources to be shared more equally and for assisting the marginalised people to assert their rights to those resources" (Cornwall & Nyamu-Musembi, 2004:1417). Uvin explains that 'rhetoric repackaging' is a process of redefining and reconceptualising "the realms of acceptable behavior[u]r, new ways of judging progress and holding actors accountable, new definitions of interest and preference" (2004:169) that takes place periodically. The issue of menstruation and sanitary wear access is packaged as MHI. MHI goes on to be repackaged as 'Period Poverty' (Bobel, 2019) in the UK – specifically Scotland (Lennon, 2017) and 'Sanitary Dignity' in South Africa (DoW, 2017). In both instances MHI takes on a more emotive tone. MHI becomes a concern linked respectively to the intrinsic human right to dignity, and the deprivation of rights as a result of poverty. This adds gravitas to MHI within the development agenda and the practice of development. A similar sort of repackaging of the UNCRC takes place The Fourth World Conference on Women in 1995, known as the *Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action*, which gives rise to the 'girl-child' as a rhetoric used in advocating for gender equality and women's rights. This particular repackaging foregrounds the centring of girls in development discourse.

As I have mentioned earlier, international development discourse is preoccupied with sanitary wear, e.g., disposable pads, single-use tampons and menstrual cups as 'remedy' to MHI. It *repackages* washable or re-usable sanitary wear 'green' sanitary wear such as a novel Western invention without a cognizance that the use of rags is not so dissimilar. MHM and MHI have most recently been (re)packaged as menstrual health and hygiene (MHH[11]) as there is a turn towards looking at how to solve MHI through a more holistic approach that locates MHM within the broader context of public health (Ljungberg & Coates, 2020; Tembo *et al.*, 2020). In this way MHM, MHH and MHI are '(re)packaged and sold' alongside other buzzwords in international development discourse.

According to development thought, 'productive' women are educated women who are formally and gainfully employed. For a society to have these kinds of productive women, it must raise up productive girls who attend (and succeed in) school. In a commentary on Zimbabwe, Bhala *et al.* state that "Considerable productive time is lost for the girl child, further compromising her education and later development in life[…] The productive time lost and the educational value the girls lose present a serious humanitarian challenge that needs the attention of government, communities, NGOs [non-governmental organisations] and individuals" (2014:16). The impetus of promoting positive development outcomes for the girl child therefore emerges as a collective and collaborative work of the state and the global development community. This is evinced in the wide range of sanitary wear interventions, which are managed at different levels from country to country, with the aim of meeting the need for accessible and/or affordable, effective MHM for indigent women and girls. MHI as it relates to the cost of sanitary wear and schoolgirl menstruation-related absenteeism has begun to push the private issue of menstruation into the public policy spotlight. For example, in 2017 sanitary pads issued by the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education in Pietermaritzburg (cf. page 30) are packaged as "championing quality education, creating and securing a brighter future".[12] Hence we see that under the rights-based approach to development, the need for sanitary wear is placed at the same level of importance as other learning needs for education like teachers, books and stationery (Bobel, 2019).

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[11] https://ssir.org/articles/entry/investing_in_menstrual_health_is_an_investment_in_global_health

Paradoxically, however, as MHI gains publicity and traction in current affairs and public policy, this issue is glaringly absent in development discourses and certain human development frameworks. Uvin warns of this too as he highlights that one pitfall of rhetorical repackaging is that, in some instances, it "may merely provide a smokescreen for the continuation of the status quo" (2004:169). That is: human development and gender development, which predominantly invoke dichotomies of 'individuals and structures, economics and culture, and quantitative and qualitative methodologies' (Kabeer, 1994: xv) may continue to simply do so as the disempowered and marginalised remain so even as they are brought into the debate through rhetoric (Jensen, 2014; Uvin, 2007). This dissertation will demonstrate how such 'smokescreens' portray distorted illusions of lived experience. This study casts a light on the incongruence between localised constructions of certain experiences and the ways in which they are articulated in development discourse. Izugbara and Undie (2008) concur with this view of a disjuncture between policy and practice. They point out the conundrum between "the articulation of sexual rights in international law (and even national law in some cases – albeit to varying degrees), [and] the actual realisation of sexual rights in many African cultures" (Izugbara & Undie, 2008:159). The localised community kin work illuminated in the empirical chapters of this study reveals ways in which sexual and universal rights can be realised. Chapter 4, in particular, discusses the ways in which the family and community work to prevent unplanned pregnancy and equip Ndebele girls with the menstrual preparedness that they need to attend school without 'revolving door' (DFID/Coffey International Development, 2016) disruptions related to cyclical menstruation.

On page 12, I highlighted that contentions between actors within the state such as the church and formal education led to a silencing of teenage sexuality, particularly in girls. Fine (1988) helps us to understand tensions between sexuality, schooling and adolescent girls through what he calls the 'missing discourse of desire' in formal education. For the same reasons that the nuclear family may be reluctant to impart menstrual information to girls (FACT, MoHCC & UNFPA, 2017), schools do not want to awaken sexual desire. Schools foster what Fine describes as the discourse of *sexuality as victimisation,* whereby women and girls must "learn to defend themselves against disease, pregnancy and 'being used'" (1988:32). When (knowledge and awareness of) sexuality and sex education are used as a means of victimisation, they become instruments of control rather than empowerment. For example, in Zimbabwean women "are expected to dress 'properly' [own quotation marks][13] to avoid the stimulation of men's sex drive, to refuse men's initiatives for sex and stay pure" (Hof & Richters, 1999:59). This is especially important once a girl becomes reproductively capable because failure to do so may culminate in unintended pregnancy. This discourse of sexuality as victimisation sees women burdened by the expectation of managing men's comportment through their choice of clothing that they wear rather than assigning a collective societal responsibility to protect women from (sexual) assault, disease (e.g., STIs) and other forms of victimisation (Macleod, 1999a).

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[12] https://face2faceafrica.com/article/south-africa-implements-free-sanitary-pads-for-schoolgirls-project

Burns remarks that, "The dangers of sexually transmitted diseases (STDs[14]) and the social, mental, economic and physical suffering – particularly of women – associated with unwanted and unplanned pregnancies prompts even many socially conservative people to tacitly accept the need for innovations in our sex education system" (1996:79). Further to this, Pattman argues that sex education is forced into formal education "in many African countries in response to HIV/AIDS" (2005:498). This is true for Zimbabwe where, in 2012, the three-year *Life Skills, Sexuality, HIV and AIDS Strategic Plan 2012-2015* was launched. As mentioned on page 12, in 2017 I was involved in the "Review, Update and Development of Community-Based Demand Generation Tools for Integrated Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR), HIV and Gender-Based Violence (GBV) Prevention Services" commissioned by the UNFPA. The review and update exercise included the adaptation of tools (manuals) that had already been rolled out in Eastern Africa for their use and implementation in Southern Africa, specifically, in that instance, for Zimbabwe. The exercise included adapting the Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE) manuals for out-of-school young people in Zimbabwe, which the Ministry of Education hoped to roll out the following year. The role of the UNFPA in this exercise demonstrates the intertwining of public with private, where the private issues of menstruation and sex(uality) become matters of public policy instrumentalised through development discourse. The new *Curriculum Framework* introduced in 2017 made CSE examinable in primary and secondary school (cf. Fig. 4, page 22 and Fig. 5, page 23).

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[13] I have placed these quotation marks to indicate that propriety is a subjective descriptor. What may be proper among, for example, the Shona people of Zimbabwe, may not be proper among the Ndebele.

[14] STDs are now referred to as STIs and include HIV/AIDS in this study. "In recent years however, many experts in this area of public health have suggested replacing STD with" STI (ASHA, 2020). This is because, "The concept of 'disease', as in STD, suggests a clear medical problem, usually some obvious signs or symptoms. But several of the most common STDs have no signs or symptoms in the majority of persons infected" (ASHA, 2020).

Hodes argues that in South Africa "the public disapprobation surrounding teenage pregnancy relates, in complex ways, to broader suspicions about moral atavism among the polity" (2017:1). Diallo (2004) infers the same about Mali when affirms that it is common practice for girls to be wilfully kept in the dark regarding sexuality up until the first period. In a similar fashion, Burrows and Johnson state that, "menarche conveys conflicting societal messages; it represents the beginning of womanhood and sexuality but girls of this age are seen [in modern times] as too young to be sexually active" (2005:236). Hence it is unsurprising that some Zimbabwean parents, as earlier mentioned on page 11, may leave out the topics of sex and contraception for fear of "sending the wrong message" and encouraging sexual debut at ménarche (FACT, MoHCC & UNFPA, 2017:2). These tensions have led to delays in the roll out of CSE because there is no consensus as to whether adolescent sex and sexuality among adolescents should be dealt with at a private, household level or at a public and global level. This chapter therefore puts forward the disapprobation around opening discussion about sex and sexuality as a reason for the siloing of menstruation from reproduction and a delinking of ménarche, menstrual preparedness from early unintended pregnancy in Zimbabwe and other parts of sub-Saharan Africa.

Early childbearing because of its links to child and adolescent sex(uality) are often decried as moral crises such as "teenage pregnancy" which reverberate into international development discourse as social ills such as "child mothers"" and "child marriage". Giaquinta interrogates the international child marriage discourse. She ascertains that, "the problem with child marriage is neither child nor marriage" but rather the curtailing of girlhood innocence (2016:25). Giaquinta points out that the Girls Not Brides[15] framework "problemati[s]es the *child* in child marriage" through a Western lens. Western notions of childhood, which are linked to innocence, underpin the Girls Not Brides framework wherein child marriage is seen as a violent rupture of childhood and the loss of innocence (2016:25). While biological immaturity is often "conceded as a human universal" and conceived in terms of pre-pubescent bodies, childhood itself is "hailed as a social and cultural phenomenon marked by spatial and historical variability" (Prout, 2000:3). However, childhood is flattened into a universal in the Girls Not Brides framework. In many cultures, ménarche is an important rite of passage (Coutinho & Segal, 1999); one that marks the transition from girlhood (childhood) to adolescence (Fingerson, 2005a). Consequently, there are various meanings of menstruation that tint the experiences and interpretations of menstruation. These meanings can be biological, sexual, socio-cultural and/or religious and have a bearing on the societal inclusion of women and girls during this time. This dissertation portrays African menstrual experiences from the perspective of women and girls in Zimbabwe, taking into account how and why early unintended pregnancy is problematised in the localised context (see page 162).

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[15] Girls Not Brides network of partners is known as and works in over 80 countries to end child marriage.

2.2.1 Theoretical framework: Reproductive labour-work

Despite the prevalence of poor menstrual preparedness demonstrated in Section 2.1 of this chapter the contribution of older women (like mothers and teachers) in preparing pubescent girls cannot be overlooked. The theoretical framework of this dissertation sets out to visibilise this contribution by framing it as reproductive labour work. For example, in the case of mothers, they are not paid to perform this labour which is part of what Tamale describes as the "unremunerated and undervalued domestic activities performed by women" (2005:11). This can be contrasted to teachers who, when performing this work as teachers are remunerated for it, particularly as CSE becomes part of the school curriculum. As see in Section 2.1, this reproductive labour-work rests disproportionately on the shoulders of women.

Čakardić (2018) states unreservedly that "If our task is to propose a theoretical and historical model best suited for understanding the origins of the oppression of women under capitalism, then we should without a doubt consult Marx". In a similar vein, this dissertation argues that Marxism is an ideal departure point in tracing and subsequently dismantling the gender blindness of development discourse. Marx (2009), a 'forefather' of sociology, describes social production as the overarching process commodities are produced to feed, house and clothe individuals in a capitalist society. He focuses on reproduction as the *re*producing of a specific good or commodity (Marx, 1867). In Marxist terms, 'labour power' is the capacity of an individual to produce a good or commodity and is determined by 'labour time'. Marx notes that labour power is replenished by the "reproduction of himself [labourer's self-] or his [or her/their] maintenance" (1990:xcviii). Given the time period of Marx's writing, it is unsurprising that the reproductive work and labour of women would be rendered invisible – 'invisibilised'. Though Marx recognises the invisible strings that replenish and regenerate workers so that they are able to continue to produce, he does not explicitly attribute this replenishment and regeneration to women. In Marxist terms, these forms of (social) reproduction are gender-blind.

Marxism is riddled with dichotomies (e.g., capitalist bourgeoisie/exploited proletariat; production/reproduction) that disguise gender blindness as gender neutrality, in such a way as to give primacy to labour production. Nevertheless, Marx describes how both production and reproduction contribute to surplus value, and this foregrounds social reproduction theory (SRT) by alluding to the invisible "link between the market and household relations" (Čakardić, 2018). SRT sets out to render the invisible processes in production by examining the factors and conditions that make it possible for the labourer to arrive at the workplace each day. These factors include sleep and food; the latter of which is mostly the work of women to prepare. Čakardić (2018) explains that "SRT points out that 'reproduction' may allude either to the process of regeneration of the conditions of production which enable society to survive, or to the regeneration of humankind." Marx's work is shaped by the events of the industrial revolution that unfolded in Europe and the US across a century, beginning in the mid-1700s. The market is where the capitalist and the wage labourer alike met their needs from access to raw materials for processing and value addition, right down to clothes and food. However, many needs such as replenishment (through sleep and nourishment) and regeneration through reproduction "are met in the household, not on the market" (Čakardić, 2018). This interrelation of economy and family in complementary societal function is made explicit in SRT (see Fig. 6 page 49). SRT dismantles the subordination of reproduction to production. It draws attention to the valuable reproductive work that tends to the preparation of clothes bought on the market; the washing and maintenance of clothes purchased on the market, and so on (Čakardić, 2018). The capitalist and the labourer both depend at some level or another on reproductive labour. It is therefore evident that "life and work in the productive sphere is mediated through a range of activities belonging to the domestic sphere" (Čakardić, 2018).

There is literature on SRT that attributes Marxist capitalism to the overlooking of the work of women (Vogel, 193; Bhattacharya, 2017; Čakardić, 2017). However, it would be inaccurate to declare that Marxism neglected the "women question" (Sayers, 1987) altogether. Though published after Marx's death, his collaborative work with Engels entitled *The Origin of Family, Private Property and the State* (Engels, 1884/1972), reflects their concern with the women question (Sayers, 1987). *The Origin* marries "the struggle for social advance with sexual emancipation" under Marxism (Sayers, Evans & Redclift, 1987:2). In Marx's own words, "The economists have a singular manner of proceeding. There are only two kinds of institutions, those of art and those of nature" (2009:3). This dichotomisation of art and science (nature) underpins the dualisation of tradition and modernity, and the privileging of economic production over reproduction. Contrastingly, Wosu reminds us "According to Harris[16], these [dualized] perspectives are deeply seeded in sociological traditions and involved the reinterpretation, often conscious, of the concerns of classical sociology" (2016:71). This legacy, based largely on the material versus the cultural determinants of industrialisation, has informed the field of development studies, leaving it fraught with dichotomies (Johnson, 2012). However, this study deals with the ‘women question’ with the view of the invisibility of their work and looks to adjust the lens so that their role in social reproduction is in focal view.

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[16] See Harris (2003).

Through a sociological lens, the study draws attention to the duality of this work as both reproductive and productive labour by marrying personal, private narratives to a public development discourse. There is no singular modernisation ‘theory’ of development (Power, 2019) that can be applied universally across the globe (Gordon, 1996). This is because modernisation theories encapsulate a range of perspectives on the ‘Third World’ as represented by non-Marxists in the 1950s and 60s (Harris, 2003). From a Nigerian perspective, Wosu’s (2016) writing attempts to deconstruct the racism inherent in the progressivist logic that is the bedrock of the modernisation theory of development and certain development discourses that share a “legatorial relationship to colonialism and latter-day neo-colonialism” (Patel, 2020:1). The theory equates developing countries to premodern (un[der]developed) societies (Cunningham, 2004), with the presumption that ‘development’ follows a linear trajectory where economic development is given primacy. Batisai explains that “Developing contexts such as Africa are characterised by a long standing ‘traditional and prescientific’ healthcare system often juxtaposed with another system framed as ‘modern, scientific and Western in derivation’” (2016:115). With this in mind, it is evident that modernity as it is constructed in international development discourse is racialised (Hesse, 2007). States such as ‘advanced’, ‘modern’ and ‘developed’ come to represent conditions that the ‘Rest’ of World that is not the West can at best only achieve an approximation (or derivative) of (Chatterjee, 1986). In part, the work of this study is to decolonise such framings and de-Westernise development theorisation taking the vantage point of a Zimbabwean perspective. The study reclaims medicine as a decolonial, non-Western practice in Africa.

In order to bring the embodied (re)productive work of rural Ndebele women into focus, I turn to Duffy (2007). Duffy attributes the original concept of reproductive labour to “the work of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, who differentiated between the production of goods in the economy and the reproduction of the labo[u]r power necessary to the maintenance of that productive economy” (2007:315). By this Marxist definition, reproductive labour (i.e., reproduction of labour power for the economy) finds itself the antithesis of productive labour (i.e., production of goods for the economy). Engels states that:

> *According to the materialistic conception, the determining factor in history is, in the final instance, the production and reproduction of immediate life. This, again, is of a twofold character: on the one side, the production of the means of existence, of food, clothing and shelter and the tools necessary for that production; on the other side, the production of human beings themselves, the propagation of the species* (1884:71)

In building on Marx and Engels, Vogel (1983) explicitly genders the processes through which labour power is reproduced, highlighting three of them in particular. The first relates directly to the production process and is classified as regeneration through sleep and food, as mentioned above (Vogel, 1983; Marx, 1867). The second process maintains non-workers (i.e., those who are not part of the production workforce), children, people living with disabilities and unemployed adults; including retirees through care(work) (Vogel, 1983; Čakardić, 2018). The third process is a means of regenerating labour power (i.e., the regeneration of workers) through childbirth (i.e., reproduction) (Vogel, 1983). By this definition, only the third form of reproductive work is implicitly gendered. Social reproduction theory centralises the gender in modes of (re)production by placing "gender at the heart of modes of production, put[ting] biological reproduction and its social and cultural realizations at the heart of social life, and attends to the labour involved in the production of life" (Luxton, 2006:35).

Marx critiques the trans-historical assumptions of classical political economy. His definition of the specificity of capitalist societies as a "collection of commodities" as well as his account of the circulation of capitalist production and reproduction, are fundamental elements of social reproduction theory (Čakardić, 2018). Taking into account all of these, social reproduction is defined as:

> *the activities and attitudes, behaviours and emotions, responsibilities and relationships directly involved in the maintenance of life on a daily basis, and intergenerationally. Among other things, social reproduction includes how food, clothing, and shelter are made available for immediate consumption, the ways in which the care and socialisation of children are provided, the care of the infirm and elderly, and the social organisation of sexuality. Social reproduction can thus be seen to include various kinds of work – mental, manual, and emotional – aimed at providing the historically and socially, as well as biologically, defined care necessary to maintain existing life and to reproduce the next generation* (Laslett & Brenner, 1989:382-3)

Further to this exhaustive definition, Luxton remarks that the classification remedies the traditions of neo-classical economics that have rendered the "socially necessary labour" predominantly performed by women invisible (2006:36). Social reproduction theory expands the reproductive labour of women and their bodies from the solely biological function of childbirth to the 'naturing' and nurturing environment that they create that contributes to the well-being and well-becoming of the productive workforce and the non-workers. The difference lies in the fact that reproductive labour-work traces the social reproduction ‘cycle’ by identifying the point during the life-course of women (i.e., ménarche) at which they begin to be actively inducted into it.

As we consider SRT, identifying reproductive labour within this framework, Majumdar (2018) helps us to interrogate the difference between work and labour in a more nuanced way. Labour invokes an altruistic volunteerism attached to motherhood alluded to by Laslett and Brenner (1989), as they describe the care and socialisation of progeny. Work, on the other hand, invokes a kind of professionalism in which remuneration is assigned to the task(s) performed (Majumdar, 2018). Tetteh (2011) helps us distinguish between labour and work with respect to children. Tetteh (2011) defines child *labour* as strenuous, hard labour whereas child *work* is constituted by “normal chores that children engage in as part of their socialization” (Tetteh, 2011:220). I use the theoretical framework of *reproductive labour-work* as a means of breaking down the hierarchical binary between (reproductive) labour and work whereupon the unpaid labour of women’s bodies is overlooked because it is not always assigned a monetary value. Therefore, reproductive labour-work finds its roots in social reproduction theory, as it too sets out to spotlight the often-invisible work of women’s bodies.

Pande (2010a; 2010b; 2011; 2014) also collapses the distinction between labour and work. She describes commercial surrogacy in India as a “form of labo[u]r” (2010b:293). It could be argued that the commercialisation of surrogacy commodifies the perceived altruism of motherhood (even if only in terms of its biological tenets). Majumdar (2018) in conversation with Pande’s work, takes another look at commercial surrogacy in India framing it as *work-labour*. I invert Majumdar’s hyphenation in my theoretical framework of reproductive labour-work in order to emphasise the processes that can transform unpaid labour into paid work. The hyphenation points to the collapsible boundary of production as an extension of reproduction and vice versa as well as work being a form of labour. My intention in using this hyphenation is to demonstrate the permeable boundaries of unpaid labour and paid work, and productive and reproductive, and public and private, thereby making more explicit the far-reaching consequences of the seemingly ‘private’ work of menstrual preparedness (of girls done by women) that in turn has implications for health (i.e., reproductive and menstrual). It visibly knits together the seemingly invisible threads of family and economy, production and reproduction, labour and work, public and private.

This hyphenation challenges hierarchical dichotomies in development discourse. The commercialisation of surrogacy reveals that reproduction can be productive work that contributes to Gross Domestic Income. Majumdar’s (2018) notion of ‘work-labour’ also speaks to the collapsibility of private and public. I assert that in the commercialisation of surrogacy, the private labour-work of gestation finds itself subject to the same public glare of policy that menstruation and MHI do. Nilsson also highlights that among the commercial surrogates in Thailand, “The majority of the women I spoke to described surrogacy as *tam bun*, a form of Buddhist merit making, as well as an opportunity to provide for their children as well as parents” (2015:34). Among these surrogates, commercial surrogacy is constructed as “a selfless act of Buddhist merit making” (Nilsson, 2015:15). From these we see the altruism of ‘motherhood’ while gaining an appreciation of it as an economised work that provides for the families of the surrogates. The Thai case study clearly demonstrates the collapsibility of (reproductive) labour-work.[17.18]

At this juncture, I turn back to Folbre in deepening our understanding of reproductive work as the theoretical framework of this study. Reproductive labour-work constitutes a sector of the ‘care economy’ (Folbre, 2006; 2008). Folbre (2006) argues that care can be defined and measured to highlight the impact of economic development on women. With this in mind, care, and by extension, reproductive labour-work, can be used to show the meaningful work of women’s bodies; work that includes menstrual preparation and preventing girls from early sexual debut and early unintended pregnancy. Camfield (2002) points out that the world is a product of people’s reproductive labour. However, given the disproportionate burden of reproductive labour performed by women, it might be more accurate to assert that the world is largely a product of women’s reproductive labour. In this study, reproductive labour-work is not relegated to the commercial ‘first shift’. It is not strictly private like the ‘second shift’, instead it can be located in a realm of in-between and both, like the ‘third shift’[19].

As a theoretical framework, reproductive labour-work is a convergence of reproduction and production, family and economy, labour and work as can be seen Fig. 6 overleaf

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[17] Commercial surrogacy was banned in Thailand in 2015 (Hibino, 2020).

[18] This collapsible boundary helps us to theorise market-nonmarket, “commodity-noncommodity” and altruism-commercialism dichotomies (Fourcade, 2007; cited in Hovav, 2019).

[19] See page 51 for a definition of the third shift.

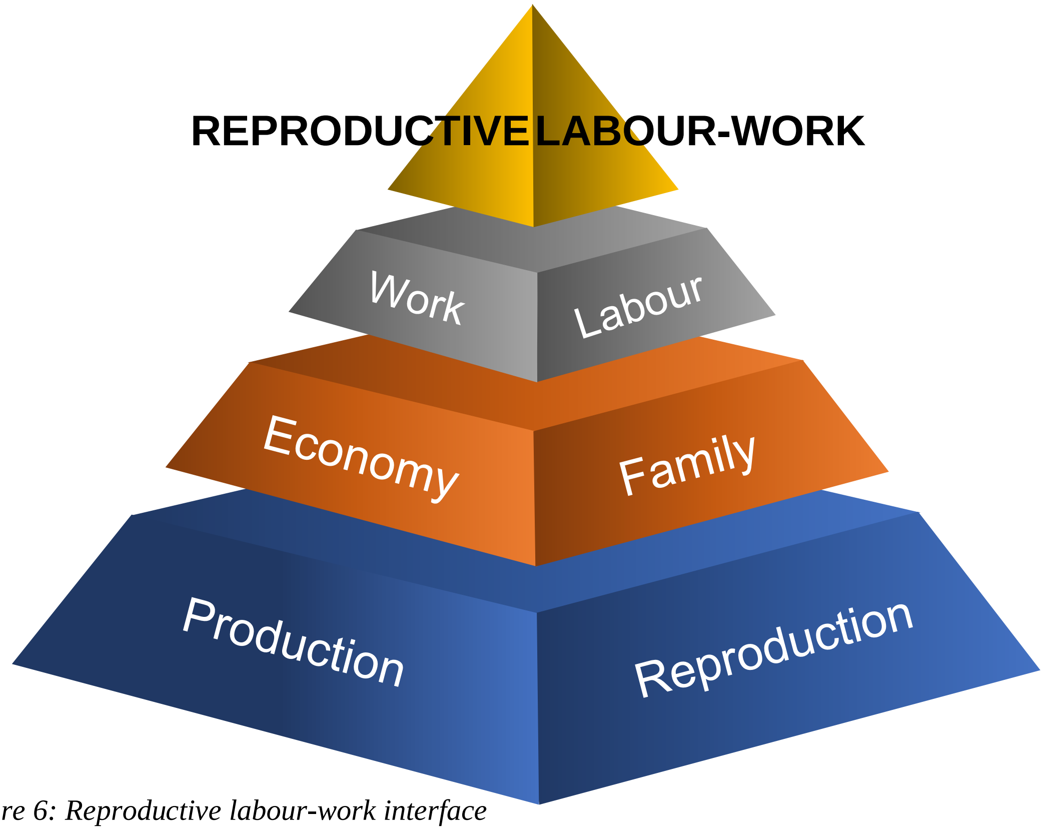

Figure 6: Reproductive labour-work interface

Figure 6 demonstrates that production and reproduction, economy and family, work and labour correspond with the public and private realms respectively – in the same way that development discourse and menstrual preparedness correspond to one another. These different sites of production for reproductive labour-work then apex to constitute different forms of reproductive labour-work.[20] The permeability of the public-private dichotomy is further demonstrated by Rousseau, who in his musings on childhood highlights the importance of a mother's role in educating a child. He states:

> *Address your treatises on education to the women, for not only are they able to watch over it more closely than men, not only is their influence always predominant in education, its success concerns them more nearly, for most widows are at the mercy of their children, who show them very plainly whether their education was good or bad* (1915/1762:10).

The "education" that Rousseau describes is a kind of reproductive labour-work that consists of socialising children into self-sufficiency. His conceptualisation of education reveals the collapsibility of the public and private. He states that education determines whether a child is raised up to be a "man or a citizen, or how he contrives to be both." (Rousseau, 1915:18). He proceeds to say that "Two conflicting types of educational systems spring from these conflicting aims. One is public and common to many, the other private and domestic" (Rousseau, 1915:19). Rousseau's remarks help us to appreciate the interface of public and private. As Figure 6 shows, like the labour-work binary, the public-private dichotomy has collapsible boundaries. Therefore, reproductive labour-work takes place at a private, household level as part of raising up and naturalising children into citizens who contribute to (re)productive nationalist projects such as the GNP, GDP, Gross National Income, TFR and maternal mortality rate.

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[20] See Figure 19, page 154.

Goldsmith (1991) helps us to visibilise this reproductive labour-work in the family through the concept of reproductive success. To ensure reproductive success, concerted care must be invested from the time of ménarche. Time and energy invested by parental care can be "beneficial to parents if it increases offspring survival, growth and/or quality (i.e., offspring performance), and ultimately offspring lifetime reproductive success" (Klug & Bonsall, 2014:2330). This form of care is classified as a type of *reproductive labour-work* in this study. This parental investment to ensure reproductive success and conditions for healthy progeny is an investment in their knowing. I will demonstrate in this study the ways in which the "knowing" equips girls to manage their menstrual cycles and exercise agency in sexual relationships. We begin to see that the interrelations can be drawn from reproductive labour-work to women's contribution to the broader development like reproductive, maternal, newborn, child and adolescent health (RMNCH+A)[21]; fertility, and the economy.

Reproductive work is not far removed from "care-labour", as Lewis (2018) defines (commercial) surrogacy. The reproductive labour-work in this study, in all its forms, is "care-labour", i.e., an interface where affect/care and pragma converge. As a theoretical framework, reproductive labour-work helps us render the body as more than "*either* wholly cultural fabrications and thus objects of disciplinary power, *or* as deeply material collections of fluids, tissues, and symptoms amenable to biopolitical intervention" (Casper & Currah, 2011:17). Reproductive labour-work helps us to reconcile the individualised materiality of menstruation with broader structures such as health and cultural norms. Reproductive labour-work takes into account the paid and unpaid work of women's bodies that has an effect on the RMNCH+A. The concept of reproductive labour-work nuances what feminist economists have referred to as the 'double burden' or the 'second shift' (Hochschild & Machung, 1989). By highlighting that the first shift is not so easily discernible from the third shift, and oftentimes is obscured by the double day – particularly in rural life –

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[21] RMNCH+A is an abbreviation that is quite commonly used in the health and development sector in Zimbabwe.

we visibilise the reproductive labour-work of rural Ndebele women and girls. The double burden is typically discussed in terms of adult women, but this study draws attention to it as a schedule activated in adolescence and reproduced in adulthood.

Grier (1994) points to the double invisibility of the work done by children in colonial Zimbabwe – both paid and unpaid. In the first instance it was given less significance than it held and, secondly, it has largely been invisible to the attention of historians, as was the case with the work of women at the time. Girls lie at the bright intersection of gender and childhood. This intersection is especially apparent when considering female adolescent bodies and it can be used to unblind gender in development discourse. Teenage girls "often worked as domestic servants in the households of white farmers" in colonial Zimbabwe (Grier, 1994:27). It was also not unusual for younger girls aged 7-8 years old to work as farmhands along with their "adult family members on white-owned commercial farms" (Grier, 1994:27). Similar to Zimbabwean scholars Mayekiso and Gwandure (2011), US American child labour scholar Grier (1994) is careful to define children as those not yet having reached puberty. This is a key delineation between childhood and adulthood in Zimbabwean culture. Yet puberty, and in particular menstruation, has been little explored in tandem with production, labour and work, as this study does.

Finally, as we examine the adolescent second shift, it is useful to reflect on the work of Gerstel (2000), who expands on the dual shift theory (first and second shift) by pointing to a third shift. Gerstel defines the third shift as "caregiving [carried out] *outside* the home – whether informally to relatives and friends or more formally to neighbours and strangers served by volunteer groups" (2000:467). As this study will demonstrate, reproductive labour-work is also characterised by the third shift that is pervasive in the rural village of Sikelela because it espouses the ethos of African community and *ubuntu* (the essence of being human, that is: humanity), which are the threads that make up the fabric of African rurality.[22] Chilisa and Ntseane (2010) helps us to theorise *ubuntu,* stating that it is based on the philosophy, 'I am because we are'.[23] The philosophy finds "its distorted counterpart in some versions of post-humanist thought" (LUCAS, 2018). These distortions are borne of a transposition of *ubuntu* to the Cartesian philosophy, 'I think, therefore, I am' (Descartes, 1637/1999). This individual-centred "Eurocentric view of humanity" (Chilisa & Ntseane, 2010:619) dualises the body and the mind, whereas *ubuntu* is a community-centred philosophy that collapses the binaries of you/me (self and other) and we/they (us and them) to render the individual an extension of the collective and community.

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[22] Mkhwanazi brings to our attention the fact that the meaning of *ubuntu* is a contested term but that "an agreed upon definition in my conversations in the township was that […] ubuntu was about humanity and connections" (2014:109).

[23] See also Goduka (2000) and Mbiti (1990), which are seminal texts for *ubuntu* as an indigenous philosophy.

Western urban centres, in contrast to rural areas, evolved from communities into societies through industrialisation and urbanisation (Tönnies, 1935). German sociologist, Tönnies (1935) makes the distinction between *gemeinschaft* (community) and *gesellschaft* (society), see Figure 7 below:

gesellschaft	**Gemeinschaft**	**ubuntu**
society	Community	humanity
secondary relationships (e.g., friends, co-workers)	family (e.g., mother, father, siblings)	kinfolk (e.g., everyone living in the area, in addition to nuclear and extended family is a quasi-family member)[24]
loose bonds	intimate bonds	close bonds
individualised	shared space	collective

Figure 7: ***gesellschaft-gemeinschaft-ubuntu*** *(society-community-humanity) triage*

Source: adapted from Wilson (2015:17)

Community in this way is based on shared space and a collective set of values, whereas society ascribes importance to individual interests. Tönnies (2001) argues that in societies secondary relationships are valued more greatly than those of family and community. *Gesellschaft* is used to denote the impersonal, superficial and transitory relationships of modern urban life (Slattery, 2003). *Gemeinschaft* resonates with African rural life, where community bonds remain preserved by the *ubuntu* value system. Figure 7 demonstrates that interactions and relationships are negotiated within the society (*gesellschaft*), community (*gemeinschaft)* and humanity (*ubuntu*). I use community and society interchangeably in this study.

The irony of juxtaposing *ubuntu* to a Western (albeit German) scholar's writing on society and community is not lost on myself as the researcher of the study. Along the same lines, Adebisi (2019[25]) cautions that we should be aware that there are many limitations in using colonial tools to 'decolonise' higher education. I discuss this in greater detail in the on page 71 of my Methodology Chapter (Chapter 3) under the Sub-section 3.6.1 entitled, "Analytical reflections". Figure 7 de-Westernises conceptions of human society that order it into the bifurcated categories of community and society whereby society is seen to be the more advanced manifestation. Once again, we witness a dualisation of community from society in a fashion that is typical of the progressivist logic underpinning the sociology of work and development. However, in *isiNdebele* there are no words that differentiate society from community. The Ndebele language refers instead to a common humanity – *ubuntu*. It is this common sense of humanity and responsibility to one another that drives the kinfolk to behave in ways that promote the well-being of Ndebele girls. It is important to have *ubuntu* in mind when considering the "double day" (Hochschild & Machung, 2003/1989) performed by rural Ndebele women. This is because the shared responsibilities of kinfolk in the rural village tend to obscure the disproportionate burden that falls on the shoulders of female kinfolk in Sikelela. Figure 7 paints a picture of the cultural landscape that underlies the rural community of the fieldsite. It gives us an appreciation of how labour, work and rural life are structured in Sikelela. I have highlighted elsewhere (Ncube, Chimbwanda & Willie, 2019) that Zimbabwe is categorised as a 'fragile state' by the World Bank (2015[26]). According to the World Bank, 72% of Zimbabwe's population are "living below the World Bank International Poverty line of $1.90 a day" (World Bank, 2015; cited in Ncube, Chimbwanda & Willie, 2019:66). This is because the majority of Zimbabweans are employed in the informal sector. This in turn veils the work of women because the contribution they make in this sector is largely unmeasured.[27]

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[24] Family relations are less far removed with first cousins constituting part of the nuclear family. See page 118-9.

[25] https://youtu.be/TSt2k7MrT5Y

2.2.2 Research objectives

At this juncture, I reiterate the study's central question, *What is the scope of preparation that Ndebele girls undergo for ménarche/menstruation*? The central research question is buttressed by the following research objectives, which in turn guide the study's methodology[28]:

- *To investigate the practices and socio-cultural beliefs associated with menstruation held by Ndebele adolescent women and girls,*
- *To examine menstruation in relation to reproductive labour-work*

2.2.3 Contribution to scholarship

The review of related literature carried out in Section 2.1.3 highlights the role of the paternal aunt as a significant figure in African social relations. Mwenda highlights that among the Baganda of Uganda, s*senga* (the paternal aunt) is responsible for counselling girls in "sexual matters, including pre-menarche practices, pre-marriage preparation, erotic instruction" (2006:341). She is also known as *tete* among the Shona of

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[26] "The World Bank defines the term fragile state as being a low-income country characterised by weak state capacity or weak state legitimacy leaving citizens vulnerable to a range of shocks. A state is also deemed to be fragile if it is eligible for financial aid from the International Development Association (IDA)" (Ncube, Chimbwanda & Willie, 2019:66).

[27] See page 153.

[28] See Chapter 3, page 56.

Zimbabwe (MacGonagle, 2007; Meekers, 1993; Batisai, 2013); *masenge* among the Tutsi of Rwanda; *wanachimbusa* among the Bemba of Zambia; *namkungwi* among the Chewa of Malawi; *kungwi* among the Zaramo of Tanzania; *mangwane* among the Sotho of South Africa (Muyinda, 2003) and *Vho-Makadzi* among the Vha-Venda in South Africa (Ramathuba, 2015). Yet despite the important role she plays in menstrual preparedness and other issues, *babakazi* has been little researched from the perspective of the Ndebele. Research on Zimbabwean women focuses predominantly on Shona and Shona-speaking women. Therefore, this study contributes to the dearth of knowledge around *babakazi*, rural Ndebele women and their role in preparing Ndebele girls for menstruation in Zimbabwe. This dissertation will also show that male kin are sometimes involved or co-opted into this work by female kin as they too share a stake in the upbringing of Ndebele girls. It illuminates the figure of *babakazi* as a female father, is a central menstrual knowledge gatekeeper that destabilises Eurocentric, heteronormative, “body-oriented” (Oyěwùmí, 1997) conceptualisations of gender imposed on understandings of kinship ties and the rigid divvying up of life rhythms according to these. In so doing, the study contributes to a growing body of decolonial[29], scholarly literature from Africa (Ngubane, 1977; Oyěwùmí, 1997; Amadiume, 2015) that challenges Western gender binaries and assumptions. The study shows how the role of *babakaz*i has changed generationally and is being supplemented by other actors and institutions in the preparing of adolescent girls for menstruation. In (de)constructing menstrual preparation as reproductive labour-work in rural Zimbabwe, it also renders visible the connections between menstrual preparedness, sexual education and developmental outcomes like early unintended pregnancy. The dissertation builds on work by feminist scholars exploring gender, sex, and sexuality in Africa (cf. Tamale, 2011; Bennett, 2011; Lewis, 2008; Becker, 2004; Mama, 1996); painting a picture of sex(uality) among the young *and* the elderly. This is complemented by an Afrocentric infographic that visualises sexual development on the bodies of black girls as part of the study’s original contribution to scholarship for the purpose of representation and interrogate the (hyper)sexualisation body of the black girl (see Fig. 20, page 157).

Bobel’s (2019) book, *The Managed Body: Developing Girls and Menstrual Health in the Global South* resonates deeply with the scope of this study in so far as centring girls in international development discourse. In it, she identifies gaps in the literature on “schoolgirls’ sexual maturation and experiences of menstruation” in Zimbabwe (Bobel, 2019:69). This monograph makes an important contribution to a body of literature on women and girls' experiences of menstruation in the context of Zimbabwe, where "significantly less research [on this topic] has been undertaken" (Padmanabhanunni *et al.*, 2018:705). Menstrual experiences are synonymous with adolescence and youth. The term 'youth' in particular is widely acknowledged as a "universal stage of development" (Jones, 1999:59). By using the body as a material unit of analysis and indexing adolescence to ménarche and menstruation, the changes undergone during this stage of development can be clearly demonstrated. There is a growing consensus that this "transition period from childhood to adulthood now occupies a greater portion of the life course than ever before" (Sawyer *et al.,* 2018:223) and that as time goes by it is becoming increasingly challenging to define an age range for adolescence (Brookman, 1995; McDonagh *et al.* 2018). The indexing of adolescence to ménarche and menstruation takes us beyond the biological facts of the age of adolescence and towards a complementary "sociological imagination" (Mills, 1959) of it. One in which reproductive maturity hails a burden of reproductive labour-work that is undertaken by young adolescent girls. This indexing also complicates our understanding of age by diffusing the dichotomy between biological maturity and social maturity. As a result, the study contributes to the sociology of the body and sociology of childhood (which neglects the bodies of older children, i.e., teenagers). Finally, adolescence when indexed by ménarche and menstruation makes a contribution to the sociology of childhood as adolescence is measured anew through a subversion of certain gender-blind dichotomies that privilege production over reproduction.

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[29] I build on this decolonial contribution in Section 3.6.1 of Chapter 3 (page 71) where I also convey my considerations around what it means to carry out decolonial research in an African language (*isiNdebele*) with Ndebele study participants, with the aim of making a contribution to the global project of decolonising higher education.

Within the sociology of ageing, little attention has been ascribed to African conceptions of age and childhood. A Cartesian approach to the studies of childhood pronounces a dualism between biological age and social age by dichotomising the body and the mind, and this is not a fitting approach for the African context. I turn to Halcrow and Tayles who remark that "polarized approaches to childhood and age "highlight the dualistic way in which 'biological' and 'social' aspects of the body are viewed" (2008:190). It is important to recognise that childhood is both a biological and social phenomenon. Halcrow and Tayles define social age as "the culturally constructed norms of appropriate behaviour and status of individuals within an age category" (2008:192). Refocusing childhood and adulthood through the lens of *relational maturity* (see page 113) is one such way of representing social age from an African perspective using the Zimbabwean context.

CHAPTER 3: Methodology

The previous chapter has presented the theoretical framework that will guide this study. In this chapter I present the study's qualitative research design and the rationale behind it. Denzin and Lincoln state that "qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them" (1998:3). I chose to visit the village of Sikelela to interview the Ndebele women and girls in the study in their locale. The main interview question was formed by considering the views of Postman (1995) and Lee (2001), who discern that one ***becomes*** an adult, therefore there are experiences that shape this transition. The main interview question posed was, *What was it like growing up?* This question allows for the research participants to construct their own meanings of 'growing up', telling stories of the experiences that distinguish what they understood as their childhood from adulthood. The question invokes a narrative inquiry space in which "each story told and lived is situated and understood within larger cultural, social, and institutional narratives" (Give, 2008:541). In this way, growing up and menstruation can be related to broader institutional narratives of education, human development, the family and community. In the event that menstruation and puberty did not arise, I would probe specifically on this along with experiences of marriage, pregnancy and menopause where (age-)applicable. I also asked them about their participation in domestic labour (see Appendix E, page 236). This chapter will describe what methodological choices were made in the study design, how the main interview question was integrated into this design and the ethical considerations for this study. It will also include an acknowledgement of my personal bias(es) and how these were negotiated throughout the 'research journey' (Cooper & Bailey, 1999). Finally, I will also outline why in-depth interviews were the primary data collection method chosen.

3.1 Methodological choices: narrative research design

Clandinin and Connelly argue that "Narrative inquiry is first and foremost a way of understanding experience" (2006:375). Narrative inquiry has been selected as the mode of inquiry for this study. Ménarche is commonly acknowledged as a transition from girlhood to adolescence (Rees, 1995; Fingerson, 2005a; Fingerson, 2006). Whyte suggests that through ethnography, "in place of numbers comes lives" (Neyland, 2007:49). This aligns with Lister's recommendation "to move beyond statistics" (2015:139) and meets the study's research objective *of highlighting practices and socio-cultural beliefs associated with menstruation held by Ndebele adolescent girls and women*.

3.1.1 Investigating childhood experiences: sociological theorisations

To investigate how Ndebele girls experience the transition from childhood to adulthood, it was necessary to consider what they defined as childhood. From a sociological perspective of Rousseau – a scholar famed for his (Western) conceptualisation of childhood in the 18th century, "Childhood has its own ways of seeing, thinking, and feeling; nothing is more foolish than to try and substitute our ways" (1915:138). Rousseau's (1915) work creates a binary between childhood and adulthood that seems to suggest children are not capable of reasoning. However, this dichotomy has been deconstructed over time. More recently, James (2009) highlights that until the 1970s, childhood and children were understood from the perspective of adults. This perspective was constituted in part by the teachings of adults to children with the purpose to shape and mould them. In the 1970s, however, there was an epistemological turn towards framing children as agents, that is: 'active participants in society' (James, 2009:34). Hill explains that "The question of how far researching with children is different or similar to researching with adults relates to wider perceptions of childhood and adulthood and the relations between generations" (2005:62).

