Nigerian and Sierra Leonean Young Women, Sex, and Sexuality: A Study in a Prairie City in Western Canada

by

Katie J. Dutfield-Wilms

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Abstract

Through an examination of how culture and cultural difference affect sexual norms and practices this thesis explores the sexual subjectivities of ten Nigerian and Sierra Leonean young women living in Winnipeg. The theoretical framework deployed in this thesis is the social constructionist approach to sexuality. This approach involves an understanding that social processes affect the meanings and performances of sexuality and will be deployed to underscore the varying ways Nigerian and Sierra Leonean young women develop sexual beliefs and practices enmeshed in dating and economic exchange, connections to “home”, pleasure, and the body. The methodological approach is ethnographic and uses focus groups, interviews, and participant observation. I argue that the Nigerian and Sierra Leonean young women’s sexual subjectivities are influenced by their social locations as straddling two different social worlds and sets of cultural and sexual norms. Media, race and religion influence these young women’s sexual subjectivities.

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Chapter 1 - Introduction - Background and Research Questions

1.1 - A Brief Introduction and Theoretical Framework

The store windows were covered with pink and red decorations, largely of the "heart" and cupid persuasion, sparkly and feathered heart shaped pillows and cardboard cutouts of cupid holding a bow and arrow hung from the ceiling inside the windows. It was clear, walking through the mall, that Valentine's Day was approaching and all the retailers had geared their merchandise to attract eager Winnipegers out shopping for the "perfect" gift.[1] It was a "first" Valentine's Day for me, as this was my first Valentine's Day as a married woman and I was excited for the upcoming "holiday." I was at the mall to meet Meg, who had become one of my key informants.[2] Winnipeg winters are brutal and February is one of the coldest months in Winnipeg and so the mall becomes an attractive option for people of all ages to have some indoor fun. Meg and I occasionally hung out at the mall together, neither of us had much money to spend or intention to buy anything, but we enjoyed the relaxing walk around the stores and we still picked up and tried on all the beautiful clothes that we wished we could buy. We always ended our shopping trip with an ice-cream, cup of coffee or fast food meal of some kind as a way to treat ourselves and make the outing official by being able to say we bought something.

I recall the somewhat awkward moment when Meg and I noticed each other that day. I could see her from the distance all her hair braided, bouncing high above her head. She had a sparkle in her eyes, it was almost as if she was smiling through them. Meg walked with quiet purpose wearing figure hugging blue jeans, a black zip up hoodie with a purple tank top underneath. I was immediately struck by the huge back pack she carried

on her back. It was so large I thought it could topple her petite frame over completely. Meg never went too far without her back pack, as it contained all of her school material. Her black winter boots had a dusting of snow on them, a reminder of the ever present winter. We approached each other smiling, she held out her hand, simultaneously remarking with a confident and kind tone “nice to see you again.” I shook her hand and responded “likewise, I was looking forward to it”. As we began to walk together she looked me up and down and remarked “now is that how you celebrate Valentine’s Day?” I was unsure at first what she was referring to, but I quickly realized that it was my bright red sweater she was remarking on. It was a light hearted joke, one like many Meg had made in the past, alluding perhaps to the all together strange combination of my bright red sweater and stark red hair. I had always believed that red heads couldn’t wear red, but when I saw the red sweater in my closet (a gift from my Mother years ago) that morning I thought why not? It was the new me, the married me and I was going to wear whatever I wanted. Meg did not think so however and she was not keen on the combination. After we had finished laughing about her comment and my subsequent defense of my perhaps poor outfit choice we entered into a talk about Valentine’s Day and the recent offer from a male Nigerian international student and acquaintance of hers to take her out on a date. He asked if she wanted to go to a movie one evening with him. Meg’s description of this man was not a particularly flattering one and it was clear that she was not “attracted” to him. She told me that she said to him she was too busy. I noticed Meg twirling one of her hair braids around her finger almost compulsively and realized that she definitely felt a little uncomfortable and unsure how to feel about the whole event.

Meg explained, “When he asked me to go to the movies with him I right away thought it would be weird. Like would I meet him there? Would he pick me up? I don’t even know if he has a car. Like after the movie would he try to kiss me and all that you know?”

Meg was concerned that she may have hurt his feelings and she felt badly. I assured her that he would likely be okay and slowly our conversation naturally shifted to involve our interest in one particular store’s winter jackets that were on sale.

Perhaps wearing that red sweater was not such a bad idea, since my fashion faux pas spurred a conversation that was incredibly enlightening. I was left asking myself how does a Nigerian or Sierra Leonean young woman figure out how to behave and make decisions about dating, a perplexing practice for African youth living in Canada?