As I highlighted in the Literature Review (Chapter 2), puberty is what delineated children from adults in Southern Rhodesia. The WHO defines adolescence as a period that lies "between 10 and 19 years"[1]. Children younger than ten years worked as farmhands and domestic workers in pre-independence Zimbabwe. This indicates a degree of wherewithal possessed by children that enables them to take on certain responsibilities. The theoretical framework of reproductive labour-work that informs this study is multi-dimensional and enables us to consider the activation of work as an index for adolescence and childhood. This study portrays this from an intergenerational perspective. It includes in-depth interviews with adults and children that convey adult teachings of childhood, adult reflections on childhood experiences and accounts from children (teenagers). This study aims to reveal the actions, choices and decisions taken by teenage girls and the adults around them to prepare them for ménarche/menstruation and acts thereof.

3.2 Ethical considerations

This section will highlight the ethical considerations of this study, such as the legal age of informed consent to participate in a research study. It will also describe the different (ethical) approvals obtained before starting the study. Among the participants in this study were teenage girls, a group that is identified by the 1989 UNCRC as a vulnerable group. The UNCRC places an emphasis on allowing "children to express their opinions on important matters and decisions affecting themselves" (Hill, 2005:61). Menstruation is one such important matter that affects their experience of childhood (Hill, 2005) and the transition into adolescence. As these participants are also minors, the increasing prominence of children's rights must inform the guidance on ethical research of children. According to Chapter 33 of the Children's Protection and Adoption Act in Zimbabwe, a child is any person below the age of 16 years. However, under the Legal Age of Majority Act of 1982, any Zimbabwean under the age of 18 years is a minor. A person between the age of 16 years and 18 years, though a minor, is defined as a young person under the Children's Protection and Adoption Act. The combination of minority age and perceived "weakness means that children are seen as especially *vulnerable* to persuasion, adverse influence and indeed harm – in research as in the rest of life" (Hill, 2005:63).

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[1] https://apps.who.int/adolescent/second-decade/section2/page1/recognizing-adolescence.html

Bearing this in mind, parental consent was sought for all adolescent girls aged below 18 years in the study. Therefore, children below the age of 18 could not provide independent informed consent. For participants below 18 years, the consent of their parents was obtained, and where they had no parents to consent, another responsible adult or family member could provide consent for them to participate. No harm was intended to come to the research participants as a result of participating in the study. It was made clear at the beginning of each interview that the nature of the topic may make the participants uncomfortable, and that answers may be traumatic to recount, e.g., ménarche (the first period), staining oneself with menstrual blood and public embarrassment as a consequence of this. The participants were advised they could pause or decline to answer or terminate the interview at any point. In accordance with the voluntary participation clause of the information sheet and consent forms, participants could also withdraw their consent to participate in the research at any point prior to the completion of data analysis. I used my training in interviewing on sensitive topics to shape the principal data collection method, which took the form of *individual* in-depth interviews (IDIs) to ensure privacy and to make interview participants as comfortable as possible.

3.2.1 University ethical approval protocols

It is obligatory for postgraduate researchers at the University of Cape Town to complete a research ethics clearance form as part of the faculty and departmental ethics requirements. For sociology researchers in *iFakalthi yezoLuntu* (the Faculty of Humanities), this process is to be undergone after departmental proposal presentations and before the start of research study (e.g., fieldwork interviews). The application of ethical clearance is escalated to the Departmental Research Ethics Committee for consideration only if a PhD student's research supervisor deems that the research is not ethically responsible. After I had satisfied the questions and concerns of my discussant and the panel at the day of my proposal presentation on 18 August 2017, I submitted a revised proposal and was issued a letter of confirmation for research ethics approval (ethics clearance number: SOC2017/2). Thus, I obtained all departmental ethical clearance(s) for the study before I started my fieldwork research.

3.2.2 Local research approval protocols

Social research in Zimbabwe requires localised approvals. As a Zimbabwean social researcher, I was exempt from submitting an application to the Research Council of (RCZ)[2] to obtain approval(s) to conduct social research exercises in the country. As the research was conducted in the rural village of Sikelela, which is in the Umzingwane District of Zimbabwe (see Fig. 2, page 16), it falls under the immediate government of the (Umzingwane) District Administrator (DA). Permission from the Rural District Council (RDC), the Chief Executive Officer (CEO), Chief Councillor, Village Head and President must therefore be obtained. To do this, I – as the researcher – submitted a formal letter of request to the DA, before the research exercise. The DA escalates it to other respective offices (i.e., the CEO, Chief Councillor etc.). Once this permission was granted, I had to present myself in person for an interview at the RDC, after which final approval was granted, and I was able to begin research. I was granted approval pending my interview prior to my arrival in Sikelela to begin the fieldwork. All these permissions were granted ahead of revisiting the field to begin the official fieldwork.[3]

Before I could formally begin my data collection, I was introduced to the Village Head before of Sikelela. This is done when I, a 'newcomer',[4] come to live in the community, even if only for a short while – leaving and returning periodically between April and August 2019. The same permissions were granted ahead of the baseline survey carried out before I launched my initiative in 2015, which formed part of the pilot study for this dissertation.

3.3 Reflexivity & researcher positionality

Reflexivity enables us to consider the ways in which who we are (our position in the world, i.e., our positionality) and what we are interested in shapes the research process. In reflecting on his own positionality as a Zimbabwean doctoral researcher, Medzani highlights that, "Researchers become aware of their positionality through the process of reflexivity which is an important aspect of any qualitative inquiry" (2020:1). My interest in adolescent girls' experiences of menstruation in particular arose from my programmatic work in the development sector, where I started a rural-based initiative, which provides free sanitary wear to adolescent girls in Matabeleland South province of Zimbabwe. As a result, when I first proposed to undertake this study, I was preoccupied with schoolgirl menstruation-related absenteeism as an issue affecting education outcomes. My bias resulted from my intersectional[5] positionality as both a PhD researcher and a development sector practitioner within the MHM space. However, as time progressed, I realised there was a far more complicated, multi-layered narrative of menstruation to be told.

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[2] For more information, visit http://www.rcz.ac.zw.

[3] They had to be sought a second time because this research, though related to, was separate to the baseline survey I conducted in 2015 when I started a free sanitary wear programme in partnership with the Umzingwane RDC.

[4] I place the word newcomer in quotation marks because my father grew up in Sikelela and I would visit during the holidays with him when we would return to see my grandparents – both of whom are now late. At the time of my fieldwork, my paternal grandmother was still alive but she was of poor health, so my rural homestead (*umuzi*) was vacant when I first began the research. This is why I stayed with *Gogo* Betty and not at my family's *umuzi*. Hence, in this way, I was a 'newcomer' because of my new visitor (*umuntu womzini*) status as *Gogo* Betty's guest.

For example, the initial intervention in 2015 began by providing commercial, single-use disposable sanitary wear and rewashable sanitary wear so as to assess what type of sanitary wear is most suitable for the beneficiaries. As I discussed in the introductory chapter of this dissertation, the term MHMMMs deconstructs the assumption of a binary that classifies disposable sanitary wear as commodified (i.e., purchasable) and RUMPs as uncommodified sanitary wear (i.e., not bought or sold). There is a need to challenge this binary because re-usable/rewashable sanitary may still consist of commodified material (such as cotton cloth). As can be seen below in Figure 8, the rewashable sanitary wear in the black drawstring bags is not made of rag cloth but rather high-quality, absorbent cotton material. This re-usable sanitary wear is manufactured at an industrial scale and the finished product has a market value.

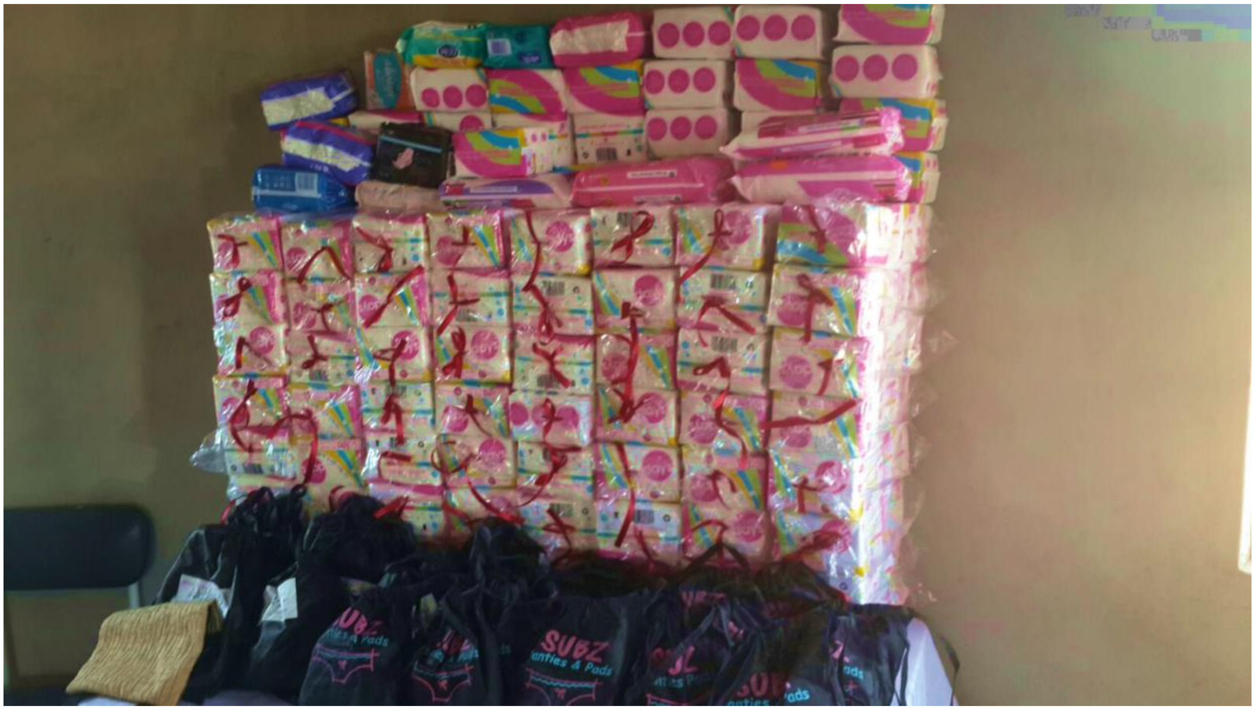

Figure 8: Sanitary wear distributed to the beneficiaries in 2015

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[5] I want to acknowledge Professor Kimberlé Crenshaw who first coined the term to capture the ways in which race and gender (and beyond) intersect to shape our experiences in the world.

I spoke with the beneficiaries six months after the initiative's first intervention. Across the board, the girls preferred the commercial, re-usable sanitary wear to the disposable sanitary wear they had been given. By engaging the beneficiaries about their preferences, there was an opportunity for a dialogue with girls who are often devoiced in the construction of the MHI (global development) 'problem'. In viewing both these forms of sanitary wear as MHMMMs, it was possible to consider complex dialectical choices and decisions that they made, and the reasons for them. Though matters of personal preference do not reveal themselves quite so starkly in the intergenerational narratives, the narratives also reveal agency in this dialectic.

As McMahon *et al*. (2011:9) state, "There is a need for further research that not only involves sanitary wear products that are effective, sustainable and culturally acceptable, but also evaluates the physical environment in which girls are living and looks beyond absenteeism to measure educational [impediments for the girl child]". It therefore became apparent that I needed to revisit the field and ask more questions – different questions – If I was going to paint an accurate picture of the experiences of rural girls in Zimbabwe.

Unlike what I had at first presumed, the question was not just about access to schoolgirl absenteeism and sanitary wear or MHMMMs. I realised there was a bigger conversation my research would be a part of, and this dialogue was not one solely about the politics of menstruation and the breaking down of hierarchical binaries that contrast commodified, commercial sanitary wear as easier and better for MHM than organic (and/or uncommodified) sanitary wear in development discourse. It was a dialogue about the status of women and the politics of poverty (Lister, 2015); one in which even indigent women and girls exacted agency in the choices they made about how to manage their menses. What also became evident during the study was the principle of *ukuhlonipha,* which is 'to respect'. *Ukuhlonipha* can be likened to research with children wherein "they would construct the researcher as an authoritative figure to whom they acquiesce" (Mahon *et al*., 1996:150). It is the "[t]he ideal that [adults] have control over children needs to be understood in the context of two principles […] mentioned: *kuhlonipha*[6] and *ubuntu"* (Mkhwanazi, 2014a:109).[7] However, it is not just Ndebele girls (who are children relative to me)[8] who would construct me as an authoritative figure, but also the Ndebele women (some older than myself) in the study. In the first instance, a vertical power relationship was experienced due to age, and, in the second instance, it was due to my being more educated (literate) than the women I was interviewing. This vertical power structure is further complicated by my involvement in a sanitary wear intervention in the village. As such, I am seen as a kind of 'donor' and patron in the village. The intervention also involves mentorship,[9] which is itself a quasi-paternalistic vertical power dynamic. In addition to this, Ndebele women and girls are not inclined to say much or to speak too openly in general as I observed in the pilot. So, upon revisiting the field, I knew I had to probe more and have more questions set out to be answered. This is what I did to navigate this vertical relationship effectively.

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[6] *ukuhlonipha* in *isiNdebele and kuhlonipha* in Zulu.

[7] It is worth noting, as Mkhwanazi states, that "The notion of *ubuntu* complements the principle of *kuhlonipha*. *Kuhlonipha* is based on a tacit acceptance that the advice and words of elders are not only full of wisdom, but also are not to be questioned" (2014:109) or challenged, and as such silence becomes a form of *ukuhlonipha*.

[8] See page 113 for a discussion on relational maturity.

The reticence of adolescent girls at the time of the pilot study is unsurprising, as a cornerstone belief in Ndebele and African culture is that children must respect their elders. This often translates as being silent in their presence, and so there was a peculiar dynamic to be negotiated by myself as the researcher when I revisited the field. While I had seen myself as a peer of the girls in the pilot, I needed to be conscious of the fact that, to the girls, I was an adult (and therefore needed to be revered and respected as such). Though I am an adult in the eyes of the law in Zimbabwe (cf. page 58); to the grandmothers and mothers I was interviewing, I was a child. A concerted effort thus had to be made to make them feel at ease so they could speak openly and freely about their menstrual experiences without fearing that doing so would a transgression of principle of *ukuhlonipha abadala* (respecting one's elders). Making the research participants feel comfortable and confident enough to speak to me openly represented a kind of invisible reproductive labour-work that assured them of their role as co-producers of knowledge in the research process. It is also worth noting that it is a cultural trait for Ndebele women to be silent, not only in the presence of elders, but also men other individuals whom they deem worthy of being respected. This was more of an issue with daughters than it was among the grandmothers and mothers in the study and other adults in the village. It is in these various power dynamics that I first witnessed my 'relational maturity' at play. Certain experiences in the field shaped my theorisation of this concept, which I expound on page 113.

I have chosen to honour the co-production between the research participants and myself by including one of the original hand-sketched maps that a teacher in the village drew for me of the amenities and geological features of Sikelela village as there is nothing detailed available of Sikelela by way of Google Maps rather than enhancing it through a software programme in this dissertation.

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[9] Sullivan states that "The role of mentor, as described in literature on 'at risk' teens, is devoted to teaching, socializing, and acting as a role model for the adolescent" (Sullivan, 1996:224).

Agar (1980) conceptualises the “professional stranger” in ethnographic research. Unlike the professional stranger who is unknown to the village and the villagers and may have to navigate a very complex pathway to the fieldsite and the research participants. I am not a complete stranger to the village of Sikelela. The villagers know me as a menstrual activist and development practitioner, through my initiative that provides free sanitary wear to girls in the area and other parts of Zimbabwe. My pre-existing relationship with the villagers made it easier to recruit them to participate in FGDs. The villagers also felt that they needed to air their views about girls in the village as concerned parents, in the hope I could perhaps lobby for improvements and further interventions alongside the sanitary wear initiative. When taking this into account, it is natural that a man (motivated by this same desire to air his views as a concerned parent) attended the meeting.[10]

As laid out in the introductory chapter of this dissertation, the study sets out to break away from dichotomies. Burrell highlights that, “The term *fieldsite* refers to the spatial characteristics of a field-based research project, the stage on which the social processes under study take place” (2009:182). This assertion suggests a static boundary wherein the fieldsite can be and is located. Anthropologists locate the fieldwork (carried out in the fieldsite) within “another culture ‘away’ from home”, where the ‘other’ culture exists. However, in my own case – while Zimbabwe is home – in many ways I have also spent most of my adulthood outside Zimbabwe. I studied in Cape Town for four years continuously from the beginning of 2009 until the end of 2012. During my Master’s programme, I spent alternate semesters of six months in Cape Town, with exchange semesters in New Delhi, India and Freiburg, Germany. I began my doctoral studies in 2016. I spent part of my studies in South Africa, Zimbabwe and Scotland. I therefore had to travel from one home (in the UK) to my country of origin and ‘home’[11] (Zimbabwe). In my Master’s dissertation, I highlight the complexity of ‘homecoming’ after living, studying or working abroad in two countries or more (Ncube, 2015). Just as the fieldsite is not a fixed site, the home culture is also not static. It “may have undergone its own changes which may range from the physical to the linguistic, social, relational, religious and familial during the [transnational] student’s time abroad” (Ncube, 2015:35-6). At times, although I am a Zimbabwean, I do not always feel Zimbabwean; or at least not Zimbabwean enough. This signifies a battle between my multiple identities, that is: my “patriotic self” and my “contaminated self” whose (mono)national identity has been “diluted” (Ncube, 2015:53-7) by my “intersectional culture exchanging self" whose identity is complicated by a transnational, hyphenated identity (Ncube, 2015) as a South Africa-based or UK-based Zimbabwean. Methodologically, "the duality of observed and observer" (Coffey, 1999:20) is assumed in ethnographic study. Coffey remarks that, "The [researcher] initially and purpose[ful]ly divests him/herself of knowledge to achieve eventual understanding" (1999:20). However, my personhood as a Ndebele woman from Zimbabwe means that I cannot completely divest myself of all knowledge of Ndebele cultural norms in the pursuit of deeper understanding. I lie at the boundary of observed and observer – the participant observer who is both researcher and subject.

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[10] He attends to provide his opinions on what the elders perceive to be Sikelela’s early unintended pregnancy crisis. See also page 162. His attendance reveals my pre-existing relationship with the villagers as a mentor, through whom parents may mediate concerns for their girls.

[11] I highlight in my Master’s dissertation that transnational study complicates our constructions of home. At the time of submitting this PhD dissertation, Aberdeen held a strong sense of *home*, as it is where I had spent the majority of 2018 to 2020.

There was another ethical matter that I had to consider, which would have implications for the reporting of my research in the dissertation. As a relatively young Ndebele woman interviewing elderly; middle-aged and young Ndebele women alike, I found that the elderly women were forthcoming in imparting insider secrets that would not otherwise be shared as easily and openly with an outsider. I concluded that in honouring the trust that my research participants had taken me into I had to use my discretion but be mindful of how and what I conveyed in this dissertation.

3.4 Tools for data collection

Mahlangu reminds us that the researcher of a study is among the "tools for measurement" (Mahlangu, 2012:113) in qualitative research. I add that, equally, the research participants are also tools for measurement as well as co-producers, instructive in the data collection process. Given the dynamic quality of the tools for measurement, considerations were made beforehand to ensure the dependability of the study, for example, in "being dressed appropriately" (Mahlangu, 2012:114). I highlighted on page 41 that social mores dictate that women make thoughtful choices around the clothing they wear, as their attire can shape the reactions those around them may have to them. This is not just applicable to inter-gender relations, but even in homosocial spaces such as the FGDs and IDIs. Hence, to maximise the dependability of the study, I made careful considerations around how to dress while I was living in Sikelela. I did not wear trousers during my time there, opting to wear long skirts and dresses. Batisai, who also conducted research with grandmothers in Zimbabwe, reports that she also "avoided mini-skirts, shorts and trousers" (2013:74). For myself, this choice of dress code was my own way of *ukuhlonipha* the villagers, as it packaged me as more of an insider than a 'city girl'[12] or *salad*[13] as they are known in Zimbabwe. Okely describes how Romani travellers[14] identified her as "a middle class lady – a *rauni*" (1983:43). In an effort to be less conspicuous, among other strategies, Okely describes making "comparable adjustments in clothing: wearing modest longer skirts, loose high necked sweaters" and how the changes she made were positively received (Okely, 1983:43). While I am hesitant to draw a parallel between my own choice of dress (as an indigenous Zimbabwean with roots in Sikelela) during the study with the decisions taken by a British anthropologist while studying Romani travellers to whom she was an outsider (Okely, 1983), this example serves to illustrate the point that dress has an effect on study participant perceptions and attitudes to the researcher. Pattman (2005) provides powerful insights into clothing as a societal script in Zimbabwe. He explains that "'Salad girls' live in the affluent and low-density suburbs of Harare, and were condemned, especially by boys from lower class urban backgrounds, for going after richer men, staying out at night, being loud, wearing 'fashionable' and 'provocative' clothes" (Pattman, 2005:505). Given the prevalence of poverty in the rural areas, my choice more conservative clothing that made me more relatable, making it easier for the women and girls in the study to talk to me.[15]

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[12] True to this description of Pattman's (2005) 'salad girls', it is a fact of my positionality that I am indeed a city girl, or what research participants referred to as – *umkhiwa* (see footnote 15, page 65) because I grew up in the country's capital, Harare.

[13] *amasalala* in Ndebele, and *salala*(s) in the term's anglicisation as the prefix *ama*-, denotes plural.

3.4.1 Pilot

In the 'pilot' study I carried out in 2015, I carried out eight semi-structured interviews (see Appendix D for the interview guide on page 236). I have apostrophised the term *pilot* because it was undertaken a year and a half before I started my PhD. This pilot baseline study was informed the broader scope of my PhD study. Nevertheless, interviewees provided informed consent to these findings being used for programmatic work and my doctoral dissertation at a later stage. The questions aimed to gauge what girls were using to manage their period before the intervention and to gauge their understanding of menstruation. I was also a participant-observer at a menstrual hygiene camp that took place on 10 August 2015. At the campfire, an intergenerational dialogue took place, with rural grandmothers, mothers and daughter narrating some of their experiences of growing up. The richness of this dialogue influenced my decision towards adopting an intergenerational approach in my PhD.

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[14] Okely (1982) refers to Romani travellers as "Gypsies", a word now acknowledged as a racial slur. I highlight this, to make plain a history of misnaming and racist entanglements between Western anthropologists and the communities they have studied. Similarly, Hunter (1933) even uses the n-word in her article, *Effects of Contact with Europeans on the Status of Pondo Women*. See also Appendix F on page 237-8.

[15] I consciously abided by the dress code norms so that participants would not feel ashamed to share stories coloured by poverty, which they might otherwise assume I would not be able to relate to. My considerations emerge out of an awareness of my privilege as a city girl, or *umkhiwa,* as I was often referred to by *Gogo* Betty. *umkhiwa* translates as a 'white person', but whiteness becomes an allegory representing "civilisation" and class privilege (*isikhiwa*). It is also connoted to colourism.

3.4.2 Revisiting the field

Cooper and Bailey (1999) describe research as a journey. Some journeys may be direct, but some are meandering and may even need rerouting – such was my revisiting of the field after the pilot; a kind of renavigating to the destination. In the pilot study, both pre-menstrual and post-menarcheal girls were included. However, when I revisited the site, I excluded pre-menarcheal girls from the sample as they would not have experienced their first period and would therefore not be able to give an account of it in what would constitute a narrative form. As mentioned on page 60, when I first proposed to undertake this study, I was focused on schoolgirl menstruation-related absenteeism as an issue affecting educational outcomes. I had initially only intended to interview Ndebele girls to capture Ndebele menstrual narratives. However, it became apparent to me that the participants in the study did not need to be girls at the time to recount their own Ndebele menstrual narratives from girlhood. With grandmothers and mothers being accessible to me as a result of the development programme (cf. page 60-1), I started to include their menstrual narratives too, restructuring the interview guide more broadly, as seen in Appendix E on page 236. Greenbaum defines *full-group* FGDs as "a discussion of approximately 90-120 minutes, led by a trained moderator, and involving 8 to 10 persons who are recruited for the session based on their common demographics […]" (1998:2). The first FGD was a *minigroup* FGD. A *minigroup* FGD is the same as a *full-group* FGD save for the fact that it is limited to a maximum of 4 to 6 participants (Greenbaum, 1998). The first FGD had six participants and lasted 1 hour and 17 minutes. It came about that the FGDs developed organically out of time convenience, as more participants were free for interview discussions on Wednesdays because it is the day of rest (*izilo*) from attending to the fields. While it was larger than the first FGD – due to the busier timetables of the participants – this FGD lasted 45 minutes. Wong (2008) argues that FGDs "give the researcher an understanding of the participants' perspective on the topic in discussion" and this is in part why they have grown so popular in health and medical research. This study lies at the cusp of the sociological subfields of reproductive sociology and the sociology of health. The FGDs enabled me to get an overview of participants' perspectives on menstrual preparedness. They also gave insights into the consensus[16] around grandmothers' and mothers' views of what has changed in terms of menstrual education and menstrual preparation in Zimbabwe from the time when they were girls to present-day Zimbabwe. With this overview, I was able to more effectively (albeit loosely) structure the semi-structured IDIs, many of which were with the same women I had carried out the FGDs with.

It is important not to be 'methodolatrous' (Stokes & Bergin, 2006). Methods must fit the research rather than the research being confined to a specific method(s). As such, "deep hanging out" (Geertz, 1998) was another data collection method I employed. It evolved more out of access and convenience than pre-crafted research design. Burrell (2009) challenges us to consider the fieldsite as a network rather than a fixed site in ethnographic research[17]. I also gathered data from a convenience sample that emerged when the local primary school invited me to attend a pilot extracurricular menstrual mentorship programme for girls aged 11-12 years. I was given consent by the school and parents to take notes, however, I did not include them in my core sample as majority of the girls were premenarcheal. With this in mind, we should be open to adapting the methodology of the study. *Deep hanging out* is defined by Kirpalani as "a method of unstructured observation stripped of theoretical concern. It is this immersive viewing of custom, myth and ritual in society that is key to unlocking cultural systems of meaning through analysing the symbols of human social life" (Kirpalani, 2016:70). I spent a considerable amount of time with my host's best friend (*Gogo*[18] *Ma*Gumede), who would visit almost every day to share a tea brewed over the fire or a meal. *Gogo* *Ma*Gumede would visit my host *Gogo* Betty, often bearing gifts such as vegetables[19]. During my fieldwork, deep hanging out with elders helped me to enrich the data collection process because I was able to ask questions about customs that I was not familiar with and gain wider context around some of the narratives the research participants shared.

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[16] FGDs have become a reputed research method for developing consensus (Fardy & Jeffs, 1994).

3.4.3 Sampling strategy

The FGDs were a mixture of grandmothers and mothers (see Fig 13, page 89) rural Ndebele women and low educational level. All of the women knew one another personally or of one another; a distinct feature of communities upholding the *ubuntu* value system (cf. Fig. 7, page 52). Along with the Umzingwane DA (cf. page 59), my host, *Gogo* Betty was part "the network 'in'" (Agar, 1980:27). *Gogo* Betty (65 years) is a well-trusted and respected village elder who shares close bonds with villagers. She assisted in mobilising the women and girls in my sample. As a grandmother herself, she was able to give me access to other women. We used a snowball sampling method to interview them, choosing women who lived within walking distance of *Gogo* Betty's homestead. One pre-menarcheal adolescent girl who was recruited had to be excluded from the sample because she had not yet reached ménarche. I had to make some decisions around expanding my criteria for rural women. I learned that many of the younger generations of participants in the study had spent certain periods of their lives in the city, even if they now lived in the rural areas. While some women had grown up in Sikelela for all or part of their lives, some had moved there because of marriage (*umendo*) to join their husband's family, while one had moved to the village because of a work opportunity. This revealed the heterogeneity of the group.[20] Batisai reminds us that, "it is worth noting that 'women' is not a term of consensus (see Anthias, and Yuval-Davis, 1989:1&7). There is a huge range of categorisation of women in the literature where women feature as 'generic women', 'poor women', 'young women' and [so on] among other categories" (2013:30). The womxn in this study include, but are not limited to, adolescent girls; male daughters; young women; elderly women; reproductive women; menopausal women; nulliparous[21] women; mothers; unmarried women; wives; divorcées. African women, and even Ndebele women are not a monolithic category (Larsen, 2010) and, even within the subgroup of the Ndebele, there are similarities and differences.

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[17] On page 63, I highlighted that I am not presently resident in Zimbabwe and, as a result, the fieldsite is not limited to Sikelela (Burrell, 2009).

[18] *Gogo* means granny or grandmother in *isiNdebele*.

[19] As I highlight on page 79 in the section on "Re-introducing the fieldsite", there was drought and so fresh produce was a delicacy. It is also part of an age old *ubuntu*-grounded guest culture (cf. Figure 7, page 52) *whereby umuntu womzini* (a visitor/guest) is offered gifts when they visit the village.

3.5 Data collection

Below in Figure 9 is a summary of the study sample breaking down the data collection method employed, the compilation and number of participants interviewed.

Data collection method	**Participants**	**No. of participants**
focus group discussions	mothers & a grandmother	6
	grandmothers, mothers & a father 'speaking as a mother'	12
in-depth interviews	Grandmothers	10
	Mothers	7
	young women	2
	Daughters	9
TOTAL IDIs		28
TOTAL		**46**

Figure 9: Study sample breakdown

The first FGD consisted of six participants – one grandmother, *Gogo* Betty, and five mothers[22]. The second FGD included three mothers and *Gogo* Betty, who participated in the first FGD along with eight new interview participants, making up a group of 12. The presence of a man in the second FGD (Fig. 9) oddly did not disrupt the dynamics. He announced that he was "speaking as a mother" and made the revelation of early unintended pregnancy as a crisis touching the village of Sikelela. By discussing premarital sex, pregnancy outside of, and his concern for the daughters in the village women were free to speak plainly too about the same and menstruation. This was my first glimpse into the fact that men can be male mothers in Ndebele culture. I discuss this in further detail on page 131, where I cast the light on *malume* (the maternal uncle) as a male mother of old. In addition to the FGDs, I carried out 28 one-on-one narrative interviews with 9 daughters (15-19 years), 2 young women (20-29 years), 7 mothers (30-49 years). and 10 grandmothers (50-79 years) between May and July 2019, see Figure 10 below. The participants of this study were not all biologically related; however, they are still framed as daughters; mothers and grandmothers because a child is "a reflection of the family and the community" that raises them (Mkhwanazi, 2014b:109). Family is a transcendental *ubuntu*-centred trope in terms of the intergenerationality of the study. Some of the IDIs were in the presence of *Gogo* Betty, particularly those with grandmothers. I did this as an observation of respect to my elderly interview participants because, relative to the grandmothers, I am a child; hence, *Gogo* Betty helped me attain a proxy (elderly) adulthood.

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[20] As Hunter highlights, it was typical for older generations of Zulu (or Ndebele) women to move "into a husband's *umuzi* (homestead)" (2007:693).

[21] This is the adjectival form of nulliparity, which is defined as "the condition of a woman of never having given birth" (Collins Dictionary, 2014) or never having completed a pregnancy beyond 20 weeks (Wiktionary, 2019).

[22] One mother was of whom was a young woman aged 28 years.

Figure 10 below is a graph showing the age distribution of the IDI participants in the study:

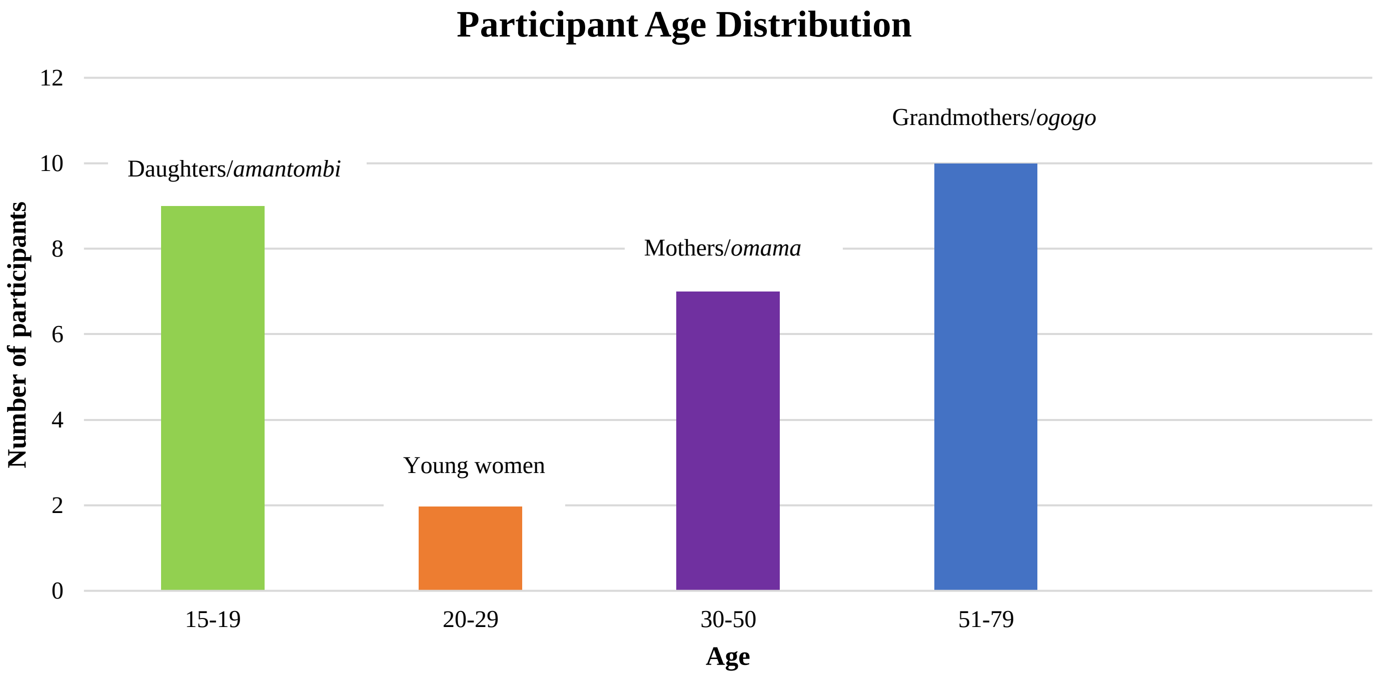

Figure 10: Age distribution of IDI participants in study

FGDs hold the danger of conformity and censorship of discussions on intimate topics like menstruation (Jowett & O'Toole 2006; Larsen, 2010). Hence, I chose to carry out all my interviews with the adolescent girls (aged 15-19 years) recruited as IDIs. I interviewed the adolescent girls in the study strictly in IDIs to mitigate the effects of peer pressure and to avoid amplifying any feelings of discomfort, trauma and shame that could be invoked by recounting memories of ménarche and menstruation. As the catchment area of my sample was a small one, this also prevented any age-mixing of the girls with older women who may be or otherwise know their caregivers. This assured confidentiality as I was cognisant that age-mixing in the data collection methods could cause complications and tension outside of the interviews and my research. Finally, all IDIs were conducted in strictly female homosocial spaces so that there was a sense of shared experience in terms of menstruation.

3.6 Data analysis & storage

I captured the demographic data of each participant, assigning each a pseudonym for the purposes of anonymity. I also generalised or left out any of the participants' distinguishable (Ncube, 2015). The FGD and IDI audio recordings were stored securely on a password-protected device and backed up electronically. These audio recordings were labelled by pseudonym to ensure that the recordings and the content remained confidential. A systematic narrative analysis of interview transcripts was undertaken, followed by manual coding by theme (Franzosi, 1998). This was followed by electronic coding on a qualitative software package. No identifying personal information was disclosed in the write-up of analysed data analysed. Burrell suggests that critical objectivity is achieved "by exiting the field to enforce the physical distance necessary for analysis" (2009:182). I argue that data analysis is ongoing within and outwith the field. However, I would occasionally return to the city to back up my data.

Burrell proposes conceiving of the fieldsite as "a network composed of fixed and moving points including spaces, people, and objects" (2009:189). In taking this into account, I argue that the fieldsite was not just Sikelela, but my 'home' in Bulawayo where I would store my data and conduct my preliminary analyses to iteratively refine my data collection process. She argues that the network conceptualisation is useful in "escap[ing] the concepts, categories, hierarchies, and presumed relations that structure quantitative research methods and formal surveys" (2009:189). This aligns with the study's aim to efface dichotomies and hierarchies embedded in development discourse.

In line with the study's narrative research design, the findings are reported in a narrative approach. The approach fleshes out each participant in a restorative way that depicts the interview participants as people rather than research subjects or statistics. This furthers the study's contribution to the decolonial turn in scholarship and visibilising the contribution of women and girls to human development at a household level.

Burrell states that, "The issue of logistics is a major concern in this movement toward mobile multisited, and virtual ethnography" (Burrell, 2009:187). The study took on a mobile, virtual and multisited dimension in data storage, analysis and interpretation. Furthermore, it did so as I posed of follow-up questions to some research participants after my fieldwork in Zimbabwe. These were communicated via WhatsApp messenger. This conception of a mobile, multisited and virtual fieldsite broadens our understanding of fieldsites, taking into account the fact that "social processes c[an] take place over vast physical terrain (Burrell, 2009:184). It also allowed me to verify of my analyses to be sure that my interpretations were true to what the research participants had said in their interviews and our interactions. In this way the final write-up became a co-production of knowledge rather than an extraction of it.

3.6.1 Analytical reflections

On the subject of African knowledge production, Zimbabwean scholar Mavhunga encourages "Africa[n] scholars to write a narrative [of] the keywords which are readily visible to and derived from African tongues, first and foremost, so that the rest of the world is able to learn about [Africa and Africans] through [African] keywords" (2018:xii). The findings chapter therefore incorporates Ndebele keywords and seeks to explain them in context, situating them within the menstrual narratives and unloading their meaning in broader terms. In this way, indigenous words can be used to explain phenomena in Africa, as opposed to the mindless adoption of foreign frames such as "development" and "menstruation" to understand phenomena that can even more richly be understood through an African language (Mavhunga, 2018). Though use the word "menstruation" in this study, it only has a similitude of meaning to its Ndebele translation *ukungena esikhathini*, which translates more closely as entering into time: a time of adolescence, preceding adulthood. Menstruation is also described as *ukukhula*. It translates literally as "growing up". *ukukhula* is used more frequently by older Ndebele women who are done growing up; women who are themselves 'grown-ups' and perhaps understand the experience through adult eyes, who see growing up as a journey that they have travelled, and are at the (latter) end of.[23] In paying close attention to Ndebele keywords I recalled that the suffix *-kazi* can be used "to indicate the feminine" in Zulu and Ndebele (Werner, 1919). Given that *baba* means father, I translate *babakazi* as female father as opposed to paternal aunt in order to demonstrate her role in fostering children in the absence of a father. This translation is significant in revealing her valuable connection to a child's Ndebele patrilineal heritage as well as a gatekeeper of knowledge about (pre-)menarcheal practices and pre-marriage preparation.

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[23] *ukukhula* is frequently used to refer to menstruation in *isiNdebele*. However, it is a euphemism of the verb for having the first period (i.e., ménarche). The verb *ukukhula* means 'to grow up' and has the sense of coming of age. The exact term for reaching ménarche, is *ukuthomba*. It can also be used to refer to rusting or gathering a layer of film or dust. The verb evokes the colour red. *ukuthomba* is, however, used interchangeably to refer to puberty more broadly. The noun *intombi* (a young girl or woman) is a derivative of the verb. *intombi* is not to be mistaken for the shortening of *intombazana*. *intombi yinkazana esithombile* (is a girl who has reached ménarche). *intombazana* is a girl that has not

In a postlude of an era of African political decolonisation, a pondering perhaps hailed by Ghana's independence in 1956, I began to grapple during the writing up of this dissertation with what it means to actively 'decolonise' my research within existing colonial and institutional frameworks such as departmental guidelines and typical academic conventions of English grammar and translation. The participants of this study are referred to by name (pseudonym[24]) and nickname, to humanise them and their narratives (Lister, 2015), paying homage to them as co-producers of this monograph. In particular Ntombenhle and Mandlakazi wanted to be referred to by their 'names' and not by their roles as '[so and so's mother]'. I gave them pseudonym given in the spirit of honouring the request while respecting my ethical obligation to maintain participant anonymity and confidentiality. This way they were commemorated not just as mother but the girls that they once were and as their own individuals, just as they wanted to be. I took great care in the selection of pseudonyms in this study. I gave Ndebele pseudonyms to women and girls who had Ndebele names and, correspondingly, I only gave English pseudonyms to women and girls who had English names. I did this in a conscious effort to avoid white-washing the research participants.[25] My assignment of these pseudonyms was an active decolonial engagement in the "politics of naming" (Patel, 2020:2), to humanise the participants in a manner befitting of a narrative study.

The African scholar is sometimes alienated from their work and their mother tongue language in academia through the self-fragmenting process akin to Fanonian 'double consciousness' (Moore, 2005) of quotation marks and the *italicisation* of 'keywords' (Mavhunga, 2018). I have opted to italicize rather than apostrophise these keywords, as I find the use of the quotation marks only serve to 'other' me as an African, Ndebele researcher from not only my language but also the culture and in effect, my research. I am of the

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yet reached ménarche). The women and girls in the study used *ukukhula* and *ukungena esikhathini* (to enter into that time) to refer to menstruation. Hence, even the word menstruation only captures a similitude of the Ndebele term. It is for these reasons that Mavhunga (2018) encourages the use of vernacular keywords over their translation. *ukuthomba* is a more scientific term, whereas *ukukhula* is more often used by older women who have the hindsight of what 'growing up' meant for them in the expression's entirety.

[24] To uphold confidentiality and anonymity in the study; no real names were used in this study.

[25] Bulawayo brings out what it means for Zimbabwean names to be white-washed in her novel, *We Need New Names* (2013:254). See also Nyathi (2018).

view that quotation marks, by virtue of their starkness, within a dissertation written in the universal medium of English (which is both my foreign and first language) perpetuate the notion that African theories can only serve as ‘pseudo’ ontologies. My conscious choice to incorporate Ndebele keywords in my analysis and write-up (as opposed to simply indexing them in a back-end glossary or footnoting them) is one that signifies my own imaginings of a decolonised dissertation that ‘re-Africanises’[26] processes in daily, lived experience – from the exceptional to the seemingly mundane. This is my own act of linguistic activism as I resist grammatical traditions and conventions engrained in colonialism, and a patronisation of indigeneity through juxtaposition and inferred ‘subordination’ (Grosz, 1994) of *isiNdebele* to English. There is also a certain impoverishment of true meanings invoked by translations (easily recognisable to Nguni speakers). By incorporating Ndebele keywords, I am attempting to diminish the paucity of translated meanings. In another act of decolonial defiance and subversion of typical academic writing conventions, I have also opted to include the Ndebele glossary at the beginning of the study (page XII) rather than in the study appendices, to prime the importance of the Ndebele keywords and names used in this study.

Also, in adhering to Ndebele grammatical rules, and not subordinating them to those of English, you will find that in this dissertation there are some sentences that intentionally begin with lower case, as they would in *isiNdebele*. It is for this reason that I use a small case for the philosophy of *ubuntu* and the value system it espouses. While *ubuntu* is relatively well-known and was iconified by the charismatic (South) African leader, Nelson Mandela, I opt to use small letters[27, 28] so as not to establish it as something separate from myself as the researcher, who is both African and a Zimbabwean Ndebele woman, but also as an extension of who my research participants are as Ndebele women and girls. On one level, these appropriations of lower case are actively decolonial acts of linguistic resistance and verbal activism (Kemmerer, 2006)[29] but, at another level, I am simply being true to Ndebele grammatical rules (which are themselves by no means rigid). For example, I do this with great intentionality in the subheadings of Section 4.2.8, because lower case indicates common nouns, which bare different importance to a person, for whom personhood (*ubuntu*) is evoked with capital letters, as I will explain below. It also uses Ndebele expressions and keywords in-text, to capture the essence of a situation or fact that is not fully translatable. This is a decolonial rhetorical choice that gives voice and visibility to my own double consciousness as a Ndebele researcher mediating a dissertation on the Ndebele people through the medium of English. On this issue, it is also worth stressing that information technology is not always accommodating of non-Western knowledge. Checks on the Microsoft Word Spelling and Grammar tool present their own invisible labour-work. This is because (at the time of writing and submitting my dissertation) the tool did not have an *isiNdebele* dictionary or multilingual support. I therefore had to decolonise the English dictionary by adding Ndebele vocabulary[30] to the Spelling and Grammar tool in order for it to correctly detect errors in *isiNdebele* otherwise all *isiNdebele* keywords being identified as errors in the document.

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[26] I first heard this term used by Mavhunga at the First Series “Theory from Africa” Mellon Workshop hosted by the Centre for Indian Studies in Africa, University of Witwatersrand in Johannesburg South Africa on 20-26 August 2017 that I attended. Mavhunga was a guest lecturer at this workshop. He proposed it as a substitute for *decolonisation,* which places the process of colonisation at the centre of Africa studies through suffixing it to periods such as post- or pre-colonial Africa. I do not, however, use the two interchangeably in this study, as they have different underpinnings.

[27] This choice also resonates with that of bell hooks, who opted not to capitalise her name so as to draw attention to “her work rather than her name, on her ideas rather than her personality” (Quintana, 2010).iz

[28] Whereas I am of the view that capitalising it would other both the value system and those like myself and my research participants who subscribe to it.

[29] Kemmerer defines verbal activism as “using language with intent to bring social change” as it is part of raising “with regard to how terms that refer to particular groups of people – such as ethnic groups – unintentionally can be discriminatory” (2006:12). See further discussion on 190.

Inking some of these analytical reflections was often coloured by what I once heard described as 'subconscious resistance' in the African American Policy Forum's (AAPF) "Under The Blacklight" series.[31] My subconscious resistance in this dissertation was itself 'an internalisation of the policing of my own possibilities'[32] vis-à-vis what a person of colour (PoC) like myself can ponder, let alone articulate in academia. It was a resistance based on the fear being micro-examined about my epistemology and dismissed because of my positionality in this monograph. This feeling finds resonance with the fact that "critiques voiced by students in both the Global South and North have turned attention to the ways in which higher education practices have been informed by, and continue to perpetuate, a series of assumptions that favour particular epistemological perspectives" (Morreira, Luckett, Kumalo & Ramgotra, 2020:1[33]).

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[30] This is in the event that it allows you to make such additions. A researcher conducting research in a language that is not available in the pre-programmed languages for the dictionary function may also have to confront notifications around addition saturation, as I did.

[31] This particular instalment was titled, *Storytelling While Black and Female: Conjuring Beautiful Experiments in Past and Future Worlds* and took place online on 5 August 2020 at 8 to 9 p.m. Eastern Daylight Time (EDT). The stream can be viewed on the following link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xGS5aP5Vi7g&feature=youtu.be

[32] Kimberlé Crenshaw, ibid. Crenshaw is the Executive Director of the African American Policy Forum. She refers to thinking about and confronting these challenges as part of the "struggle for intersectional justice" (AAPF, 2020).

[33] In referencing according to the Harvard (Author-date) method, the University of Cape Town (UCT) *Fakalthi yezoLuntu* **(**Humanities) Reference Guide recommends that when there are four or more authors, an in-text citation should list the first author's surname followed by *et al.* in-text. In this case, this would subordinate and invisibilise the Black Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) or Black, Indigenous, People of Colour (BIPOC) authors to the white lead author of this article. As a result, I have opted to list all of the co-authors for this reference. This is my own conscious effort to visibilise their contribution to this journal article on the 'decolonising curricula and pedagogy in higher education'. There are limitations in using Western theory and practice to decolonise or de-Westernise knowledge and pedagogy (Adebisi, 2019). One example of such a limitation is the contradiction that would arise from observing the aforementioned in-text referencing guidelines for this article, which has four authors. For in abiding by these guidelines, the BAME/BIPoC scholars who contributed to this paper are invisibilised in a work that sets out exactly

In Ndebele culture, once a Ndebele woman has a child and leaves her childhood home to go to her husband's home,[34] her name becomes a reference to identity as a mother and *Na* (meaning 'mother of' in Ndebele) is prefixed to the name of her first child. This underscores the importance of parenthood in Southern African culture. All of the elderly women in the study are referred to as *gogo*[35] (grandmother/granny) because rural life especially is a fabric woven by the fine threads of community and family. Hence, while you may not be biologically related to an elder, you would still relate to them as 'grandmother' if they are around the same age as your grandmother. A grandmother is also a mother and so, sometimes, I refer to some of the elderly participants as *Gogo Na[...]* (Granny, mother of [insert name of first born]) or *Gogo Ma*[insert family name]. This a mirrors the colloquial way of speaking, which stresses a woman's role as a grandmother, a mother, the daughter of [family namely]. Similarly, girls and nulliparous women are referred to simply also as *Ma*[insert family name], for example I am *Ma*Ncube (see page VIII). The closest translation of this prefix into English (albeit with implications regarding high status and prestige) would be "of the House of (family name)". Rather than grasping for a sometimes-unattainable similitude, I have maintained these colloquialisms in the dissertation in order to capture the spirit of *ubuntu* in my portrayal of the participants, because family bonds are an essential thread to the fabric of rural life in Zimbabwe. I also would like to highlight that throughout this dissertation there are instances win which I use the word 'woman' where 'girl' is also applicable. This is done to convey a sentiment underpinning the study; that of the women we[36] are raised to be through (invisible) reproductive labour-work.

This dissertation has drawn on a number of different sources to enrich the analysis in the study. Apart from scholarly and grey literature, I have also included social media posts (e.g., Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, Twitter[37]). I have done so because development discourse is not just mediated through official websites, policy documents and booklets of UN Family. It is all around us, including in the social media we consume. I am of the view that part of decolonising higher education involves using social media as pedagogical tools

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to illuminate the persisting "systems of coloniality" (Morreira, Luckett, Kumalo & Ramgotra, 2020:3) entrenched in pedagogical and higher education practices that mute BAME/BIPoC voices and invisibilise their academic contributions. These considerations represent remedying past injustices and visibilising the BIPOC at UCT that sees UCT's iconic Jameson "Jammie" Memorial Hall renamed as to Sarah Baartman Hall in 2018.

[34] See also Mchunu (2005).

[35] I use capital letters for "gogo" to denote the appropriate level of respect that should be accorded to elders (like grandmothers) in Ndebele culture.

[36] Ndebele girls (myself included).

[37] See Appendix F on page 237-8.

while fact-checking information rigorously in this post-truth era.[38] As in Appendix F (page 237-8), I have drawn on posts that were from a personal Twitter account. I sought the permission of the Twitter account user. I did this even though the account was a public account, because of what I call reflexive consent. Reflexive consent, unlike the bureaucratic informed consent I described in Section 3.2, is a consent that ensures that even where information is circulated in public domains, when utilised elsewhere besides original the source platform (e.g., in this doctoral study), the user is made aware and consents to such use. The intention behind reflexive consent is to critically engage with the act of seeking consent in decolonial work by confronting the legacy of extractive colonial research, which in many cases consists of non-consensually obtained knowledge from indigenous groups. It allows for the participant to change their mind and say ‘no’ at any point of the research and/or publication process, even after the consent forms have been signed.

3.7 Limitations of the study

Like a minefield, development discourse is riddled with abbreviations (e.g., GDI, GFI, GII, GNI, HDI, HDR, NICs, LEDCs, MEDCs, MCPs, RUMPs, RMNCH+A, WASH,[39] etc.). Though they constitute what Patel[40] calls a “useful shorthand for development”, they are not without their conceptual limitations and practical challenges. Similarly, my concept of MHMMMs also presents its own limitations. It is an alphabetic shorthand that development practitioners (myself included) often take for granted, ignoring how inaccessible it can be for those who are not fluent in this language of alphabet.[41] Within this acronymic jargon, there are also ‘homographs’ that share the same letters but stand for different things, e.g., GDI can be Gross Domestic Income or, as the abbreviation is used this study, it also stands for Gender Development Index. I will not shy away from stating that MHMMMs is a cumbersome, slightly clumsy term, like RMNCH+A. However, in its laboriousness, it seeks to portray the complexity of the some of the often oversimplified processes that underlie decisions that women and girls make about what type of sanitary wear to use. It also conveys that often mixed menstrual hygiene management *methods* and *materials* are used according to need, availability and accessibility. For example, on page 13, I highlighted that girls from lower-income brackets may opt to supplement their use of single-use disposable sanitary wear with RUMPs in order to be cost-efficient. Nevertheless, the use of more sustainable sanitary wear like RUMPs and the menstrual cup is not an automatic signifier of (lower) economic status. Ecofeminists in the global North may also advocate for re-usable sanitary wear as part of a (third-wave) menstrual activism (Bobel, 2007; Lorber, 2010). This activism lobbies for effective menstrual waste management that conserves the environment in a bid to battle climate change (Roxburgh *et al*., 2020). By complicating the cross-sectionality of choices, the term MHMMMs seeks to decolonialise the idea of poverty, highlighting that even the existing shorthand fails to capture the nuance of third worlds within the first world and first worlds within third worlds. The dilemma of shorthand is that concomitantly, while desiring to abbreviate meaningful terms, the abbreviations themselves have a tendency to divest the phenomenon they describe of their meaning. This conundrum is not unlike the challenge of decolonising curricula and pedagogy (Morreira, Luckett, Kumalo & Ramgotra, 2020), while using colonial structures (and tools) such as the university. Hence, we find that in presenting the pitfalls of these terms – which, like MHI, are not accessible, and even I as a development practitioner find to be inaccessible – I propose a more accessible term, which is still inaccessible in many respects[42].

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[38] Post-truth relates to a state of modernity in which objective facts are less influential in shaping public opinion than presentations of ‘fact’ that appeal to emotions, personal beliefs and biases.

[39] Gender Development Index, Girl-Friendly Index, Gender Inequality Index, Gross National Income, Human Development, Human Development Index, Human Development Report, Newly Industrialised Countries, Less Economically Developed Countries, More Economically Developed Countries, multiple concurrent partnerships, Re-usable Menstrual Pads, Reproductive, Maternal, Newborn, Child and Adolescent Health, Water, Sanitation and Hygiene.

[40] Kamna Patel mentioned the notion of “useful shorthand for development” during a webinar I attended, entitled: *Rethinking (de)coloniality: how useful is the ‘global North’ vs ‘global South’?* that took place on 26 June 2020. See also Patel (2020).

[41] The UN Family are themselves a family of alphabet, e.g., UNFPA, UNICEF, UNESCO, WHO. They are also the lead authors of this language of alphabet that punctuates development discourse.

The interconnectedness of the globe means people in the global North and the global South have commonalities of experience. Menstruation and its management is one such unifying experience. For example, amid the COVID-19 pandemic of 2020, Garikipati (2020) highlights that the sanitary wear crisis in India[43] “is not only the case in India. Women in Fiji[44], the US[45], the UK[46] and other parts of the world[47] [like Zimbabwe] have also reported severe supply shortages and hiked up prices for disposable menstrual products”.[48] Hence it is at times of crisis, such as when development discourse is seen in emergency state practice, that the term MHMMMs finds underscored significance as we consider what menstrual hygiene management methods and materials are most sustainable for girls now and in the future. Though the term MHMMMs is menstruation-focused, it resonates with Field-Springer and Margavio Striley's (2018) MMEE. Field-Springer and Margavio Striley propose a way of "interpreting bodily ways of knowing, experiences informed by actions, and reflective dimensions guided by sociocultural conditions that either constrain or enable efforts to be and act in the world" (2018:700). They refer to this theory as *managing meanings of embodied experience* – MMEE (Field-Springer & Margavio Striley, 2018:700). In encapsulating limitations and choices, MHMMMs is a term that helps us to consider what alternative strategies can (and are) adopted in the absence, unavailability, inaccessibility, unaffordability of disposable sanitary wear. For we see that multiple-use sanitary wear are not a matter of racialised poverty but find their resonance and relevance in a universalised rights-based (development) discourse.

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[42] This language of alphabet is especially inaccessible to those outside of the field of development practitioners and development scholars. I recall being completely lost in this jargon when first began working at an international non-governmental organisation – an iNGO. There is a tendency within the development sector to create a language within the language and a discourse with the discourse(s) through this shorthand. Where possible in this dissertation I have avoided acronyms. However, this is a study on the cusp of development studies and sociology, and I am forced to converse in this language of alphabet even while seeking to dismantle and transform certain parts of the discourse.

[43] https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-india-52718434

[44] https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/jun/10/food-over-sanitary-pads-women-in-fiji-struggling-to-cope-with-periods-in-the-pandemic

[45] https://www.nytimes.com/2020/04/05/us/02IHW-virus-tampons-pads-periods-product-shortages.html

[46] See details on COVID-19-related period poverty in the UK at https://therealistwoman.com/reported-shortages-of-menstrual-products-amid-pandemic/

[47] https://therealistwoman.com9/reported-shortages-of-menstrual-products-amid-pandemic/

[48] See also Plan International (2020).

CHAPTER 4: Menstrual preparation as Reproductive labour-work

This chapter begins by providing a snapshot of some of the specifics of the fieldsite. It conveys how menstrual preparedness is understood by three generations of Ndebele women and girls. Using the lens of reproductive labour-work, the chapter considers the locations and processes through which menstrual preparedness is transmitted. It portrays the sexual precarity of young pubescent girls who straddle the ambiguous line of being reproductively capable but seen by kinfolk as being too young to engage in sexual intercourse and procreate. The chapter illustrates that generation gaps are not just a matter of age, but are influenced by waves of social change, such as increased access to education. The chapter also complicates the idea of generations by giving insights into an African (i.e., Zimbabwean) perspective on age, childhood and adulthood by examining them through indexes like physical maturity (e.g., ménarche, menstruation, motherhood, menopause); (il)literacy; and what I refer to in this study as “relational maturity”. Finally, the chapter closes with a discussion around the benefits and tensions of tradition and modernity in the practice and passing down of Ndebele MHMMMs.

4.1 Re-introducing the fieldsite

Poverty affects 70% of the rural population in Zimbabwe (OPHI, 2017). Coupled with the revolving door of pupils’ education (cf. page 18-9), it is unsurprising to find there is a prevalence of overaged learners. In rural areas, the proportion of overaged learners who enrolled in Form 1 in 2019 is 67.25%, compared with 56.63% in urban areas (MoPSE, 2019:60). On pages 11 and 17, I mention that my fieldsite, the rural village of Sikelela[1], is located in the province of Matabeleland South. Matabeleland South is a historically underdeveloped province and continues to be an underserved region of Zimbabwe in terms of basic service delivery, including access to water and sanitation (Ndhlovu, 2019). The German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development estimate that between 2014 and 2016, in Zimbabwe 25-34.9% of the population were undernourished (BMZ, 2017). Further to this, the village is vulnerable to seasonal drought and famine. Sikelela is found in the Umzingwane District which has a food poverty prevalence ranging between 30-44% (Figure 11) overleaf. At the time of my fieldwork in 2019, Zimbabwe’s food insecurity was exacerbated by the El Niño-induced drought and economic instability. As a result, the United Nations declared that food insecurity in the country was at an emergency level[2].

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[1] cf. pages XV, 11 and 17

[2] https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2019/nov/29/zimbabwe-on-verge-of-manmade-starvation-warns-un-envoy

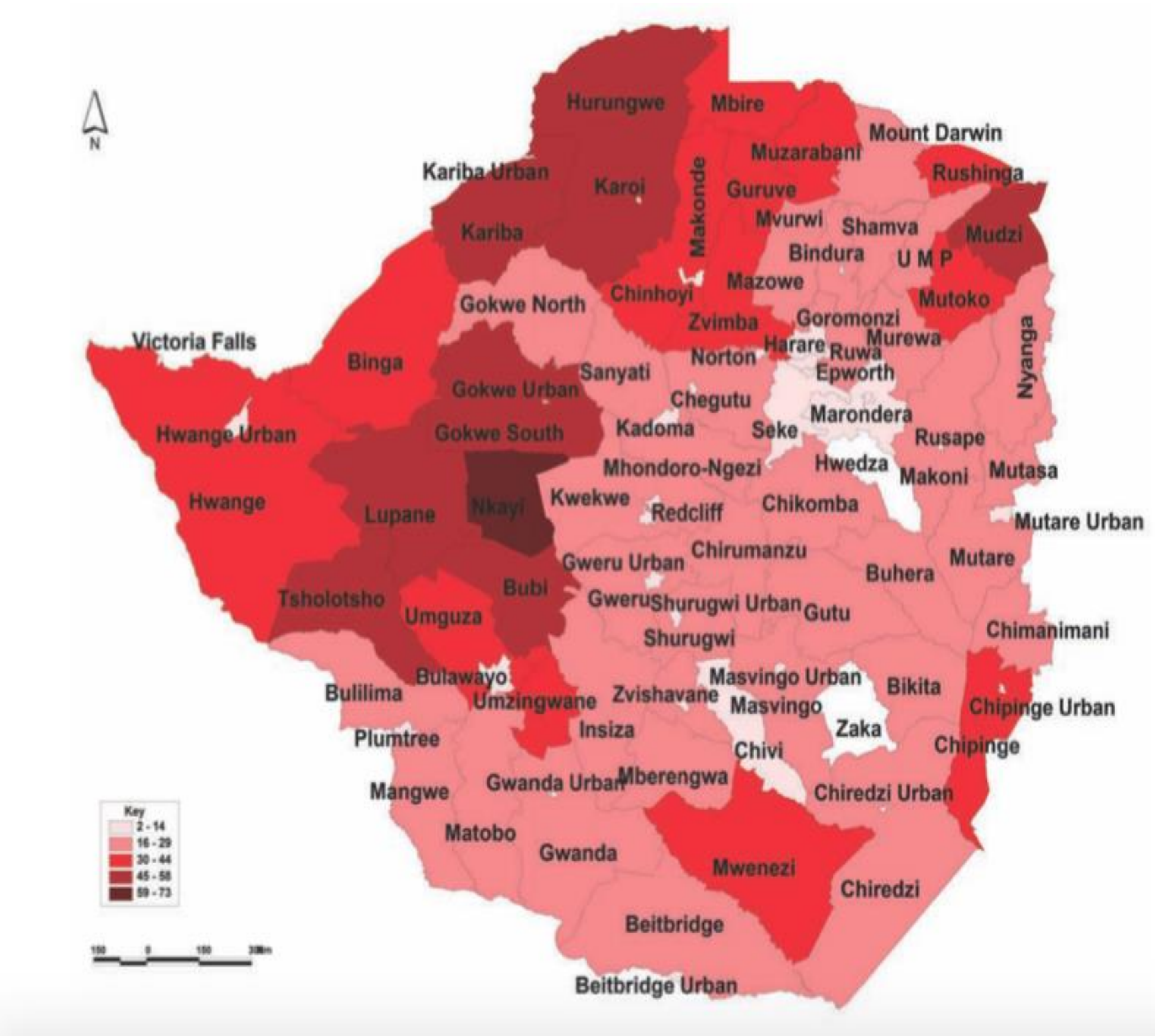
N
Hurungwe
Mbire
Mount Darwin
Muzarabani
Kariba Urban
Karoi
Rushinga
Guruve
Makonde
Mvurwi
Shamva
Mudzi
Kariba
Bindura
U M P
Chinhoyi
Mazowe
Mutoko
Gokwe North
Zvimba
Goromonzi
Victoria Falls
Harare
Ruwa
Murewa
Binga
Norton
Epworth
Nyanga
Sanyati
Gokwe Urban
Chegutu
Marondera
Hwange Urban
Gokwe South
Kadoma
Seke
Rusape
Hwedza
Mhondoro-Ngezi
Makoni
Mutasa
Hwange
Nkayi
Kwekwe
Redcliff
Chikomba
Lupane
Mutare Urban
Chirumanzu
Gweru Urban
Mutare
Buhera
Bubi
Tsholotsho
Gweru
Shurugwi Urban
Gutu
Umguza
Shurugwi
Chimanimani
Bulawayo
Masvingo Urban
Bikita
Bulilima
Zvishavane
Umzingwane
Masvingo
Chipinge Urban
Insiza
Zaka
Plumtree
Chivi
Chipinge
Mangwe
Gwanda Urban
Mberengwa
Chiredzi Urban
Key
2 - 14
16 - 29
30 - 44
45 - 58
59 - 73
Matobo
Gwanda
Mwenezi
150
0
150
300km
Chiredzi
Beitbridge
Beitbridge Urban

Figure 11: Food poverty prevalence by district[3]

Source: ZIMSTAT, 2016

4.1.1 The Village of Sikelela

The 9 daughters included in the sample (cf. Fig. 9, page 68) were from Sikelela and other neighbouring villages. While there is a primary school in the village, when girls transition into secondary school they are confronted with an arduous daily commute. This is because the nearest secondary school (Dingani Secondary School) is approximately 10 kilometres from Sikelela.

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[3] http://www.zimstat.co.zw/sites/default/files/img/publications/Finance/Zimbabwe_Food_Poverty_Atlas_2016.pdf

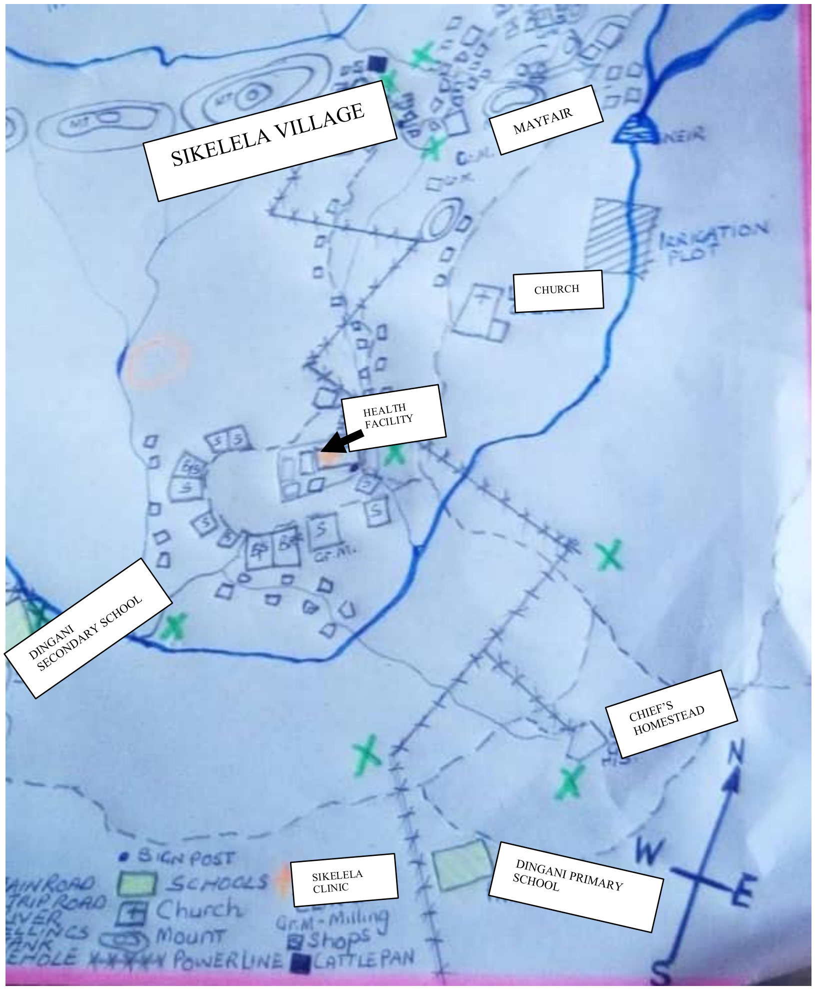
SIKELELA VILLAGE
MAYFAIR
WEIR
IRRIGATION PLOT
CHURCH
HEALTH FACILITY
DINGANI SECONDARY SCHOOL
CHIEF'S HOMESTEAD
SIKELELA CLINIC
DINGANI PRIMARY SCHOOL
N
W
E
S
SIGN POST
SCHOOLS
Church
Mount
POWERLINE
Gr.M-Milling
Shops
CATTLE PAN

Figure 12: A hand-sketched map indicating the location of the village of Sikelela & the nearest secondary school

For most rural girls in Sikelela, the highest level of education that they aspire to is fourth form. This is mostly because Dingani does not offer sixth form education (cf. Fig. 5, page 23). Attending school, travel (mostly by foot), and chores take up a significant amount time for rural girls in Sikelela and the Umzingwane District. There are 4 manually operated boreholes in the Sikelela, where villagers fetch water for household consumption (e.g., drinking, bathing, cooking) and for their livestock. There are 158 homesteads in the village. The nearest small grocery store is 7 kilometres away from Sikelela. The majority of the families in Sikelela are matrifocal. Subsistence agriculture is a primary activity shaping the life and work-rhythms of the villagers. Some villagers are employed at the neighbouring rural health facility as seen in Figure 12 the local school and grocery store. There is also what is commonly referred to in Zimbabwe as a "growth point" with a butcher, grocery stores (*amagrosa*/*izitolo*[4]) and a bottle store (shebeen), all of which are an odd 24-30 kilometres from the village, depending on the location of the homestead within Sikelela.

4.2 Menstrual preparedness: first encounters with menstrual knowledge

4.2.1 Menstruation as a reproductive arena

From the narrative interviews I conducted, I noted two different instances through which menstrual education is transmitted at school. The first is on a need-to-know basis whereby information is only shared when, or *ex post facto* (after ménarche is reached). In this instance, schoolgirl gladiators-in-arms and teachers play an integral role in preparing girls for the menstruation and its management, mostly by providing MHMMMs to girls if/when they stain themselves. This is a practical form of menstrual preparation. The second means of menstrual education is received out through formal curriculum-based classes. The latter in so far as it encompasses the physiology of menstruation constitutes a kind of 'theoretical' menstrual preparation – what I describe as *menstrual literacy*. It consists of "vernacular knowledge and belief[s] about menstruation" (Newton, 2016:1). With this in mind, it is unsurprising that Fingerson (2005b) identifies secondary school as a significant site where girls begin to navigate their public menstrual identity. The gendered bodily differences brought on by puberty and the accompanying onset of menstruation are especially accented in co-educational schools, where girls are being taught alongside their non-menstruating schoolboy counterparts. Fingerson describes this phase as one "betwixt and between childhood (as nonmenstruants) and adulthood (as menstruants)" (Fingerson, 2005b:115). Puberty is a delicate phase of adolescence, which – for the pubescent bodies of schoolgirls – lies between girlhood and womanhood and is shaped by school timetables and activities. We can frame the gendered experience of menstruation for adolescent schoolgirls through what through Connell (1995) refers to as the 'reproductive arena'. For Connell, the reproductive arena "includes sexual arousal and intercourse, childbirth and infant care, bodily sex difference and similarity" (1995:71)[5]. I propose that the reproductive arena also includes menstruation and reproductive maturity.

4.2.2 *usukhulile*: an introduction into the ecosystem of 'growing up'

The following section introduces the study's empirical findings. My findings show that both mothers and teachers are important menstrual knowledge gatekeepers, particularly with regard to the practical aspects of managing menstruation. Ndebele girls are prepared for menstruation by a network of actors including kinfolk, school teachers, peer educators[6] and friends. Lindokuhle's memory of ménarche reveals the complementary role of mothers and teachers in the reproductive arena of menstruation, and the reproductive labour-work of preparing girls for menstruation. Lindokuhle (aged 19), nicknamed "Lindo", tells me (the researcher) that it was her class teacher who gave her her first pack of pads. She remembers that this happened when her first period began unexpectedly in class. Lindo was 16 years old and in the fourth form of secondary school at the time (cf. Fig. 5, page 23). Her teacher only explained to her that the pads were to be placed on her underwear. She says that when she came home and explained to her mother what had happened at school, she still received very little further explanation. What comes to Lindo's mind is that "At the time[7] my mother had some money, so she bought me a second pack of pads." Besides this, however, Lindo does not remember being given any other additional information regarding menstruation that day. Hence at ménarche, Lindo is taught how to manage her menstrual bleeding but the physiology of menstruation and what menstruation would mean for her going forward remained a mystery. This meant that she was prepared only in part for her newly realised reproductive maturation.

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[4] lexical borrowing derived from the English words 'grocer' and 'store'

[5] See also Thakkar (2013).

Like Lindo, Denise's mother bought her some disposable pads and demonstrated to her how you peel a pad out of its packaging and place it on her underwear. Denise (aged 16) had her first period at home when she was 15. It took place when she was on holiday in the City of Bulawayo visiting her mother[8]. She recalls that she learned from her peers and not her mother that "you can fall pregnant [once you start menstruating]".

Gciniwe (aged 35) too is prepared only in part for menstruation. She was told *usukhulile* (you have "grown up", meaning you have come of age), by her mother. Like Lindo and Denise, Gciniwe did not receive any menstrual preparation besides a packet of pads being bought for her and being given instruction on how to use them. Though Zimbabwean, Gciniwe and Lindo's menstrual experiences are congruent with Shah *et al.* who found that Gambian girls "learnt about menstruation from their teachers first and also from mothers or sisters" (2019:7). Similarly, in Mexico Marván and Bejarano discovered that the majority of girls (77%) learned about menstruation from both their mothers and at school (2005:87). They also found that 14% of Mexican girls gained their menstrual knowledge from school while 9% gained their menstrual knowledge only from their mothers (Marván & Bejarano, 2005:87). Marván and Bejaran's study and the menarcheal accounts of Lindo, Denise and Gciniwe menarcheal make plain the interplay of the family and school as vehicles of knowledge transmission about menstruation.

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[6] Peer educators are a cadre of students who are typically hand-picked by school management and receive some training on to supported to promote health-enhancing change among their peers.

[7] This contrast between then and now is suggestive of Zimbabwe's continued economic decline since the year she reached ménarche in 2016, three years before her interview in 2019.

[8] Denise lives in a rural Umzingwane and not in the City of Bulawayo with her mother.

In the US, Costos *et al*. found that "although there are a variety of sources of information about menstruation, mothers are typically the primary sources" (2002:50). Though mothers were important sources of menstrual education in the US as well as in Mexico, Costos *et al*. also highlight in their study that in the US, "[a] lot of mothers simply gave instructions about how to manage the technical aspects of the menses" (2002:53). This is consistent with the experience of Lindo, Denise, Gciniwe and Nomvuyo. Nomvuyo (aged 16) had her first period at home. She told her mother what had happened, shortly after it had taken place. Her mother gave some cloths saying, "here are some cloths, take them and fold them securely over your underwear". She says that "besides how to use the cloths, my mother did not tell me anything else". For Lindo, Nomvuyo and Gciniwe, the menstrual preparation they receive from their mothers focused on the technical aspects of managing menses through the provision of sanitary wear and instruction on its use. We see that mothers have a tendency to only prioritise teaching girls about the technical aspects of MHM as an important aspect of menstrual preparedness. As a result, girls gain other aspects of menstrual preparedness (e.g., emotional support, explanations around the physiology and biological purpose of menstruation) from various other complementary sources.

*Gogo Ma*Gumede recalls that when she reached ménarche (at the age of 17 in 1960s), "Back then you didn't know what was going on and you would often be confused. You could go to your grandmother and ask about it, but it was also okay to go to your mother about it." Again, we witness menstrual preparation as taking place *ex post facto.*

In an interview with *Gogo Na*Kitty (aged 69), she recalls standing up at home and suddenly being pulled out of sight by her mother who had noticed that she had stained herself. *Gogo Na*Kitty says, "I was afraid when I first noticed the blood, but my mother comforted me and told me that it was nothing to be afraid of and that I had just come of age, (*usukhulile*)." For *Gogo Na*Kitty, her menstrual preparation was an introduction to the "culture of concealment" (Houppert, 1999) that governs menstrual etiquette. This is witnessed to when her mother moves her 'leaky body' (Shildrick, 1997) out the view of any gazing eyes in the household that might observe that she has come of age. I argue in this dissertation that when *Gogo Na*Kitty's mother pulls her out of sight, this concealment differs from the Western menstrual taboo of concealment. The Ndebele culture of concealment is less imbued with blanket stigma in so much as it concerned with helping her manage the stigma and in particular, the *danger* associated with menstrual leaks and stains that menstruants are often subjected to in heterosocial spaces. *Gogo Na*Kitty's mother is pulling her out of the view not to shame her but rather to but rather to protect her from the male gaze, which might shame and/or sexualise her leaky body. The menstrual leak 'betrays' her as a young woman to men in the household who may seek to test this out through sexual intercourse. In this way a menstrual leak signals the need for concealment, protection and susceptibility to danger, as it could make her the subject of sexual interest (Douglas, 1966). Her mother acts swiftly to prevent the then 17-year-old *Gogo Na*Kitty from becoming the target of unwanted attention the event that a family member besides a female relative and fellow menstruant – who can relate to this embodied experience – should be the one to notice that *Gogo Na*Kitty had just stained herself. *Gogo Na*Kitty's mother acts hastily to keep her safe from eyes that would sexualise her newly realised reproductive capability. Incestuous childhood sexual abuse is a common theme Zimbabwean literary fiction (Nyathi, 2018; Bulawayo, 2013); shining a light on the social ill[9]. We see that the Ndebele culture of concealment around menstruation is not a one-dimensional matter of universal of cross-gender stigma. It is also about protecting the girl child. Once *Gogo Na*Kitty and her mother are somewhere private, *Gogo Na*Kitty's mother seeks to reassure the then adolescent *Gogo Na*Kitty that reaching ménarche is "nothing to be afraid of" which also normalises menses as she uses the Ndebele vernacular of menstruation, *usukhulile*. It is also at this time that her mother teaches her how to fold a cloth over her new underwear to absorb her menstrual flow.

In addition to teachers and mothers, the literature suggests that female relatives are important in menstrual preparedness. A study in Nigeria ascertained that 95% of female undergraduate students received menstrual information "from mothers, female relatives and school lessons prior to menarche" (Adegbayi, 2017:1). Female relatives are important sources of information because they share not only blood ties but routines with girls within the home. My interviews with Khanyi, Sithabile and *Gogo* Betty support this.

Khanyisile (aged 16), nicknamed "Khanyi" describes being "taken by surprise" (*kwangijuma*) when she started menstruating for the first time at school. Khanyi was 14 at the time. She remembers that she went to go and see a peer educator who provided her with pads. Like S'tha, Khanyi lives with her grandmother. It follows then that her grandmother was the first person that she told at home about her period. Her grandmother gave her sanitary wear.

Sithabile (aged 16), nicknamed "S'tha" lives with her grandmother. S'tha says that when she first started menstruating she did not know what was going on. She recalls that when she told her grandmother, her grandmother said *vele kukhulwa njalo*. Loosely translated, the Ndebele expression means, "this is what it means to grow up, we all go through it". The words normalise the experience of menstruation as a rite of passage into adulthood. S'tha's grandmother spoke with her mother and told her to buy new pads and underwear for S'tha. There is a range of sanitary products, including underwear, that are invisible to the eyes of the public *and* the members of one's household. The abovementioned menstrual narratives of S'tha and Khanyi illustrate the importance of *ogogo* in this ecosystem of 'growing up'.

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[9] See page 155 for further discussion.

Gogo Betty's (aged 65) menarcheal narrative, on the other hand, provides an example of the importance of older sisters. She says, "I was in the second form[10] when I started menstruating. I didn't even tell my mother. My older sister [Gogo *Na*Kitty, also a participant in the study] had already taught me [about menstruation and how to manage it] by the time I had my first period, so I never stained myself." *Gogo Na*Kitty had reached ménarche four years earlier, when Granny Betty was 12 years old. *Gogo* Betty's memory of ménarche and the commencement of menstrual management is a reminder of the significance of female relatives in menstrual preparation, in particular vis-à-vis the technical aspects of how to hygienically manage menstruation (including how to avoid accidents like staining oneself or school property). *Gogo* Betty's older sister, *Gogo Na*Kitty, performed reproductive labour-work in the form of teaching *Gogo* Betty the menstrual etiquette code whereby menstruation must be concealed by avoiding menstrual leaks and stains. So deep was *Gogo* Betty's indoctrination into the culture of concealment that she even hid the fact that she had started menstruating from her mother. When I probe *Gogo* Betty as to why she did this, she answers that "I was shy and embarrassed". This seems to suggest that since she knew (from her older sister, *Gogo Na*Kitty) how to manage and conceal her menstrual periods, *Gogo* Betty did not feel she needed to broach the subject with her mother because she felt she was prepared for menstruation. Munthali *et al.* (2006) put forward that the presence of female relatives in a household increases a girl's access to menstrual information. We see this play out with *Gogo* Betty who was too shy to tell her mother she had started menstruating but is able to lean on her older sister for menstrual advice and education. The menstrual narratives of *Gogo Na*Kitty, *Gogo* Betty and S'tha illuminate the taken-for-granted reproductive labour-work performed by older female relatives like the purchase and provision of MHMMMs, which ensures that Ndebele girls are able to manage their menses discretely.

Gogo Bhekiwe (aged 72) remembers that when she first started menstruating, she stained the skirt of her uniform and a prefect pointed it out, swiftly tying a jersey around her. Thereafter she was sent home. At school, *Gogo* Bhekiwe was not prepared for menstruation. She was not given any MHMMMs at school and the physiology of menstruation was also not explained to her.

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[10] *Gogo* Betty was 17 years old when she reached ménarche. She was overage, as the official expected age of a Form 2 learner is 14 years, cf. Fig. 5, page 23. The reasons for her being overage are highlighted on page 150.

Gciniwe texturises our understanding of the culture of concealment when she shares that, “You would constantly check yourself to make sure you did not stain yourself.” She also mentions that you were expected “to keep track of the dates [of your period]” in order to effectively manage your cycle and not be caught unprepared. The theme of (self-)surveillance is persistent theme across the different generations of Ndebele women and girls in the study. At various instances of this dissertation, what I have referred to as “menstrual etiquette” (Laws, 1990) and “culture of concealment” (Houppert, 1999) can be extended to what Prendergast describes as being “constantly mindful” (2000:116). This mindfulness relates to the fact that once a girl’s body starts menstruating, there is a need to be hyper-vigilant. This hyper-vigilance may also manifest an anxiety[11] about being caught off guard, or silently ‘assailed’, by menstruation and taking days off from school to confront this opponent (see Fig. 13, page 89) in a more controlled environment like the home as we see with *Na*Lindo does (see pages 90 and 103).

Ntombenhle, nicknamed “Ntombi” (aged 47), states in the first FGD that menstruation “was taboo for the opposite sex. Like if you were at school, you’d even be too scared to stand up and get off the bench because you’d be scared that the boys would see.” I therefore argue that the Ndebele menstrual taboo and stigma is associated more with heterosocial spaces and not homosocial ones. Among and between Ndebele women and girls, menstruation is not always stigmatised.

Unlike the home where some agency could be exerted, in school, “girls have little control over their schedule and with whom they interact” (Fingerson, 2005b:115). Ntombi evinces the aforementioned anxious hyper-vigilance. When she tells me that she would take control of her interactions with boys at school and the potential shaming that could possibly happen if they realised, she was menstruating by remaining seated and not participating in physical activities. This same hyper-vigilance that propels a school prefect to quickly tie a jersey around the menstrual stain the then 15-year-old *Gogo* Bhekiwe’s school skirt. While *Gogo* Bhekiwe did not have any prior knowledge on menstruation at the time of ménarche, she is vigilantly policed in such a way as to equip her swiftly with certain aspects of menstrual preparedness when her first period comes.

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[11] Menstrual anxiety is typically prevalent in pupils that who (already) have some knowledge of what menstruation is.

In the first FGD, Ntombi says that "Menstruation is not supposed to be seen by others, especially not men in the household". This is something, she learned when she 'ran away' from home, see page 97 where I discuss this in detail. At this time away from home following ménarche, Ntombi is initiated into culture of concealment around menstruation. This is the similar with Khathazile who was taught in secondary school that menstruation should be concealed to everyone besides the menstruant (see page 105). Fingerson (2005b) helps us to understand that menstruating girls must learn to incorporate their leaking bodies into their everyday lives. I argue in line with Laws (1990), that this process of incorporation consists more of *concealment* than integration – in abidance with "menstrual etiquette". Fingerson (2005b) also asserts that when our bodies experience change, this change is not only personal and private but also affects interpersonal relations too. There is a code of etiquette that menstruating bodies must adhere to in school and elsewhere. For example: menstruants must not stain school apparel or apparatus with menstrual blood.

School uniforms are an ambiguous possession. They are an extension of oneself as they cover and clothe a schoolgirl's body, but they are also school property. They represent the wider school body to which the menstruating schoolgirl belongs. Venter and Niekerk (2011) apply Foucault's *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*[12] to analyse South African schools. They state that:

> *It was Foucault who reminded us that the modern school is based on Prussian military ideals of punctuality, discipline, neatness and submissiveness to authority. Foucault tends to see schooling as one side of "corriger"*[13]*, which is to punish or to teach. Education as "correction" is therefore regarded as the antipode of authoritarian punishment* (Venter & Van Niekerk, 2011:243).

Drawing on this application of Foucault, I am arguing that wearing a clean, neat uniform reflects well on a school, whereas a period-stained school skirt in public spaces perceivably reflects poorly on the school; demonstrating its failure «de corriger» (to correct) this menstruating body into a seemingly non-leaky[14], 'docile' (Foucault, 1997) body[15] that is neat and pleasing to the public eye.

In different cultures, reproductive women are sometimes likened to warriors. For example: in Mexico where

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[12] The French title of the book is *Surveiller et Punir: naissance de la prison*.

[13] I am proficient in French and would translate «corriger» as to correct or redirect without imposing the books title verb (i.e., punish or «punir») on the sense of the word.

[14] Bodies are transformed through correction, teaching, discipline and punishment into disciplined bodies, i.e., «les corps corrigés» (Lefeuvre Déotte, 2010), not unlike a disciplined gladiator.

[15] Foucault 1975; 1977; Bartky, 1997

Salas explains that "Women who gave birth were called warriors because the child coming out of the womb was covered in the mother's blood. A Mexica woman who, along with her baby, died in childbirth was honoured as a warrior who took a life" (Salas, 1990:7). In drawing on the symbolism of blood, adversity and triumph, I have extended the concept of the "reproductive arena" (Connell, 1995) to an allegory of school as an 'arena' like the Roman colosseum of old; wherein the gendered bodies of adolescent girls navigate the experience of menstruation as 'gladiators'.