This thesis is about the production of sexual subjectivity. Throughout this thesis the theoretical framework I use is a social construction framework in order to examine what people say and do as a way in which sexuality is produced (Curtis 2009; Ross and Rapp 1997; Cameron and Kulick 2006, etc.). Language has a strong influence on defining the contours of human sexuality and in its multiple expressions. “Sex” is not simply a physical, real time act that human beings perform, but it is something people think about and ultimately live out or represent every day (Cameron and Kulich 2006). Not only is language a critical component in the social construction approach to sexuality but this theoretical framework will “examine the range of behaviour, ideology, and subjective meaning among and within human groups, and [will] view the body, its functions, and sensations as potentials (and limits) which are incorporated and mediated by

culture" (Vance, 1991: 879). The decision to use a social construction of sexuality framework in my thesis made a great deal of sense especially when considering the other two major approaches; the historically popular biological approach or biological determinism and what Vance describes as the "cultural influence models of sexuality" (Vance,1991:878). The biological approach is an essentialist framework that largely views sexuality as "natural" and universal. The "cultural influence models" focuses on culture and the way in which it creates and defines sexual practices and beliefs. The cultural influence models are not built to focus on the other dynamics at play, which are the influences of individual sexual behaviour and beliefs on the wider sexual culture. The social construction approach to sexuality is best suited for this thesis largely because it rejects a pure biological approach as well as the cultural influence models that are alternate frameworks which could have been used. The biological and cultural influence models naturalise sexuality and the social construction approach looks at how sexuality is constructed by "denaturalising sexuality" and by studying the connections between sexual practice, desire and identity (Curtis, 2004: 95). The questions I asked research participants were designed based on the social construction theoretical framework and the accompanying understanding that sexuality is not a biological given, but rather that sexuality is shaped by wider social and cultural influences. These questions therefore did not include possible effects of genetics for example, but focused more specifically on the different realms of these young women's lives (family, peer groups and global influences) as sites of discourses where their sexual subjectivities are produced.

It is important to note the unique way human beings within the realm of their sexual lives interact with culture and are not just acted upon. The social construction framework allows for human agency as well as influences of wider social structures. The social construction approach fosters this unique push-pull interaction.

It is also important to point out that sexuality exists within and is influenced by overlapping layers of social existence like politics, the economy, and family life. Clifford Geertz's (1973) onion metaphor, used by Ross and Rapp (1997) to explain sexuality, suggests how sexuality, like culture, can only be understood by viewing sexuality through these multiple layers collectively. Ross and Rapp (1997) describe the whole onion as being the "essence" of sexuality, "in sexuality as in culture, as we peel off each layer (economies, politics, families, etc), we may think that we are approaching the kernel, but we eventually discover that the whole is the only 'essence' there is" (Ross and Rapp, 1997: 155). Other scholars such as Wekker (2008) use Geertz's "famous layers of an onion" and an overall social construction approach to sexuality in order to understand the interacting layers of social life that influence how sexuality is experienced and performed (2008: 3). Wekker's (2008) study involving women's sexual culture in the Afro-Surinamese diaspora considers sexuality to be socially constructed and "in opposition to deeply ingrained essentialist notions that assumed existing social and sexual arrangements between women and men were natural, normative and inevitable (Peiss, Simmons, with Padgug 1989), these studies have convincingly shown that all sexualities are socially constructed" (Wekker, 2008: 121-122).

Language is present in all the layers that contribute to the formation of sexuality both as a lived experience and as a category of academic or more specifically in this case anthropological investigation. The social construction approach to sexuality recognises the same physical acts as having several different meanings based on the way in which they are made sense of within different cultures, economic and political systems and throughout time (Vance, 1991).

At this point in the introduction, I would like to explain a few important definitions. Firstly, when I use the term "sexuality" I refer to the socially constructed and cross-culturally variable expressions of what is sexual and the different ways and meanings of being sexual (Cameron and Kulick 2003: 10). "Sexuality" therefore can include erotic feelings, desires, identifications, institutions and social practices, which are expressed and represented in dating and marriage. Curtis' (2004) approach establishes sexuality as a set of identities and subjective experiences mediated through "culturally specific historic and social processes" (2004: 95-96).

"Subjectivity" as well as "identity" will be used throughout this thesis. I use "subjectivity" in most cases because "sexual identity" "posits a unified and coherent sexual subject" which Curtis believes is limiting (2004: 95). Curtis, following Sally Anderson, argues that subjectivity is "best understood as a process which is always in the making, is never finished or complete" (2004: 95). "Subjectivity" is also used throughout this thesis because this term, more completely "captures[s] the dynamic interaction between culture and the individual" (Curtis, 2009: 7). Therefore "subjectivity" is particularly useful in this study, a study examining the affect of culture and cultural

difference, because it highlights the multiple ways in which the African women continually think about and make sense of their sexual lives within multiple and shifting social contexts.

This thesis will also involve a cultural analyses of the body. This type of analysis will allow for the physical body to be understood within a wider cultural context. Sexuality is lived through the body and therefore cannot be left out of the analysis (Donnan and Magowan 2010; Cameron and Kulick 2006 etc.). This will be elaborated on in chapter six, where I will examine the "sexual body" and the role of hair and the hourglass body shape in the production of sexual subjectivity.

Through a series of interviews, focus groups and countless hours of participant observation, I explore the multiple ways in which culture and cultural difference affect the sexual subjectivity of Nigerian and Sierra Leonean young women living in Manitoba. I pay particular attention to the everyday lives of these women in the way they talk about sex as well as the sexual practices themselves. The social construction of sexuality theoretical framework is a good fit for a study looking at culture and sexual subjectivity focusing on the way in which the Nigerian and Sierra Leonean women act on and are influenced by culture, both the attitudes and behaviours of Canada and the African countries the women are from.