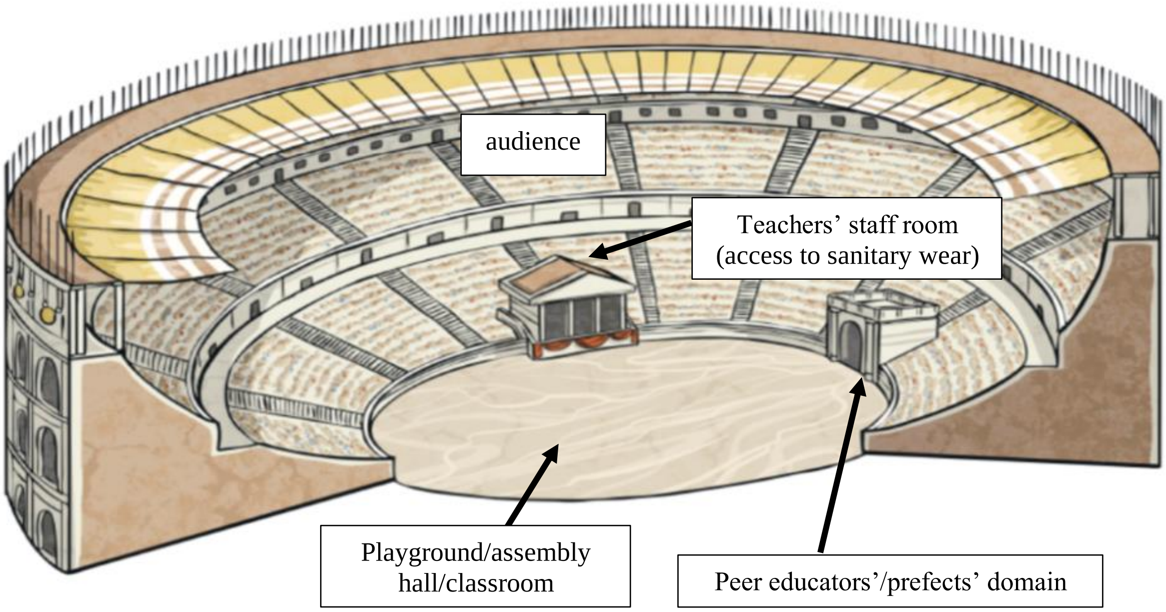

Figure 13: The School presented as a cross-section of the Roman colosseum

Figure 13 represents this allegory of the arena. It shows public spaces in a school such as the playground, assembly hall and classroom. It also depicts more private spaces like the teachers' staff room and prefect's domain. The theatrics of a schoolgirl's role as a gladiator can be understood with the aid of Goffman's (1956) dramaturgical model. Within this mode, an adolescent schoolgirl emerges as the hyper-vigilant gladiator who is responsible for her "impression management" (Goffman, 1956) before an audience of pupils and staff. If she is to avoid being stigmatised and taunted as a result of a menstrual stain, she must make different considerations within the arena in order to overcome her menstrual opponent upon 'attack'. For *Na*Lindo and other girls who learn in co-educational schools, boys (non-menstruants) make up part of the jeering audience in the colosseum. Prendergast (2000) paints a picture of the tension-filled landscape in this arena when she highlights that:

> *If a girl has any kind of negative effects from menstruation (which, as we have seen they commonly do) she must assess how likely she is to feel and be appropriately prepared (for pain [or a heavy menstrual flow], for example) in order to stay alert and complete school tasks successfully. She must have considered the day's lessons, and brought a note if she wishes to be excused from them* (Prendergast, 2000:117).

Here, Prendergast (2000) reminds us that the schoolgirl gladiator of this arena must have easy access to (effective) sanitary wear in order to control her impression management before an audience of menstruating and non-menstruating bodies who may laugh and ridicule her if she were to be assailed unawares by her menstrual opponent. Like the Ndebele women and girls of this study, the gladiators of the Roman Empire also attended school – gladiator school[16]. There, they learned how to fight and wield weapons such as swords; lances; tridents; nets; bows and arrows.[17] MHMMMs can be likened to these weapons and menstrual preparation can in the same way be likened to the training that gladiators receive because it can be the key to managing menstruation successfully. Vora suggests "that the metaphors we use to structure our understanding of bodies and body parts impact how we imagine appropriate roles for people and their bodies" (2015:89). The metaphor of the Roman colosseum that I use in this section finds its resonance as an allegory for Laws' "menstrual etiquette" (1999) and the role of others in policing and 'correcting' the menstruating body in the arena of the school.

When *Na*Lindo was a teenager, the pressure of the gladiator performance was so daunting that she opted to stay at home rather than risk staining herself at school. For her and all menstruating bodies, being prepared for menstruation goes beyond hyper-vigilant and ready for menstruation, it extends to the confidence that the sanitary wear at your disposal will enable you to effectively manage menstruation (Prendergast, 2000). So great was *Na*Lindo's anxiety about menstrual stains in school that she would not attend school during her period, elaborating that, "I used to miss school when I was on my period because I had a very heavy flow too". She says, "they would laugh at you if you stained yourself. If it happened [to a girl], you would see the boys *beqwebana, behleka* (nudging one another and laughing)". In order to be a victorious gladiator in the colosseum that is co-educational school, a female pupil must be hyper-vigilant of her menstrual blood and that of her menstruating gladiator-peers. Ntombi says, "Girls watched out for each other [at school] though; like a girl would come and let you know that you had stained yourself. She would step in to help you, and maybe tell the teacher, and they would bring you a cloth to wrap around you if you had stained yourself."

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[16] http://m.tribunesandtriumphs.org/gladiators/gladiator-training.htm

[17] ibid.

The prefect in *Gogo* Bhekiwe's menstrual narrative is a kind of fellow 'gladiators-in-arms', protecting her from ridicule and embarrassment by swooping in and tying a jersey around her waist to cover the menstrual stain on her school skirt. She ensures that the young *Gogo* Bhekiwe honours the menstrual etiquette code by keeping her menstrual stain concealed. As previously mentioned on page 83, Lindo's first period happens at school. As a consequence, she is provided with pads by her class teacher who is a female teacher. When she is given the sanitary wear, this is not accompanied by a discussion preparing her for what menstruation is and what menstruation will mean for her going forward. This is information that Lindo gains through participation in third-party free sanitary wear intervention at her school whereby promising pupils received sponsorship and mentorship. Here we see development (discourse) in practice as this third-party is a development agency. In the work towards tackling MHI, the agency provides menstrual education and free sanitary wear. Lindo's experience is in line with Abioye-Kuteyi's (2000) study, which reveals that a girl can be post-menarcheal and still have limited or inaccurate information about menstruation.

This is also the case in Zambia where Sinden *et al.* found that Zambian girls had a poor understanding of "the biological purpose of menstruation" (2015:49). Further to this, Mojola adds that schools also play a hand in "transforming 'traditional girls' into 'modern schoolgirls'" (2014:132). School becomes a site where consuming girls are produced. They modern consuming girls who wear sanitary pads as opposed to using homemade MHMMMs and this is evident with Lindo and Khanyi who are given free pads at school[18]. They are modern consuming girls who take pain relief for abdominal cramping and visit local health facility when plagued by menstruation-related problems like extended periods (see page 106). At ménarche, Lindo was not prepared for menstruation in terms of knowing what was going on and possessing sanitary wear to manage her period. Lindo, like all 6 of the women in the first FGD were all poorly prepared in both aspects when they had their first period. They only gained the information after they reached ménarche. Similar to the gladiators-in-arms at school, female relatives such as mothers, aunts, sisters and cousins are integral to equip girls with the necessary knowledge on menstruation, sex and reproduction. Lindo also learns from her school peers that this was a rite of passage that many of them had gone through, and they reassured her that it was not abnormal and that it was not something she need worry about. Her friends said to her *sonke sadlula khonapho*, which translates loosely to 'it happens to all of us [as women]'. Her friends and peers are a part of Lindo's ecosystem of 'growing up' who normalise ménarche for her by describing it as something they too had been through.

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[18] The responsibility of replenishing these cyclical menstrual management is transferred to their mothers, see page 96.

For older women like *Gogo* Bhekiwe and *Na*Lindo and younger girls like Lindo and Thandazo (see page 94), school dominantly shaped the reproductive arena of menstruation. Hyper-vigilance by way of the energy invested to ensure sanitary dignity is a form of reproductive labour-work. Outside of the school, we also witness female relatives supplementing this reproductive labour-work by providing girls with knowledge on menstruation *ex post facto*. Teachers and female peers are often the first points of contact through whom girls gain access to menstrual knowledge.

When a girl starts menstruating at school (and is unprepared), the immediate concern is dealing with her out-of-place, leaky body (Shildrick, 1997) and so teachers; peer educators, and other actors in the school may only equip her with sanitary wear for managing the menstrual bleeding. However, this is only one aspect of menstrual preparedness, and it may not include a physical demonstration of how to hygienically manage menstruation (i.e., how to securely place pads or cloth, or how to wash and dry or dispose of sanitary wear). Female peers can be gladiators-in-arms who play a special role in normalising menstruation through their shared collective experience as menstruating bodies, while at the same time also paradoxically normalising the experience and the concealment of this natural biological process with great vigilance in school. For example, Khanyi's friends at school help her to normalise the process as she learns from them that each girl matures and starts to menstruate, and they did too. These conversations with her peers make the social significance of this biological function clear to her. Boys, by contrast, can be the sources of great humiliation and embarrassment when they taunt menstruating girls. Vigilance and supporting female peers in their efforts towards concealing menstruation from the male gaze also represents kin work.

The reproductive arena of menstruation is ordered by the culture of concealment; menstrual etiquette; and being constantly mindful – each of which suggest a public-private dichotomy, public and private menstrual identities are negotiated concomitantly. The private bodily experience of menstruation may sometimes flow (albeit inadvertently) into the public space – becoming visible. Actors like school peers, prefects, teachers, and female relatives all play a key role upholding the code of menstrual etiquette, both in public spaces and in the privacy of households. The invisible reproductive labour-work of rural Ndebele women and girls at home and at school helps to maintain the culture of concealment. This invisible labour-work sees menstruation managed without being visible to the non-menstruating male gaze that often renders it 'problematic' when it comes into view. It is reproductive labour-work done in the aforementioned intangible ways, and through the tangible purchase and provision of sanitary wear and underwear.

Seemingly invisible reproductive labour-work is also devoted to the keeping sanitary wear out of public view. Khanyi reveals that one-use sanitary wear must be disposed of by incineration in the rural areas. My dialogue with Khanyi on this issue unveils as follows:

Khanyi: *I heard from others in school. They said that "If you are a girl, you mature (**uyakhula**[19]), and as a girl will you start to menstruate (**ebesengena esikhathini**) and at this time you must use rewashable sanitary pads that you must wash or else you burn them.*

Researcher: *What do you burn?*

Khanyi: *The disposable pads that you can't re-use.*

Researcher: *Why do you burn them? How often do you burn them?*

Khanyi: *Well, you can't throw them away with the rest of the rubbish so you keep them in a plastic and then when your period is finished you burn all of the pads that you would have used?*

Researcher: *How many pads do you use a day?*

Khanyi: *3-a-day – morning, afternoon and night.*

Khanyi's MHM practices are in line with recommendations made by providers of sanitary products. *Stayfree*[20], a popular brand of commercial sanitary wear, suggest that a disposable sanitary pad be changed every 6-8 hours[21]. Hirshkowitz *et al*. state that, "For teenagers, 8 to 10 hours was considered appropriate, 7 to 9 hours for young adults and adults, and 7 to 8 hours of sleep for older adults" (2015:40). Using this as a benchmark, the typical teenager may typically have 14-16 waking hours and this would align with 2-3 pad changes a day. This shows that Khanyi's disposable sanitary wear usage fits the S*tayfree* recommendations, highlighting the relevance of peer educators in menstrual preparedness. Mothers, teachers, female relatives and peer educators as menstrual knowledge gatekeepers are all part of the social ecosystem that cultivates menstrual preparedness. The reproductive labour-work that goes into preparing for menstruation preparedness itself also comprises of an introduction to the culture of concealment and an induction into commodity consumption patterns around the purchase of sanitary wear, underwear and various other products. Nomthandazo (aged 24 years), nicknamed "Thandazo" also recalls that in her secondary school there were older peer educators who would counsel them that, "If you have pads, use pads [when you are on your period]". While the technical aspects of how to manage menstruation are but one aspect of menstrual preparedness, this technical know-how is often intrinsically tied to the induction into what I call 'markets of menstruation' (MoMs)[22]. Thandazo's account brings peer educators into our purview as a cadre of school pupils who are also who also make up part of this ecosystem of 'growing up'.

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[19] also translated as growing up in this study

[20] *Stayfree*, under the Johnson and Johnson, are among the multinational corporations that drive an international development discourse that sees MHI as a problem it must remedy (Jacob, Khanna & Yadav, 2014; Bobel *et al*., 2020); cf. page 95.

[21] http://www.stayfree.com/femininehygienefaq/lists/2_about-pads/how-often-should-i-change-my-feminine-pad

Lindo's memory of ménarche (page 83) whereby she is given her first pack of pads by her class teacher at school and then a second pack by her mother at home discloses the role of mothers *and* teachers in the reproductive arena of menstruation and performing the reproductive labour-work of preparing girls for menstruation. Like the US-based mothers of Costos *et al*.'s (2002) study, Lindo's mother also focused on the technical aspects of managing menses by purchasing sanitary wear for her and instructing her on how to use it. Lindo's access to sanitary wear by way of her mother and her teacher constitutes an introduction into MoMs. Ménarche can also constitute an induction into MoMs.

*Gogo Na*Kitty explains that she and her sisters (one of whom is *Gogo* Betty, my host during my fieldwork)[23] had no underwear growing up. For *Gogo* NaKitty, as well as being the time when she learns about menstruation from her mother, ménarche is also an induction into MoMs. This is marked by her mother buying her her first pair of underwear. As I highlighted on page 13, underwear is a commodity that that has become integral to the comfortable management of her menses and the menstrual stigma around leaks and stains. Hence the purchase of commodified underwear has double weighted significance as reproductive labour-work that prepares girls for two dimensions of menstrual preparation, i.e., that of physical menstrual hygiene management as well as menstrual stigma management.

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[22] Coincidentally this acronym is mimetic of the abbreviation of "Momma" (Mom) and pays homage to mothers and their role in preparing girls for menstruation.

[23] *Gogo Na*Kitty is *Gogo* Betty's older sister.

The concept of ‘MoMs’ helps us to visibilise the modern consumerist goods used to manage menstruation (e.g., commodified pads, (oral) pain relief medication, contraceptives, underwear) while MHMMMs visibilise the knowledge and energy directed towards the management of menstruation. These commodities involved in the management of menstruation are not necessarily superior uncommodified sanitary wear to commodified. Through the lens of MoMs we are able to appreciate that even seemingly ‘traditional’, uncommodified MHMMMs can comprise of commodified components such as purchased underwear, cotton wool and old blankets. MoMs are a “multi-billion dollar industry that produces, markets, and sells menstrual management products around the world” (Bobel *et al.*, 2020:671). The flow of finances in this industry point to the commercial interests that underly the identification of menstruation as a problem in need of a commodified remedy. In recent years, development agencies have emerged in the global South, including Zimbabwe. These agencies are part of a i/NGO sector in the menstrual health space focused on the provision of “menstrual cups or washable pads because they are inexpensive, long-term solutions” (Bobel *et al.*, 2020:836).

Migration has led to the split with (Kang’ethe & Itai, 2014). Female male relatives may not always be available to counsel the girls at the commencement of their menstrual journey. This was true for many of the Ndebele girls in Sikelela. Khanyi tells me that her mother lives in *eGoli* (South Africa). When she reached ménarche, Khanyi was given sanitary wear by a peer educator at school gives her for the practical management of her period. As earlier mentioned, Khanyi lives with her grandmother and her granny buys her sanitary wear when she comes home and tells her that she has started menstruating. When Khanyi gets the opportunity to tell her mother that she has started her period, her mother also buys some pads and sends them to her in Zimbabwe from *eGoli*. The economic instability[24] in Zimbabwe means that MoMs *eGoli* have a much wider variety MHMMMs, accessible at a lower cost.

Nevertheless, it is important to recognise that there are Ndebele MHMMMs that were antecedent to commercialised menstrual management products. *Gogo* Sinini (aged 75) started menstruating at the age of 17. In the second FGD, she stood up to demonstrate how, “We didn’t have easy access to underwear back then [early 1960s]. You used to tie a make-shift belt [around your waste] and you would use old blankets.” She explains that “You would remove it and wash it when it was soaked.” *Gogo* Betty contextualises *Gogo* Sinini’s comments by explaining that “*Gogo* Sinini is part of the oldest generation who are still alive and did not use the pads we use today". Another mother chimes in that "This is how they as padded up back then".

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[24] Matabeleland South, where the village of Sikelela is located, is a province that shares a border with South Africa (see Fig. 2, page 16). Since Zimbabwe’s economic downturn which caused hyperinflation many Zimbabweans particularly, from Matabeleland travel to neighbouring countries like South Africa and Botswana with more stable economies to purchase commodities at more affordable prices.

Gogo Sinini also builds on the notion of the policing of space that *Gogo Na*Kitty and *Gogo* Bhekiwe allude to when they describe being pulled out of the view; and being secluded from of male eyes. *Gogo* Sinini highlights that when she was menstruating boys were not allowed to pass by her and explains that this was because, "I was raised by my [maternal] grandmother and she was Venda." This can be understood by referring to Ramathuba (2015) who reveals that the "Vha-Venda are a close knit community with less social movement and interaction and menstrual practices are contained in households by women elder[s] and aunts (Vho-Makhadzi) and peers" (Ramathuba, 2015:2). The menstrual narratives of *Gogo* Sinini, *Gogo Na*Kitty and Ntombi all give us a glimpse into the policing of menstruation in heterosocial spaces that is observed among the Ndebele and other Peoples of Southern Africa like the Venda.

Batisai notes that, "The interplay between gender and financial discourses presents a different prism for discursively analysing interviewees' girlhood experiences" (2013:86). I underscore that though the girls and women in this study are predominantly from lower-income brackets, poverty was never explicitly stated as a reason for using uncommodified sanitary wear. Indeed, mothers like *Na*Lindo and *Na*Khanyi were in a position to purchase pads for their daughters. Hence, we see that as I highlighted in the introductory chapter, I contest the framing of MHI as a social issue that can be singularly remedied by the provision of commodified sanitary wear like disposable pads. The sections to follow in this chapter will build on this argument to demonstrate that the choices around MHMMMs are influenced by multiple factors that include but are not only centred on quantifiable factors like poverty; access; and affordability of disposable sanitary wear. The menstrual narratives of *Gogo* Sinini, *Gogo* Bhekiwe (see page 103) and Kazi (page 107) reveal qualitative factors influencing the use of MHMMMs in dialectical interplay between *isintu*, accessibility and availability. Their narratives give agency and context to the "figure of the poor non-Western girl" (Murphy, 2017:113-4) and the "girl child" that becomes a central icon of development discourse in the 1990s.

We can conclude from these menarcheal narratives that the reproductive labour-work of menstrual preparation is fed into by a network of Ndebele women and girls – mothers, grandmothers, sisters, teachers and peers. For younger participants such as Lindo and Khanyi, a teacher and peer educator are the first to give them sanitary wear. In their narratives, we witness school emerge as a complementary vehicle to the family for menstrual preparation. The menstrual narratives in this study reveal that menstruation is a reproductive arena that is negotiated with actors at school and at home and that menstrual preparation is multisited.

Piercy (1976) weaves a story of a world in which there are five parents to each child. Yates *et al*. argue that "The reason for this is that she regards child rearing as such a complex and demanding role that it needs to be shared by a group with multiple talents and skills. Piercy was concerned about the physical, intellectual and emotional development of a child" (cited in Yates *et al*., 2015:34). This is by no means a novel conceptualisation of the collective spirit of parenthood. In Southern Africa the philosophy of *ubuntu,* this idea is communicated by the age-old African proverb that says, "It takes a village to raise a child". We have seen from the above narratives of ménarche that a network of Ndebele kinfolk who play a collective role in meeting the needs of adolescent girls and socialising them into (re)productive future adult women; mothers, and wives in bid to promote what Marx (1867) and Vogel (1983) would classify as a replication of the 'generational replacement' cycle.

4.2.3 *Wawubaleka ngasekhaya*: 'running away' from home to get menstrual

In answering the central research question, *What is the scope of preparation that Ndebele girls undergo for ménarche/menstruation,* I sought to understand what the girls and women in the study perceived as menstrual preparedness. Ntombi shares that she knew that when you reached ménarche as a Ndebele girl you had to "'run away' from home (*wawubaleka ngasekhaya*)" and go to your grandmother's homestead where you would be taught what to do from there. "Traditionally, when a girl begins to menstruate, she tells her grandmother" (McMaster, Cormie & Pitts, 1997:534) and when Ntombi shares her account of *ukubaleka ngasekhaya* during the first FGD – in the company of 4 other mothers and *Gogo* Betty – her narration is met with murmurs of dissent expressing that this had not been the experience of the other when they reached menarcheal age. Another mother in the FGD, *Na*Anita (aged 55) remarks that Ntombi was "truly Ndebele". I come to learn that *Na*Anita's cultural identity as a Ndebele has always been contested because her father was not Ndebele. She views *Na*Clive's claims to the culture as legitimate, unlike her own. She shares that she too had heard that "when you were menstruating, you were also supposed to stay away from home during this time". The mothers and *Gogo* Betty went on to lament that there was once a time wherein girls would receive this information from the paternal Aunt, that is: father's sister, traditionally referred to as *uBabakazi* but now more commonly referred to as *u*Aunty[25]. This takes place through a process of *lexical borrowing* from English. Grant (2015) explains that lexical borrowing is "[t]he transmission from one language to another of a label with which to name a concept […] and it constitutes the commonest form of contact-induced linguistic change”. The first contact with English in Zimbabwe is arguably through what Jeyifo calls a “violent colonial-imperial conquest” (2018:134). Part of this violent encounter consists of the erasure of practices and socio-cultural beliefs associated with menstruation held by Ndebele girls and women in Zimbabwe before colonisation – as the shift from calling her *babakazi to* calling her “Aunty” suggests. This violent colonial conquest heralded the adoption of English as an official language and the widespread conversion to Christianity, forever reshaping the memory and role enactment of *ubabakazi*. The modern Zimbabwe education system (cf. Fig. 5, page 23) that arose out of colonisation also signified the rupture of oral tradition as a mode of knowledge transmission; a mode through which Ndebele culture was preserved from generation to generation before coloniality. This rupture gave primacy to literacy and numeracy as pedagogy over oral tradition.

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[25] I have capitalised the words "babakazi" and "aunty" here to denote that the vowel "u" (pronounced as "ooh" in *isiNdebele*) is prefixed to indicate personhood, differentiating a(ny) paternal aunt/female father from *the* specific paternal aunt/female father as a figure in the Ndebele family and social relations.

However, one thing Ntombi, the 5 other women in the first FGD and Lindo do have in common is that they received their menstrual preparation *after* ménarche. In this way, women are often poorly prepared at the onset of ménarche. For Ntombi, the menstrual preparation she received was not just about addressing her immediate concerns of managing the bleeding; it also entailed being taught about what ménarche would mean for her going forward. *Gogo* Betty responds to Ntombi’s account of menstrual preparedness (gained by running away to her grandmother) by saying that she did not know of this. This is striking given the generational gap between the two. It suggests a break in the transmission of Ndebele socio-cultural practices associated with menstruation. *Gogo* Betty adds that she only knew that “When a girl reaches ménarche that girls could also be sent to *ubabakazi* to gain knowledge menstruation before ménarche.” After *Gogo* Betty’s comments, the women in the FGD go on to lament that this pre-menarcheal practice no longer happens as consistently as it once used to. To help everyone in the FGD put things into perspective, *Gogo* Betty asks Ntombi why she specifically had to *run away* to receive the menstrual preparation to which she refers. Ntombi’s response to this question is, “That’s just the way it was done. This also ensured that knowledge of you reaching ménarche filtered back through the correct channels. This is how he came to know that you had started menstruating”. Upon hearing this, *Gogo* Betty chimes in and the following exchange ensues:

Gogo Betty: *That’s what was a taboo – father was not meant to know. At least not like that.*

Ntombi: *Even now I’m still embarrassed. It took me a long time for it to be normal for my Dad to know that I was menstruating. The worst thing I* *could imagine were to be if he were to see my menstrual blood. The thought of it… it would bring me shame. I wouldn't ever want that.*

*Na*Anita: *I would take a blanket and tie it securely around me on top of whatever else I was wearing, like a skirt.*

The focus group discussion reveals that *ukubaleka* in this context involves at first keeping the fact that one is now of menarcheal age hidden from your father and other male members of the household. This distinctly Ndebele menstrual etiquette of *ukubaleka ngasekhaya* at ménarche to receive menstrual education away from the home nuances Western conceptions of "menstrual taboo" (White, 2013:65) and the idea of a seemingly universal "menstrual etiquette" (Laws, 1990) that dictates the concealment of menstruation and menstrual products (Laws, 1990; Houppert, 1999; White, 2013; Fahs, 2016; Bobel *et al*., 2020). This Ndebele menstrual etiquette of *ukubaleka ngasekhaya* at ménarche suggests that the concealment was from the male gaze. This is *Gogo* Sinini's account of being isolated from men and boys during menses and *Gogo Na*Kitty's memory of being pulled out of sight by her mother in the home when she began her first period and was not at first aware that she had stained herself. Ntombi stresses the fact she still continued to feel ashamed of menstruating. She adds that she grew up knowing that "someone of the opposite sex, besides our husband, was never supposed to know about you menstruating". Even though Ntombi's grandmother had normalised menstruation as a natural process of 'growing up' (*ukukhula*), Ntombi professes that "I would even wear tights." Ntombi makes special mention of not wanting her father to know she was menstruating. *Gogo* Betty replies pensively, "And yet your father probably already knew by then". This part of the focus group discussion indicates that through this Ndebele menstrual etiquette there are specific channels through which information about your coming of age by way of ménarche was meant to filter to your father and/or other men of the house. This is likely because by conscientising the male head of the home to this development, while observing cultural protocol and not inappropriately transgressing the appropriate gates of gender[26] around menstrual preparation, male guardians could be co-opted into protecting a young post-menarcheal girl and being vigilant of any wandering eyes in (and outside of) the household in a bid to prevent early or coerced sexual debut and early unintended pregnancy. A Ndebele girl is Ndebele only if her father is Ndebele[27]. In this way *babakazi* is a proxy for *baba* (the male father) in gendered matters like menstruation, marriage and reproduction. In this role she blurs the lines of heteronormative gender binaries as a female father. Furthermore, this communitarian way of alerting a

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[26] See page 108 for further discussion of other kinsmen who serve as gatekeepers of menstrual knowledge**,** governing Ndebele menstrual etiquette in different ways.

[27] See footnote 23 on page 147.

(male) father about menarche uncovers the stake that fathers had in the upbringing of Ndebele girls. We find that male kin are not excluded from this ecosystem of growing up. They too are involved in the reproductive labour-work of protecting girls and promoting the reproductive success.

The stigma menstrual taboo is not a blanket experience of external judgement by the wider society. Ntombi helps us to understand that the shame and stigma is equally a personal internalisation. Hence, we see that it is not that men have no role in menstruation or its management but more so that the role that they play is a very specific and particular one. This role is evolving as we find that men are now openly involved in menstruation[28] matters. *Gogo* Betty points out how "now we even give them pads through our intervention [referring to my initiative[29] other development programmes[30]] and tell them to give it to their girls." *Gogo* Betty's critique suggests that the work of development agencies in the menstrual health space is visibilising the reproductive labour-work of menstrual preparation. Ntombi applauds this and saying "But there is nothing wrong with that. Even in the store, your husband will buy it for you." In this way, men can be an access point to MoMs as we also with Karen's *malume* (see page 108). This is because men may sometimes have a higher purchasing power than their female counterparts. By this account, technical aspect of menstrual preparation becomes a collective, familial responsibility.

Ntombi's menstrual narrative destabilises "a heteronormative order [that] legitimis[es] the 'men-active-penetrators' and 'women-passive-penetrated' oppositional binary (Epprecht, 2009: v)" (Batisai, 2013:27). This Ndebele menstrual etiquette enables us to appreciate Ndebele women as actively agents in sex and sexuality (as opposed to passive penetrants), which subverts the discourse of sexuality as victimisation. In this narrative we see the agency in abstinence. Ntombi's memory of ménarche also enables us to peep in through a window to see that older female kin ideally[31] work alongside male kinfolk to protect newly menstruating girls from the advances of others who may possibly be enticed by a Ndebele girls' newly realised reproductive maturity. The home is thus fortified in this way as male and female kinfolk are unified around protecting the Ndebele girl child from sexual abuse and early sexual debut, through this very private household-level inter-gender reproductive labour-work. Once again, we witness reproductive labour-work related to menstruation as a collective familial responsibility.

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[28] and reproduction as we see with the male mother who joins the second FGD to discuss the issue of early unintended pregnancy in the village

[29] cf. page 60-1

[30] cf. page 91

[31] I use adverb "ideally" because I do not, however, take for granted that sexual violations are also perpetrated by family members. This is an issue I discuss in Chapter 6 (Section 6.1). Nevertheless, it was ideally performed in solidarity, in the spirit of *ubuntu*.

Ntombi realised that after ménarche, she not only had a responsibility to manage her flow but "to be constantly mindful" (Prendergast, 2000:116) that her menses remains invisible to the male gaze. This is indicative of the two strains of invisible reproductive labour-work that Ntombi is performing. Ntombi's double weighted invisible reproductive labour-work (itself constituting differing dimensions of menstrual preparation) is a product of the reproductive labour-work done by Ntombi's grandmother during this time of seclusion from her family. Though the other women in the first FGD did not receive their menstrual preparation by observing the Ndebele socio-cultural practice of 'running away' to their grandmothers, they were nevertheless prepared for menstruation by other female relatives such as mothers, older sisters and *obabakazi*. These female kinfolks are also supporters in managing the societal stigma around menstruation. It is important to note that though it is cognisant of the social stigma around menstruation, the reproductive labour-work done by female kin does not shame girls about menstruation.

4.2.4 *babakazi*: the patrilineal menstrual knowledge gatekeeper

The above narratives of ménarche have revealed that mothers, elder sisters, aunts, peers, and friends are all part of this ecosystem of growing up. They have also illuminated another important menstrual knowledge keeper whom I would like to focus on – *babakazi* – whose duty it was to advise Ndebele girls on rites of passage such as menstruation and customary marriage as well as knowledge around SRH. *babakazi* as the female father demonstrates the implicit ways that menstrual preparation crosses the lines of gender while dismantling the Western, body-oriented heteronormative binary of male and female (Oyěwùmí, 1997). *ubabakaz*i is charged with the important work of transmitting menstrual and reproductive knowledge as a womxn but represents patrilineage as the father's sister, because it is through the father that the cultural heritage of a Ndebele girl is legitimated. Mwenda (2006) highlights the importance of the paternal aunt (ssenga) in Uganda[32] as figure who, similar to the Zimbabwean context, is a gatekeeper of knowledge on sex(uality), pre-menarcheal practices, and preparation for marriage. Even among Basotho of Lesotho, "[s]ex education, counselling and preparation of young girls for womanhood and marriage for Basotho were traditionally done by aunts and older sisters under the supervision of grandmothers" (Khau, 2012:764). The paternal aunt is a significant figure in Zimbabwe too as she is a culture-bearer of menstruation matters, reproduction and marriage; however, *babakazi* appears to be feature less prominent among adolescent girls, i.e., daughters in this study. Though this is may be indicative of the fissure of nuclear family as a result of migration (Mkhwanazi, 2011; Kang'ethe & Itai, 2014), it is worth bearing in mind that *babakazi* as a patrilineal knowledge gatekeeper of menstruation matters has not always been recalled as cultural fact. As highlighted on page 97, over twenty years ago, McMaster, Cormie and Pitts reported that in Zimbabwe "Traditionally, when a girl begins to menstruate, she tells her grandmother, who informs the girl's mother. Her grandmother would show her how to take care of her pads and keep them ready for the next cycle" (1997:534). The role of *babakazi* among the Ndebele has been hybridised by migration and epidemiology. For example, Foster and Williamson (2000) found that the paternal aunt is known to take up the role of caregiver for a child in the event of absentee parents or orphanhood such as that brought about by HIV/AIDS epidemic in Zimbabwe which saw the rise in matrifocal, grandparent- and child-headed families.

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[32] See also Muyinda *et al*. (2003).

One grandmother in the study, *Gogo Na*Nambitha (aged 77), underscores the issue of migration when she states that as a young adolescent girl in the 1950s, "Back then [paternal] aunts were nearby." In this comment lies a silent recognition that nowadays, the role of gatekeeper to menstrual knowledge and sex education is not always performed by *ubabakazi* because of rural-urban, regional and international migration. In Zimbabwe as in Uganda, parents traditionally "have little or no role in sex education" (Muyinda *et al*., 2003:160) with this role being played female kinfolk like *ogogo* and *obabakazi*. *Gogo Na*Nambitha's remarks point to the fact that the role of the paternal aunt as a gatekeeper of menstrual and sexual knowledge has been eroded by her lack of proximity to her niece(s) in contemporary times. This finding is congruent with McMaster, Cormie and Pitts who found that in Zimbabwe there has been a "breakdown of the traditional family network that passes on information about menstruation" (1997:533).

In this study, *babakazi* played a more prominent role in the two older generations. For example, *Na*Lindo[33] (Lindo's mother, aged 50) explains that when she started menstruating at the age of 14, she did not know what was going on. She describes a feeling she likens to a *ukusika* ('cutting') pain in her stomach, which is likely to have been abdominal cramps. She missed school on that day. When she described her symptoms to her *babakazi,* she suspected that it could be her period because the pain that the then 14-year-old *Na*Lindo was describing sounded like dysmenorrhea. *Na*Lindo's *babakazi* taught *Na*Lindo that this pain was referred to as *isilumo* – a 'biting' pain used to describe menstrual cramps in *isiNdebele*. It is at this point that *Na*Lindo is introduced to the Ndebele vernacular of menstruation that captures abdominal pain as a symptom of PMS. On that day whereby the then 14-year-old *Na*Lindo was experiencing this pain, her *babakazi* asked if she could see her underwear. *Na*Lindo showed it to her, and as *babakazi* had suspected they found that *Na*Lindo's underpants were stained with menstrual blood. *Na*Lindo's *babakazi* gave her cotton wool to use. *Na*Lindo explains that every month thereafter her *babakazi* would give her cotton wool for her to use for her period. Her *babakazi* is an access point to commercial MoMs. Nevertheless, *Na*Lindo would still miss school during her period because she had a heavy flow. Due to its porosity, cotton wool is not the most effective MHMMM. It is therefore unsurprising that the adolescent *Na*Lindo was anxious and afraid of being ridiculed at school in the event that she should have a menstrual leak and stain her uniform and school property. *Na*Lindo's interview shows that some MHMMMs are less effective than others and that where they are not effective, they can leave the menstruant feeling poorly prepared. This in turn causes distress and may also lead to menstruation-related schoolgirl absenteeism from school as highlighted on page 27.

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[33] To call her *Na*Lindo is not a factually or culturally correct name because Lindo is not her first child, however, I have done so in order to make obvious their mother-daughter relationship in the study. *Na*Lindo is also both a mother and a grandmother as Lindo had not long given birth to a newborn when I conducted my fieldwork.

Gogo Bhekiwe's memory of ménarche stresses the importance of *babakazi*. After the prefect covered up her menstrual stain with a jersey at school (cf. page 86), she was sent home to bathe without any further explanation. By this account we know that her menstrual knowledge was incomplete as she does not understand what is going on and is left confused as a result. She recalls, "When I came home my Mom found me crying. She thought I was injured and asked, 'Who hurt you?'". While she was enculturated into the "culture of concealment" (Houppert, 1999) by the school prefect, she still did not know what had caused her to bleed. This upset frightened and upset her because even though she had begun menstruating, she still did not understand what was going on with her body. At home, the teenage Bhekiwe's mother comforted her and explained what was going on thereby providing her with menstrual preparation that constitutes knowledge around the physiology of menstruation. Still, she was not prepared with regard to the material management of menstruation. This menstrual preparation came from her *babakazi*, who then taught her how to cut and tie a blanket that was used to absorb the menstrual blood. *Gogo* Bhekiwe explains that when she was a young girl, "You would tear off a piece of old blanket and place it between your legs, and maybe use some string to secure the blanket [if you had any]." *Gogo* Bhekiwe cautions that, "We didn't have underwear back then. If you weren't careful, the blanket would come undone." This another reminder of the need to be "constantly mindful" as Prendergast iterates (2000:116). It is tied into the issue of personal care and hygiene. Like *Gogo* Sinini, as a girl Gogo Bhekiwe are made do and managed her menses without underwear.

She makes a distinction between the blankets they would use and the RUMPs that girls use today. She adds that, "We would not wash ours." *Gogo* Bhekiwe stresses that, *kwakulokhe kuy' isintu* (*back then, we still did things the traditional African way*). *Isintu* (the traditions of African people) is a derivative of *umuntu* (a person) and *ubuntu* (personhood/humanity). Therefore, what underlies her remark, is a nostalgia for the 'things of old'. *Gogo* Bhekiwe is referring to the MHMMMs that preceded the modern commodified sanitary that are now more widely used by younger women and girls from the time of ménarche. It is also a reminder of what Mkhwanazi (2014a) conveys as the notion of "an African way of doing things", in her same-titled paper. This African way of doing things is often remembered in the form of customs and traditions – before they were tainted and transformed by colonisation and African or Ndebele people became westernised. When *Gogo* Bhekiwe evokes this African way of doing things, she is not just referring to the MHMMM of using a blanket-cloth, but she is also underscoring the process of *ubabakazi* teaching girls how to manage menstruation for *babakazi* was the appropriate menstrual knowledge gatekeeper of old. The narratives *Na*Lindo and *Gogo* Bhekiwe reveal *babakazi*'s role as a patrilineal culture-bearer for *isintu* and *amasiko amaNdebele* (Ndebele customs). *Gogo* Bhekiwe's *babakazi* teaches her how to manage menstruation practically whereas *Na*Lindo's *babakazi* even teaches the hermeneutics of the stomach pain she is experiencing so that she recognises it as a pain related to menstruation - i.e., *isilumo.* The narratives of *Gogo* Bhekiwe and *Gogo* Sinini (cf. page 95) are a reminder that MHI is not a 'third world problem' without a solution; it has not lain in wait for the developed world to solve it. Ndebele women and girls have had strategies for coping with menstruation that historically precede international development discourse and even the colonial encounter.

On the role of *babakazi* I close with the summation that she is an important gatekeeper of coming-of-age information regarding menstruation, sex and marriage for African girls. When understood from as a female father and not just a paternal aunt, we come to find that she plays a similar role to a Ndebele girl's male father. The reproductive labour-work of *babakazi*, though largely the same as that carried out by other female kin, is unique. As female father she reconciles Ndebele girls' 'Ndebele-ness' (which is passed down through the father) with their reproductive capability which is gendered female. This is significant because depending on who a Ndebele woman bears children with, she may or may not produce progeny for a Ndebele lineage. As a menstrual knowledge gatekeeper *babakazi*'s role is to re-enforce a girl's new identity not only as reproductive girl but as a reproductive *Ndebele* girl in a way that other female kin (from the maternal line) cannot. She legitimates the cultural heritage of *intombi* (a reproductive Ndebele girl); doing so as both man and woman – as a female father.

Sicelisiwe (aged 18) is a younger study participant who demonstrates the importance having Ndebele vernacular for PMS symptoms. Sicelisiwe describes how she experienced an extended period of *isilumo* and what was characterised by acute abdominal pains. She does not remember exactly when it was but recalls that it was towards the end of the Dry Season – what is also referred to as Winter. Zimbabwe's dry season is from April to October. She was 11 years old when she reached ménarche and she remembers that:

> *I woke up one morning and I found the sheet [was covered] with blood. I wanted to cry [because] I thought I was injured. [But] Mom said, "It's natural for all girls* ***ukuthi engena kuma****period*[34] *(to have their period). You will get used to it.*

In this account, her mother is revealed as a gatekeeper for Sicelisiwe's menstrual knowledge. Her mother assures her that it was a natural process and meant that it meant that Sicelisiwe would now be able to have children. Sicelisiwe's mother makes sure that Sicelisiwe understands that she was now reproductively capable as part of her menstrual preparation. Her mother also spoke to her about overall hygiene and menstrual hygiene. When S'tha reaches ménarche, her grandmother also does the same and counsels her not only on aspects of menstruation like MHM but also sex and sexuality and personal hygiene. S'tha's grandmother tells S'tha that she must "be smart". in *isiNdebele*, the instruction *ube smart* ('be smart') refers to being neat and tidy in terms physical presentation and personal hygiene. S'tha's grandmother urges her to be careful not to sully her clothes with menstrual stains. To be "smart" in this context is "to be constantly mindful" (Prendergast, 2000:116); making sure not to stain oneself. This is echoed in Khathazile's menstrual narrative. Khathazile (aged 15 years), nicknamed "Khatha", was taught in secondary school, that no one must be able to tell that you are on your period. We see that being 'smart' is as much part of home comportment as it is an expectation for school deportment. These findings are congruent with Sommer (2010a) who highlights puberty as a critical stage for gaining knowledge on personal hygiene.

Sicelisiwe often suffers from bouts of dysmenorrhea. When I asked her what she does when this happens, she said:

> *When I am at home, I sleep. When I am at school, though, I can't just sleep. At home, I just let them know that my stomach is painful; they give me some painkillers and then I go and sleep.*

Sicelisiwe is able to turn to her female relatives when she is experiencing menstruation-related problems like abdominal pain (Munthali *et al*., 2006). Yücel *et al*. (2018) found that in their study among girls aged 9-18 years in Turkey, 11.4% felt that no one cared about their menstruation-related problems whereas 9.5% do who to turn to about problems. This is not the case for Sicelisiwe, when she experienced an extended period[35] whereby her period lasted almost three weeks. At age 18, Sicelisiwe's mother took her to the local clinic. It is likely that *Na*Siceliswe accompanied Sicelisiwe to support her because Sicelisiwe has a learning disability. Her mother is the also one who administered Sicelisiwe's medication following the trip to the clinic. When I asked her what they said was wrong with her at the time, she did not know but took solace in the fact the medication had worked.

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[34] lexical borrowing from English

Sicelisiwe does not have the kind of medicalised vocabular that I do as a student specialising in sociology of female reproduction. I am aware that her prolonged period is known as menorrhagia in English, and these are my words and not Sicelisiwe's[36]. Extended, irregular periods can be a symptom of other reproductive complications. For example, "excessive bleeding"[37] is a symptom of what catamenial diseases[38] like endometriosis and polycystic ovary syndrome[39]. Her episode of menorrhagia, coupled with the severe abdominal cramping she describes, are strongly suggestive of this. Without the knowledge and vocabulary to communicate her condition in *isiNdebele* or English, we find that Sicelisiwe not only suffers through the discomfort of these symptoms but in retrospect also suffers from the hermeneutical injustice that accompanies not being able to understand or articulate exactly what she was experiencing. We see this from the fact that still did not know what had been wrong with her at the time. Language and literacy taught in schools plays a role in transforming rural girls in modern consuming girls as I mention on page 91. Sicelisiwe has vernacular knowledge about menstruation learned in school – she is able to distinguish between, *ukungena esikhathini* (to menstruate, regularly or cyclically) and *ukuthomba* (the first menstrual period). When I probe her on the difference between the two, she defines *ukuthomba* as puberty. This is inaccurate. Though she may be 'menstrually literate' in so far as being able to track her period and identify an irregular one, she has her limited vernacular to articulate other related catamenial disorders. In instances where the condition is acute or recurring, hermeneutical injustice can impede one's recourse to action. This may compromise the sufferer's quality of life and lead to delayed diagnosis and misdiagnosis.

Sicelisiwe's menstrual narratives gives us another glimpse into biomedicalised MHMMMs, that is: menstrual hygiene management *methods and materials* that can be employed to manage pain as well as long menstrual periods and prevent pregnancy. Her narrative expands to include contraceptive pills – which is likely have been what Sicelisiwe was prescribed. Even this seemingly uncommodified medication which was free from the clinic is part of commercialised MoMs that are heavily subsidised by the Ministry of Health and Child Care (MoHCC). The term MHMMMs brings together the old and the new, the organic and the biomedical, traditional medicine and Western medicine. We consider that girls and women are empowered to manage menstruation not just in the home and at school but also through health facilities and access to prescribed medication for the management of reproductive complications[40] even in remote, rural Zimbabwe. Mamo and Fosket explain that there are a number of drugs "aimed at regulating and minimizing menstruation, is part of ongoing biomedicalization processes that emphasize risk reduction and management and the transformation of health itself" (2009:925). Sicelisiwe's consumption of painkillers when she has bouts of dysmenorrhea along with the medication, she is prescribed to treat her menorrhagia signify her participation in biomedicalised MoMs.

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[35] Menorrhagia describes a number of symptoms including a menstrual period that lasts longer than 7 days and heavy menstrual bleeding that requires sanitary wear change at frequency of more than once very hour. In their systematic review, Harlow and Campbell (2004) found that "approximately 4–8% of women report having menstrual periods longer than 7-8 days". See also Pietrangelo (2019).

[36] I also use dysmenorrhea as a translation for *isilumo*.

[37] https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/endometriosis/symptoms-causes/syc-20354656

[38] cf. page 36

[39] See Dunaif and Fauser (2013).

Mandlakazi (aged 40), nicknamed "Kazi" began menstruating at the age of 15 years. She recalls that "My mother tore a t-shirt for me – a white one." In the absence of single-use sanitary wear such as disposable pads, tampons and the menstrual cup, Kazi like *Gogo* Sinini and *Gogo* Bhekiwe is nevertheless equipped with alternative MHMMMs and the technical know-how for their effective use. Kazi also explains:

> *I used to have very bad period pains. I have period pains that 'are a man'. I would sleep for pain; I couldn't get up. They [the elders] would tell me that I wouldn't have children. I would be like a sick, bed-bound person with a blanket over me – the pain was so bad.*

Kazi uses a Ndebele metaphor likening the intensity of her period pains to the force and strength of a man. The elders around her likely assumed that her severe abdominal cramps were an indication of poor menstrual health that would present itself as reproductive complications later on in Kazi's life. Her elders are part of the sense-making around menstruation and menstruation-related problems in her life. This sense-making is itself a form of invisible reproductive labour-work. From the menstrual narratives of all three generations of Ndebele women and girls we find that mothers, female peers and female relatives are gatekeepers of menstrual knowledge as well as supporters in managing the stigma of menstruation. The older generations of Ndebele women consistently describe *ubabakazi* and *uGogo* (usually maternal)[41] as being key to their menstrual preparation. These figures remain important gatekeepers of menstrual knowledge, however, with younger girls, other actors such as peer educators, teachers and even male relatives become supporters in this ecosystem of 'growing up'.

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[40] See Kantartzis and Sucato (2013) on menstrual suppression in adolescents.

[41] See McMaster, Cormie and Pitts (1997)

Sinikiwe (aged 30) says that she was fishing by the river when she started menstruating. She was there with her older sister's husband (*usibare*[42] *wakhe*), who told her to go to (older) sister when he notices the blood. It is important to note that Sinikiwe has her first period in the community and not in the more private boundary of the household. The community is a broad, public proxemic zone (Hans & Hans, 2015)[43] that encapsulates school and home. As such her *sibare* is co-opted into this state of constant mindfulness for he, despite being a male relative, intervenes to assist her timeously and directs her to her older sister for further menstrual preparation. Once at her sister's marital home, Sinikiwe bathes and is given cotton wool. When Sinikiwe's *sibare*[44] points Sinikiwe to her sister rather than telling her himself what has happened, we see that there are social norms that govern menstrual etiquette. As a brother by marriage to her sister he is not a blood relative and so the gates of gender are not so easily by-passed for him to share menstrual knowledge with Sinikiwe or prepare her for menstruation. Menstrual etiquette in Ndebele culture, for the most part, relegates discussions around menstruation to female homosocial spaces. However, happenstance and urgency may necessitate the transgression of gender boundaries.

One example of this is Karen's (aged 16) *malume* (her mother's brother) who buys her pads. *Malume* is the maternal uncle (i.e., mother's brother). He stands in as a kind of male mother in the absence of Ndebele girl's mother.[45] When Karen has her first period at home, her grandmother with whom she lives was not there at the time. Her *malume*, who she also lives with, addresses the practical menstrual preparation by buying her pads whereas her cousin-sister (the daughter of her mother's sister)[46] deals with the theoretical menstrual preparation Karen's cousin-sister had been taught about menstruation by their grandmother. This menstrual preparation is not unlike what the peer educator did for Khanyi (cf. page 85) and what many mothers of the interview participants did for their daughters. Karen's older cousin-sister complements the provision of sanitary wear by their *umalume* by sitting Karen down and teaching her that she is now capable of falling pregnant and so must abstain from sex until marriage. Ntombi's husband and Karen's *malume* are male kinfolk who materially provide MHMMMs. Female kin may do the same but in addition to this, they are also reproducers of Ndebele culture. As we saw with *babakazi* (cf. page 101) and now Karen's cousin-sister, female relative transfer values about avoiding premarital sex. Therefore, the reproductive labour-work of menstrual preparation transcends gender.

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[42] *Sibare* is a word evolved from *sibali* (in-laws) which has evolved through "contact-induced linguistic change" (Grant, 2015) with the Shona speakers (cf. Fig. 1, page 15). I assert this because *isiNdebele* traditionally does not have the letter "r" in its alphabet and conversely, Shona does not have an "l". Msindo reminds us that, "It is important to remember that Sindebele had lost many Zulu words because of distance, social change, and local variations" (2005:94).

[43] Hans & Hans (2015)

[44] See also page 148 for another insight into the role of *sibare* through a continuation of *Gogo Na*Nambitha's narrative.

[45] See page 131 for further illustration.

[46] *esiNdebeleni* (in Ndebele culture), first cousins are considered the same as siblings, relationally.

4.2.5 Menstrual literacy – the end of childhood?

The previous section has cast a light on preventing premarital sex is a way in which the childhood of Ndebele girls be preserved. In this section, I will now consider whether theoretical knowledge about the biological function of menstruation and the adult world of sex constitutes an end of childhood. Postman (1995) postulates that:

> *[…] in a literate world to be an adult implies having access to cultural secrets codified in unnatural symbols. In a literate world, children* ***become*** *adults. But in a nonliterate world there is no need to distinguish sharply between the child and the adult. For there are few secrets, and the culture and does not need to provide training in how to understand itself* (1995:23).

Postman (1995) counterposes biological age as an index of adulthood by challenging us to consider literacy instead as an index of adulthood. In light of Postman's assertion above, I begin to wonder this conceptualisation of adulthood make an interview participant like *Gogo Na*Nambitha a perpetual child because she is illiterate? Literacy as an index of adulthood has its problems and pitfalls. A Postmanian reading of literacy as an index of adulthood infers that societies can be homogenously literate or homogenously illiterate and this is rarely universally the case. Besides this, literacy alone does not govern what is and what is not age-appropriate. Illiterate children may accidentally hear or see that which is not age-appropriate for them and even imitate or emulate it.

African cultures have a long, rich history of oral tradition – one that precedes colonisation and the introduction of the Latin alphabet to African society. Burke (2004) engages with the fact that 'preliterate' or predominantly oral cultures transmitted values through folklore. Folklore intimated through song and dance, storytelling and ritual "marked the important transition from childhood to adulthood" (Burke, 2004:823). As mentioned on page 11, Bhebhe (2018) noted the same about Ndebele oral tradition. Huchu (2020) in his short story, titled *Egoli*, texturises the significance of folklore in Zimbabwean rural life. It gives a glimpse into childhood imagination – what Huchu describes is a youthful age in which it is "impossible to discern fact from fiction" (2020:4). This suggests that unlike adults, children are not initially mature enough to intuit what is true and what is false from what they hear from the adults around them; nor from any misinformation that they may read. As such, we must also be mindful of the fact that literacy does not render one all-knowing in the 'secrets of the world'. Maturity and adulthood are not solely realised in writing. For example, *Gogo Na*Nambitha did not know her age but offered up her identity (ID) card as she knew it had her date of birth recorded on it even if she could not read what was written on it. *Gogo Na*Nambitha challenges these dichotomies of illiteracy and childhood/literacy and adulthood because she is both an adult and illiterate.

Nevertheless, I do still think that literacy as an index of adulthood as an idea is worth exploring in the modern day Zimbabwe. In Zimbabwe, the Guidance and Counselling classes and Science classes taught in secondary school[47] are an introduction to menstrual literacies. Khanyi says that she learned about menstruation in Guidance and Counselling class, where she was taught that "the body is God's temple" and so must not be violated by boys and allowing them to "touch" you. Khanyi reveals that menstrual literacy in this case is imbued by religious value transmission. At the time of my fieldwork, Denise had also recently learned about menstruation in her Guidance and Counselling class[48]. Denise says she was taught about breast development in Form 1 Science class[49]. She adds, however, that they never discussed menstruation in her first form Science classes. Denise would have been in first form in 2016. It is worth noting that a year later, the 2017 new *Curriculum Framework* introduced a 'safe sex' component to Guidance and Counselling classes and that menstruation is now also covered in the adolescent CSE manual of the curriculum. True to the curriculum change, Denise explains that she went on to learn about puberty and menstruation in Guidance and Counselling just a few weeks before her interview in July 2019. She attributes her understanding of the biological process of puberty and the physiology of menstruation to these Guidance and Counselling classes. Karen too reveals in her interview that she did not understand the biological purpose of menstruation until that class. Since being taught about menstruation in their Guidance and Counselling class, Khanyi, Denise and Karen[50] girls are now aware that menstruation means that they are now reproductively capable.

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[47] Denise, Khanyi, Karen and Thandeka all mention this (cf. page 111)

[48] i.e., Denise was 16 years old at the time of the interview and had recently learned about menstruation in school that same year (that she was aged turned 16).

[49] the official school age of a first former is 13 years, cf. Fig. 5, page 23

[50] The girls are peers and so had learned about menstruation in this class at the same time.

Their peer, S'tha, also gives us a glimpse into the menstrual literacy she gained in Science class, wherein she learned how to track her menstrual cycle (McMahon *et al*., 2011). S'tha says that she learned in Science that "you can count 21 days after 5 days of menstruation" before your next period. S'tha's menstrual literacy is blighted by only slight miscalculations. This slight inaccuracy corresponds with the studies of Abioye-Kuteyi (2000) and Dhingra *et al*. (2009) who found that in Nigeria and India respectively, girls often have inaccurate information about menstruation (Abioye-Kuteyi, 2000; Dhingra *et al*., 2009). It may also be a case of misremembering rather than misunderstanding. S'tha may also be referring to the length of her own menstrual cycle which may be 26 days long. Menstrual tracking is a menstrual literacy that enables a girl to be 'mindful' (Prendergast, 2000) from one cycle to the next in order to avoid being caught unawares and without any MHMMMs. Complementarily, Karen understands menstruation as the "washing out of [unfertilised] eggs" from Science class. She also knows that a fertilised egg can become a "zygote". Her menstrual literacy consists of a vast vernacular of reproduction in *isiNdebele*, which she is able to articulate using scientific lexicon in English. This kind of menstrual literacy can perhaps be understood as a form of hermeneutical justice (Fricker, 2007) as she has the vocabulary to articulate these biological processes, relating to menstruation and reproduction. Karen has an accurate grasp of the physiology of menstruation (Sinden *et al.*, 2015) and she even declares that "You must not sleep with a boy. You can easily fall pregnant [if] you do". Thandeka (aged 17) was at home when she had started menstruating at the age of 16. She says that she knew about it because she had been taught about it in school, in both Science class and Guidance and Counselling classes.

As a result of their Guidance and Counselling classes and Science classes, Thandeka, S'tha, Karen, Khanyi, and Denise are all cognisant that sexual intercourse can bring with it procreation – whether intended or not. The girls gain knowledge on the biology of menstruation in Science class. This is accompanied by a grounding in abstaining from sex in both Guidance and Counselling class and the menstruation-related teachings they receive from female relatives at home. This new literacy in menstruation matters, reproduction, and sex brings me to wonder if this accumulative knowing marks the end of their girlhood; their childhood?

In my interview with her, *Gogo Ma*Moyo (aged 72) shone alight on menstruation and the menstrual-related knowledge gained thereafter as an end to childhood innocence. She specifically talks about 'knowing' as the end of childhood when she says, "I started menstruating late. I was 20 and had finished my teacher training before knowing anything." When I prompted as to what she did not 'know' at this age, she explains that she had not yet "known a man". She adds that by this time, "My mother and grandmother were worried that I had not yet become a woman and therefore could not marry. They also worried that I could not have children [yet].” *Gogo Ma*Moyo was married not long after she began menstruating. She was 20 years old when reached menarche and was married at the age of 22 years. We are reminded in *Gogo Ma*Moyo’s narrative that the ability to reproduce, signified by ménarche, marks the end of childhood. Earlier I referred to the double burdened ‘work of knowing’ (cf. page 4)[51], which is generally invisible but rendered visible in *Gogo Ma*Moyo’s menstrual narrative. The idea of not synonymising childhood with biological age is not a novel one. Rousseau articulated it in 1762 when he argued that “Childhood and age have too little in common for the formation of a really firm affection” (1915:42). Kamwendo Naphambo (2021) concurs. In her monograph, she found that age (alone) is not a significant marker of maturity among Malawian women.[52] In thus study it is evident from *Gogo Ma*Moyo’s narrative that even though she is a qualified teacher and has knowledge in her field – she is still seen as a child (by her mother and grandmother). In their view, until ménarche a Ndebele girl is a child. As such, I put forward ménarche (menstruation)[53], literacy (‘knowing’) and maternity (childbearing) as complementary ways of indexing of adolescence and adulthood in this study.

Just as maternity can be an index of adulthood, conversely, nulliparity is an index of childhood. She is also a child in their eyes and her own eyes because does not have the adult ‘knowing’ of a man by the way of sexual intercourse – she is still *intombazana* and not *intombi (nto)*. *Gogo Ma*Moyo’s narrative reveals two realms of knowing: (i) public and professional knowing (as a teacher) and (ii) private knowing (of intimate topics and experience). It shows how knowing is itself a form of reproductive labour-work that the ‘knower’ invests in. Both labour and work can be measured in action, but work is remunerated while labour is typically gratuitous (Tamale, 2005). Personal knowledge (labour) can be translated into professional remunerable work (i.e., teaching as we see with *Gogo Ma*Moyo) and measured in competencies and literacies (e.g., a teacher training certificate). This demonstrates the permeability of the labour-work and public-private boundaries. Drawing on Fricker (2007) who emphasises gravity of knowing, I argue that knowing is empowering because it enables us to understand and articulate experiences, which helps us describe and explain phenomenon.

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[51] Fricker too alludes to ‘knowing’ it in her theorisation of hermeneutical injustice as mentioned page 4.

[52] See Ncube (1987) on how until the Legal Age of Majority Act was passed in 1982 were grown biological adults but legal minors under African customary law as they were mog able to own property, entering into contracts without male consent.

[53] I recognise, however, that ménarche is biological marker of (more so than using chronological or biological age) it is meaningful in particular social contexts, like Zimbabwe. Though biological age is inevitably social age, different biological markers are used in different societies and for different purposes. For example, among the Ndebele, ménarche (besides marking the body biologically more mature) signals the need to prime girls for reproductive success by beginning collective community-based reproductive labour-work of preventing early unintended pregnancy and single motherhood.

I contrast *Gogo Ma*Moyo with *Gogo Na*Nambitha. *Gogo Na*Nambitha remarks self-deprecatingly that, "I am uneducated, so I do not know my age now or how old I was when I first started menstruating or when I first got married". She is still knowledgeable, however. She has 'known' a man, and while she does not know the exact year, she reached ménarche; married; or had her first child she is still able to delineate these with paperwork such as her ID card and her first-born son's birth certificate. *Gogo Na*Nambitha also speaks of how she would track her period using the lunar cycle. Time, and with it the transition from childhood and adulthood, pre-dates the Greco-Roman calendar. Societies measure time, and in turn adulthood, in different ways, for example by the waxing and waning of the moon or the changing of seasons. Through *Gogo Na*Nambitha's narrative we see that the modern and traditional are not such distinct categories as we would like to imagine. On one hand, *Gogo Na*Nambitha used the 'synodic cycle' (Steele & Allen, 2004) to track her menstrual cycle through her life. Yet on the other hand, she is still able use modern alphanumeric bureaucratic documentation to discern time. Though *Gogo Na*Nambitha is in many ways a traditional rural woman who was not allowed to attend school by her father, her insights make it possible to reclaim rural African women in a narrative of knowing and knowledge (re)production that they have been excluded from for centuries.

4.2.6 Relational maturity

At this stage I am conscious to emphasise that in Zimbabwe there are interpretations of childhood that argue that children do not *become* adults but rather are born 'little adults' or 'miniature adults'; each of whom have a role to play in the family and the community more broadly (Gwandure & Mayekiso, 2011). This is echoed by *Na*Milisuthando who explains to me that "*umntawana* [a child] is a derivative *umuntu* [a person, specifically an adult]". Further to this, as I argued earlier, that childhood is not always indexed by biological age; and when it is, age too is socio-relational. This notion is captured by Mkhwanazi who encourages us to think of the relationality of age as a social construct when she writes:

> *To begin with, people said that a child was a reflection of the family and the community it grew up in. Therefore parents/guardians/adults, by virtue of age (social or biological), had authority over children and were meant to guide and teach them "appropriate" ways to behave and conduct themselves in sociality* (2014a:109).

While chronological age is biologically determined our understanding of adulthood transitions in

Zimbabwe can be contextualised by an examination of social relations and the continuity of one generation from another. According to Southern African tradition, childhood is also not a phase that you definitively grow out of; indeed, there are also 'adult children' in Southern African culture. The Xhosa-speaking Mpondo[54] people of South Africa serve as a good illustration of this argument. As far back as the 1930s, anthropologist Monica Hunter (1936) grasped the nuances of age among this ethnic group in her research. Hunter explains that "as the child grows older he is taught respect and obedience […] There is no age at which he is regarded as free from parental control" (1936:25). As I highlighted in the positionality Section 3.3 on page 62 of the Methodology chapter, even as an adult you are a child *in relation* to someone older than you (either biologically or socially). I call this ambiguous relativity of 'age' and adulthood *relational maturity*. In order to buttress my propositions around relational maturity, I turn to Zimbabwean agriculturist scholar, Mandivamba Rukuni. Rukuni captures the nuance of relational maturity in the Zimbabwean context when he states:

> *To all my mother's sisters and cousins, I am their child. Therefore, it does not matter if one of my mother's cousins is twelve years old, while I may be 53 years old. I still treat that twelve-year-old child as my mother and I still play a role as a child to her – even in my late adult[hood]* (Rukuni, 2007; cited in Mangena & Ndlovu, 2014).

What Rukuni describes here is an Afrocentric conceptualisation of social age. From this perspective, one can be either a child or an adult *in relation* to others; and this is regardless of embodied physical maturity (e.g., ménarche, menstruation, motherhood, menopause), (il)literacy and/or 'knowing'.

During a 'deep hang out' (Geertz, 1998) with *Gogo* Betty there is an instance when she is explaining a traditional Ndebele neonatal practice and says to me "You are going to learn things that are uncommon at your age". She is not referring to my biological age but rather to my age in *relation* to her. To *Gogo* Betty my chronological age along with my nulliparity at the time makes me a child in relation to her – an older adult who has born children and even has grandchildren.[55] Relational maturity has multi-layered concept and is not without contradictions in practice. I witness this with Thandazo who refers to me as *mamomdala*[56]. Strictly speaking, she should refer to me as *gogo* but because I am relatively close to her in age (I am six years her senior) and the fact that she is a mother (whereas I am not yet). On top of this is she is even a *babakazi* who lives with her 12-year-old niece and is her niece's primary caregiver. Thandazo thereby uses these markers of adulthood relativise the generation gaps between us. Relational maturity is thereby a subjective social construct because though she is a mother and past the legal age of majority at 24 years of age, to me Thandazo is a child – *umntanami* (*my* child) – as she refers to me as *mamomdala* (older mother).

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[54] whom she misnamed the "Pondo"

[55] My relational maturity in the study served as an advantage because like Batisai – a Shona, Zimbabwean researcher, who found during her doctorate that as a "relatively young Shona woman", interviewing elderly Shona women, she was perceived as the ideal candidate for coaching (2013:74); cf. page 64.

[56] i.e.: older mother; mother's older sister; Aunt

Diallo (2004) and Khau (2012) refute the notion of 'African culture' that portrays the continent and its indigenous people as static in the face of modernity. The conception of relational maturity helps give vitality to Afrocentric conceptions of childhood and adulthood. It nuances (mis)conceptions that interpolate African cultures as a homogenous, singular culture. Amadiume (2015) also contests the misconception when she admonishes the work of Leith-Ross (1939) who entitles her work – a work riddled with misunderstandings and superimpositions of Western ideology on the Igbo women of Nigeria – *African Women.* The title generalises her ethnography with one ethnic group in one country on the continent to the whole continent. It is important to recognise the multiplicity of heterogenous cultures and lived experiences in Africa if we are to meaningfully debunk specious notions of a universal 'African culture'. Alanamu *et al.*'s (2018) argument that the definition of childhood cannot be generalised helps to centre this debate from Afrocentric perspective. The authors unseat some of the essentialised and essentialising notions of African culture as often conveyed in much of the literature produced by European and North American scholars (Alanamu *et al.*, 2018).

This is not to say that none the nuances and the heterogeneity of Africa can be grasped by non-African scholars (cf. page 114). Jeremy Jones (2009), for example is a US anthropologist who raises a critical discussion around African youth and African culture in his work on elopement practices in Zimbabwe. He begins by problematising the notion of Africa in his writing on African youth and their mediation of their youth identity through marriage (Jones, 2009). He goes on to consider how it is not possible to divorce the "land mass" that is Africa's material existence from the "colonial, neo-colonial and experiences [that] are mapped onto its face" (Jones, 2009:2). Jones (2009) cautions against fixating on youth as a category in such a way as to presume offhandedly that some other way of dividing the social sphere (e.g., race, social class, gender) is not equally or more relevant (Jones, 2009). He also contests the comparability of an 'African youth' because youth groups in Africa are as diverse as they can be homogenous. Jones (2009) therefore concludes that age may not always be the best qualifier. He contrasts youth studies to a lesser studied demographic – the elderly (Jones, 2009). Batisai adds to this when she asserts that "the dearth of historically based literature about discourses of gender and sexuality is noteworthy" and that, "[t]his is especially true of research that involves the elderly in post-colonial Africa" (Batisai, 2013:3).[57] In the above section on menstrual literacy (cf. page 112), I put forward ménarche as an index for maturity in order to better understand the transition into adulthood and the responsibility heralded thereof. Relational maturity blurs the distinctions between biological age and social age, and in so doing, the study takes us "beyond the apparent links to biological facts of age" (Jones, 2009:2) by centring adolescence and the social significance of biological graduations into adulthood for Ndebele girls.

4.2.7 SUM(Menstrual preparedness – sexual socialisation) = Danger?

This section returns to the dangers of poor menstrual preparedness. It presents the community-based, and household-level *ubuntu*-motivated policing of young Ndebele girls' bodies as a strategy to prevent early unintended pregnancy. It examines how over time, this reproductive labour-work to prevent sexual abuse and early unintended pregnancy is becoming multisited as the development community begin to implement social and behaviour change programmes to confront these social issues and schools transmit menstrual literacies through CSE-based curricula.

When *ogogo* began recounting their youth by highlighting a key difference between themselves and girls of today. Most of them said that they were petrified of boys growing up. There seemed to be a consensus that unlike girls of today who openly fraternised with boys, they would literally run away from them. *ogogo* felt that, as young girls, they had been indoctrinated to believe that boys were trouble and that any interaction with a boy was one to be shied away from. What *ogogo* articulated was a genuine sense of terror about encounters with the opposite sex. In the second FGD, a grandmother remarked that "Young girls of nowadays are not afraid of boys the way we were when we were growing up". She bemoaned the fact that young girls these days could be seen socialising and even canoodling with them in the open. There were tuts of disapproval in the FGD at this contravention of traditional behavioural norms.

*Gogo Ma*Gumede echoed the same in a one-on-one interview stating that, "We grew up knowing that you weren't meant to play with boys. A boy is not your friend". She added that when reached ménarche a female relative like your mother or grandmother would say "*usukhulile, yikho ukukhula kwang'khona* (you are now grown up, that's what it means to grow up)". They would also explain that now that this has happened you were no longer allowed to play "*ngapanse kwababafana* (under boys)". Here, *Gogo Ma*Gumede is referring to the dangers she was warned of when she was a girl. '*Ngapanse [kwa]*' is the preposition *underneath [of]*. *Gogo Ma*Gumede uses it to euphemise the act of missionary sexual intercourse, whereby a woman is ‘underneath’ a man. Unlike the majority of the research participants in this study, *Gogo Ma*Gumede was prepared for menstruation holistically. She receives sexual education alongside her menstrual education. Although vague, she says that she understood completely what the cultural messaging about ‘playing under’ boys meant.

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[57] Both Jones (2009) and Batisai (2013) are writing on Zimbabwe.

Menstrual preparation for Ndebele girls ideally included sexual socialisation and warnings against engaging in sex after ménarche. The sense of terror about interacting with boys that *ogogo* express is one that rings true with Mason *et al.*’s (2013) study, which found that in Kenya, girls they were likely to avoid playing with other children because of an internalisation of their own sense of sexual vulnerability after the onset of ménarche.

*Gogo Ma*Gumede also shares that:

> *[With] splintered families, where children are left on their own in town without adult guidance [while the parents have to find work outside of Zimbabwe]; with elders like the child’s grandparents in the village, girls fall by the wayside and end up falling pregnant. As a girl, you can find yourself* ***ususindwa ngemphilo ungumntwana omncane*** *– while still only a child too – heavily pregnant and in the fields working the field with a small child [on your back]. Toiling just to sustain yourself and your child because you have no education.*

What *Gogo Ma*Gumede says above indicates that poor menstrual preparation is a consequence of migration. She refers to girls not being assured of two-parent investment in the rearing of children (Goldsmith, 1991) that may prevent early unintended pregnancy. For *Gogo Ma*Gumede, adult behaviour like sexual intercourse brings with it adult responsibilities. In her own words, even if a girl is young when she falls pregnant, she must (now) provide for her baby as an adult would and work hard, subsistence farming for their sustenance. In her view early unintended pregnancy disrupts school education and diminishes the chances of young mother’s chances at formal employment.

*Gogo Na*Nambitha also laments girls are fraternising with boys. Her lamentations and those that I heard from other grandmothers in Sikelela reflect a collective anxiety that children are becoming adults before their time. To be seen walking with a boy, let alone holding his hand in the open is an act of rebellion and defiance in Ndebele rural culture. *Gogo Ma*Gumede comments about what used to happen in her day if a girl was caught in the company of a boy. She says:

> *We were brought up the right way and any adult that you saw falling by the way side could give you a talking to saying, "My child..." as if they themselves were your own parent*

She believes that children these days do not want to be parented and corrected by adults who are not their parents or caregivers. In her view *abazi phathi kuhle* (they do not behave with self-control/they do not abstain from sex). *ukuziphatha* is an extension of the ubuntu-centred principal of *ukuhlonipha*. It is the respecting of one's own body. As we hear in Khanyi's remarks on page 110, of "Christian notions of 'respectability' (Mkhwanazi, 2014a:108) come to frame the body as a "temple". The grandmothers connect the brazen behaviour young adults today to the early unintended pregnancy crisis that they perceive in Sikelela. In their view there has been an abandonment rural "practices of sexual socialisation" (2014a:108), whereby young Ndebele girls received a sexual education and were warned of the dangers of pregnancy at ménarche. It appears that the youngest generation of girls in the study are receiving a fragmented menstrual preparation at ménarche. One that at first only deals with technical aspects of menstruation – like the use of MHMMMs and an introduction into MoMs without a holistic sexual socialisation grounded in cultural values whereby the sexual abstinence of a Ndebele girl is framed as a positive reflection on herself and the wider community.

*Gogo Ma*Gumede went on to express that "parents of today" are also adopting the same attitude. I reiterate the African proverb "It takes a village to raise a child" at this juncture. The proverb can be taken to mean that it takes a community, with each member playing a part in the reproductive labour-work, to raise safe and healthy children. This is the heart of *ubuntu.* This notion of collective parenting is embodied by the Ndebele family lexicon. For example: in *isiNdebele*, your mother's older sister is a not aunty, she is *mamomdala* which is a contraction of *mama omdala*. *Mama omdala* means "older mother". Inversely, your mother's younger sister is *mamomncane* (*mama omncane*) – younger mother[58]. So, if your mother has many sisters, you have many mothers. Even if your mother's younger sister is your age or younger than you, she is still accorded the respect (*inhlonipho*) of a mother even if she is younger or "little mother" as the translation lends itself more closely to. If she were to chide you, you must heed her because she is your mother. Reciprocally, your younger and little mothers must treat and recognise you as *umntanami/umntwana wethu* (my child/their child) where and when possible. As such she may choose care for you and indulge you as a doting mother would. Collective parenting resonates with the concept of relational maturity and the idea of social age.[59] She underscores what *Gogo Ma*Gumede explains about the role of adults in guiding and raising up children. In accordance with the *ubuntu*, it is not just parents and caregivers but also neighbours and fellow villagers who are allowed to rebuke children when they see them veering off the beaten track, in particular being in danger of early unintended pregnancy and single motherhood in the case of Ndebele girls.

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[58] The same goes for your father's siblings: *babomdala* (*baba omdala*) and *babomncane* (*baba omncane*). Vowels are contracted (similar to French) for the words to run onto one another more smoothly.

This collective parenting as seen by the Ndebele menstrual etiquette of letting a father know that a girl has reached ménarche, after she has been prepared for menstruation represents a kind of 'third shift' (Gerstel, 2000) reproductive labour-work. From an *ubuntu*-centred perspective, it should be performed by kinsfolk in the household and the wider community of the village as illustrated in Figure 7 on page 52. This reproductive labour-work through the collective rearing of children in the village, socialises them into sex through guidance around acceptable and unacceptable forms of courtship in Ndebele culture. An important aspect of Ndebele sexual socialisation is teaching children the different types of sexual relationships in order to safeguard against abuse, and romantic relationships that do not culminate in marriage.

From my deep hanging out with *Gogo Ma*Gumede, I learned that she was reticent about the fact that she had placed marriage as an aspiration over education. She explained that this was common in her generation but that now, sexual socialisation is as much about preparation for preventing early sexual debut as well as encouraging girls to pursue education so that they may be empowered (both with knowledge and financial means[60]) in marriage. In this way, sexual socialisation is about raising well-rounded partners who can build durable, long-term relationships and are not promiscuous. That way they can protect themselves from STIs by negotiating safe sex where possible. In marriage and wifehood, *ukuziphatha* is synonymous with fidelity. My conversations with *Gogo Ma*Gumede help us to understand that monogamy was encouraged for Ndebele women over multiple concurrent relationships because male parental investment in offspring was assured if the father of a child felt "certain of his paternity" (Nel, 2007:93). In the same vein, *Gogo Na*Nambitha remarks that, "Back in the day, men would come back [and take responsibility if they impregnated you]. It was assumed that you were lying if the father of the child didn't come back."

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[59] Social age is dependent on relation and relationship roles. For example: the role of the niece of *babakazi* is to be a mother to *babakazi's* children. So, though her niece is technically her child by virtue of her being her female father, her niece is the mother of her children regardless of whether or not *babakazi*'s children are younger or older than her niece.

[60] e.g., to get access contraceptives to prevent unintended pregnancy

According to Ndebele culture, for adolescent girls, singlehood and fraternising publicly with a boy is virtuous. It reflects the virtue of *ukuziphatha* in showing restraint by literally 'holding oneself'[61] rather than others. Public displays of affection bespeak a carnal hunger in adolescence that is unbecoming for a future wife. A woman *oziphathayo* (who 'holds' herself, i.e., abstains from premarital or extramarital sex) is one who can be taken at her word, e.g., with regards to the paternity of a pregnancy. Her self-restraint is a credit not just to herself but to her family; for as Mkhwanazi (2014a) highlights, in African culture a child's behaviour is a reflection of the family's upbringing of the child.

Gogo Nkosazana (55 years)[62] remarks that, "As law bearers, for a long time, lawyers could be disbarred for fathering a child out of wedlock". From this we see that policy and cultural mores mirror one another. Until 2020, "custody and guardianship of a child born out of wedlock [wa]s vested in the mother and the biological father only pa[id] maintenance, […] and [met] all the child's requirements but d[id]not have the right of access"[63] This status quo was overturned by the High Court which has legalised the joint custody of 'illegitimate' (GoZ, 1971[64]) children[65]. With this in mind, marriage can be seen as a possible "reproductive strategy" (Fisher, 1992; Nel, 2007; Murdock, 1949) for simplifying what may otherwise evolve to be complex parenting structures.

Ntombi describes how she would swim naked with the boys when she was a young girl and that until she entered into puberty, she saw little difference between herself and them. Once she became reproductively mature, she could no longer swim naked with boys. Though *Gogo* Betty was alarmed by this freedom when Ntombi shared this memory in the first FGD, this narrative is consistent with what Batisai (2013) found when interviewing Shona grandmothers in Zimbabwe. They explained that they too swam naked with boys "until we developed some breasts" (Batisai, 2013:99). As we will learn when we get a deeper glimpse in Ntombi's childhood, her parents did not believe in constraining her to the gendered role of a girl at a young age. They allowed her to participate in certain freedoms and activities more commonly conferred to boys, however, this changed when she became reproductively capable.

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[61] This is a word play on the literal translation of the Ndebele verb *ukuziphatha.*

[62] *Gogo* Nkosazana like *Na*Anita is Ndebele-speaking but she is not Ndebele according to cultural heritage. But as she is Kalanga and therefore kinfolk to the Ndebele (cf. footnote 23, page 147); hence she has been included in the study. Both have Ndebele Mothers. *Gogo* Nkosazana is not a rural woman but is well-educated. She was educated in the city, like *Gogo* Bhekiwe, and Gciniwe. Though they are in Sikelela when I interview them, their lives have not been unilaterally located in the rural areas.

[63] https://www.herald.co.zw/give-us-access-to-our-kids-born-out-of-wedlock/

[64] Children's Act [Chapter 5:06]

[65] https://allafrica.com/stories/202003200738.html

It is my view that the village elders' apprehension about early sexual debut (both consensual and non-consensual) reflects a collective anxiety among the Ndebele that is linked to the reproductive labour-work prevent early unintended pregnancy. The messaging around *ukuziphatha* is pervasively transmitted, even if not completely understood by adolescent Ndebele girls. This is seen with *Gogo* Betty who says that when she first started menstruating her periods were irregular. With bemusement over her youthful naïvety, *Gogo* Betty recounts that she once confided in a friend shortly after ménarche that she feared she may be pregnant because she had not had her period in some months. Her friend was surprised and remarked that it could not be possible as Gogo did not have a boyfriend. To this, the then teenage *Gogo* Betty confessed she had been 'touched' by a boy. By touched, she meant that he had touched her hand with his own. Her friend burst into hysterical laughter saying, "You can't fall pregnant like that. You would have to be another case of the immaculate conception!" This is an example of the kinds of "falsehoods about menstruation and their [girls'] own bodies and possibly make [girls] more vulnerable to maladjustment" (White, 2013:65). *Gogo* Betty's surprise about Ntombi having been allowed to swim to swim in the river with boys in the first FGD shows that *Gogo* Betty – as an elder – is worried about early sexual debut and early unintended pregnancy. Her views on the impropriety of allowing Ntombi to swim with boys as a young girl is influenced by her Christian upbringing which she shares with me. She concedes that this upbringing shapes her views about the Ndebele culture and Ndebele sexual socialisation. It is evident from the opposing stances of Ntombi's elders and *Gogo* Betty that even among Ndebele elders there are divergent views about how and when Ndebele girls should be socialised into sex.

4.2.8 Ndebele MHMMMs

The connection between production (i.e., productivity through chores and school attendance) and reproduction (i.e., menstrual preparation including sexual socialisation) was obvious to me in many of the study participants' interviews. For example, I found that *iporridge eyophoko* and *umbondo* are Ndebele MHMMMs that enable rural women and girls to remain productive during menstruaton.

4.2.8.1 ***Iporridge***[66] ***eyophoko*** **as a MHMMM**

There is a porridge, *iporridge eyophoko* that is prepared by the Ndebele to shorten long menstrual periods and suppress the adolescent girl's sexual libido. It is made from a meal ground from dried rapoko – (*uphoko* in *isiNdebele*) known as finger millet in English (see Fig. 14 overleaf).

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[66] The noun for "porridge" is *iyambazi* in *isiNdebele* but lexical borrowing from English results in it more commonly being referred to as *iporridge*. *iporridge eyophoko* is also often anglicised to *phoko* porridge.

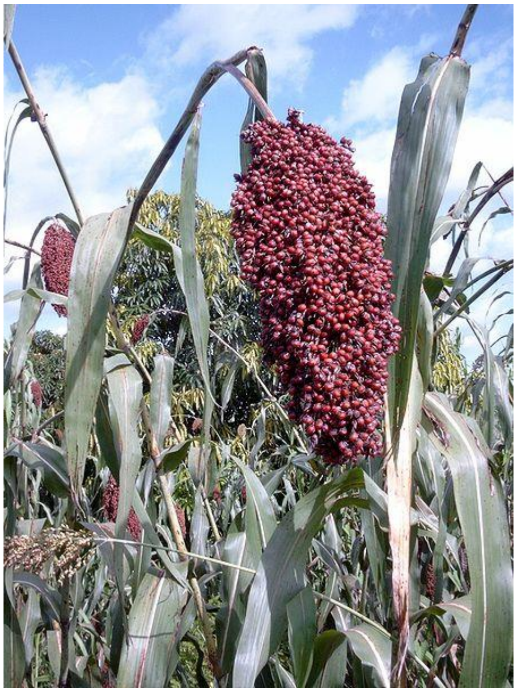

Figure 14: Photograph of ***insimi yophoko*** *(a finger millet field)* taken in Sikelela[67]

Rapoko's scientific name is Eleusine coracana. It is not to be confused with marble red sorghum grain (*amabele*). Finger millet has high drought tolerance (US National Research Council, 1996) and is therefore well-suited to the drought-prone climate in Matabeleland South province (cf. page 79). Speaking on its properties as a Ndebele MHMMM, *Gogo Na*Nambitha recalls that:

> *Back then [when she was a young girl], what they [the elders] used to do was they would make* ***isitshwala*** *[the Zimbabwean staple dish made from ground grain meal and water to a mashed potato like consistency]* ***sophoko***[68]*. I don't know maybe they also added to medicine to it. They knew that it had properties to shorten long courses. It shortens the period to make sure that the period would be 3 days long. Others have week-long periods and so this helped with that.*

*Gogo Na*Nambitha's comments reveal how rapoko is a grain that is believed to help with regularising menses. In a conversation with *Gogo Na*Nambitha, *Gogo* Betty speaks about the uneasiness and uncertainty she experienced when she reached ménarche and found she had an irregular cycle. She explains that she had her first period but did not have a second until almost 6 months later. This type of irregular cycle is a catamenial disorder known as oligomenorrhea. Adaji *et al.* state that "Most women all over the world are aware of their pattern of menstruation and how it affects their lives (2005:147). This may be true once a pattern has been established following ménarche, however, early in one's reproductive life, as we see with the teenage *Gogo* Betty, menstrual patterns may be irregular.

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[67] I used this finger millet from this field to make *isitshwala sophoko* photographed in Appendix C (page 235).

[68] See Appendix C, page 235.

*Gogo Ma*Gumede confirms this in a one-on-one interview that she recalls that there were some herbs that were inserted in the porridge and that these herbs were known to help shorten the length of one's period so that it was more manageable. When I probed her about what these herbs were, she said she could not remember. *Na*Anita (aged 55) also recollects being served *iporridge eyophoko* with garnishings. She says:

> *What I've noticed though about reaching ménarche. When we started menstruating, there was certain food that was prepared for us when the time came, I don't know what exactly it was. What happened was, when you started menstruating, you told the elders that you had started menstruating. You would go there [to your paternal Aunt or grandmother] to Aunty or your grandmother] and stay there for a period of time. They would make you* ***iporridge eyophoko****. But I'm not sure what they mixed it in with. Whether it was a type of bark or what exactly?*

*Na*Anita explains that this was done specifically when a Ndebele girl started menstruating. Ntombi adds that the mixture had to be sipped directly from the bowl in which it was served or scooped using a wooden spoon but that it could not be eaten using the hands. In taking these four narratives into account we can conclude that *phoko* is believed to be an MHMMM. None of the women know what exactly was in the porridge. In the FDG, upon hearing these accounts, *Gogo* Betty responds pensively that this is no longer done for young Ndebele girls. This mixture of *iporridge eyophoko* is part of indigenous menstrual knowledge and preparation that has been lost over time. Among the daughters in the study, none of them mentioned *iporridge eyophoko* at all. Sanabria (2019) states that, "Various forms of care are extended to plants. They form part of kinship structures, and their genealogies may be entangled with those of the humans who domesticate and propagate them." The collective forgetting and loss of MHMMMs leads to the loss of kinship structures of care and knowledge on herbs and medicines used in the management of MHH. This care and knowledge of indigenous plants was once a type of reproductive labour-work transmitted from one generation to another. Could it be that this fragmented knowledge transmission is a contributing factor to the early unintended pregnancy crisis?

5.2.2 *Umbondo*: willow bark as a MHMMM

In the book, *Natural Plant Products: New Discoveries and Challenges in Chemistry and Quality*, Blumenthal pays homage to "medicinal plants of African origin and the some of the latest basic and clinical research supporting their ongoing and potential uses in self-care and healthcare" (2009:3). *Gogo* Bhekiwe started her period for the first time at school. She recalls that a prefect noticed that she had stained her uniform before she did. As a schoolgirl she was *eTown* (in town or in the city)[69]and not in rural Matabeleland but her older female relatives made sure to find *umbondo* for her still, as it was common practice for girls to consume it when they reached ménarche in the village. At home, she was given *umbondo* and instructed to chew it. *Gogo* Bhekiwe says she was given *umbondo* to decrease her blood flow and shorten the number of days that she would menstruate. *Umbondo* is a bush willow that bears large fruit (Amusan, 2009). In the same book, Amusan's chapter lists *umbondo* as a treatment for digestive disorders (2009). He describes it as a "root infusion is used for diarrhoea" (2009:31). Roots and barks have anti-inflammatory properties (Amusan, 2009), which would also be beneficial for abdominal cramping. It is possible that *umbondo* may have been one of the garnishings that *Na*Anita, *Gogo Na*Nambitha and *Gogo Ma*Gumede believe was placed in *iporridge eyophoko* remarks suggest that perhaps is what was placed inside *iporridge eyophoko*, or one of the ingredients. *Umbondo* therefore is another type of MHMMM used by the *amaNdebel*e.

Willow bark (in each of its variations) is known as "nature's aspirin" and "has been used for centuries as a pain reliever" (Goldman, 2017). The suppression of teenage girls' libidos and management of menstruation-related problems (e.g., *isilumo*) are forms of invisible reproductive labour-work performed by rural Ndebele women in Zimbabwe through the use of MHMMMs like *iporridge eyophoko le 'mbondo*. Plant remedies like *uphoko* and *umbondo* are sustainable and eco-friendly unlike pharmaceutical medication do not generate non-biodegradable waste. Not only this, they also represent colonial antecedents to commercialised menstrual management products. At various intervals of this dissertation, I have defined knowing as a form of reproductive labour-work. Therefore, knowledge of natural remedies for pain is reproductive labour-work that enables girls to manage menstruation and be (re)productive. This invisible reproductive labour-work is administered through the knowing and sourcing of pain remedies. Finally, the use of *umbondo* as a MHMMM demonstrate that even without the purchasable goods that are part of MoMs, menstruation can and has in the past been managed effectively by indigenous rural Ndebele women of

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[69] *Town* in Ndebele is a noun that signifies lexical borrowing; a colloquialism for *edolobheni* which means the urban area or city. It means the city; where there is urban development in contrast to the rural areas. When a participant said *etown* (in the city), they meant the City of Bulawayo.

Zimbabwe. Mahomoodally argues that "[African] knowledge systems are worth preserving and resurrecting rather than erasing through studies such as these piece together the fragmented knowledge in a written record. The extensive use of traditional medicine in Africa, composed mainly of medicinal plants, has been argued to be linked to cultural and economic reasons" (2013:1). This chapter is written up in the spirit of promoting the preservation and resurrection of African indigenous knowledge systems.