After "completing" my fieldwork (I must share that I did not feel like all the questions were asked or that my fieldwork was finished, but I understand that this is a normal outcome of ethnographic methodology and moreover, for the purposes of this project, I did have to begin writing) I returned to my anthropological methods textbooks

and was captured by the character of narrative ethnography. Tedlock noted that in the 1970s “there was a shift in emphasis from participant observation to the observation of the participation” (Robben and Sluka, 2007: 19). There was a change in the way ethnographers saw their relationship with their research participants especially when it came to writing the ethnography. There was an increased desire on the part of ethnographers to produce “a creative intermingling of lived experiences, field data, methodological reflections, and cultural analysis by a situated and self-conscious narrator” (Robben and Sluka 2007). In practical terms, this shift manifested itself in the use of more direct quotations and the presence of collaboration with research participants. Narrative ethnography is reflexive in that it shows the ethnographer’s positionality by allowing the stories of the research participants and the ethnographer to weave in and out of each other. As a result, in this thesis, I have emphasized the narratives of the young women I interviewed through a narrative analysis approach. Each chapter is focused on one Nigerian or Sierra Leonean young woman and as each chapter develops examples are drawn from several research participants. I decided to structure the thesis in this way because I felt that it was critical that the individual women’s stories lay at the centre of the piece and the analysis and theory was built around them. Alternatively, I could have laid out the analysis and the theory and subsequently inserted the women’s narratives into the appropriate places, but this seemed somewhat disjointed and almost counterintuitive to the ethnographic process. By structuring the thesis in this way, I hope I have ensured the women’s voices are ever present within these pages, sharing their own experiences, dreams and thoughts.

I wanted to share a little bit about my story to perhaps provide some context to my descriptions, thoughts and analysis in the coming pages. The fieldwork process was somewhat surreal and almost therapeutic for me and my own narrative may illustrate why. I immigrated to Canada fourteen years ago with my family. I have an older brother and a younger sister, both characters in their own right. My mother, an incredibly strong willed Welsh woman is a powerful influence in my life, immigrated once before as a child with her family, and I have always idolized her for her courage, resourcefulness and unwavering persistence to re-qualify her education when she immigrated for a second time to Canada. My father, a particularly proper English man with a childish spirit and affinity for nicknames, immigrated once before as well; following his sense of adventure in the early 1970s he headed to Africa. There he met my mother and, as they say, the rest is history. When we were preparing to come to Canada I was eleven years old and I documented my thoughts and fears in a school journal that I still have today. Occasionally, over the last fourteen years, I have read excerpts from that journal. One passage is particularly interesting "We're moving to Canada soon, I'm sad to say good bye to my friends, but maybe I'll marry a Canadian boy". This is indeed what happened, only a few short months ago, I married a Manitoban man with German roots and my outlook on love and life is perhaps a little different from before. I now view marriage and relationships more generally in a less rosy kind of way. There is a complicated and messy dynamic that is sometimes only understood when you are inside that confusion, rather quite similar to fieldwork really (that is, however, a whole other discussion). Some of the young women I had the privilege of working with knew me before and afterward I was

married and it was fascinating for me to watch the different ways in which they related to me as a single (perhaps best described as “engaged”) and then a married woman. I do not share these details of my life to illustrate similarities with the women you will meet in this thesis because our stories are quite different, but rather to highlight my own positioning as a privileged white woman in my twenties who identifies as a South African-Canadian whose sexuality is unfolding in important “milestones” within a “Western” life course. My hope is that this thesis reflects the inter-subjective processes of fieldwork insofar as the outcomes of my interactions with these young women are shaped by my life course and sexual subjectivity. At the same time my analysis is a result of my interpretation of their lives and their experiences based on what I see and understand. This thesis cannot explain the fullness of the lives and experiences of the women I was privileged to work with. However, it provides a partial yet meaningful representation of what I have seen and experienced during my fieldwork.

1.2 - African Identity and the Winnipeg “Village” - Doing Fieldwork at Home

I looked out the window of my parked car and watched the snow carefully fall to the ground as if it had a place in mind that it wanted to settle. It was early evening and completely dark, it was the beginning of winter in Winnipeg and you could almost taste the impending bitterness in the air. The ground was not completely snow covered, but the crunching sound of a nearby pedestrian’s shoes making contact with the icy snowy sidewalk with a fast gate could still be heard. My car engine remained on, the heat still flowing inside the vehicle and the radio playing quietly in the background. The nearby

buzzing street light illuminated the packed parking lot in which I sat. Thoughts were furiously running through my head as I procrastinated exiting the vehicle, pretending to dig in my purse and gather my things in the event that someone saw me and wondered why I was just sitting there. I felt fear, raw unadorned fear that even shortened my breath and quickened the pace of my heart. I felt out of my element, void of confidence and uncomfortable within even my own skin. Opening the car door seemed like a task equal to that of climbing Mount Everest at this point and I was not interested. I had spent the entire day and to be honest the entire previous year anticipating this moment and now it was here. I saw my cell phone light up, directing my attention to the passenger seat beside me where it lay. A text message from my "new" husband came through: "hope it's the start of something great" he wrote. At this point I decided I needed to try to embrace what seemed to be an all together frightening endeavor, fieldwork, something I had only read about in anthropological methods books.