4.3 Conclusion

This chapter has used Connell's (1995) concept of the 'reproductive arena' to frame menstruation as gendered and embodied. It zooms in on menstruation as a unique reproductive arena navigated in schools as well as the village community. While Denise, Karen and, Nomvuyo and Thandeka all have their first period at home, other daughters like Khanyi and Lindo have their first period at school. School begins to gradually emerge as either the first encounter with menstrual information or supplements menstrual preparedness gained at the home; making the menstrual preparation of the younger Ndebele girls and women in this study multisited. The interviews have shown that menstrual preparedness is not just about the physiology of menstruation, i.e., menstrual literacy as covered in Science class or teachings on how to prevent early unintended pregnancy by not being 'touched' by boys in Guidance and Counselling class. Though these classes now consistently teach on menstruation, for some girls this curriculum-based menstrual knowledge was learned after they had reached with ménarche. Denise and Karen, for example only learned about menstruation in class a year after she had reached ménarche. Menstrual literacy as I conceptualise it is a part of menstrual preparation that involves normalising menstruation as a biological function and managing the social stigma around it, and in particular menstrual leaks and stains. Following ménarche, Ndebele girls receive a sexual socialisation that primes the value of comporting ones with sexual and abstaining from premarital sex restraint (*ukuziphatha kuhle*). I argue in this dissertation that this knowing of menstruation matters; sex and reproduction marks 'the beginning of the end' of childhood. The chapter illustrates different forms of reproductive labour-work that constitute menstrual preparedness, including the collective kin work of protecting of girls from sexual abuse and early and early sexual debut. It has shown how scope menstrual preparedness and first encounters of menstrual knowledge compare and contrast across three generations of Ndebele women. It also portrays these encounters as an introduction into a complex ecosystem of 'growing up' where kinfolk like female fathers (*obabakazi*), male mother (*omalume*); teachers and peer educators are key actors, while considering the widening rift between *babakazi* as a menstrual knowledge gatekeeper and culture-bearer. By spotlighting menarcheal experiences, the chapter has illustrated that culture, and by extension, the family is no longer the sole and central vehicle of transmitting knowledge about menstruation. The chapter has complicated our understanding of Ndebele girls' menstrual preparation as gendered reproductive labour-work by revealing that it not just female kinfolk who are involved but that male kinfolk like fathers and husbands also have specific part to play. It gives us appreciation of the sexual precarity of adolescence whereby girls are seen simultaneously as capable of reproduction but at the same time perceived as too young to reproduce. This chapter captures organic Ndebele MHMMMs as colonial antecedents to modern day biomedicalised markets of menstruation but also reveals that the indigenous knowledge around is growing gradually more fragmented.

CHAPTER 5: Domestic life & Reproductive labour-work

Chapter 4 gave a snapshot into the different layers of reproductive labour-work involved in menstrual preparedness. Chapter 5 reveals that ménarche, apart from marking the body as female, also marks the body as growing older and more able to take on responsibility. The induction into this reproductive labour-work in domestic life initiates girls into the world of gender and women's work that moulds them into adult women (*abafazi*); future wives (*omakoti*), dutiful daughters-in-law (*omalukazana*) and mothers (*omama*). As we continue to focus the lens of reproductive labour-work on Ndebele girls, we witness their socialisation into gender and visible productivity through their incremental involvement in the domestic division of labour. This division of labour represents reproductive labour-work that is both gendered and gender fluid, as it is negotiated around necessity and the gender distribution of a homestead. Finally, the chapter gives a glimpse into the ways in which Ndebele women monetise domestic labour into remunerable work. I have at various junctures of this essay indicated the importance of productivity Ndebele rural life; this chapter will show how menstruation also activates a different set of reproductive labour-work located within the home – giving a better glimpse into how Ndebele girls are socialised into becoming (re)productive. It reviews the changing shape of the Zimbabwean family shining while destabilising heteronormative gender binaries by giving a glimpse into female fathers (*obabakazi*) and male mothers (*omalume*) in relation to their role in the upbringing of Ndebele girls.

5.1 Family & its role in reproductive success: *omalume* & *ukucola*

Family support structures are key to ensuring reproductive success for Ndebele girls as *abafazi*, *omalukazana* and *omama*. However, there are changes in society that witness to the decline in reproductive success. Kang'ethe and Itai (2014) attribute modernisation and westernisation to the erosion of cultural values. They state that the resultant new norms give rise to higher rates of divorce, premarital pregnancy and different forms of matrifocality in Zimbabwe (Kang'ethe & Itai, 2014). It is their view that single motherhood is on the incline on account of women's liberation (which is a driver of divorce rates in Zimbabwe) and is a response to the discontent and abuses that women have and continue to suffer under patriarchal oppression (Kang'ethe & Itai, 2014). The preservation of one's virginity until marriage as a virtue intrinsic to Ndebele culture that was mostly upheld until the 1990s, but we see that in recent times premarital pregnancy and matrifocality (including single motherhood) are on the rise. As I mentioned on page 81, I noted the prevalence of matrifocality in the homesteads in the village of Sikelela. Most of the grandmothers in the study were the heads of their matrifocal households, having been either widowed or divorced. Two out of the three young mothers (aged 20-29 years) were also single mothers.

*Gogo Ma*Gumede articulates how she sees relationships as having changed over the decades. She says that back in her day,

> *If you took a liking to a man or he to you, you were not meant to rush into having sex. If you look around at girls nowadays, things are very different. Because if you rush to have sex you can fall pregnant, and the father of that child may not commit to you. Then you find yourself in another relationship and you can end up having children by different men.*
>
> *Relations were not as flimsy as they are today. If you had a romance with a boy and he left for work, say in South Africa, you were expected to stay faithful and wait for him until he returned. That was how you showed that you would be a wife for life. Not like now, where girls move on so fast. The minute that she feels she has not heard from her lover in a long time, she then finds someone else and perhaps her old lover returns but now she is involved with someone else, and her previous relationship cannot be cemented.*

*Gogo Ma*Gumede cautions against hurrying into premarital sex as it may jeopardise the chances of marriage if a deep enough bond has not been developed. *Gogo Ma*Gumede's comments give us an insight into labour migration as a driving force behind gradually disintegrating familial and romantic relationships. As I mentioned on page 36, Goldsmith defines reproductive success as "having both parents invest time and energy in defense of breeding grounds, and the care of the young" (1991:41). In the Ndebele culture, the kin work of guarding against early sexual debut, early unintended pregnancy and premarital sex promotes their reproductive success as future mothers in stable, two-parent households. This reproductive labour-work is active at ménarche. Based on Goldsmith's definition, fidelity; marriage; collective parenting; motherhood; and co-parental investment are aspects of what would be described as "reproductive success". Then conversely, serial dating; multiple concurrent partnerships (MCPs); divorce; lack of male parental involvement/single motherhood would most likely be seen as reproductive 'failure'. This coincides with Becker's (1963) theorisation on deviance whereby he argues that deviance is defined by some sectors of society as the product of mental illness. By this analogy, "Divorce is illness because it signals failure of marriage" (Szasz 1961; cited Becker, 1963:5). While I do not agree with this application of deviance, it helps to explain how reproductive failure is codified into a set of social ills.

Lindo[1] (aged 19) and Thandazo (aged 24) are both single mothers. At the time of my fieldwork, Thandazo was pregnant with her second child. Her unborn child and her son (aged 8 years old at the time of the study) have different fathers. She is a cautionary example of the dangers of premarital sex that *Gogo Ma*Gumede describes above. Lindo's mother, *Na*Lindo, also explains in her interview that she only came to her husband's home in marriage when her son by him was aged 6 years old. Her time of single motherhood before marriage may have been seen as a reproductive failure. Elders in Sikelela believe that single motherhood, if not guarded against closely, can be passed on from one generation to another. During the second FGD, they express the hope that pregnant unmarried young mothers may make a final reproductive success of themselves by either marrying the father of their child or another man so that their children will have a positive example to emulate. As we learned in Chapter 4, *babakazi* safeguards a Ndebele girl's relationships with the opposite sex, encouraging her alongside other female relatives to abstain from sex. *babakazi* is the person that young girl can introduce to the young man she is involved with, particularly if their relationship is becoming serious. *Na*Milisuthando (aged 44) explains that "*ubabakazi* is playful in her relations with a girl's partner". She goes on to add that, "*ubabakazi* can expedite the process 'off the record' of a girl getting married (*lobola*[2]) to her partner if she is pregnant and would like to be married before she begins showing". In this way, *babakazi* is not only a gatekeeper of menstrual knowledge but she is also a culture-bearer to formalising romantic relationships.

In would extend Goldsmith's theorisation of reproductive success to Ndebele customary marriage and male parental investment as reproductive successes, we can refer to the Ndebele custom known as *ukucola*. This custom took place when a man took responsibility for impregnating a woman. A study by Nyathi (2005) found that traditionally, the Ndebele had a practice of leaving a tuft of hair on the back of the head known as *icholo*[3] as overleaf in Figure 15 to denote marital status.

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[1] cf. page 83

[2] See 143 for a more detailed discussion of *lobola*.

[3] *isicholo* is a Zulu headdress that originates from the Ndebele *icholo* hairstyle, known in Zulu as *isicholo*. In the 1800s when the Zulu army was defeated by the British, and colonised "women began wearing hats that mimicked this hairstyle instead of the hairstyle itself". However, the more contemporary *isicholo* is woven out of ochre-dyed string or commercial red wool. See Appendix A, page 233 and https://www.sarajo.com/product/zulu-hat-isicholo/.

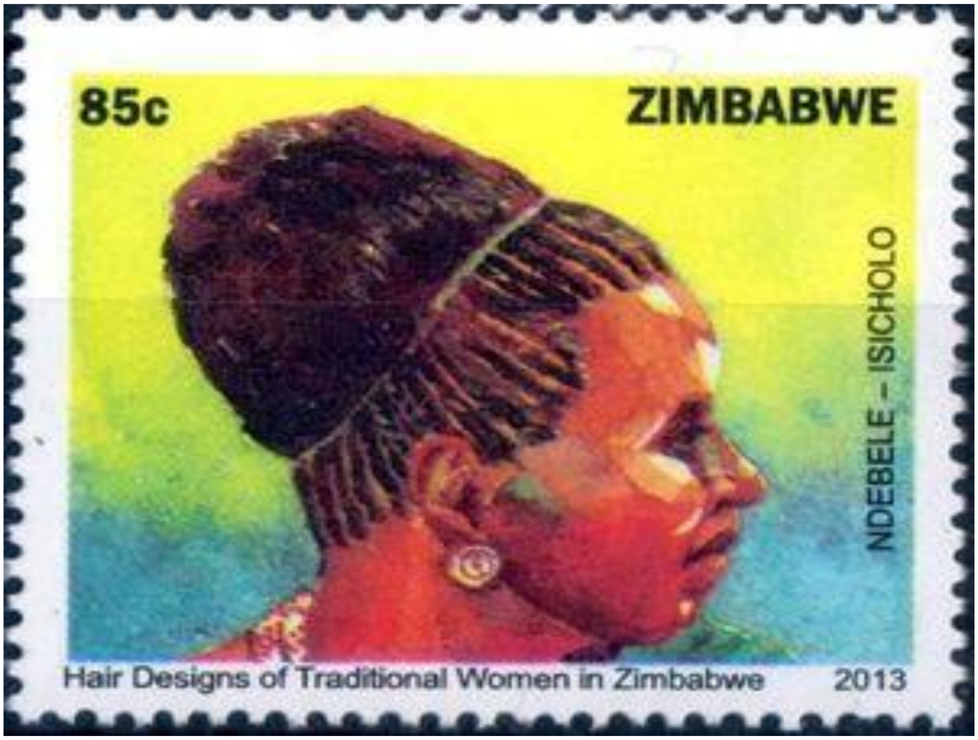
85c
ZIMBABWE
NDEBELE – ISICHOLO
Hair Designs of Traditional Women in Zimbabwe
2013

Figure 15: Image of Ndebele ***icholo/isicholo***

Source: https://colnect.com/en/stamps/stamp/563700-Ndebele-Isicholo-Hair_Design_of_Traditional_Women-Zimbabwe

In Nyathi's study, one of his respondents explains that "as soon as a woman had a child, she wore *icholo*. However, *icholo* was mostly worn by a married woman" (2005:23). As you will see in Appendix B (page 234), *isicholo* is worn proudly on celebratory occasions like the *lobola* day. This custom of wearing *icholo* crystallises the idea of marriage and *ukucola* (the action of a man taking paternal responsibility) as reproductive successes in Ndebele culture.

In the second FGD, there was a general feeling that reproductive failure can be attributed to the poor guidance of girls by elders. This is because a child is "a reflection of the family and the community" that they are raised in (Mkhwanazi, 2014a:109). *Gogo Ma*Gumede's comments on page 117 reflect the same. She describes early sexual debut and early unintended pregnancy as events that can interferes with a girl's education and future income earning power. She attributes this to rural to urban labour migration saying that "Splintered families, where children are left on their own in town without adult guidance with elders like the child's grandparents in the village, girls fall by the wayside and end up falling pregnant".

Another factor contributing to the proliferation of grandparent-headed households was the HIV epidemic which brought with it a rise in widowhood and orphanhood. Zagheni highlights that, "households headed by grandparents or adolescents increased in the 1990s" (2011:766). Zimbabwean families rely on fostering by extended family in the event of crises (Zagheni, 2011). In such crises, Ndebele girls would be fostered by *obabakazi* and *omalume*. However, death rates due to the epidemic saw the depletion of kinship resources. An increasing proportion of double orphans were left without living grandparents and this gave rise to many child-headed households (CHHs). CHHs became a prevalent new family unit in Sub-Saharan Africa (Francis-Chizororo, 2008). The epidemic witnessed development discourse begin to attribute reproductive failure in Zimbabwe to infidelity framed as the engagement in MCPs which increase the risk of HIV and mortality; parental non-involvement; and single motherhood.

Gogo Nkosazana adds to our understanding of the role of *malume* in the Ndebele family. She stresses that:

> *Even illegitimate children [of his sister] were brought up by him. In the Ndebele culture in the absence or death of a mother and her sisters (**mamomdala/mamomncane**) you have to find her brothers (**omalume**) to assume the role of caregiver of a mother's children. My mother is deceased, and if I were to pass on; given I have no surviving sisters, my daughter would need to tell my **omalume** of my demise before everyone else. In the absence of a mother **omalume** are like mothers.*

Gogo Nkosazana brings out the 'male mother'[4] role of *umalume* when she highlights how would step in to raise the children of his sister who born out of wedlock, particularly if his sister married a man who wanted no part in raising another man's children. In this way, he rallied around her in favour of her reproductive success in matrimony. *Gogo* Nkosazana specifies that it is very important for her *omalume* to be notified of her passing. This is especially important to her because mother is late and so her *omalume* are her mothers now. A girl who is raised by a *malume, uyalotshlwa komalume wakhe* (is married off customarily by her *malume*)[5]. This practice stresses that an orphaned girl child was one who still had a home where she would be married off[6]. This role of *omalume* in fostering is witnessed on page 108 where in the absence of her mother, Karen is being raised by her grandmother and her *malume*. Her *malume* even buys her sanitary wear when she reaches ménarche. We come to appreciate that the family supports Ndebele women in achieving reproductive success amidst winds of change that are sweeping across society.

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[4] I have highlighted how the paternal aunt (*babakazi*) is a female father. It follows then that she would stand in, in the event of the loss of a father. In a similar fashion the maternal uncle (*umalume*) stands in as a kind of 'male mother' in the absence of a mother.

[5] whereas a girl with a living father is alive and has always assumed parental responsibility is married off customarily at her father's home

[6] See 144 for more on *lobola* and *ukulotsholwa.*

Chapter 4 highlighted how the kin work of keeping girls safe is not definitively gendered and how male relatives are co-opted into this reproductive labour-work through specific cultural protocols. In this chapter we see that like *babakazi*, *malume* too plays an important role in promoting reproductive success. In taking this into account, I expand Goldsmith's conceptualisation of reproductive success to collective parenting and having foster networks to take up the parental roles in the event of absent parents, orphanhood and widowhood. There is a tendency to deal with gender, and by extension, gender and development (GAD) as women's issues. This sweeps gender under the rug by ignoring the interaction and involvement of men. This study reveals that, like female relatives; peers; and teachers, there are men – in particular male relatives like *ubaba* (the male father), *umalume* and *usibare*, who are involved in the menstrual preparation of Ndebele girls. By considering the status of women and girls alongside their interactions and power relations with their male counterparts, this study prevents the distillation of women's issues from gender. It contrasts Western beliefs around menstruation that perpetuate a "politics of taboo" (Risling Baldy, 2017:23) and distort localised interactions and entanglements of humanity, sexuality and gender in Africa through western transpositions.

5.2 Reproductive labour-work & the second shift

Not only is the family integral to reproductive success through its support structures, but it is also a site where we can locate the reproductive labour-work of traditional value transmission. Within the family, the reproductive labour-work of girls' domestic chores (*imisebenzi yamankazana*) are used to inscribe a Ndebele girl's gender identity as is she is groomed into a productive future adult, mother, wife and *malukazana*. It is a form of reproductive labour-work that is also age-specific, for the burden of women's work grows heavier and gradually intensifies as a girl grows older taking on new social responsibilities. This socialisation into chores is activated in adolescence, particularly after ménarche so that the same division of domestic labour is *re*produced in adulthood as the second shift. Chapter 4 gave a glimpse into women's role in the educational and formative functions surrounding menstruation, sex(uality) and reproduction. Chapter 5 will now demonstrate how the economic function of the family continues while being absorbed and invisibilised by its educational and formative functions; functions of which are performed disproportionately by women. I visibilise the reproductive labour-work of Ndebele girls and women by casting a light on the double day that is absorbed by girls of school-going age who attend school as part of the first shift and also participate in chores as part the second shift.

5.2.1 Menstruation: an initiation into the world of gender & women's work

For the Ndebele girl, menstruation heralds the initiation into the active world of gendered responsibilities and women's reproductive labour-work. As mentioned on page 42, Diallo (2004) – writing on Mali – points to menstruation as a defining moment for gender and sexual socialisation. She makes a direct link between domestic labour and ménarche pointing out that, "Up to the menstrual period, the young girl has no explicit access to information on sexuality. Instead, she is voluntarily kept in the dark on that subject, while fully involved in learning her gender roles through an active participation in domestic chores" (Diallo, 2004:184). The same is true in Zimbabwe. Chores carried out by the rural Ndebele girl child in Zimbabwe are referred to as *imisebenzi yamankazana*. Translated literally, this means "girls' work". There is an inference that household work is divided between genders and thereby gendered. However, necessity can render work gender-fluid. For example, "when there is no boy in the family, girls herd animals", says *Gogo* Betty. When asked when girls begin to do chores, she states that, "In rural areas they start at a very early age; as early as pre-school from 5 or 6 years; fetching water carrying 2 litre or 5 litre bottles." She goes on to explain that at from the seventh grade (official expected age of 12 years) they are helping with all the household work from washing to cleaning and even ironing. This is not dissimilar to the findings of a 2019 report by Plan International[7] Zimbabwe that describes the process of girls taking on more responsibility at the age of 10. The report notes that girls of this age would get "lessons in cooking, fetching firewood and how to treat or respect [*ukuhlonipha*] the opposite sex". This gradual intensification of responsibilities is not unlike the way in which the Southern Ndebele initiation ceremony of *ukuthombisa* whereby girls are instructed by the village elders (i.e., grandmothers) on their obligations and practices of homemaking[8]. Both initiations (ceremonial and informal) introduce Ndebele girls into the world of women's work as they are concertedly moulded into productive future wives.

According to *Gogo* Betty, even in the absence of a boy or a son in the family, "younger girls herd smaller animals like goats" while older girls can herd larger animals such as cattle. This is congruent to the UNICEF 2016 *Harnessing the Power of Data for Girls* report which highlights that there is a gradual intensification in the division of labour of girls aged 5-9 years and 10-14 years. Dangarembga (2004:16; cited in Ndhlovu, 2019) confesses that, "Th[e] business of womanhood is a very heavy burden". The multiplicity and taken-for-granted nature of this burden obscures the heavy weight it bears on women's shoulders. For example, Okin (1989; cited in Lamb & Vincent, 2011) argues that the lack of conceptual separation of childbearing from childrearing renders the family an overlooked site at which gender imbalances and (reproductive) injustices could be dismantled. In the same vein, the Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO) found that "Cultural expectations continue to be a barrier to women's economic and social empowerment in Zimbabwe. Despite the heavy workload and gender roles that women perform, they have the additional burden of providing care for sick and elderly family members" (FAO, 2017). Care work is a form of invisible reproductive labour-work as I state in Chapter 2 on page 48. In our attempts to render the taken-for-granted work of women visible in this chapter, I turn to the family and domestic life to shine a light on the invisible labour-work of Ndebele rural women and girls that is negotiated through a complex social ecosystem that socialises girls and builds up communities. We learned from Chapter 4 that among priorly prepared; poorly prepared, or unprepared girls and women alike; there are two sides of the coin when it comes to what menstrual blood represents. On one side it signals danger and reproductive capability but on the other it is symbolic of reproductive potential and a victorious war-like triumph over girlhood. This chapter illustrates the other side of the coin following the onset of ménarche, whereby menstruation represents a symbolic transition into motherhood, marriage and wifehood. Once ménarche has begun, the reproductive labour-work burden of girls is gradually increased as they grow older so that Ndebele girls become (a) proxy adults, (b) proxy mothers and (c) proxy wives to prepare them for the reproductive burden of these life events (if and) when they arrive.

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[7] Plan International is a global children's charity with a special focus on the rights of the girl child.

[8] https://southafrica.co.za/ndebele-initiation-and-rites-of-passage.html

Lever comments that "Children's socialization is assumed to have consequences for their adult lives" (1976:478). By way of illustration, one of the daughters in the study, Nomvuyo explains to me at the beginning of her IDI that when her mother consented to her attending the interview she was especially approving because the venue was a distance away and would give an opportunity to make sales to new customers on the back and forth. In her interview, Nomvuyo tells me that after ménarche, which for her began at the age of 14, she began to tag along with her mother when she is selling her wares. In this process she is taught how to sell goods and by the time of my interview she was selling wares on her own. We see with Nomvuyo's initiation into the world of gender and women's reproductive labour-work that ménarche apart from marking a body as female, also marks the body as growing older and more able to take on responsibility. Hence, we see that her induction into this reproductive labour-work initiates girls into productive work that contributes to the household income. This chapter will build on such narratives to demonstrate the ways in which the socialisation of Ndebele girls into reproductive labour-work in the household is an active part of moulding them into (re)productive women, future wives and mothers.

5.2.2 “Doing gender”: the gender fluidity of reproductive labour-work in Zimbabwe

West and Zimmerman argue that gender unlike sex is “an achieved status: that which is constructed through psychological, cultural, and social means” (1987:125). West and Zimmerman stress that gender is a learned performativity. Chapter 5 thus far has revealed how gender is also a learned performativity – a ‘doing of gender’ – learned through relationality. This relationality is performed as *imisebenzi yamankazana* (girls’ chores) and what participants referred to as *imisebenzi enzima* (hard labour), which is *imisebenzi yabafana*. Gogo Betty explains to me that boys and men do *imisebenzi enzima,* like going taking the harvest to the mill (*isigayo*) for it to be ground into grain meal; herding cattle; chopping down logs and for fencing in livestock and for fires, used for cooking and keeping warm. *imisebenzi yamankazana* has changed slightly. For example, *Gogo Na*Nambitha recalls that *sasisindwa ngobulongwe*. The *ukusinda* verb means to is ‘to weigh down’. She remembers being weighed down by the burdensome chore of polishing floors of black treated cow dung. She also recalls *ukucola ngamatshe* (grinding grain using a stone). However, grandmothers, mothers and girls consistently described chores like:

- washing certain kitchen utensils, e.g., the wooden cooking spoons (*amaphehlo lamaphini*) for making *isitshwala;*
- fetching water *(ukukha amanzi*) from the well or river to be used for washing (personal hygiene, food; pots and utensils)*;*
- gather firewood (*ukutheza inkuni*) for cook; and
- sweeping (*ukuthanyela*) as *imisebenzi yamankazana*

Hunter (1933) notes the division of labour among the Xhosa-speaking Mpondo of South Africa (cf. page 114) “was conditioned by necessities”. She was cognizant that both men and women were involved “some basket work” for example. Similarly in the list above both girls and boys gather firewood for cooking. Necessities can transform the division of labour. In this study I will take this insight a step further by demonstrating how the division of domestic labour (itself of form of reproductive labour-work that contributes to the sustenance of a household) is gender-fluid.

Every morning in rural Zimbabwe, the cattle are taken out of their kraals by boys and led out to open plains so that they can graze. Herding livestock is considered to be *imisebenzi yabafana*. However, not all Ndebele homes distinguish between the work to be done by girls and that to be done by boys. In some homes, Ndebele boys are expected to be able to cook and clean because marriage does not necessarily follow immediately after a man leaves the homestead. A rural Ndebele may go and find employment in the city before finding a wife. Geschiere explains that “Young men are compelled to seek paid employment in modern sectors because they must earn money for the brideprice" (1982:15). Ntombi, aged 47 at the time of the study recounts that as a girl, at her home, there were many women, including her own older sisters and *omalukazana* (sisters-in-law). This meant that there were enough hands tending to the domestic labour at home even without her taking up her role as *intombazana*[9] *yasekhaya* (a daughter of the house). So, when Ntombi was young she did *imisebenzi yabafana*. Early in the morning at around 7:00 am, she would leave the homestead to heard cattle with the other herdboys in her family, only returning with them for lunch until coming back home in the evening. She declares proudly, "The first milk (*imthubi*) was eaten by us herdboys!"

Umthubi is colostrum, which is the first form of milk that a cow produces after it has delivered a calf. According to *amasiko*, this milk is not to be consumed by the household, but herdboys can milk it from a cow and consume it while the cows are out grazing or inside the cattle kraal[10]. This narrative bespeaks of the fluidity of gender roles as Ntombi was not treated like an honorary 'herdgirl' but enjoyed the full privileges accorded to herdboys. It is worth considering this consumption of colostrum as a kind of rewarded of the work of herding cattle. In this way, herding is visible even in the mundanity of rural life rhythms, unlike much of the largely overlooked reproductive labour-work done by girls and women. I argue here that Ntombi must become a 'son' from a daughter to be rewarded for her work, whereas the work of women is typically gratuitous.

*Gogo Na*Nambitha explains that where there is no son in the family, daughters will herd the livestock and conversely, if there were no daughters, cooking would be done by boys. Therefore, cow herding ceased to be *imisebenzi enzima yabafana* (hard labour done by the boys) and conversely cooking ceased to be *imisebenzo yamankazana*. Necessity transforms them into gender-fluid domestic chores. Also, we see that the wood chopped down by men is not just for supplying the male activity of building cattle kraals or fencing in livestock, the wood is also put to domestic use in the kitchen and at the homestead. If men were able to gather enough firewood or fetch enough water, it would be used by girls and women for their tasks too. Hence the domestic labour among the Ndebele is centred more on necessity than gender division. We learn that if there was no son or if there was an abundance of women to do "women's work", then a girl could be taught *imisebenzi yabafana* (boy's work), as we learn from Ntombi's childhood recollection of cow herding, cow herding for her was "doing gender" as a boy; a herdboy – male daughter. In highlighting the fluidity of gender in Zimbabwe, I point to the generalised misconception(s) that gender and gender roles are fixed. While there is a gendered division of labour, no work is inflexibly assigned to either one gender. This is because people (Ndebele, African, or otherwise) are capable of adopting different, sometimes conflicting, roles and values depending on circumstance (Helle-Valle, 2004:196). I am mindful that this anecdote not a universal picture of rural life in on the continent. It is, however, indicative of the gender fluidity in Ndebele rural life. For example, Ndlovu and Mjimba found that management of livestock is an activity that women, especially widows, in Umzingwane District are taking ownership of "to preserve family wealth" (2021:5) and this is as a result of rising levels of matrifocality. The trend is also an emerging trend in Botswana (Petitt, 2017; cited in Ndlovu and Mjimba, 2021).

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[9] cf. footnote 23, page 71-2

This was before she began menstruating.

[10] It was meant to be boiled. An elder from the village said that *umthubi* is typically consumed as porridge. One boils the *'mthubi* adding mealie meal to it into until it gradually changes consistency becoming porridge. Engebretsen *et al*. (2014) explain that there are "[African] traditional practices such as expressing and discarding of colostrum due to a belief it contains dirt, giving feeds as part of religious ceremonies and other rituals have also disturbed the vulnerable early feeding period". The boiling of colostrum was believed to purify the milk for consumption. See also Iliyasu *et al.* (2006) and Davies-Adetugbo (1997) regarding these traditional practices.

ukukha amanzi from the communal boreholes is typically "women's work" as can be seen depicted in Figure 16. Rural Ndebele women who use *inkatha* (a cloth that is placed on the head) to help balance a bucket of water on the head as shown below:

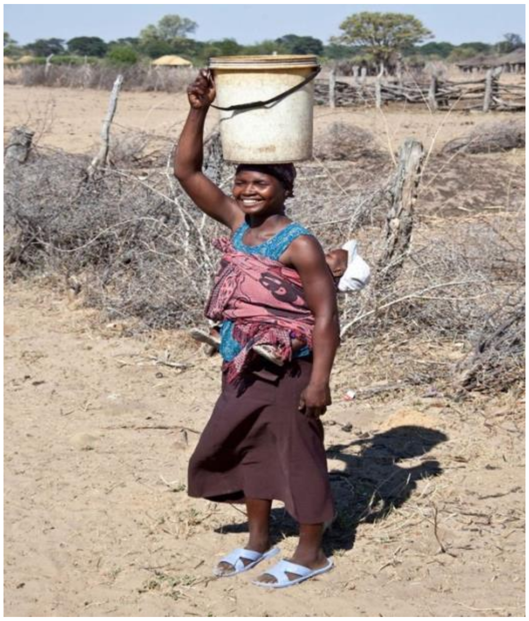

Figure 16: Photograph of woman balancing a water bucket backs ***ebelethile umntwana*** *(while carrying a baby on her back) in Zimbabwe*[11]

Photographer: Edward Schonsett

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[11] See page 152 for discussion about *ukubhabhula*.

Hochschild and Machung argue that “women more often do two [or more] things at once” (2012:9), e.g., *ukubeletha umntwana* and fetching water balanced on the head with *inkatha*. This simultaneity is part of a heavy burden of invisible reproductive labour-work that is overlooked. The gendered division of labour in African rural life is reflected in homosocial spaces such as those that you see in Figure 17 (below).

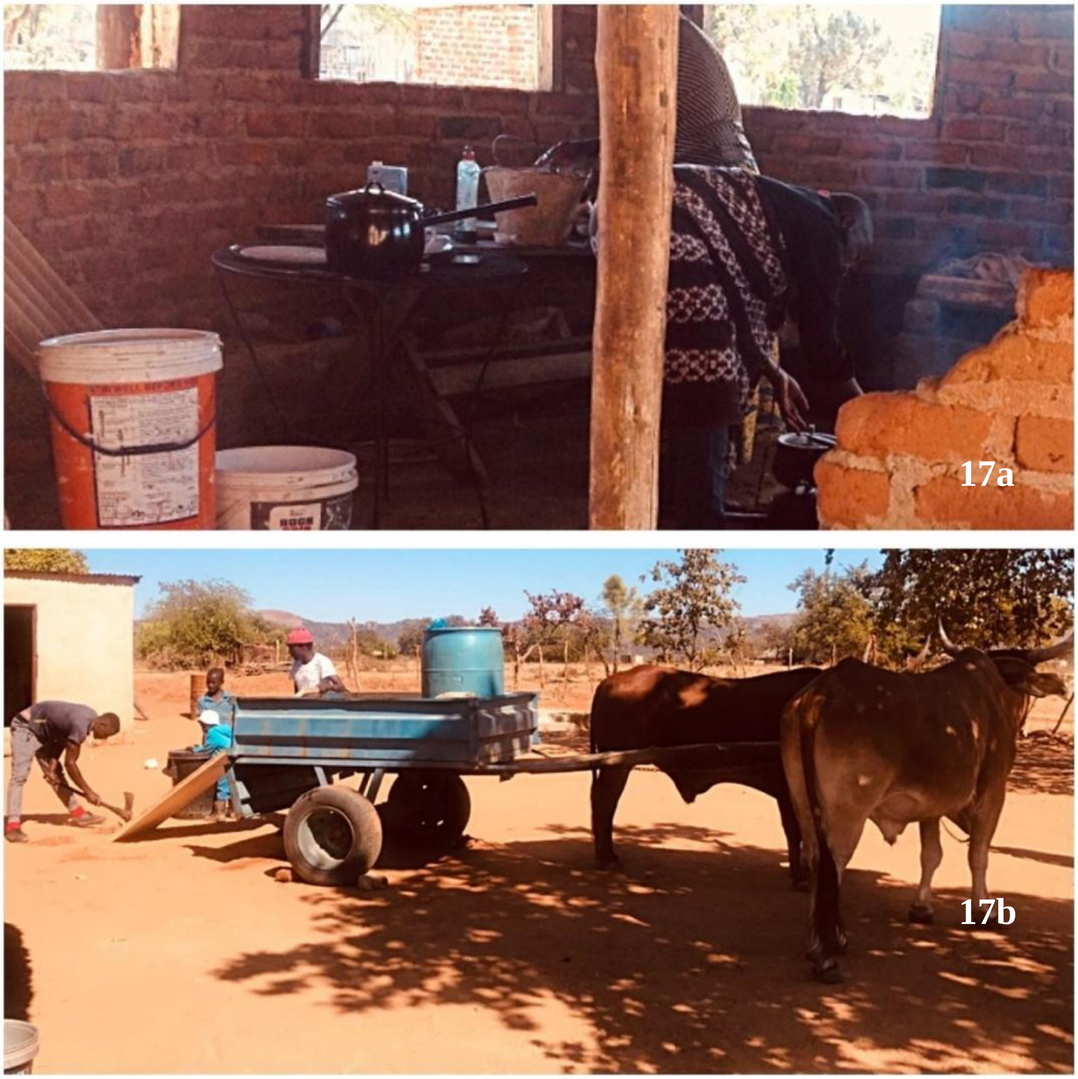

Figure 17: Picture collage of gendered workspaces in Sikelela daily life rhythms

Shown in Figure 17a below are two Ndebele women in the kitchen washing dishes and below in 17b are two Ndebele men with a young boy who have just returned from the well and are devising a means of unloading 50-litre container of water from the cart. The two spaces signify home and work realms, each often respectively gendered male and female. However, the boundaries are collapsible as one may become an extension of the other based on the needs of household and the performance of an activity. For example, when water is required in bulk for the household it constitutes *imisebenzi enzima* (hard labour) done by men. As shown in 21b, the same yoked cattle that would be used to in the 'work' realm of the field where crops are subsisted for consumption and sale cart driven by cattle may be employed to fill and fetch large(r) barrels of water that will be used in the home realm. These larger barrels of water supplement the smaller 2-5 litre containers that girls and women fetch water with as can be seen in Figure 17. The collapsibility of the home-work boundaries signifies unity and collaborative effort that are the fabric of rural life-work rhythms. The philosophy of *ubuntu* (cf. Fig. 7, page 52) renders the work of the household communal work hence each member of the household realises that it is their collective responsibility to meet the needs of the household (e.g., nourishment, hydration and sanitation) through everyone participating in different forms of reproductive labour-work. With this in mind, women will not rigidly distance themselves from *imisebenzi enzima* and equally men may participate in "women's work". Equally, the structure of Zimbabwean families has evolved as described in Section 5.1 and the rise of matrifocality, for example, may mean that there are no men in the household. In such *imisebenzi enzima* is performed by women and girls. However, as *ubuntu* dictates, they may also be assisted by kinsfolk (what international development discourse refers to as 'volunteers')[12] in community.

In line with this utilitarian fluidity, there was a helper named Keith at *Gogo* Betty's where I resided. Keith was employed to help *Gogo* as she lives alone suffers from deteriorating health. He would assist with tasks such as cleaning and cooking even with me being now present at the homestead to help *Gogo* with some of the "women's work". Before my arrival Keith and *Gogo* had long established their own work-rhythm structured around her need. This did not make him a 'houseboy' and restrict him from working in the field. His role as *Gogo*'s helper shows that *imisebenzi* is conditioned by necessity and not gender. It is also worth mentioning that I straddled the ambiguous line of both guest and villager and as a result, *Gogo* would not hear of my involvement in time-consuming labour-work that would take away time from my research. So even though I was an extra pair of female hands for *imisebenzi yamankazana*, *Gogo* and Keith's gender-fluid domestic division of labour arrangement continued on as it had before. *Gogo* to would also do *imisebenzi enzima* like mending the fence around her *muzi* herself.

Finally, in considering the types of work performed by rural women in Zimbabwe, it is worth noting that the vast majority of rural women work on family's (farm)land without remuneration until they get married. Upon marriage, they in turn work on their husband's land or his family's land while also working in a household enterprise (e.g., weaving; odd jobs such as caregiving) – the latter of which is done to generate an income. I observed that Kazi, one of the mothers at the 5 mothers at the first FGD, worked as a part-time domestic worker for *Gogo* Betty. She would help with cooking, baking, cleaning and handwashing clothes at *Gogo* Betty's home. Kazi's work represents Gerstel's *third shift* - "caregiving [carried out] *outside* the home – whether informally to relatives and friends or more formally to neighbours and strangers served by volunteer groups" (2000:467). However, this is not solely an altruistic form of work instead it is a monetised third shift for which Kazi is paid. This is the kind of reproductive labour-work that lies on the interface of invisible and visible work. Kazi's rural double day is obscured –because there is no formalised money trail (e.g., payslips) but she is remunerated for this work.

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[12] See page 141 and 163 for further discussion around NGO volunteers.

McCafferty and McCafferty state that, "In addition to weaving, childbearing and food preparation are two key areas of women's sphere of action (1996:443). They go on to explain that "Weaving (resulting in cloth) and parturition (resulting in babies) both display women's generative capability". When considered this way, it is easy to see weaving more clearly as considered an invisible form of reproductive labour-work resulting wicker baskets. As a welcome gift for visiting the village and living with the villagers for a time, I was given a gift of a woven wicker bowl made by one of the elders in the village (see Figure 18 below).

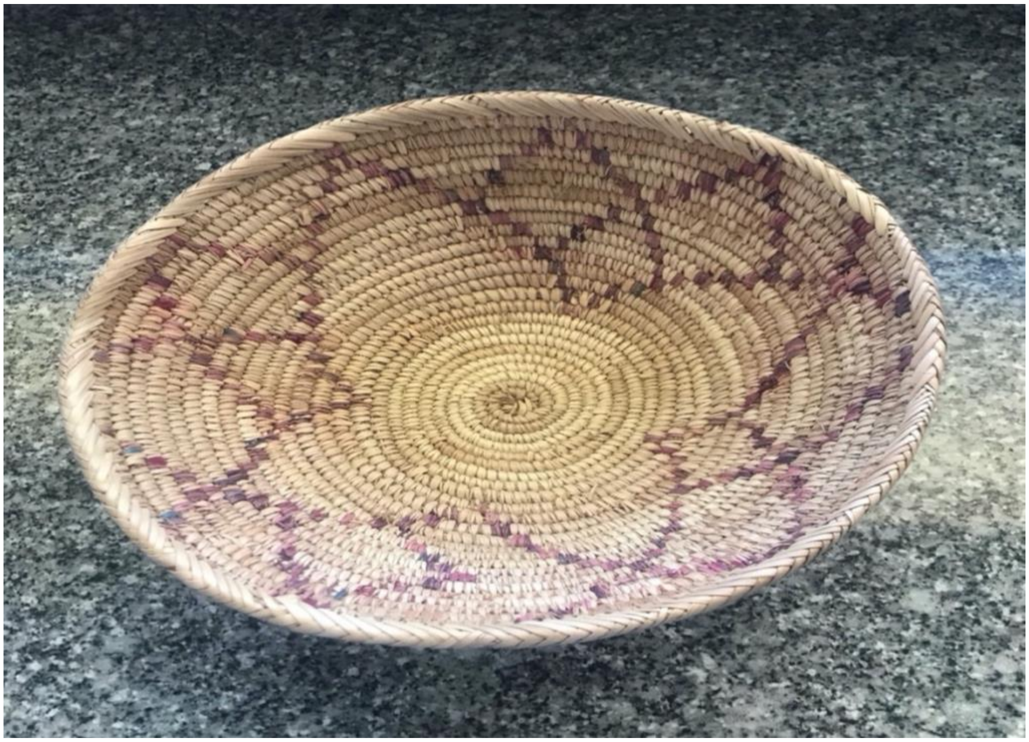

*Figure 18: Photograph of **ingcebethu**, Ndebele wicker bowl that I was given as a gift by an elder of Sikelela*

As can be seen in Figure 18, this *ingcebethu* is of a quality that could be sold commercially, making this type of labour-work the sort that truly signifies that intersection between work and labour. For just as it can be used in the home for practical purposes like holding food, it can be monetised through sale and purchase.

Duffy describes it aptly when she explains that:

> *Although feminists have argued that reproductive labo[u]r produces value, and that the sustainability of productive labo[u]r and of society itself depends on it, domestic activities remain largely defined in contrast to work. And when those domestic activities are performed by paid workers, they seem to retain their invisibility as labo[u]r* (Duffy, 2007:316).

The nature of Kazi's third shift at *Gogo* Betty's homestead is further complicated by the fact that work is *ad hoc* and performed on a need-basis. Its irregularity contributes to its invisibility as there may be weeks where this paid reproductive labour-work is not carried out at all – either because it is not needed, or *Gogo* Betty cannot pay for it. In which case Kazi also may choose to simply take it on as a volunteeristic, unpaid third shift. There are also various cadres of community-based workers in Sikelela who are also villagers. The health facility (cf. Fig. 16, page 137) is a modern institution and following Zimbabwe's independence from Britain in 1980, the country's Ministry of Health adopted a focus on "disease prevention and provid[ing] community [health]care at the primary level in rural and peri-urban wards". This signified an emphasis on primary health care (Sanders, 1993). Zimbabwe transitioned from a "curative, urban-based and minority-focused health care system to one which emphasized health promotion and prevention and provided some acceptable level of health care to the majority rural population" (Woelk, 1994). *Gogo NaKitty's* reproductive narrative helps us to witness the changes brought about by this policy shift. She explains that went she gave birth, "There were clinics at the time". She was in the City of Bulawayo, and she gave birth in a hospital in contrast to a home birth. This formalisation of healthcare in the rural areas gives birth to a cadre called village health workers (VHWs) who link (remote) rural communities to the formal health system (Shelley, n.d.). VHWs were integral to the fight against the HIV as they were tasked with collecting medication from the nearest health facility, which in some parts of Zimbabwe could be as far as 120 kilometres. VHWs also deliver medication.[13] *Gogo* Betty explains that there are community volunteers in Sikelela who do work not unlike the third shift reproductive labour-work that Kazi does at her home. These volunteers also help the elderly without children who cannot afford help with labour around their homestead. Musick and Wilson state that, “Volunteering is a form of altruistic behaviour. Its goal is to provide help to others, a group, an organization, a cause or a community at large, without expectation of material reward” (Musick & Wilson, 2007:3). For them, “volunteering is defined as unpaid work *for an organization*” (Musick & Wilson, 2007:13). The organisations that these volunteers are coordinated through are community-based. These organisations are a site witnessing to the interaction between development and rural life-work rhythms as “volunteers”[14] (an altruistic cadre constructed in development discourse that does unpaid body work) emerge to espouse *ubuntu* in caring for elderly kinfolk. I make a distinction between the archetypical kinsfolk I describe in Figure 7 (page 52) and volunteers because these volunteers may not be salaried, however they may receive a stipend for travel expenses or food like VHWs.

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[13] https://allafrica.com/stories/201903050471.html

After few years of marriage and having had children, *Gogo Na*Kitty left her husband. When she leaves her husband, she begins selling wares to generate an income. She eventually becomes a community-based distributor of family planning. She describes how she would travel through the village, “teaching about family planning and age spacing”. She goes on to explain that “Age spacing refers to birth intervals between siblings in families”. It is through women like *Gogo Na*Kitty and their narratives that we see the intersection of public development discourse and the personal narratives of rural Ndebele women. Her life knits together to the central question: *What is the scope of preparation that Ndebele girls undergo for ménarche/menstruation?* At a micro-level she is influencing reproductive health coverage and TFR. She successfully generates an income to support her family even though her schooling was disrupted, and she was not able to complete her education. *Gogo Na*Kitty is a human face through whom the bodies of women and girls *and* the reproductive labour-work that they do are rendered more visible in development discourse. Through her we are able to make connections between gender, health and education.