I turned the key in the ignition towards me, immediately hearing the engine shut off and the radio silence. With still some trepidation I got out of my car and walked towards the building, a structure I had walked by, run by and driven by hundreds of times before. Granted I had never been inside, but still somehow in my head, it now seemed so new to me. It was a small church, an unassuming building on the corner of two relatively busy residential streets in Winnipeg. Hannah, a Sierra Leonean acquaintance of mine, who was interested in my research project, had told me about this event and encouraged me to attend. She was the only person I would know at the event so I approached the building hoping that she was already there so I would have someone to talk to. A handful

of concrete steps with wooden bannisters lead to one set of brown double doors. I grabbed one of the handles and walked inside, I immediately felt some shelter from the cold. I was greeted by a wall of beautiful colours, a large number of brightly dressed African men and women were standing in the foyer. The men and women were wearing "traditional" African clothing all of which was made with bright blue, green, purple, and yellow fabrics. A very tall woman, dressed from head to toe in bright purple, probably in her mid-twenties worked her way through the crowd and came to the door to greet me. She shook my hand and offered me a program of the evening's proceedings. I eagerly accepted the program and thanked the woman. She welcomed me to the "Young Adult African Cultural Night" and directed me to the area where the evening's events would be held. She had a large smile, a friendly outgoing smile that definitely provided me some reprieve from the anxiety I was feeling only a few minutes previously.

Only a few minutes later, I was thrilled when across the room I recognized Hannah had already arrived. Wearing a bright orange and green patterned skirt and top she was standing amongst a group of women,. Her outfit was figure hugging and eye catching both because of its colour and because of the way she wore it. I could hear her energy and excitement in her voice from quite a distance away. I was immediately drawn to her. As I approached her she saw me coming towards her and she walked my way, "collected me" and with quite a vibrancy took my hand and introduced me to all her friends. Our conversation was interrupted by a call to take our seats and shortly after the shuffling of people ended, the event got underway. The room went silent and a small band just off to the side of the stage began to play upbeat high tempo, heavy drum-

infused music. Hannah, who was sitting beside me whispered into my ear, “Glad you’re here; hope you don’t feel too out of place.” I found Hannah’s comment interesting because I undoubtedly felt out of place, but this was largely because for the first time I was “being” an anthropologist not just reading about being one. I was conducting fieldwork for the first time and it was a little overwhelming to say the least. However, Hannah was probably alluding to the obvious fact that I was the only “white” person at this event.

To this comment I chuckled quietly and responded, “Don’t worry, I’m good.” It would be unfair of me not to disclose that this was the beginning of when I became especially aware of my “whiteness.”[3]

For the next two and a half hours we were entertained by dancers, singers, poets, and special guest speakers one of whom was the MLA for the area who brought with her greetings from the provincial legislature. The entire evening was about celebrating culture and it manifested itself in all forms of art from many of the countries across Africa, including Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Ghana, just to name a few. Speeches were made and songs were sung in English, French and Igbo. After all the performances ended and the closing remarks were being made I sat there thinking what an incredibly complex, dynamic population and so highly enshrouded within political, economic and cultural forces.

The formal program ended and everyone was invited to the basement where a hot meal was going to be served. We all went downstairs and enjoyed a delicious array of different types of African dishes that organizers of the event prepared for everyone. We

all sat and ate at round tables that seated about eight people per table. The people at the table I sat at were laughing and joking and enjoying helping after helping of food from a buffet table that did not seem to shrink at all. All areas of the African continent were represented. Food dishes were labelled by the region or country they were from. Every detail of the meal had been planned and the whole event went off without a hitch, at least from what I could tell.

I left with a full stomach and a content smile on my face. I walked with a more confident bounce in my step as I left the building. I certainly did not figure I was a full fledged anthropologist, but I did recognize as I walked down those concrete steps that my lens may never quite be the same. Perhaps it was not the start to something "great," but it was a start, a symbolic yet very real beginning to four months of fieldwork in which I would try to interview, observe and most importantly get to know a small number of Nigerian and Sierra Leonean women living in Manitoba. As I drove home I pondered why I was so anxious about attending the event? The location after all was only a few blocks from the house I lived in for a large part of my life until only four months previously when I got married and moved out. The area was familiar to me, I had played soccer in the nearby fields and for years walked to the mom and pop ice cream shop with my sister during the summer and while the fields look a little different and the ice cream shop is now a huge block of condos I am aware of the streets and local amenities. That evening however, I definitely felt lost, not that I did not know where I was or needed directions but the context had now shifted and the familiar became all together

unfamiliar. In order to explain further a discussion of doing fieldwork at home will follow.

I was not in some "away from home" destination, yet I still felt displaced by the very fact that from now on I was to share my "home" with my "field" and vice versa. At the same time I was excited to begin that period of immersion in which I would experience that deep and imbedded process of anthropological inquiry that I had only read about in methodological textbooks. I adopted somewhat of a routine, each morning making a cup of coffee and a piece of toast with marmalade sitting down at my desk in my little office, which I created in a space in the spare bedroom. A space that was designed to be "school" or "research" space. I consistently worked away at a project that I would ultimately be surprised by, challenged by and delighted by all at the same time. I slowly set up interviews, focus groups and arranged times to hang out with the women that had agreed to be part of the project.