The reproductive narratives of the Ndebele girls and women in this study have brought out some of the connections between the seemingly invisible “second shift” (Hochschild & Machung, 2012) that they do which contributes RMHNCH+A; well-being and well-becoming of the household. Karen, *Gogo Na*Nambitha, Gogo Betty and Ntombi each give us insights into the ways in which gender roles are fluid and socially inscribed rather than biologically determined. *amaNdebele* do not confine gender and their gendered division of domestic labour to a rigid biologically determined heteronormative binary of male and female. For the Ndebele, gender is a verb, a doing word – “doing gender” (West & Zimmerman, 1987).

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[14] “Although the term ‘volunteer’ is a familiar part of everyday language in Western cultures” (Musick & Wilson, 2007:13), it has not always been.

The Ndebele People are not unique in their flexible way of "doing gender" in terms of the division of domestic labour and reproductive labour-work. Gender flexibility is also witnessed among the Igbo people of Nigeria, where gender does not correspond to sex as the Victorian gender ideology does (Amadiume, 2015). Amadiume highlights that among the Igbo of Nigeria "[d]aughters could become sons and consequently male" (2015:15). While these two subgroups of African people – the Ndebele and the Igbo cannot be taken as a universal representation of an African way of "doing gender" we can see a similarity with Ntombi who by virtue of the labour division in her household is transformed into a male daughter, performing *imisebenzi yabafana* because of the abundance of women in her family[15]. As a male daughter she helps to balance the division of domestic labour in her household. I draw this parallel between the Igbo and Ndebele in order to debunk the notion of a monolithic, racialised African culture where domestic labour division is constrained tightly by the shackles of patriarchy. Even historically, African men could be daughters even among the Zulu whom Ngubane explains, "Divination is a woman's thing, and if a man gets possessed he becomes a transvestite as he is playing the role of a daughter rather than that of a son" (1977:142). The gift of being a diviner in Zulu and Ndebele culture is transmitted through the matrilineal line and a diviner is "possessed by the spirits of her own descent group, not those of her husband's" (Ngubane, 1977:142). *Gogo Na*Sithule in her own IDI makes passing mention of how Sikelela has been left without a *wosana* (water diviner) as there are no girls in the line of the last diviner. She explains that one of the late *wosana*'s sons claims he has the gift of divination but will not subject himself to the tests and relinquish his gender in order to channel his mother's spirits as a female son. The section to follow will give further details on how lineage operates among the Ndebele and is framed by *amalobolo*, which gives a father (and husband) legitimate rights over his children to claim that as the continuance of his line[16].

5.3 Lobola & the changing shape of the Zimbabwean family

Reproductive labour-work in the form of domestic chores is seen as preparation for heterosexual marriage[17] and motherhood. This orientation is a product of a "rights discourse in the light of the term, heteronormativity" (Batisai, 2013:27). Batisai, also looking at the context of Zimbabwe explains that this heteronormative rights discourse "refers to 'the institutionalisation of exclusive heterosexuality in society' (Steyn, and van Zyl, 2009:3)" (2013:27). The family and *umuzi* (the homestead) are sites where we can locate the inscription of gender roles as it is etched through reproductive labour-work. The socialisation into the domestic division of labour is a coping strategy for matrimonial harmony with one's future mother-in-law (*umamazala*). These skills make for a smoother transition from a girl's family home to that of her in-laws because in marriage she is expected to evolve from being the virgin bride to being the dutiful daughter-in-law (*malukazana*). *umalukazana* is a contentious figure in in Ndebele and African culture. She is often expected to bear the full burden of domestic labour once she marries into the family, and this can sometimes render her the subject of abuse. Another aspect of the controversy around *malukazana* and her relationship to her in-laws is the fact that bride price (*amalobolo* now commonly as *lobola*) is paid for her. *umalukazana* is a useful figure for locating reproductive labour-work in the family, as she is expected to willingly bear the brunt of it in her husband's home.

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[15] Ntombi's narrative helps us to build on Hunter's somewhat superficial grasp of nuances gendered division of labour among the Mpondo people, which describes in her study as being "on the whole […] fairly equal" (1933:261). I would assert that division of labour is division of labour among the Ndebele (and other Southern African Peoples) is not to be taken for granted. It is not inflexibly gendered but rather it is intentionally balanced, through continual negotiations and the (re)assignment of tasks among family and community members.

[16] When *Gogo Na*Sithule shared this with me, she wondered if perhaps she was straying off topic. She also framed her narrative around Ndebele divination around climate change the drought the region was experiencing. I emphasise this order to accurately represent *Gogo Na*Sithule. Like *Gogo* Betty is represents tradition and modernity, being able to muse over seasonal trends through both science and culture. *Gogo Na*Sithule exemplifies the complex multifaceted-ness of all women. She is not a stereotype of backward thinking reminiscent of the 'dark continent' of Africa but represents decolonial thinking.

[17] Section 4.87 of the Constitution of Zimbabwe (amended in 2013) criminalises same-sex marriage, hence the narratives openly expressed are heteronormative.

This section will discuss the body politics tied to the payment of *lobola*. *Gogo Ma*Gumede says that "once you were a over 17-18 years, you would be taught how to be a wife." She began menstruating at age 17 and married at 21. She had her first child shortly after arriving at her husband's home (*ukuenda*). Though a widow now, *Gogo Ma*Gumede might be considered the archetype of a reproductive success. According to Zulu tradition, Vilakazi (1965) states that when *umakoti* (the [new] wife) marries, she "serves out an apprenticeship with her mother-in-law" (Mchunu, 2005). This same is also true for the Ndebele. Ntombi explained in the first FGD that, "You might not find a good *mamazala*. I had a good relationship with mine." Ntombi's *mamazala* was kind to her as a *malukazana* because she said to *Ntombi*, "I didn't want to do what my mother-in-law did to me." We get the impression that some mothers-in-law can be unkind as the *mamazala* of Ntombi's *mamazala* was to her. *Gogo* helps us to appreciate the invisible reproductive labour-work *ukuhlonipha abadala* even when marital relations have soured. Below she describes the circumstances that led her to leave her husband.

*Gogo Na*Kitty: *Though I wasn't very educated*[18] *and did not know what I would do to support myself I knew I could stay.*

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[18] See page 150, where we see from *Gogo* Betty's narration of her childhood, she, and her older sister (*Gogo Na*Kitty) were not able to complete the education because they lived with her brother and his wife and their *malukazana* (brother's wife) kept them at home to help with caring for their children.

Researcher: *What was happening to make you want to leave?*

*Gogo Na*Kitty: *At the time I lived in the rural areas [with my husband's family] and my husband lived in town [the city]. The man I was married to, he drank heavily, and whenever he came home, he never had any money and provided no support. I realised I just couldn't go on this way, and I left… after 6 years.*

Researcher: *What was the process of leaving you husband in your day?*

*Gogo Na*Kitty: *I didn't just leave, I said goodbye to my in-laws.*

*Gogo Na*Kitty contrasts stealing away clandestinely to saying goodbye formally. This is a form of *ukuhlonipha*. Seidman also highlights that, "A woman for whom *lobola* was not paid could easily move on to another man" (1984:432). Though *Gogo Na*Kitty had been mistreated by their son, she honours the custom of *lobola* by saying goodbye to her in-laws. Bidding them farewell is an act of respect and gratitude for the time she spent in their home. Leaving was not an action that she took lightly. *Gogo Na*Kitty speaks to the financial abuse of having a neglectful husband who was not meeting his end of the parental investment of providing for and supporting his family. *Gogo Na*Kitty uses the English word "abuse" in her Ndebele narration. This shows how (being part of the development sector as a community-based distributor) development discourse jargon is part of her vernacular. This *ukuhlonipha* that *Gogo Na*Kitty performs constitutes a management of marriage. It too is a form of invisible reproductive labour-work carried out by (rural) Ndebele women and girls in order to smooth out family relations even when marriage culminates in separation or divorce. This important yet overlooked reproductive labour-work of in the form of post-marital relationship management ensures that children are not cut off from their *babakazi* (father's sister)[19,20] and their cultural heritage from the paternal line in the event that the children leave with their mother. It was demonstrated in Chapter 4 that *ubabakazi* is an important culture-bearer for Ndebele children and for girls in particular, she is a gatekeeper of menstrual knowledge as well as a mediator of customary marriage rites.

*Gogo Na*Kitty's experience of marriage is worlds apart from that of Ntombi who has a compassionate *mamazala* and at the time of my fieldwork is still married and *emuzini wendoda yakhe* (living at her

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[19] and other female relatives from a child's paternal line

[20] should the split between parents be acrimonious – a reproductive failure

husband's homestead). Ntombi recounts a story her mother-in-law told her of how she was not allowed to use her mother-in-law's pots at her husband's *umuzi*. Ntombi's *mamazala* was alleged to have placed clothes in hers so that they would not be touched, and she would declare, *imbiza zame ziyaphumula* ("my pots are resting") and so could not be used (by her daughter-in-law). This mother-in-law seems to resemble the trope of the vilified mother-in-law who is represented in cultures across the globe. But there is more to take from this tale. Ntombi, like her own mother-in-law, also arrived without her husband's home without her own pots. However, Ntombi's *mamazala* – having had a tough experience with her own *mamazala* makes her choose to be kind to Ntombi. Ntombi says that her *mamazala* "encouraged me to buy my own pots". Ntombi explains that "There was much ululation because you had your own pots and pans". In a similar way to a girl coming of age through ménarche, getting one's own pots was a kind of coming-of-age event as a wife. Ménarche signified the evolution into a whole(some) woman, and we learn from Ntombi's narration of her early days of marriage that proprietorship of pots signified being a whole(some) wife who could prepare meals for her husband and her family. Pots and pans are an extension of the kitchen as a domain. A mother-in-law can assert control in this domain by denying or giving her daughter-in-law access to the pots, pans and utensils in it. This is an example of what Tamale referred to as older women's attempt to "confer power, and authority to control the youth and the enactment of older women's dominance even under patriarchy" (2011:213).

From an Afrocentric perspective, the primary purpose of marriage is to reproduce the husband's line (Meursing, 1997). Meursing argues that a *lobola* is paid "to secure the right to children born to the couple" (1997:141). This is also why a girls' *babakazi* – female father – being of her (patrilineal) line she addresses feminine issues such as these and not the mother. *Lobola* is given to the parents of the bride before marriage and once it is paid, she and her groom are considered to be 'traditionally married'[21]. Ordinarily, *lobola* is paid in the form of cash and/or livestock. Graeber accurately clarifies that bride price is exchanged in "whatever is the social currency" (2012:131). In Zimbabwe, this was once predominantly cattle but as the society has shifted from being an agrarian economy to a more industrialised, capitalistic and service-based one, people may prefer cash and in-kind gifts over cattle, particularly if they do not have lands on which to retain the cattle. Seidman states that *lobola* "marked the acquisition of an agricultural labo[u]rer and childbearer" just as much as it marked a union between two kinship groups (1984:422). Further to this, Guy argues that "among the Sotho, the origins of political power are more direct – the appropriation, by chiefs, of tribute labour, the accumulation of women and cattle as tribute or of tribute goods which had value in terms of cattle" (Guy 1990:42). The same is true for related other peoples of Southern Africa like the Zulu and other Nguni. Productivity, (re)production, and reproductive labour-work were in this way are markers of political power. This kind of body politics is still tied to the payment of *lobola*.[22] Traditionally, *lobola* is paid in part to solemnise the marriage. *Lobola* is not paid in full typically; only a majority portion on it is paid at first. The remainder was ordinarily settled when the first child was born, as this was proof and subsequent recognition that your wife was 'whole' and could be (re)productive, bearing a lineage for her husband.[23] It is considered poor etiquette and a lack of *ukuhlonipha* to pay lobola in full on the day of the *lobola* ceremony. This is because, as Graeber (2012) specifies, there are "debts that cannot possibly be paid". He goes on to explain that bride price, when understood as a commodification of women, is a misinterpretation of the custom because *amalobolo* is one such debt that cannot be paid in full. That is to say, no price is enough for a bride and rather it is a token of ingratiation and the groom's own indebtedness for the gift that is his bride, *umakoti*.

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[21] *ukulobola/ukulotsholwa* (to marry traditionally/to be married traditionally) is a practice that signifies a customary marriage recognized by the Customary Marriages Act of 1950 [Chapter 5:07]. However, the act specifies that a marriage officer must be present to solemnise the marriage; with an entry being "made in ink" to be signed and filed in the marriage register by the marriage officer.

The social status attached to lobola can be seen with *Gogo Na*Nambitha who shortly after ménarche was pledged to her *sibare* (her older sister's husband) because he was wealthy, and this meant that he would pay a second lobola to her family. She explains that in order to thwart this arrangement, she chose a lad for herself (*ukukhomba ijaha*) and fell pregnant. A process known as ukubika isisu ensued. *ukubika* is the Zulu/Ndebele word for 'to report' or 'reporting' and *isisu* literally means a stomach but in this case is a pregnancy. *ukubika isisu* is the act of going to the responsible male's home to make a formal report to his family that he has impregnated you.[24] *Gogo Na*Nambitha confesses that she had intended to fall pregnant by this young lad because her father was arranging for her to be married off to her older sister's husband

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[22] Yet in debates that considered the outlawing of *lobola*, the Ministry of Home Affairs equated it to the "legaliz[ing] prostitution" as it would weaken the bonds of (customary) marriage, allegedly making it easier for a women to "move on to another man" without it (Seidman, 1984:432).

[23] I learned this in my own personal communications with my cousin. It is said that *kulotsholwa* the children not the wife. Therefore, the secured rights the children she would bear as Meursing (1997) suggests. This is because among patrilineal peoples like the Shona and the Ndebele, "the purpose of marriage is to produce children for the husband's lineage" (Meursing, 1997:141). Hence you are Ndebele if your father is or was Ndebele, you are Ndebele. It is perhaps an oxymoron that there can be non-Ndebele-speaking Ndebele people. This bespeaks of women's role in shaping a child's fluency in their mother tongue. The rise of non-Ndebele-speaking Ndebeles is also connected to language's own death brought about by westernisation, Western education and migration as English is adopted as a dominant linguistic medium. In strict adherence to these rules of cultural heritage, *Gogo* Nkosazana and *Na*Anita who are Kalanga and Shona respectively because their fathers were Ndebele, but it is worth noting that they were both raised Ndebele (in Matabeleland) and are Ndebele-speakers. In fact *Gogo* Nkosazana does not speak *isiKalanga* even though she understands it. It is for these reasons that they were not excluded from this study.

[24] *ukubika* happened before *ukucola* (cf. see page 129), when a woman fell pregnant by a man she was not (yet) married to.

(*usibare wakhe*). The expression *ukukhomba* suggests defiance of social norms, the transgression from innocent friendship to physical and sexual attraction. Mayall (2002) and James (2009) identify intergenerational relations as a form of social interaction in which we can locate children's agency and the instances in which it is inhibited. Gogo NaNambitha exercised her agency to resist the polygamous marriage arrangement that her father was proposing; thereby making a difference to a decision that was being made for her that she did not consent to. According to Ndebele culture, this specific type of marriage arrangement may also happen when *usibare* is widowed; that is *usibare* will be offered his deceased wife's younger sister's hand in marriage. By the same token, a widow may also "choose to marry her late husband's younger brother" (Nyathi, 2005:24). This is a cultural practice known as *ukungenwa* (Nyathi, 2005). This was not the case for Gogo NaNambitha, however. She was going to be her *sibare*'s second wife.

Child-adult relations are a complex terrain upon which agency can be located. We see that even as she resists being married off to *usibare wakhe* (her brother-in-law), the lad who has impregnated her must still concede that the child is his before her decision not to marry her *sibare* is respected. *Gogo Na*Nambitha cannot make this choice independently but instead has to become a dependent of her new husband in order to free her from subjugation as a dependent of her father. *Gogo Na*Nambitha's new-found independence as a wife is short-lived as she finds herself subjugated and, in some ways, infantilised her once by her new spouse. She reports that "him hitting me was the reason I left". As opposed to a child as feeding into the narrative of children as "victims of the adult and patriarchal society" *Gogo Na*Nambitha recasts her then adolescent self as an agential child "who question[s] and destabilise[s] society's entrenched views of children as inconsequential minors" (Vambe, 2011:108). She takes control of her fate by choosing her own husband and also by leaving him when he abuses her.

Dating 'faithfully', as *Gogo Ma*Gumede calls it, is one way of optimising paternal involvement as the paternity of a child is less likely to be called into question if the mother of the child is held in good repute, as a result *ukucola* is more likely to happen after *ukubikwa kwesisu*. *Gogo Na*Nambitha who fell pregnant with the lad she chose for herself remarks that, "Back in the day, men would come back [and take responsibility if they impregnated you]. It was assumed that you were lying if the father of the child didn't come back." In these comments we witness another instance of sexuality as victimisation. It is a victimisation of women whereby the burden of truth, consequence and responsibility for consensual premarital sex resulting in pregnancy lies squarely on the pregnant woman's shoulders. She must bear up individually to the (i) disappoint and anger of her parents; she is responsible for the (ii) pregnancy *and* (iii) sullying the family's name. Finally, the truth of the child's paternity rests on her word which may or may not motivate the father to take responsibility. Her word is not upheld as true on its own. Even if she is telling the truth, her word is contingent on the moral fibre father of the child's moral fibre. I argue that whether he chooses to take responsibility (*ukucola*) or not, should not be seen as corresponding to the verity of her claims. Shaming a pregnant woman who is telling the truth is a form of victimisation. Yet status as a truthful woman comes can only be redeemed by his elective ownership of paternity. *ukucola* restores by literally "making an 'honest woman' out of her" and taking her as a wife. The fact that the contemporary *isicholo* is a pride garment/headdress (Appendix B, page 234) also reveals the fact that *ukucola* is a kind of redemptive reproductive labour-work that restores an unmarried pregnant women's status as a wife and/or mother whose lineage has been legitimately claimed by the father through the process. *Gogo Na*Nambitha is subject to a discourse of sexuality as victimisation that renders her powerless in the face of cultural expectations like *ukuziphatha kuhle* (abstaining from [premarital] sex). She is rendered powerless when she is pledged as a wife to her brother-in-law but manages to reclaim. her agency. In *Gogo Na*Nambitha's narrative we see different workings of invisible reproductive labour-work at play. Namely, the reproductive labour-work of clearing her name and making a reproductive success of herself as a wife with a paternal investment in the offspring that she bears for a partner of her choosing.

This narrative brings out the reproductive labour-work carried out by male and female kinfolk which ensures that should a girl engage in premarital sex and fall pregnant, the family can 'report the pregnancy' – *ukubika isisu* and promote paternal investment should the father *cola*. In this way we find that promoting reproductive success is a collective form of reproductive labour-work performed by the family unit. We begin to see that contrary to what may appear to be a disjuncture between menstruation and reproduction in public discourse, this fissure is not mirrored at a household level. For the Ndebele, ménarche signals the collective, community-based reproductive labour-work to prevent early unintended pregnancy and single motherhood.

Kamwendo Naphambo explains that "where girls' readiness for marriage is conceptualised in other distinctive ways [besides biological age]. These include physical and mental maturity, sexual maturity, perceived loss of innocence (pregnancy and dating), ability to perform gendered household chores and commencement of menstruation" (2021:III). The previous section highlighted how ménarche intersects with evolving practices around customary marriage and how these in turn shape our ideas of what a 'girl child' is and when she is considered ready to be married off as a wife. This also arose with *Gogo Ma*Moyo who explains her mother and her grandmother's anxiety around the fact that she was not marriageable until she reached this rite of passage, which came "late"[25] for her at the age of 20. The section to follow discusses gender domestic chores as part of the invisible reproductive labour-work that trains up girls into (re)productive future adult women, mothers, and future wives.

In households where there is a young child or baby (*umntwana omncane*[26]), the girl or daughter is typically tasked with child-minding her siblings while parents or caregivers are away working. This was the case for *Gogo Na*Kitty, *Gogo* Betty and Karen. This is reproductive labour-work constitutes the unpaid labour carried out on the bodies of others combined with the management of embodied emotional experience and display. For it is carried out in spite of a prior disagreement or present disgruntlement with a/the sibling. It may also be done in addition to other household chore that she is expected to have completed by the time that her parents return home. Karen – a daughter in the study – describes how she and her siblings live with their grandmother as their primary caregiver. Her grandmother told Karen when she reached the age of 13 that she must ensure that her two younger siblings, aged 5 and 7 years, do not miss school should ever her grandmother be away from home. Karen helps them bathe and prepare for school as well as making meals for them. Karen is being socialized not only into the gendered division of domestic labour but also into reproductive labour-work. This reproductive labour as the proxy adult or maternal figure often comes at the expense of her missing school. Here we witness adolescence enacted as a kind of "apprenticeship[27] period for adulthood" (Burke, 2004:825). Mangena and Ndlovu concur as they highlight that "In the cultural sense [in Zimbabwe], parents rely on children's labour also as a part of training for children" (2014:667). Karen's experience of missing school to look after her younger siblings underscores the gendered burden of caregiving responsibilities that can undermine academic achievement for girls (Crenshaw, Ocen & Nanda, 2015).

It is not uncommon for Ndebele girls to be pulled out of school or to miss school on account of child care. A grandmother, *Gogo* Betty, aged 65 years, explains how her elder brother's wife (her *makoti*[28]) did not want them to go to school so that they could remain at home and look after her nieces and nephews. Child-minding is a type of "body management" by Gimlin's categorisation of body work in which we witness the

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[25] I have placed the word "late" in quotes for two reasons. The first is because these were her own words. The second is because the notion of late is one that is constructed in relation to readiness for marriage. The age itself is not a signifier of late or early in localised construction of adulthood and readiness for marriage. Though she is financially independent – a marker of adulthood – her menarcheal state still renders her a child.

[26] In spoken Ndebele this the vowel "a" at the end of *umntwana* is contracted for smoothness (e.g., umntwan' omncane).

[27] Not dissimilar to the apprenticeship that a newlywed wife has under her *mamazala* (Mchunu, 2005).

[28] It is worth noting that *makoti* means bride. Strictly speaking, the word for daughter-in-law is *malukazana*.

"embodied emotional experience and display" (2007:353) of the caregiver of an infant by lifting, carrying and cradling the child. Through it, the caregiver produces a calming effect on the child but is carried out in spite of the caregiver's own feelings as the time (e.g., exhaustion, sadness, frustration). Hence this child-minding takes on a double weight as both the "body work/labour" carried out on the bodies of others, i.e., the young child and also the caregiver's own "body/emotion management" (Gimlin, 2007). *Gogo Na*Kitty and *Gogo* Betty express frustrated and saddened to have their schooling disrupted for the sake of caring for their older brother's children.

Within marriage, there role of wifehood is taken up what I would describe as *ubumakoti* in *isiNdebele*. The noun *makoti* means bride *ngesiNdebele*. Daughter-in-law strictly speaking is *malukazana*. However, as *Na*Milisuthando highlights *makoti* can be used *emendweni* (in marriage) "as a term of endearment" used by your in-laws. I have opted to use the latter in order to capture the world of expectations (met[29]) that accompany being a wife to one's partner and the responsibilities of being a sister-/daughter-in-law to the family. *ubumakoti* is centred on *ukuhlonipha* and *ukuhlonipha* is reproductive labour-work that nurtures family relations. *ubumakoti* is also management of marriage. *ubumakoti* and *ukuhlonipha* are their own world of invisible reproductive labour-work enactments. *Gogo* Betty's sister-in-law (as a wife and *malukazana* herself) is likely to have seen a greater value in training her young sister-in-law to be a good wife by taking on the reproductive labour-work of caring for her offspring than for the young Betty to attend school. Brehony argues that "If children are engaged in labo[u]r, whether in their homes or outside of them, the opportunities for play are much curtailed" (2004:83). I argue that the same applies for education in the case of the rural Ndebele girl whose role as a proxy adult and caregiver or mother may come at the expense of school attendance. Considering child care as competing a responsibility that Ndebele girls must take up (at the expense of attending school) through the lens of invisible reproductive *labour-work* provides to compare this seemingly banal unremunerated work of child care done by Ndebele girls to paid forms of 'affective labour' such as "the care work of the nanny" (Murphy, 2017) or au pair whose labour is not only valued but *valuated*.

*Gogo Na*Kitty and *Gogo* Betty's *malukazana* and her insistence on their socialisation in domestic labour represents the inscription of gender roles. This inscription is etched gradually until gender roles are engraved, because in the natural life cycle of a rural Ndebele girl a good daughter must eventually evolve to be a good mother and good wife. Ndebele girls stand in as proxy mothers. *Gogo* Betty explains that girls aged 6-7 years carry babies on their backs (*ukubhabhula*)[30]. It bears semblance to training in motherhood. *Gogo* Betty elaborated that, "When a young girl carries an infant on her back this is done to help prevent the child from developing *izigwenxa* (rickets)." Here we witness a direct perception of the work of girls as playing a role in the well-being and well-becoming of other, younger children as well as being shaped in the image of adult Ndebele women. The same is alluded to when Gwandure and Mayekiso highlight that, "In some [African] societies children are viewed as 'little adults' or 'miniature adults', and they are expected to behave and participate in the community as adults" (2011:233). Hence the young *Gogo Na*Kitty and Gogo Betty are slowly being socialised into being (re)reproductive through the reproductive labour-work of motherhood. Parallels can be drawn between this reproductive labour-work and Pande's (2006) conceptualization of mothering as 'work' done by women's bodies. Hence in this way we see that gender and relational roles are activated in adolescence and *re*produced in adulthood. It is through the body that women become integrated into a community's social and sexual order, adopting meanings about their bodies that help construct their sense of identity and status (Lee, 2009:616).

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[29] A *makoti* in this way is dear to the family she marries into because she meets the expectations placed upon her, perhaps sometimes even going above and beyond them.

5.4 Conclusion

In presenting the kinship structures and gender-fluid domestic division of labour among the Ndebele, it has revealed some of the localised constructions of gender and sexuality in African societies that the work of colonial anthropologists such as Hunter (1933), Leith-Ross (1939), Evans-Pritchard (1940a; 1940b; 1951) and others has failed to fully capture.[31] Chapter 4 and Chapter 5 have demonstrated that the family and the State (through the formal education and the health sector) are entangled in the scripting of the body with regards to menstruation and its management. The chapters have shown how the nature of reproductive labour-work done by girls evolves, depicting sombre visualisations of adolescence and teenhood in which children begin to contribute to the domestic division of labour or household income. In this older childhood a Ndebele adolescent girl must herself evolve to be (*re)productive*, that is: reproductively capable and productive. At this point an adolescent Ndebele girl's reproductive status is not centred on her reproductive capability but rather on her taking up her role as a proxy adult, a proxy mother and proxy wife so that when she steps out of this transient stage she is prepared to confidently assume these roles in imminent adulthood;

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[30] Also known as *ukubeletha* (Fig. 16, page 137). *ukubhabhula* conveys a more colloquial sense of carry a child on one's back. It is also how one would describe the action to a young child, shortening it to *bhabhu*.

[31] This is on account of measuring customary practices against a Western yardstick. Evans-Pritchard was an anthropologist who studied the Nuer people of Sudan. He and Hunter both refer to the so-called "cattle complex" of the Nuer of Sudan and the Mpondo of Africa. This reduction of the importance of cattle in African communities to a psychoanalytical discourse that categorises it as a "complex" reveals the racialised condescension to the two cultures by these two anthropologists. It reflects a failure to grasp the multivalent significance of cattle to different peoples in Africa and is a discourse that seeks to propagate difference rather than a common sense of humanity (*ubuntu*) that transcends culture.

marriage and motherhood. This is seen in Chapter 5 through in the participation the domestic division of labour by way of chores. In Chapter 5 we witness visualisations of young girls kept home from school in order to care for her younger kin as was the case for Karen, *Gogo Na*Kitty and *Gogo* Betty. However, attention must be drawn to the fact that in this process of forfeiting on her education, her future capacity to compete in the labour market declines; but her reproductive labour-work value within the household conversely goes up. It is evident that reproductive girls are vital to the institutions of family and marriage. They are the vessels that give it continuity. Karen, *Gogo Na*Kitty and *Gogo* Betty's narratives contribute to a blossoming literature from on "young carers" who are a legacy of the HIV epidemic in much of sub-Saharan Africa (Imoh, Bourdillon & Meichsner, 2019). In this way, the study depicts different Zimbabwean childhoods, for example: those that recognise children's positions as powerless compared to adults, e.g., disrupted education due to caregiving responsibilities. It has also conveyed childhoods coloured by the processes influencing the decision-making around what sanitary wear to use, for example: access to disposable sanitary wear is governed by adult kin's purchasing power as was the case for Denise, Karen Khanyi, Lindo and S'tha. This in turn influences children's consumption patterns in MoMs.

The chapter has provided insights into the economisation of *amalobolo* and adds to the literature on marriage payments in Southern Africa. This economisation is a consequence of the introduction of formal employment through colonisation which brings about its own 'a regime of valuation' (Murphy, 2017:5-6) and is another way of understanding the westernisation of labour. The valuation of labour transforms it into (remunerable) work. This chapter has demonstrated that reproductive labour-work can be "harvested to stimulate economic value" (Murphy, 2017). However, as we also saw with Kazi and Nomvuyo, there is reproductive labour-work that generates taxable income even though it is not tax-deductible[32]. I have demonstrated in this dissertation that development discourse's preoccupation with quantitative measures of development (like income per capita) results in the overlooking of informal employment. This in turn flattens the complex dynamic of women's work in such a way as to invisibilise the work performed by women's bodies that contributes to the sustenance of their households. The chapter has also demonstrated the different ways in which the double day of Ndebele women and girls in Zimbabwe is obscured and invisibilised. The fact that the reproductive labour-work of Kazi and Nomvuyo is performed in the informal sector, where its "second shift" nature is not always so easily discernible, means that there may not always be a paper trail for it to be traced and made visible. This reproductive labour-work is further obscured by the overall prevalence of informal employment in Zimbabwe. The reproductive labour-work of Ndebele women and girls is also obscured by the double day that they perform as part of the *ubuntu*-centred third shift of volunteer labour-work. I now conclude this chapter with a diagram (overleaf) summing up some of the different types of invisible *Ndebele reproductive labour-work*.

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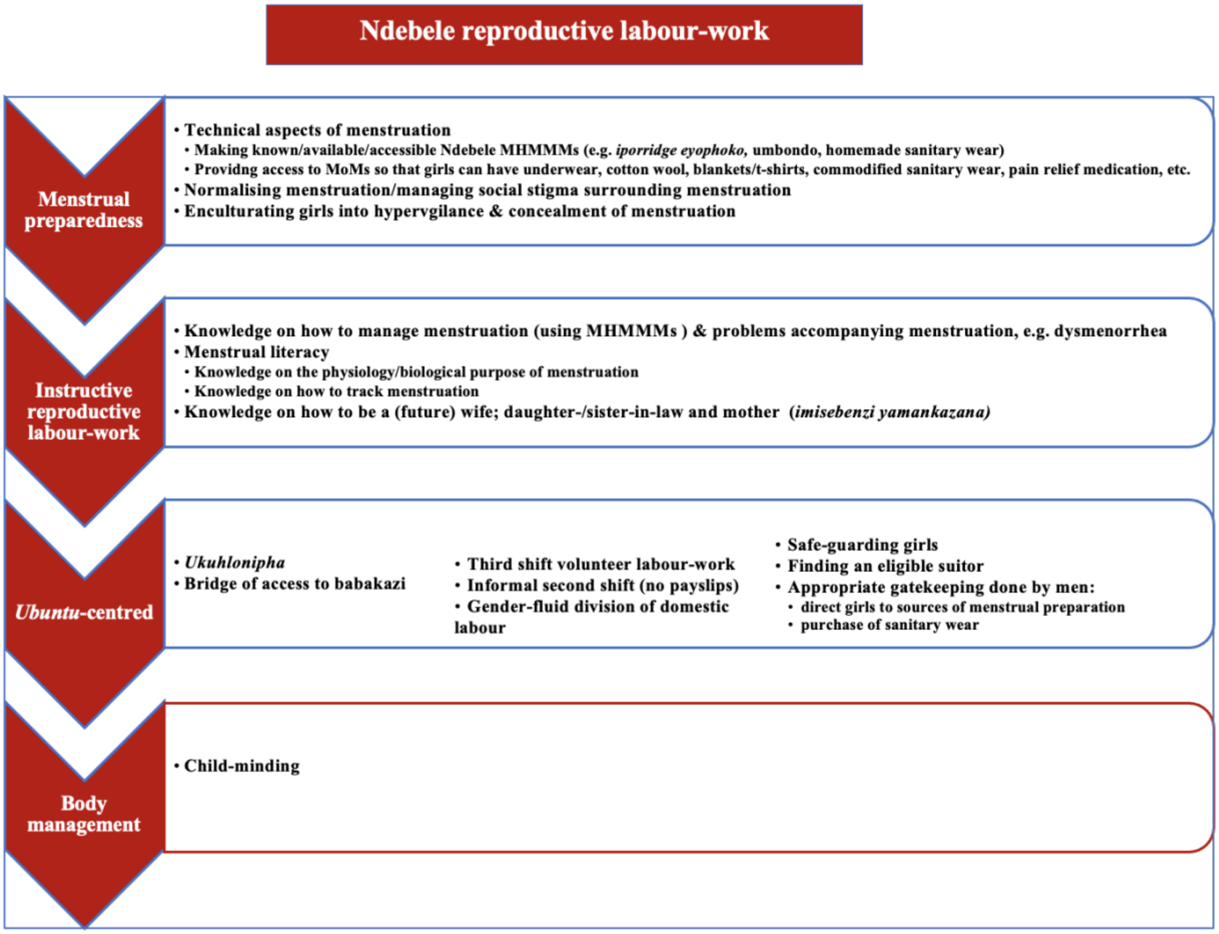
[32] https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-42116932



Ndebele reproductive labour-work

Menstrual preparedness

- Technical aspects of menstruation
  - Making known/available/accessible Ndebele MHMMMs (e.g. *iporridge eyophoko,* umbondo, homemade sanitary wear)
  - Providng access to MoMs so that girls can have underwear, cotton wool, blankets/t-shirts, commodified sanitary wear, pain relief medication, etc.
- Normalising menstruation/managing social stigma surrounding menstruation
- Enculturating girls into hypervgilance & concealment of menstruation

Instructive reproductive labour-work

- Knowledge on how to manage menstruation (using MHMMMs) & problems accompanying menstruation, e.g. dysmenorrhea
- Menstrual literacy
  - Knowledge on the physiology/biological purpose of menstruation
  - Knowledge on how to track menstruation
- Knowledge on how to be a (future) wife; daughter-/sister-in-law and mother (*imisebenzi yamankazana)*

***Ubuntu*-centred**

- *Ukuhlonipha*
- Bridge of access to babakazi

- Third shift volunteer labour-work
- Informal second shift (no payslips)
- Gender-fluid division of domestic labour

- Safe-guarding girls
- Finding an eligible suitor
- Appropriate gatekeeping done by men:
  - direct girls to sources of menstrual preparation
  - purchase of sanitary wear

Body management

- Child-minding

Figure 19: Summary of types of invisible Ndebele reproductive labour-work

CHAPTER 6: Discussion

This chapter highlights discussion points arising out of the empirical chapters of the dissertation. It revisits conceptualisations of childhood, casting a light on the epistemological turn in childhood studies whereby experiences of childhood began to actively be investigated from the perspective of children. In this chapter, the body of the black girl is located as a site of danger. In it, I re-examine the motif of danger one last time in order to reveal the ways in which Ndebele kinfolk are involved in collective reproductive labour-work to protect Ndebele girls from the dangers of early sexual development, early sexual debut and sexual abuse. In so doing, the chapter illuminates the incongruence between localised constructions of childhood and ideological constructions of childhood in human development discourse.

6.1 Dangerous childhoods

In 1979, the globe commemorated the "International Year of the Child" (James, 2009:37). Following this, the "world's children" began to be centred in development discourse. This process was framed by postmodernist theories of childhood which posit that there is no one normative childhood but rather that there are "pluralities of childhoods" (Burke, 2004:825). As part of this new centring of children in international development discourse, "Child abuse also began to become [sic] a more public issue, raising a wider public consciousness that some children do not have the idyllic world of 'Happy, Safe, Protected, Innocent Children'" (James, 2009:37). As a result, "Interest [and research] in childhood sexual abuse (CSA) has grown, fuelled in part by an awareness that it is more frequent than suspected in the past" (Zabin, Emerson & Rowland, 2005:393). Zabin, Emerson and Rowland identified that there is a correlation between age at puberty and age at sexual debut among African Americans where the probability of early first sex corresponds to early sexual onset (2005:393). Fiscella *et al*. found that CSA appears "to be a risk factor for earlier pregnancy among African-American adolescents" (1998:420). CSA is a dominant theme in dangerous childhoods and has in many societies been neglected, silenced and/or normalised.

6.1.1 The (hyper)sexualised body of the black girl

Nevertheless, there is a growing awareness of the hypersexualisation of the bodies of black girls. The National Center on Violence Against Women in the Black Community (2003)[1] found that "1 in 4 [25% of] Black girls will be sexually abused before the age of 18" in the US. Zimbabwe's 2015 *National Adolescent Fertility Study* found that 26% of girls aged between 10-14 "were not confident that they could refuse sex or being touched sexually if they did not want" (MoHCC, ZNFPC & UNFPA, 2016:53). The figures are a chilling reflection of one another. In comparing them, I centre the racialised sexual precarity[2] and dangers of female adolescence for black Zimbabwean girls and their black counterparts in the US. To better understand the possible reasons for the figures reported in Zimbabwe and the US, we can turn to Munro (2010) who explains that there are invisible macro-structures that influence the everyday ability to exercise agency in sexual behaviour. These range from "gender power dynamics, socio-economic stratifications, inter-personal relations and contradictory impulses of desire" (Munro, 2010:46). Each combine to form a complex web that constructs and constrains our "substantive decisions as well as our perception of the options available to us to choose from" (Munro, 2010:46). Basing this assertion on the findings of my study, I argue that kinship structures and sexual onset are additional mitigating factors in sexual relationships. Further to this, the vulnerability of girls is worsened by a long history tied to the hypersexualisation of the black body[3] – a hypersexualisation that is extended even to underage[4] girls.

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[1] https://www.apa.org/pi/about/newsletter/2020/02/black-women-sexual-assault

6.1.2 Normalising the black female body

This dissertation has highlighted some common experiences of racialised precarity for Ndebele women and girls. By presenting a discussion of the hypersexualisation of black girls' bodies, the dissertation humanises the black, "non-Western girl" (Murphy, 2017:113-4) who becomes an icon of development discourse by depicting some collective experiences. The African American Policy Forum have promoted a dialogue regarding how this hypersexualisation and the silence around these statistics sweeps race and gender under the rug (AAPF, 2020). They argue that this reflects a routinisation of violence that does not warrant national, regional and global dialogues around the safeguarding of black girls and their futures (AAPF, 2020). We cannot completely separate any discussion about the work of protecting black Zimbabwean girls from male predators in communities from the plight of their black trans-Atlantic counterparts. Our histories are tied together. African Americans were trafficked from our continent to North America and suffered a long history of cultural erasure, exploitation and (sexual) abuse by their enslavers. Such parallels, in a unifying way, build solidarity and foster representation while debunking the notion of a monolithic blackness. They represent a dialogue about the status of women in a bid for global gender equality (SDG 5).

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[2] Listen into the "Under The Blacklight" podcast, *Storytelling While Black and Female: Conjuring Beautiful Experiments* hosted by the African American Policy Forum on https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xGS5aP5Vi7g&feature=youtu.be for a discussion around the racial precarity of African American girls.

[3] See Story's (2010) *Racing sex—Sexing race: The invention of the Black feminine body* for an overview of how the black female body was reconstructed through the explorationist project and centuries of colonisation and slavery.

[4] The legal age of consent for sexual intercourse in Zimbabwe at the time of my writing up this dissertation is 16 years.

Towards this endeavour of humanising and normalising the black female body, I searched the internet but could not find any pubertal infographics with depicting girls of skin tones that are racialised as non-white that I could use in my study. I took it upon myself to co-produce such an infographic (see Fig. 20 below) with a black female visual artist, Lambi Chibambo. In it, we capture the biological developments of black women and girls like ourselves and the ones in this study.

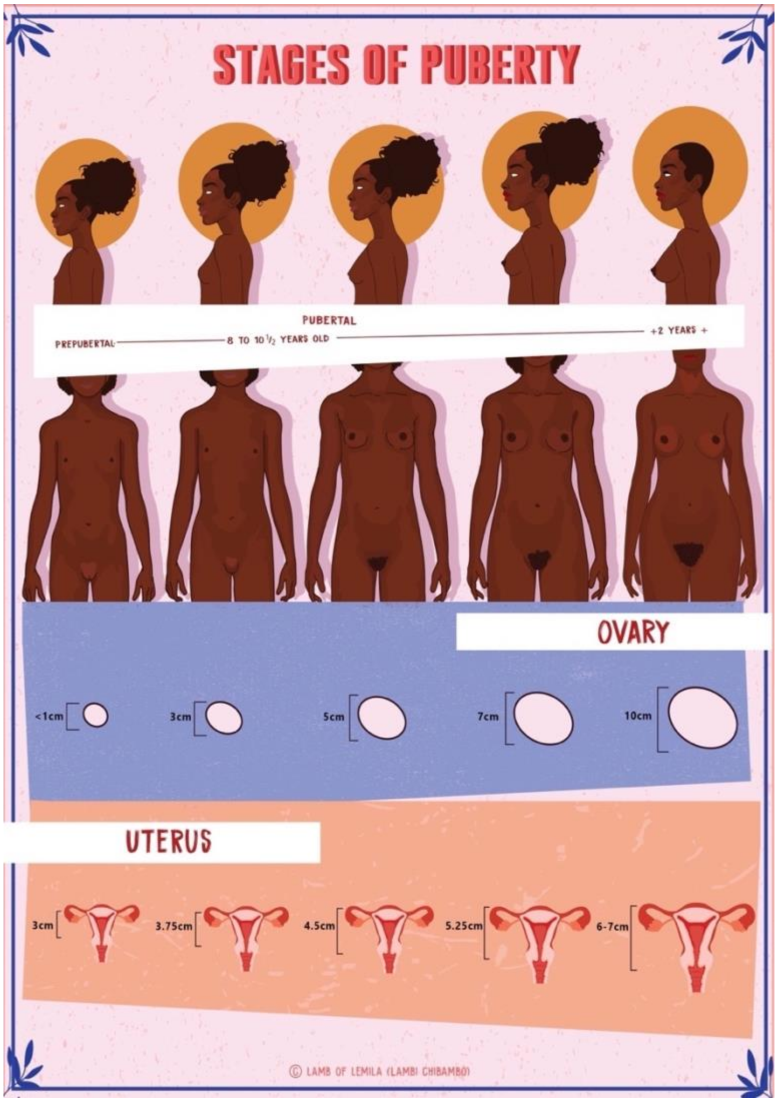
STAGES OF PUBERTY
PUBERTAL
PREPUBERTAL
8 TO 10½ YEARS OLD
+2 YEARS +
OVARY
<1cm
3cm
5cm
7cm
10cm
UTERUS
3cm
3.75cm
4.5cm
5.25cm
6-7cm
© LAMB OF LEMILA (LAMBI CHIBAMBO)

Figure 20: Afrocentric 5-stage infographic of pubertal development[5]

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[5] This infographic has been adapted from a Eurocentric infographic by the Texas Children's Hospital (see Appendix G, page 239). I was granted express written permission to modify the infographic and credit them as a source on 22 September 2020 with copyright. In this Afrocentric adaptation, I have used 8 years as the average for puberty as cited by Ndlovu and Bhala (2016:4), cf. page 35. Some girls may not go through the fourth stage at all but still reach

Stage 5 (the sexually mature body) represents a more curvaceous form typical of Southern African women and shows the hair loss which I noted among the majority of menopausal women in the study. This infographic is part of the study's original contribution to scholarship because it texturises the issues of visibility and representation in decolonial research.