Each day I entered the "field" and exited the "field" in one fluid motion, as I conducted interviews, focus groups and hours and hours of participant observation. There were particular challenges to doing fieldwork at "home" as opposed to if I had gone abroad and carried out fieldwork in a more perhaps "traditional" or even "exotic" manner, where there are more obvious marked entry and exit points into the field. Fieldwork conducted at "home" has become an increasingly written about experience as anthropologists begin to do fieldwork in several local and varying locations. A great deal of the literature on fieldwork at "home" discuses the way in which "traditional fieldwork", largely marked by travel to a distant geographical location inhabited by

"exotic others" is still favoured and better supported than contemporary fieldwork research conducted at "home". Caputo (2000) argues that the reasons for this involve the discipline's inherent desire to separate itself from other disciplines, largely through continual re-inscribing of fieldwork in it's "traditional" form.

> That is, as disciplinary boundaries dissolve and more and more overlap occurs between disciplines, anthropology has responded in part by reestablishing its own borders and reasserting what makes it unique from other disciplines. Fieldwork, one of the central enduring symbols of that which defines anthropological work, seems to be the target of this effort (Caputo, 2000:21)

While I do not fully agree with this assertion, I do recognise that there may be commonly held misconceptions about conducting fieldwork at home and in some cases reducing this kind of research to be the simpler or easier option available to anthropologists. The fieldwork that I conducted over four months in Winnipeg, despite being my "home", the place where I lived, possessed all the same characteristics of fieldwork in a more distant geographical location. Some of these characteristics included: constant movement from location to location in and around Winnipeg, constant unfamiliarity in place and people away from home, several moments when I had to "initiate" or prove myself trustworthy, movement to and from the "field," just to name a few. These are all similar issues that would be faced by an anthropologist doing fieldwork away from home. In this chapter heading I deliberately decided to use the phrasing "Winnipeg 'Village'" because I wanted to draw on some of those "traditional" ideas of village fieldwork, while at the same time constantly challenging and renegotiating those ideas within my own research project.

Caputo (2000) draws on work by Gupta and Fergusson (1997) that suggests that there is a "hierarchy of purity of field sites" at work in anthropology (2000: 22). Moreover, Gupta and Fergusson argue,

> After all, if "the field" is most appropriately a place that is "not home," then some places will necessarily be more "not home" than others, and hence more appropriate, more "fieldlike." All ethnographic research is thus done "in the field," but some "fields" are more equal than others - specifically those that are understood to be distant, exotic, and strange (Caputo, 2000:22).

While I do not want to focus on the way in which some have argued that fieldwork at "home" has been in some ways misunderstood and to a larger extent even disregarded as being less than "traditional" fieldwork methods, I do feel it important to draw on these major tensions at work within the literature when it comes to doing fieldwork at home since this is what I carried out for four months and is the foundation of this thesis.

Following these scholars, I will argue that to the contrary, I felt like I was in a field site that was extremely strange and uncomfortable despite it being my home. I think this was largely because it was not until now that I had really taken a close look at the place where I lived and fundamentally my lens as an anthropologist altered my perception as well. A few sentences in my field notes help to explain what I was feeling regarding this estrangement during my fieldwork.

> It almost feels as if Winnipeg is becoming more and more strange and confusing to me, perhaps it's because for the first time in 14 years I have really given a lot of thought to all the taken for granted ideas I had of my "home," for example, the frequently referred to phrase that Winnipeg is diverse, for example, or even that Winnipeg is dangerous (Dutfield-Wilms, 2011:4).

I recall one day during the second month of my fieldwork when I was waiting in a coffee shop for Meg to arrive. It was shortly after Christmas and so the plan was to do a short interview because she had to get back to school for a class. I recall feeling like I was in completely unfamiliar territory, despite having studied and hung out in this coffee shop for years. I felt a disconcerting feeling in my stomach. I was not nervous to meet up with Meg, I had interviewed her before and we had built a good relationship. It did not have anything to do with the location either, but rather my feelings of displacement and bewilderment were the emotions of the early stages of the fieldwork experience. I was feeling this way largely because being an "anthropologist," interviewing research participants and doing participant observation was something I was still trying to make sense of in my head and at the same time the clear familiarity around me began to blur.

From my experience of conducting fieldwork at home in Winnipeg, I slowly became more and more aware of the complexity of such a project and others like it where anthropologists carryout fieldwork in the same places they reside. At the same time as carrying out fieldwork, I still maintained family commitments, work commitments and tried to keep in touch with friends and acquaintances, all part of this multidimensional life in which I juggled every day. I enjoyed several aspects of having done my fieldwork in Winnipeg, one being that I was so conveniently closely located to my advisor at the university as well as my committee, who I called on at different points during my fieldwork for advice. I also appreciated the way in which some degree of my life maintained familiar, in that at the end of most days I could go home and enjoy the comforts of "home." I will add that "home" did look significantly different for me even

from a few months prior. Having been recently married, I had moved to another area of the city and so my "new" life was somewhat shifting and still settling into some kind of routine so much that when I did return home from my daily fieldwork endeavours, interviews etcetera I did often come home to be surprised by how much had changed. However, as the fieldwork went on the "field" became more and more familiar, transforming in some ways into "home" therefore blurring the lines that are methodically and practically drawn to ensure objectivity and maintain boundaries meant to be for the benefit of the researcher and his or her's research participants. While this does sound at first to be somewhat problematic, looking back I now see the benefit of the "messy" nature of fieldwork and I am pleased with the extraordinary complex outcomes of this process.

Recruitment, Interviews and Focus Groups

My fieldwork ran from December 2010 through March 2011. I conducted two focus groups, with a group of five and three women respectively, as well as fifteen one-on-one interviews. The individual interview locations were selected in consultation with the research participants themselves. All of these interviews took place in locations that were safe and comfortable for myself as the researcher and the research participants. The individual interviews were conducted in both public and private locations such as coffee shops, small meeting rooms and in a few cases in the homes of research participants.

The two focus groups that I carried out took place in small meeting rooms in a central location accessible to all research participants. The two focus groups I conducted occurred near the beginning of my fieldwork. The rationale for why I carried out focus

groups is largely based on the extensive literature that suggests that when discussing topics related to sexuality, dating or gender, one-on-one interviews do not tend to work as well as small groups or focus groups of three to five individuals who are roughly of the same age and gender (Montell 1999). In addition, according to Montell (1999) "focus groups can be both consciousness-raising and empowering for the research subjects, as well as the researcher" (1999: 44). In addition to this reasoning, largely based on the literature, I also felt that carrying out a couple of focus groups might help identify possible themes or lines of questioning that may inform individual interviews. This is indeed what happened. After reviewing the transcripts of the two focus groups I conducted, I was able to identify several important themes that were raised by focus group participants on multiple occasions. Some of these areas include: perceptions of Canadian youth, dating and the media. Finally, focus groups allow anthropologists to observe interactions between research participants in a so-called naturalist setting. I do feel that the two focus groups I conducted were very useful, in that I do not believe I would have obtained the same candid data during one-on-one interviews.

Interviews and focus groups occurred during times that were selected by the participants to not disrupt their class schedules at university, part time jobs, volunteer positions or other personal commitments they may have had at the time. All the individual interviews as well as the focus groups, with the consent of the individuals involved, were audio taped.

The interview strategy that I used during the course of my fieldwork was the informal interviewing method.[4] I deployed the informal interviewing method in both the

individual interviews as well as during the two focus groups. In terms of my recruitment strategy, I first attempted to recruit participants from an organisation in Winnipeg where I volunteered, but this was not successful. This organisation provided all kinds of referral and resource support for African immigrants in Winnipeg. I then shifted my efforts to women I knew through other means of contact, that is, through my university social networks. Some of these social networks included established connections I had with several different student groups. Through my connections within the community, I met one key informant who introduced me to a number of individuals within the African community and the "snowball" effect occurred from there. During my fieldwork and in the year prior in a naturally unfolding way I became embedded within the community and slowly research participants (through snowball sampling and word of mouth), volunteered to become part of this research. As I began spending time with the first few women who agreed to be a part of this research project other friends and acquaintances of these women became curious about my presence and purpose. After explaining that I was a master's student who was conducting a research project and sharing the details of my research methods, for example, conducting interviews, many of the women wanted to learn more and were eventually so interested in the project that they volunteered to participate.

Research participants were selected based on several criteria namely gender, age, nationality, duration of time in Canada, and knowledge of the English language. I was seeking women who were between the ages of eighteen to thirty who were from Nigerian or Sierra Leone. I was also looking for some variation in terms of the length of time the

participants had lived in Canada. Finally, since my first language is English I needed to recruit willing participants who were English speaking. In terms of my rationale for these criteria, I targeted young women in this research project because, due to cultural norms, I believed they may be more willing to talk with me about issues related to their sexual subjectivities than men would be. Regarding country of origin, I specifically recruited young women from Nigeria and Sierra Leone in this research project because I had established rapport with these 2 groups, which is crucial to ethnographic methodology. Furthermore, there are numerous cultural and linguistic similarities, since they both come from the same general geographic region of West Africa. Moreover, these two groups spend time together on a day-to-day basis in Winnipeg as well.

Within two months of starting my fieldwork, I had met ten women who gave their consent to be a part of my research project, who form the cohort for this study. The women ranged in age from eighteen to twenty-six years and their length of time in Canada ranged from one to nine years. The majority of the women I interviewed came to Canada as university international students. Some of the women immigrated as children with family and in some cases without. In these instances some of the women attended elementary school, junior high school and even high school in Winnipeg. Eight of the women came to Canada from Nigeria and two of the women came to Canada from Sierra Leone. All of the women I worked with spoke English. All of the women attended university. The women come from varied socio-economic backgrounds. Many of the women are well supported financially by their parents for everything from their rent, food, tuition to in some cases even allowing some monies allocated for entertainment or

visits home. A few of the women pay for their own tuition and living expenses through a combination of part time work and bank loans. All of the women's religious beliefs were Christian. Most of the women attend Baptist or evangelical faith churches. For two of the women they are practicing Catholics. All of the women identified as heterosexual women.