6.1.3 The dangers of adolescence: transitions from childhood into adulthood; womanhood, motherhood & wifehood

Puberty – like adolescence – marks a transition out of childhood, and is believed to bring with it danger(s). During puberty, a young girl's once seemingly gender-neutral torso – untainted by sex and sexuality – begins to gradually be sexualised into a womanhood. We saw in Chapter 4 that puberty transforms a young girl's seemingly unsexualised prepubescent torso into a sexualised reproductive body that signifies womanhood and adulthood through occurrences like thelarche and ménarche. This is further visualised in Figure 20. However, this sexualised reproductive body lies at the intersection *between* childhood and adulthood. Menstruation in particular is symbolic of this ambiguous, intermediate state in which a girl's body is reproductively capable but simultaneously perceived as too young to be sexually active (Burrows & Johnson, 2005).

As is demonstrated in Figure 20 this intersection is characterised by outward, conspicuous signs of reproductive maturity – thelarche and differentiation of hip width as well as largely concealed signs of reproductive maturity such as: ménarche, menstruation; the differentiation of pubic hair contour; ovarian volume increase; increase and change in uterine dimensions and in endometrial thickness. It is worth noting once again that menstrual leaks are a kind of 'transgression' that make concealed signs of reproductive maturity visible. We see this with Ntombi who spoke of how she was always careful to ensure that she was securely covered and padded up so her father would not 'know' that she was now menarcheal. Yet he likely already knew but she nevertheless did not want to transgress that visual boundary.

A pubescent girl is not fully an adult, she is an adolescent who lays on the cusp of womanhood. Bailey (2004) and Burke (2004) help us to texturise the transient dangers of adolescence. They highlight the murky boundaries between adult sexuality and adolescent sexuality. Unlike childhood, "a period deserving –

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ménarche and mature to the fifth stage of a mature adult. The original, Eurocentric infographic can be viewed at the following link:
https://www.texaschildrens.org/health/puberty. Both are in part an adaptation of Tanner stages of pubertal development in girls (Marshall & Tanner, 1969).

demanding – protection from adult sexuality, the proper relationship between *adolescence* and sexuality is less clear" (Bailey, 2004:743). As a result of the conspicuous signs of reproductive maturity I described above, it is widely acknowledged that "[a]dolescents are clearly sexual, but not clearly adult" (Bailey, 2004:743). Bailey's remarks invoke another echo of Douglas (1966) who notes that danger lies in transitional states such as adolescence.

In visibilising the overlooked reproductive labour-work of rural Ndebele women, it is important to note that besides the chores that Ndebele girls do themselves is (as described in Chapter 5), there is another dimension of work that is activated by the reproductive maturity of Ndebele girls. This work consists of collective reproductive labour-work done by the kin and community to protect these girls from the dangers of early sexual debut with childhood peers or even through violation by surrounding adults. Burke explains that, "The status of *child* awarded protection and acknowledged distinct limitations of personal responsibility within a context of parental or community belonging" (2004:818). However, it may also happen that this childhood transition into adolescence exposes the dangers that may exist in kinship structures, because while this work is morally expected of parents, guardians and caregivers of the child, it is sometimes these same adults who exploit this vulnerable childhood. This provides us with one last perspective of the discourse of sexuality as victimisation where sexual(ised) children are pitted as the prey and possibly the victims of sexual abuse. This discourse rests on historical and social fabrications of childhoods that are steeped in images of children's innocence, indicating their disinterestedness and powerlessness vis-à-vis the immorality of society.

To contextually nuance this reproductive labour-work of protecting the Ndebele girl child, I will tap into the vocabulary of the vernacular. In *isiNdebele*, when one is referring to a pregnant woman, the expression used is *uzithwele*, that is: she is with child or in a literal translation she is carrying (a child in her stomach). Outside of wedlock, there is a suggestion that a pregnant girl or woman is one who laid her self-restraint (*ukuziphatha kuhle*) aside and engaged in sex; therefore being impregnated. There is a kind of moral policing of the appropriate time for human reproduction in *isiNdebele*. Elders counsel often girls saying *amantombazana bafuze ukuthi baziphathe kuhle* (must carry themselves with self-restraint – preserving their virginity). This speaks to the social order of life-course events like motherhood and pregnancy. Ménarche too is a life event. In the youth life-course, the attainment of ménarche signifies that a girl is now an adolescent capable of bearing a child. However, this reproductive capability is ideally not supposed to be activated in adolescence (Burrows & Johnson, 2005). The general belief in Sikelela is that an adolescent is not an adult and that adolescent girls should not, outside of the marital bed, become mothers – especially if they have not yet completed their secondary schooling. For the girls of Sikelela, secondary school typically terminates in fourth form with attending and completing sixth form (i.e., Form 5/Lower 6th and Form 6/Upper 6th), cf. Fig. 5 (page 23). The reproductive labour-work of rural Ndebele women is performed with the aim of keeping safe the bodies of Ndebele girls; bodies that are seen as reproductively mature but still too young to have sex and fall pregnant (Burrows & Johnson, 2005). While done privately, the benefits of this reproductive labour-work are experienced at a household, community and national level because in time, girls are successfully socialised into (re)productive women; wives and mothers. For example: by shortening menses and providing pain relief, *iporridge eyophoko* and *umbondo* respectively prevent menstruation from being prolonged and inhibiting their productivity within the home and outside of it. Therefore this application of Ndebele medicinal grains and herbal remedies in the management of menstruation is precolonial, decolonial and anticolonial as it does not from the onset problematise menstruation as pathological but only intervenes where it is extended, debilitating and/or inconvenient. The prepositions of MHM in international development discourse that focus predominantly on sanitary wear interventions are an overstatement of MHI that largely misdiagnoses the problem and overlooks the agency of donor recipients. This study, by visibilising Ndebele MHMMMs that promote MHH (and RMNCH+A), reclaims medicine as a non-western practice. The reproductive labour-work of the rural Ndebele resonates transcendentally with international development discourse as they each seek and effectively do to influence the experience of (school)girls as they transition into adulthood.

6.2 International development discourse constructions of childhood vs localised constructions of childhood

Chapter 5 revealed that reproductive labour-work as preparation for adulthood, future wifehood and motherhood can be seen as a lens that inverts visualisations of childhood as the idyllic frolicking and playing. Instead a "reproductive childhood" is portrayed - one in which the reproductively capable bodies of girls must equally be productive bodies. This productivity is achieved through their participation in the division of domestic labour within the family household. Adolescence is not to be confused with adulthood. International development discourse in the way of the WHO defines an adolescent as "a young person aged from ten to nineteen years" (WHO, 2013) while the UNCRC defines a child as any individual below 18 years of age (Hill, 2004:847). International development discourse uses biological age as an index for childhood, adolescence and adulthood. These definitions reflect a clear overlap between childhood and adolescence. They flatten out the ambivalence reflected starkly in African conceptions of youth (childhood) and adulthood which is complicated by multi-dimensional notions of social age.

The HIV epidemic in Sub-Saharan Africa gave birth to many a child-headed home and foregrounds a nuanced re-emergence of adult children. These adult children are distinct from Rukuni's (2007) adult children (page 114) and my concept of relational maturity. The adult children who are the child-heads of CHHs assume parental responsibilities for caring for their siblings and other children in that household. These 'adult children' have financial responsibilities. This leads us appreciate the taking on of (financial) responsibilities as another marker of adulthood. The taking on of (increased) responsibilities signifies of the "psychological development[s] that help transform 'children' into 'adults'" (James, 2009:34) and is an echo of what I describe as taking on the role of a proxy adult. Given that parental responsibilities (by way of caregiving and financial provision) index adulthood, childlessness can also be an index of childhood. I shall now demonstrate, drawing on my personal experience in the field, the role of maternity[6] in indexing social age among the Ndebele. Though I am a menarcheal adult, to the grandmothers and mothers in the study I am a child both in relation to them (i.e., relational maturity) and because I was nulliparous at the time of the study. As a result, interviewed participants in their homes (as opposed to them coming to *Gogo* Betty's), I attended the IDIs with *Gogo* Betty who stood in helped me attain a proxy (elderly) adulthood. This was a sign of *ukuhlonipha abadala*.

Postman (1995) highlights that in a literate world, children *become* adults. In connection with this, Lee discerns that "[a] division is often drawn between adult 'human beings' and child 'human becomings'" (2001:7). Responsibilities (e.g., caregiving, motherhood), literacy (a kind of knowledge responsibility), menstruation (which comes with the responsibility managing it) are an important part of this adult-becoming. Though there is a socially constructed watershed between adulthood and childhood, we have seen that adult children exist in African culture. International development discourse problematises such ambivalence using terms such as "child brides" and "child mother" that do not always translate in African culture. For example "[i]n international development practice and academia child marriage is defined as a formal marriage or informal union before the age of 18" (Giaquinta, 2016:2). Many African cultural practices are predicated on the fact that a mother cannot be a child, and that equally a wife cannot be a child. As such, adulthood is not marked exclusively by biological age but takes into account life events such as motherhood and marriage. Kamwendo Naphambo found that biological age not "a marker of maturity for marriage for local communities" in Malawi (2021:131). She also points to the contradiction between the "legal construction of girls' readiness for marriage in Malawi [which] is shaped by international human rights instruments[7] and, as such, do not reflect community constructions of girls' readiness for marriage" (Kamwendo Naphambo, 2021:131). Kamwendo Naphambo highlights a male participant in her study who remarked that "Marriage has no age, it is a shoe that has a size! *(ukwati ulibe saizi, nsapato ndoyomwe*

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[6] which can biological or fostered

[7] What Kamwendo Naphambo (2021) describes as "international rights instruments" are localised addendums of what I refer to in this dissertation as (international) 'development discourse'.

imakhala ndi saizi)" (2021:132). This localised reality conflicts with international development discourse and its application as seen through GAD in practice. The same was true in this study, whereby on-the-ground articulations of what the elders in the village perceived to be the Sikelela's early unintended pregnancy crisis are less concerned with age (i.e., childhood and adulthood), but rather the interruption of schooling and the occurrence of pregnancy outside of wedlock. Western notions of childhood are linked to innocence (Giaquinta, 2016) and "insulation f[rom] the responsibilities of adulthood" (Ocen, 2015:1588); so too are African notions. However, African constructions of childhood place less emphasis on the innocence of being unknowing and more emphasis on the fact that that certain types of knowing bring with them responsibilities that transform a child into an adult. For example, once a child becomes 'literate' in the adult activity of sexual intercourse, he or she may find herself burdened with subsequent adult responsibility of be(com)ing a mother or father. As *Gogo Ma*Gumede expresses on page 117, Ndebele constructions of girlhood encapsulate an innocence that is unsaddled by the burden of pregnancy and motherhood – which in turn ushers other types and forms of reproductive labour-work. I reiterate that this is evinced by the fact that *ngesiNdebele* when a woman is pregnant, it is said that *uzithwele* which means "she is carrying", derived from the infinitive verb *ukuthwala* (to carry). In this way, there is a sense that pregnancy and subsequent motherhood is like a weighty 'burden' (*umthwalo*) that cannot that cannot be laid aside once the baby is born. In conclusion, biological age on its own does not capture some of the nuances of marriage readiness and social maturity. Life-course events and socio-economic and political landscapes shape constructions of childhood and adulthood. They are a terrain upon which sexual and romantic relationships are complexly negotiated. These conceptualisations are not unique to (Southern) Africa, however. In the Caribbean[8], Pasura *et al.* found that "some respondents conceptualized motherhood and childhood as states that cannot coexist for teenage mothers" (2012:209). Consequently, this dissertation uses the narratives of Zimbabwean women and girls to portray the incongruence between certain localised constructions and international development discourse conceptualisations.

Other discrepancies between international development discourse and local realities include its depiction of non-Western children as symbols of hope for the future often against a starkly contrasting backdrop of political and economic instability (Malkki, 1997; Ncube, Chimbwanda & Willie, 2019). Along the same lines, Bornstein (2001) gives an example of a contradictory effect of child sponsorship in Zimbabwe. She explains that "In the process of empowering a child, child sponsorship dislodged the purchasing power of parents and in this sense, their authority" (Bornstein, 2001:614). This dissertation visibilises the social capital for health promotion embedded in Ndebele menstrual KAP. Yet Sicelisiwe's menstrual narrative demonstrates the role of female kin in helping Sicelisiwe – an adolescent girl with a learning disability – to access the local rural health facility to be treated when she experiences a bout of menorrhagia. These social networks are especially important for vulnerable groups such as people living with disabilities where they may have to rely on their support networks in order to gain access to services or mediate their experiences. They are not replaced by sponsorship the role of donor aid. This is in line with Larsen who asserts that, "Involvement in networks can be utilised in efforts to improve the social position of individuals by emphasising norms, reciprocity and trust" (2010:821). I have refrained from making any judgements on the socio-cultural practices associated with menstruation, considering instead how *ubuntu* and rural life-scapes can be incorporated in health enhancement, for example through MHMMMs; cadres like the VHWs and NGO-funded community 'volunteers'. In line with this, Arnfred aptly argues that "In GAD lines of thinking, 'tradition' and 'African culture' are detrimental to women, being posed in opposition to equity and modernity" (2004:13). Further to this, Robins (1998) describes the divide between tradition and modernity as an imaginary one. Rising levels of matrifocality also mean that there are far more single-wage-earning families headed by widows (such as *Gogo Na*Sithule and *Gogo Ma*Gumede) and divorcées (like *Gogo* Sinini, *Gogo Na*Kitty and *Gogo* Betty) and in this we see witness the villagers of Umzingwane "straddl[ing] the imaginary divide between tradition and modernity" (Robins, 1998:1679). These women are simultaneously culture-bearers and elders as well as self-sufficient heads of homes who care for grandchildren whose parents have been forced to migrate for *lebenschancen* and those orphaned by the HIV/AIDS epidemic. The increased divorce rates and financial independence of many of the matriarchs in this study suggests an improvement over time as Ndebele women begin to assume occupations that otherwise would not exist without the prominent role of NGOs in Zimbabwe. The involvement of NGO-funded such as the 'fieldworker-mothers' that are part of my own development initiative in the village collapse the boundary of labour-work as they are they do the work of mobilising the community for sanitary wear distributions voluntarily, but sometimes also receive stipends for it. The collective spirit of this work done through NGOs re-enforce menstrual preparation as a community responsibility. Yet at the same time, the economic strife in the country persists, driving the prevalence of poverty in the village of Sikelela and across Zimbabwe.

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[8] in the Eastern Caribbean states of Anguilla, Barbados, Dominica, Grenada, Montserrat and St Kitts and Nevis

CHAPTER 7: Conclusion

The study herein has captured certain aspects of the experiences of ménarche; menstruation and its management by girls women and Ndebele in Zimbabwe. It has also deconstructed the Western menstrual taboo (of concealment) and challenged the application of Western heteronormative gender binaries to African peoples like the Ndebele. This chapter will now summarise the key findings of this study, pointing out the significance of the theoretical framework and concluding with a brief exploration of some avenues for future research. In bringing this study to a close, I turn back to the central question of this dissertation**,** *What is the scope of preparation that Ndebele girls undergo for ménarche/menstruation?* The scope of preparation that Ndebele girls undergo for menstruation has undergone changes from generation to generation and it remains wide. It is best understood through the lens of reproductive labour-work as follows.

7.1 Reproductive labour-work: the scope of Ndebele menarcheal & menstrual preparation

7.1.1 *usukhulile*: menarcheal reproductive labour-work

When a Ndebele girl begins menstruating, she is told *usukhulile*. This expression itself signifies an introduction into the vernaculars of menstruation, which most will not have encountered before ménarche. Part of the menstrual preparedness that Ndebele girls receive is the ability to articulate their experiences in *isiNdebele*. It includes a literacy and fluency in the physiological processes and menstrual-related problems like *isilumo* (abdominal cramps), so that girls can have access to coping strategies when such symptoms arise. Menstrual preparation is not about just (vernacular) knowledge or literacy but embodied practices of preparing and managing the female body.

The study has ascertained that ménarche is a time when a girl is taught how to manage menstruation and avoid leaks and stains. At this time, actors at school (e.g., school peer educators, teachers) and kin (*obabakazi*, *ogogo, omama*, *omalume* and other female relatives) may open the gateway into MoMs by providing access to various MHMMMs. The avoidance of menstrual leaks and stains also keeps girls safe from a male gaze that may subsequently sexualise the menstruant. *ukukhula* has two senses in this study: (i) that of growing up and (i) starting to menstruate. *ukukhula* activates collective reproductive labour-work done by the kin and community to protect these girls from the danger of early sexual debut with childhood peers and sexual abuse by surrounding adults. *ukukhula* is not just about bodily changes and reproductive labour-work, it is a central aspect of the gendered lived experience for girls.

At ménarche, a Ndebele girl is conscientised to her reproductive capacity, which is translated (sometimes obscurely) by the parental advice about *ukuziphatha kuhle* – abstaining from premarital sex. *ukuziphatha* teaches Ndebele girls the embodied virtues (e.g., self-restraint, fidelity) that make for a good wife. Such a wife, because of *ukuziphatha,* can be trusted to be carrying the children of the line that she claims to bear. Through *ukuziphatha* girls learn that what makes for an attractive in a future wife goes beyond reproductive capacity and aesthetics. In this way, *ukuziphatha kuhle* is an ingredient for reproductive success. Finally, *ukukhula* represents a symbolic transition into a gradually intensifying reproductive labour-work burden that evolves Ndebele girls into proxy adults, proxy mothers, proxy wives, and future *ubumakoti.*

7.1.2 *ukukhula*: an entanglement of State, school & the family

This study locates school as a site of menstrual preparedness. It found that Ndebele girls are prepared for menstruation and reproduction and through the school, and the reproductive labour-work done by their kin. School-based menstrual preparation provides information on the physiology of menstruation and sex education. It is part of knowledge that enables girls and women to track their periods and constitutes Ndebele girls' "menstrual literacy". The home is also an important site of menstrual preparation. For *ogogo* in this study, *ugogo* (maternal) was their first family-based encounter with menstrual knowledge. This begins to change across the generations. *omama* describe being given their menstrual education by *ugogo* and *ubabakaz*i whereas adolescent girls describe a diverse number of sources for their family-based menstrual knowledge from *babakazi* and other female relatives; peers and including *umalume*. We learn that migration has played a role in this shift along with poor and *ex post facto* menstrual preparedness among Ndebele girls. The dissertation destabilises Eurocentric conceptualisations of gender imposed on Africa in a portrayal of female sons, male daughters and *malume* as a male mother, who even participates in the reproductive labour-work of fostering his sister's illegitimate children. The study also demonstrates the social role of *babakazi* as a female father and legitimator of the patrilineal line through her involvement in menstrual preparation and sexual socialisation.

7.1.3 *imisebenzi yamankazana*: pre- and post-menarcheal reproductive labour-work

Ndebele families – in their diverse, non-nuclear structures – are important are sites of socialisation where children are taught the norms and values of the society in which they live. Through localised forms of play and games and age hierarchies (biological and social), Ndebele girls are to *ukuhlonipha* (a central tenet of the *ubuntu* value system) that they respectively accord in the arrangements of social life. Girls are also socialised into gender roles through "non-play activities" (Lever, 1976:479). The assigning of *imisebenzi yamankazana* and *imisebenzi enzima* is a way in which the division of domestic labour becomes gendered. Chores are a form of reproductive labour-work which become more abundant and weight as a girl grows older. Through *imsebenzi yamankazana* a girl is skilled with certain competencies (e.g., child care, caregiving, weaving, cooking, cleaning) that enable her to monetise her domestic labour into remunerable work. In this study I have determined that Hochschild and Machung's (1989) 'second shift' does not emerge in adulthood but is slowly inscribed in childhood with the inscription being deepened at puberty. This inscription is then re-engraved at life-course events like ménarche (as *intombi*), at the time of marriage (as *umakoti*) and at birth (as *umama*). *Imisebenzi yamankazana* is not confined to girls because the normative gendered division of labour can be subverted depending on the presence or absence of daughters or sons in a family.

7.1.4 *ukuhlonipha*: (post-)marital body work

Menstruation is like a river that flows into the tributaries of womanhood, wifehood, *ubumakoti* and motherhood which in turn carry their own responsibilities and reproductive labour-work. These streams will flow into an ocean where generational replacement will bring the cycle full circle for it to repeat itself. *ukuhlonipha* is an especially important reproductive labour-work for *umakoti* as it constitutes a management of marriage. It is a form of invisible reproductive labour-work that is performed in specific ways during marriage but also serves an important role in smoothing out family relations even when marriage culminates in divorce. This important yet overlooked reproductive labour-work in the form of post-marital relationship management ensures that daughters are not cut off from their *babakazi* (and the paternal line) who is a culture-bearer and important gatekeeper of menstrual knowledge for Ndebele girls.

7.2 The significance of reproductive labour-work as a framework

As observed by Kamwendo Naphambo (2021) scholarly literature does not sufficiently explore menstruation as an embodied signifier of girl's readiness for marriage in Southern Africa. I attribute this to cultures of silence and 'missing discourse of desire' (Fine, 1988) in public discourse. The key findings of this study reveal that despite the moral panic about teenage desire, sex(uality) and pregnancy that causes a delinking of menstruation and reproduction in development discourse, this link (and the dangers it makes pubescent and adolescent girls vulnerable to, i.e., sex, procreation, STIs, HIV/AIDS, unplanned pregnancy) are not ignored at a community level. In so doing, the study makes explicit the silenced connections between menstruation, menstrual preparation, sex education, preparation for future (marital) sex and reproduction.

7.3 Final conclusion

This study has contributed to a sociological vernacular that help us to understand how menstrual knowledge, beliefs and practices mark the body as growing older and more able to take on responsibility. It finds that the individual, collective and collaborative reproductive labour-work carried out by the Ndebele to lprepare the female body for menstruation also promotes reproductive health and has far-reaching positive impacts for the community and more broadly human development. This reproductive labour-work cuts across development issue-areas of gender, health and education in the process of equipping girls with certain specialised ‘literacies’ (education) which affect future fertility (health) and school completion as it socialises them into their reproductive roles (gender) in society as healthy, educated and productive proxy adults; future mothers and wives.

7.4 Suggestions for further future research

The introductory chapter of this dissertation described what appears to be a secondary school transition crisis for schoolgirls in Zimbabwe. There is evidence to suggest that Zimbabwean women’s age at first sex is lower than their male counterparts and that they “spend much less time between first sex and marriage” (Cremin *et al*., 2008:i34). However, there remain missing pieces of the puzzle on schoolgirls’ educational outcomes in Zimbabwe. The literature review has revealed that there is a lacuna in terms of menarcheal and menstrual (including menstruation-related absenteeism) data on Zimbabwe, particularly at a national level. Alongside this kind of data collection, health and social policy on Zimbabwe could benefit from the use of menarcheal age as an indicator in population health. By the same token, there is need for more research on the relationship between ménarche and developmental outcomes such as school drop-out rate; sexual debut; age at first pregnancy; and age at marriage in Zimbabwe. Further to this, longitudinal studies in Zimbabwe could help us to establish to whether or not childbearing results in permanent dropping out of school. This would help us to understand the impact of early motherhood on schooling.

Childhood studies from underrepresented geographies in the global South are emerging as a new research agenda in the field of sociology[1]. The work of this dissertation could also be furthered by more anti-racist, decolonial research by African scholars tapping into other indigenous knowledge systems; particularly in the area of teenage desire and sexuality in Southern Africa where there is a dearth of more recent studies. Such research should consider precolonial histories and culture, and challenge “colonialism and latter-day neo-colonialism” (Patel, 2020:1) so as not to fixate on coloniality but instead centre Africa and Africans as research participants ***and*** (co-)producers of knowledge.

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[1] As established by the International Sociological Association Virtual IV Forum of Sociology where I presented in the session on ‘Visualities of Childhoods – Images of Innocence, Vulnerability, and Inequality: Part I’ on 26 February 2021.
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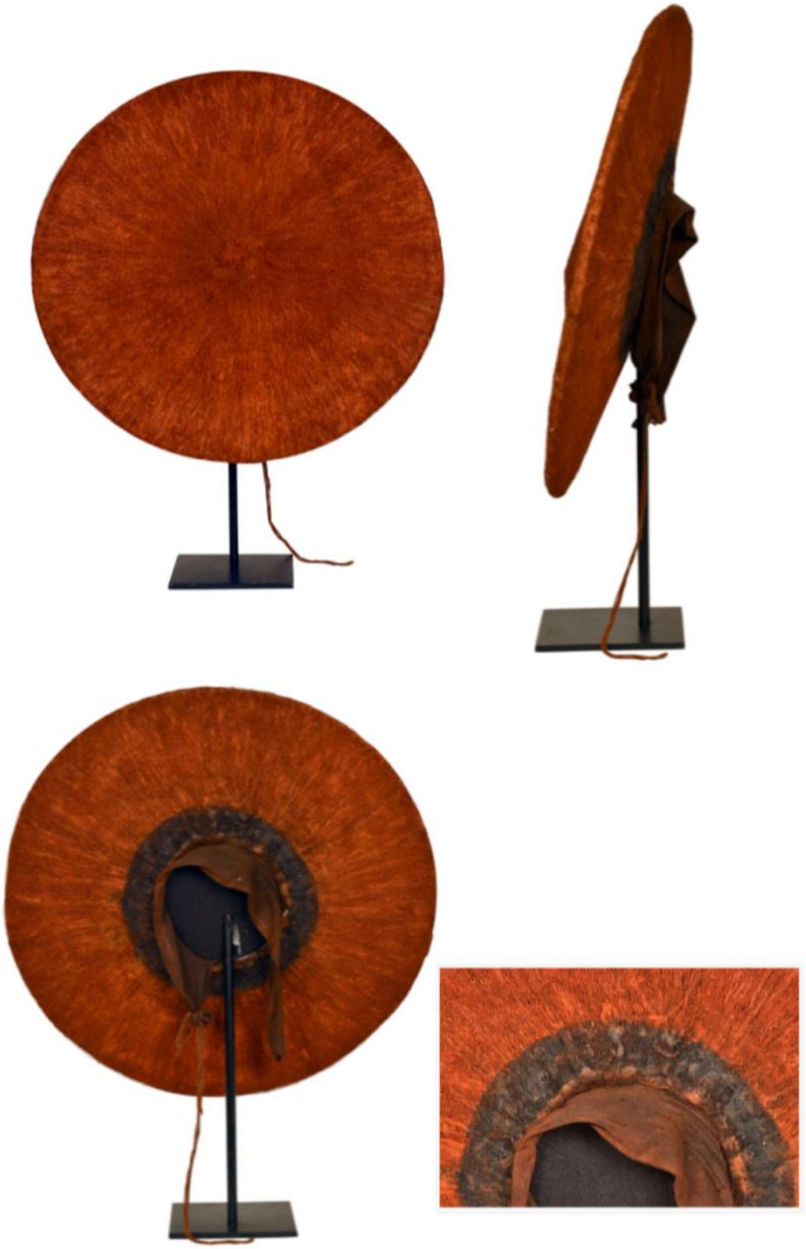
APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: Zulu headdress (*isicholo*)

Below are cross-sectional photographs of the traditional *isicholo* made in the 20th century in KwaZulu-Natal. It is made out of palm fiber, hair and (red) ochre[1]. It is mounted on a steel stand.



Source: https://www.sarajo.com/product/zulu-hat-isicholo/

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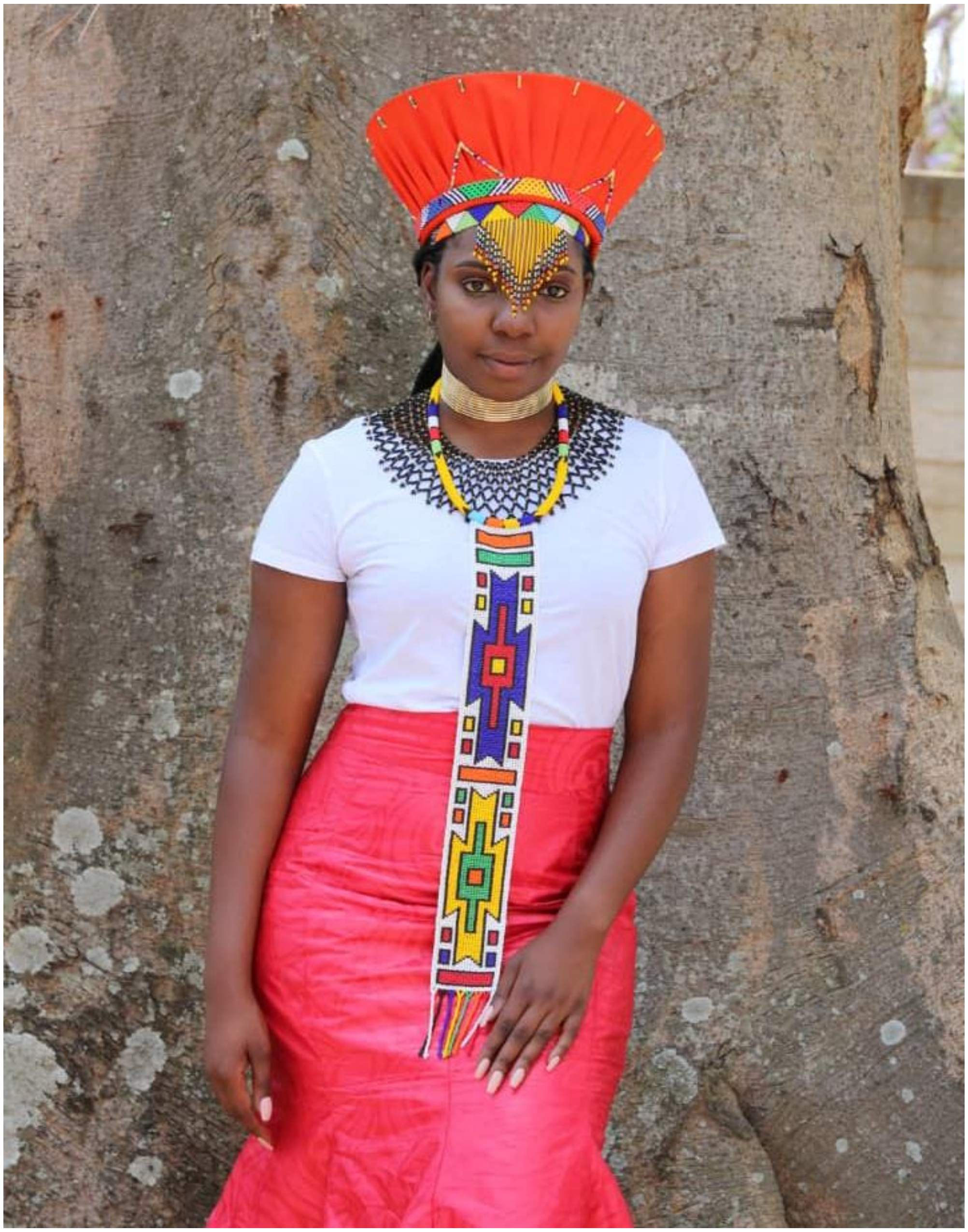
[1] Initiates of the Xhosa rite of passage *intonjane* (see page 32) would have their body "painted with white ochre to symbolise contact with ancestral spirits" (Padmanabhanunni *et al*., 2018:705).

APPENDIX B: Contemporary *isicholo*

The contemporary *isicholo* is worn as a bridal headdress, is signifies a Zulu/Ndebele women's maturity and marital status. It first worn at the *lobola* negotiation ceremony. It is symbolically red in colour like the ochre-dyed *isicholo* that begins to trend at turn of 19th century. *isicholo* is sometimes adorned with intricate beadwork as seen below.

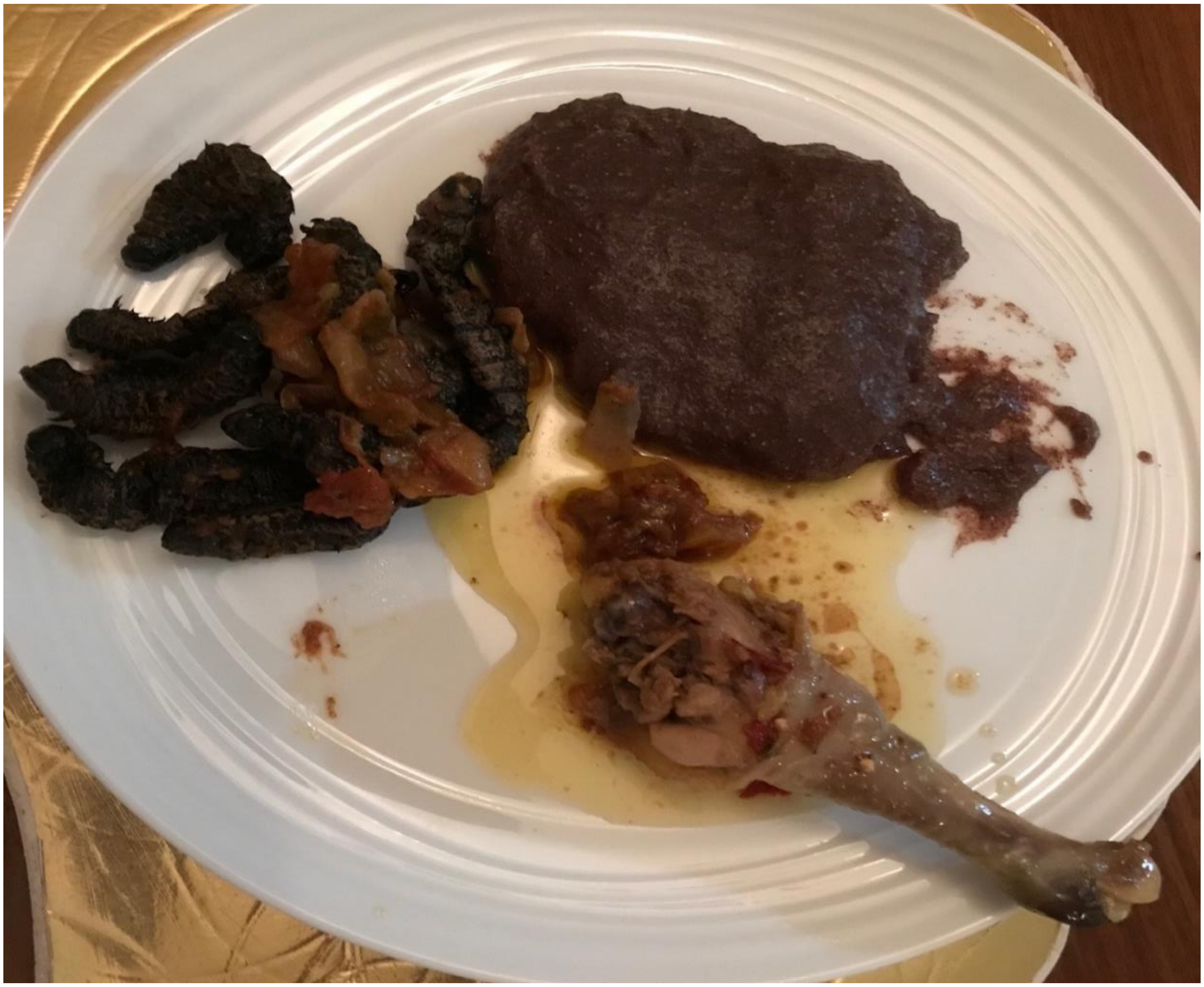


A Ndebele bride at her lobola negotiation ceremony in Zimbabwe, October 2019.

She gave her permission for me to use this photograph in my PhD dissertation.

APPENDIX C: ***isitshwala sophoko***

Below is ***isitshwala sophoko*** that I prepared myself served with a relish of Mopane worms (***amacimbi***) and ***inkhukhu yemakhaya*** (roadrunner chicken) which I made from the rapoko in the field photographed in Figure 18.



APPENDIX D: Pilot interview guide

1. How old were you when you first started menstruating?
2. When you started your period, did you understand what was happening?
    - If yes, how had you learned about it?
    - If no, who explained to you what was going on with your body?

3. What do you use for your menstrual period?

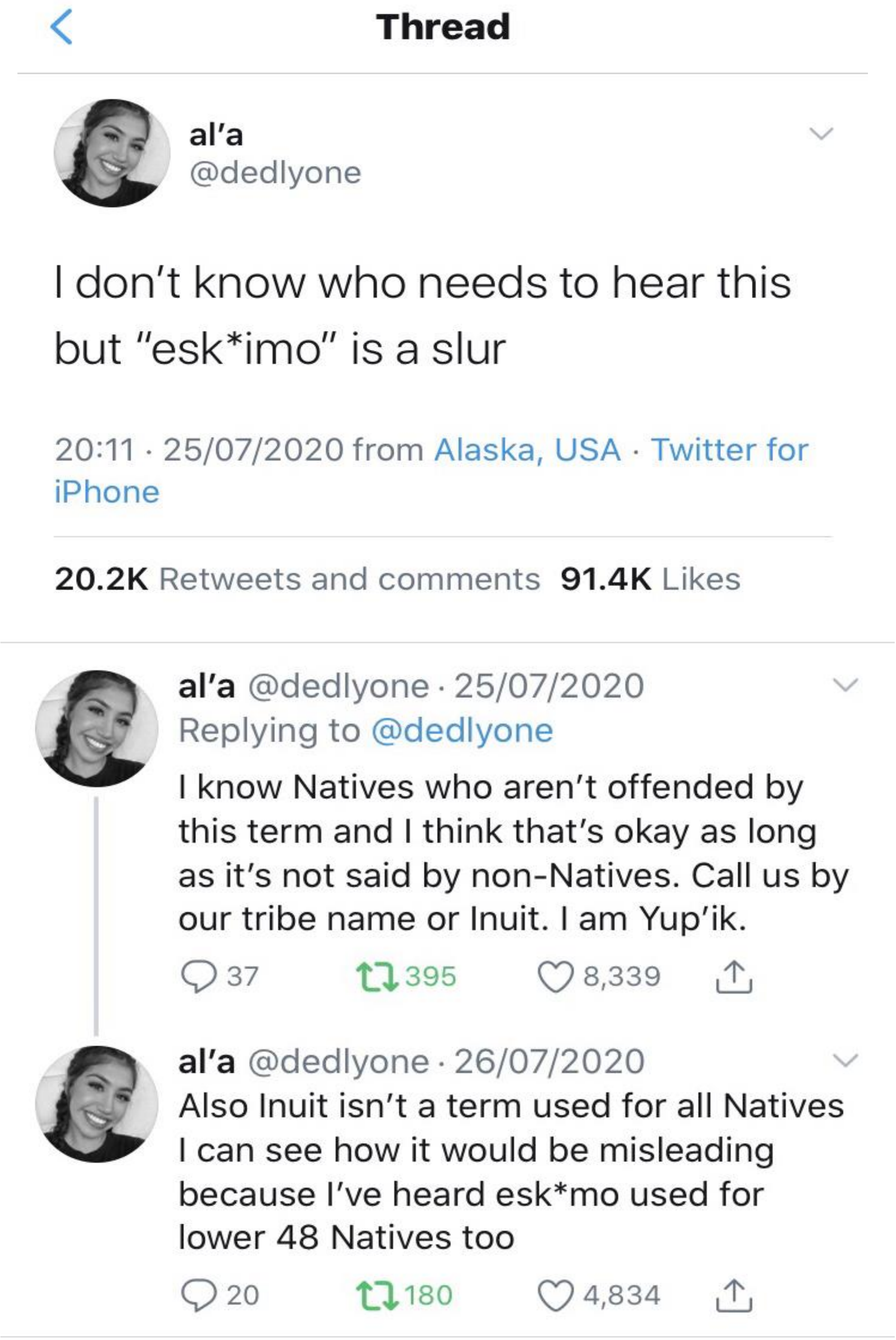
APPENDIX E: Fieldwork guide

What was it like growing up?

Probes:

- Ménarche
- MHM
- Marriage
- Menopause
- Did you do *imisebenzi yamankazana?*

APPENDIX F: Twitter thread raising awareness around the fact that "esk*mo" is a racial slur[2]



al'a
@dedlyone

I don't know who needs to hear this but "esk*imo" is a slur

20:11 · 25/07/2020 from Alaska, USA · Twitter for iPhone

20.2K Retweets and comments **91.4K** Likes

al'a @dedlyone · 25/07/2020
Replying to @dedlyone
I know Natives who aren't offended by this term and I think that's okay as long as it's not said by non-Natives. Call us by our tribe name or Inuit. I am Yup'ik.

al'a @dedlyone · 26/07/2020
Also Inuit isn't a term used for all Natives I can see how it would be misleading because I've heard esk*mo used for lower 48 Natives too

---

[2] https://twitter.com/dedlyone/status/1287103280804323328?s=21

Al’a is Yup’ik. The Yup’ik are indigenous “peoples of western, southwestern, and southcentral Alaska and the Russian Far East.”[3] Al’a also highlights in the third tweet not all natives in the “lower 48” (@dedlyone, 2020) are Inuit but explains that this is a likely misconception because the descriptor is sometimes applied homogeneously to indigenous peoples of the Contiguous US or the “contiguous continental states”[4] of the USA. These states are 48 altogether, and they do not include Alaska and Hawaii.

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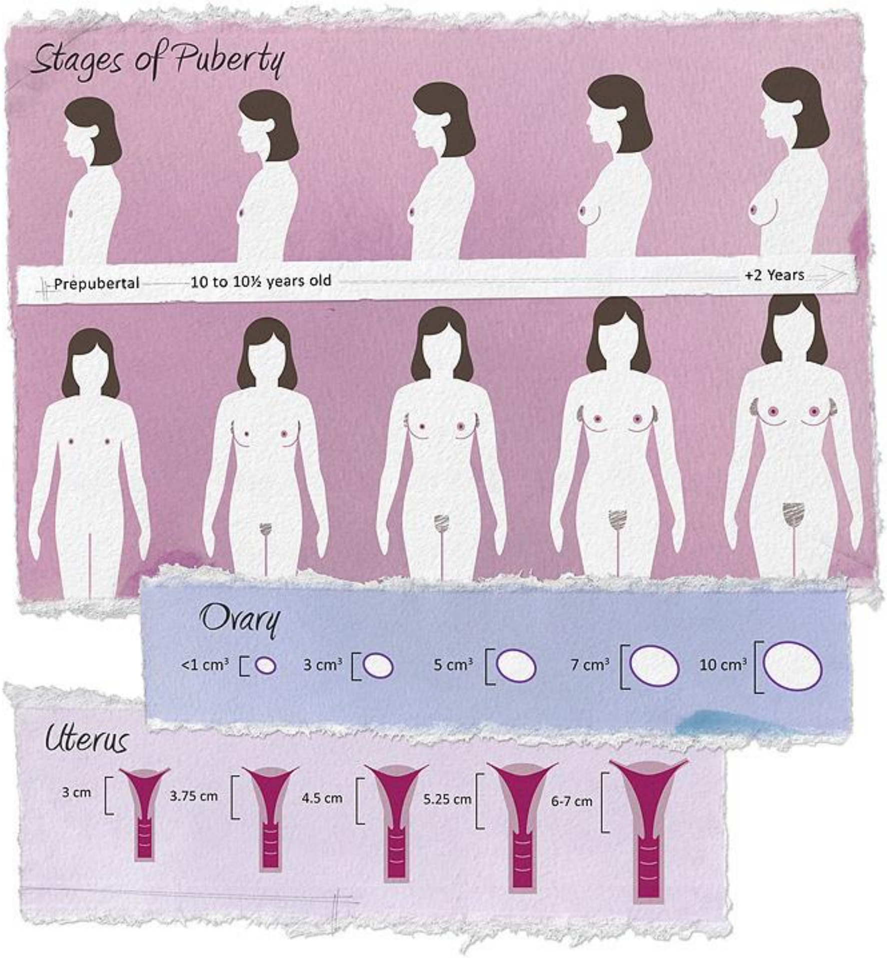
[3] https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yupik_peoples

[4] https://www.yourdictionary.com/lower-48

APPENDIX G: Texas Children’s Hospital “Stages of Puberty” Infographic


Stages of Puberty
Prepubertal
10 to 10½ years old
+2 Years
Ovary
<1 cm^3
3 cm^3
5 cm^3
7 cm^3
10 cm^3
Uterus
3 cm
3.75 cm
4.5 cm
5.25 cm
6-7 cm