Anthropology involves understanding not only what people do but also what they say. Moreover, being able to understand what people say requires understanding the wider contexts of their everyday lives and social worlds. One of the strengths of this thesis is how I bring both narrative and social context together by deploying interviews as well as participant observation. Participant observation is one of the main "cornerstones" of anthropological methodology and is a "method in which a researcher takes part in the daily activities, rituals, interactions, and events of a group of people as one of the means of learning the explicit and tacit aspects of their life routines and their culture" (Dewalt and Dewalt, 2002: 1). Participant observation contributes to my analysis by being an "on the ground" source through which I was able to observe conversations, interactions and events first hand. This "on the ground" experience is what "field" in fieldwork is really getting at in everyday ways as anthropologists go about researching complex social issues. These observations (carefully recorded in field notes) served as another source of information that I am able to use when carrying out the technique of triangulation in order to develop a fuller understanding of who people are and why they act a particular way.[5] As a result, I selected research participants who were willing to allow me to interview them multiple times as well as to allow me to spend time with them during their

everyday routines like spending time shopping, studying together, hanging out on campus, attending church events and eating together. All of the women were receptive to my hanging around with them and were happy to take part in one-on-one interviews or in some cases participate in focus groups. I did not need to reject any research participants. According to Dewalt and Dewalt (2002) it is important "for the researcher to participate in naturally unfolding events, and to observe them as carefully and as objectively as possible" (2002: 120). I made every attempt throughout my fieldwork to do exactly that and I extensively used field notes to record my own observations, feelings and impressions of my unfolding social world and the social worlds of the women I was working with.

All of the interviews and focus groups were, with the consent of those involved audio taped and then transcribed verbatim. Using the inductive coding or "open" coding method I identified patterns that were common to the women's interviews (both one-on-one and focus groups) as well as what was said in participant observation.[6]

At this juncture I would like to briefly sketch out the contours of the Winnipeg "village" more specifically as well as briefly explain what I came to understand, at least in part, as "African identity." It is important to note that there has been a shift in where refugees and immigrants to Canada are coming from in the past several years in Canada. A change from European source countries to the fast rise in refugees and immigrants from African and Middle Eastern source countries is an apt description of the current Canadian situation (Kanu 2008). Several factors affecting the African continent have contributed to this shift, namely "economic mismanagement by governments, the

structural location of the continent in the global capitalist system, and [the] neo-liberal policy prescriptions from international financial institutions continue to peripheralize its economies to an extent that creates extensive economic hardships for a significant number of people" (Tettey and Puplampu, 2005: 4). Many African countries are also faced with political unrest stemming from civil war, ethnic divides and the lasting effects of colonialism (Tettey and Puplampu, 2005: 4). "Diaspora" and "diasporic Africans" are phrases that are used throughout this thesis. Since "diaspora" is a somewhat complicated and contested concept, I would like to describe more specifically why I have decided to include it in this thesis as well as describe how it will be used in the pages that follow. Historically, diaspora has been used to do describe a group of people who were "forced and/or violently compelled" to leave their homes and find an alternate place to live (Tettey and Puplampu, 2005: 4). However, the way in which this concept of diaspora has been used over time has changed. The overall understanding of diaspora that will be used in this thesis is,

> A people with a common origin who reside, more or less on a permanent basis, outside the borders of the ethnic or religious homeland - whether that homeland is real or symbolic, independent or under foreign control. Diaspora members identify themselves, or are identified by others - inside and outside their homeland - as part of the homeland national community, and as such are often called upon to participate, or are entangled, in homeland-related affairs (Tettey and Puplampu, 2005: 4).

All the young women involved in this research project are diasporic young women who in many ways came to Canada based on an understanding of Canada as "accepting" and "multicultural." Some of the women who moved here specifically for university believe part of their coming to Canada had to do with their parent's preconceived notions of

Canada as being "multicultural" and therefore accepting and understanding of various different people who carry with them, in many ways, vastly different cultural beliefs, religious practices, and spoken languages. The way in which Canada is "imagined" to be "open" and "multicultural" is explored throughout this thesis as these ideas and meanings exist along side an "African identity" that I explore in the paragraph that follows.[7] The nuanced interaction of these two sets of cultural identities and understandings inform a great deal of this research. It is within this space where these Nigerian and Sierra Leonean young women make sense of and incorporate both of the social worlds in which they occupy. The process of immigration is a tumultuous one to say the least and the following description provides a context perhaps to understand the dual nature of African youth who have to occupy both social worlds (Tettey and Puplampu 2005), "immigration is, in a sense, a new beginning that entails a reconstructing of cultural practice, notions of self, and attachment to the larger society, the success of which is greatly predicated on the immigrant's sense of the personal and social resources at his/her disposal" (Tettey and Puplampu, 2005: 207).

The African population in Winnipeg is an extremely dynamic group in part because of the multiple African countries represented, all of whom have their own complex and multiple political and economic histories and relationships to one another. The "African identity" I speak about is not at all my attempt to encapsulate fully what it means to be "African", as this is highly problematic. Instead, I try to understand what ideas condition and define what it means to be from a country in Africa living in Winnipeg. The young women I worked with constantly referred to "back home" and made reference to things

"we do" as well as openly talked about their preference to be friends with and date individuals of their own country of origin or of another African country. It appears that these young women make attempts to identify and interact within the boundaries of their own particular community. The group of women in my research often remarked that I was their first white "friend". I choose to highlight this aspect of the women's lives in order to demonstrate that one of the important shaping forces of their "African identity" is influenced by a very real and acknowledged interaction with solely other African women and men. That is not to say that this was something that the women actively decided on. Furthermore, on more than one occasion two women remarked that this was concerning to them and they favoured interaction with "Canadians" (who largely signal "whiteness"). I have highlighted this point at the outset of this thesis because it introduces a complexity around the issue of race that emerged throughout my fieldwork as an important influencing aspect in how the Nigerian and Sierra Leonean young women make decisions about their "African identity" and conceptualise their "black sexuality" (as "black girls").[8] Despite the pervasive notions of Canada as "multicultural" and "open" issues of race, albeit "silent" affect the every day lives of these young women, in who they choose to be friends with, who they choose to date and how they think about their sexual subjectivity within a "multicultural" country.

1.3 - Youth Sexuality and Race

This thesis draws on, and contributes to, the body of work on youth sexuality focusing on race. However, before I explain this connection and contribution I would like to explore

how race and ethnicity will be used throughout this thesis. Race is not only an important theme that emerges at several points throughout this thesis, but as my fieldwork wrapped up it became clear to me that this aspect of Nigerian and Sierra Leonean young women's sexual subjectivities warrants more investigation in future research. Research in the social sciences and the humanities that focusses on race, ethnicity, and nationalism is based upon an understanding of ethnicity as a "set of socially constructed boundaries in political, economic, cultural, social, and moral time and space" (Nagel, 2000: 110). Race refers to "visible (often skin color) distinctions among populations" (Nagel 2000: 110). Race and ethnicity are strongly interrelated and therefore a working definition of race, that will be used throughout this thesis inlcudes these two concepts together. Therefore, I understand race to be the "visible distinctions among populations" that contribute to and are influenced by the formation of "a set of socially constructed boundaries in political, economic, cultural, social, and moral time and space" (Nagel, 2000: 110). Race is socially and culturally constructed (Nagel 2000) as opposed to a biological or genetic construction. Race as a social construct is the overall understanding that underlies this thesis. Race and ethnicity were ways in which these young Nigerian and Sierra Leonean young women identified and thought about themselves and therefore as the anthropologist I was not simply imposing a category or label.

Debra Curtis' work with teenage girls on the eastern Caribbean island of Nevis explored the ways in which sex and sexuality were influenced by and influenced culture more broadly as well as consumer culture. Her research examined "how sexuality is a social and economic product capable of changing and varying within a culture and across

a subject's lifetime, demonstrating it's fluidity and malleability" (Curtis, 2009: 5). My own research is heavily influenced by Curtis' work. Along with Curtis' contribution to this body of literature Asencio's (1999) work with Puerto Rican youth examines the most dominant binary that exists within this field, the male-female, not male-male, female-female or male-non male categories. According to Ascenio's work an eighteen year old male states, "Why would any guy want to be like a girl...They got no pride in themselves, not like a real man. A real man would never be treated like a girl" (Asencio, 1999: 119). Ideas and feelings around what makes a "real man" is defined exclusively by notions of heterosexuality which involves the male-female binary. In similar ways, this research examines the Nigerian and Sierra Leonean cultural expectations to be "good girls" by in part, remaining virgins until marriage. Ideas around "purity" and virginity contour notions of "good girls" that these young women are expected to live out. This research, through an interrogation of the way in which these women perform heterosexuality (through intimate relations with other women within cultural spaces around the "black" body, for example, the cultural practice of "doing hair") around notions of race form part of the contribution that this research is making to this wider body of literature on youth sexuality and race.

Also Garcia's (2009) work with "Latina Girls" has helped to shape the growing literature focused on youth sexuality and race. These "Latina Girls" were second-generation Latina youth living in Chicago whose narratives (obtained through extensive interviewing) expressed two configurations of relationships that were deemed "appropriate for virginity loss." The first include relationships "defined by love" and the

second include those relationships "characterized by a mutual sentiment of caring" (Garcia, 2009: 601). These findings, in part, resound true with the Nigerian and Sierra Leonean young women I interviewed as some women talked about other women they knew (who were not their friends) who had sex for the first time because they were "in love." First sex and "losing" one's virginity is defined by "Latina girls" and the young women in this research study as solely penile-vaginal intercourse. Virginity and first sex experiences are very important areas in young women's "sexual biography" whereby decisions are made and understandings are constructed that have a role in forming their sexual subjectivity.[9] These constructs orient young women's sexuality within a broader set of dominant expressions and expectations that interact in dynamic ways to influence the individual as well as at the same time affecting the wider understandings.

The research I am undertaking in Winnipeg with Nigerian and Sierra Leonean young women builds on this body of research that focusses on youth sexuality and race. This population is an under-researched population in Canada both within the sexuality arena and within anthropology more generally. The recent work conducted in Winnipeg by Frohlick (2011) with varrying ages of men from Sub-Saharan African countries examines "...the implications of new demographics of diversity and sociality of 'difference' for the subjectivities of African newcomer teen boys and young men facing particular challenges related to racism, poverty, and displacement in the forging of sexual lives" (2011: 1). Work by Frohlick (2011) and Kanu (2008) as well as a small number of other scholars frame the existing literature on African youth in Winnipeg.[10] Another important set of findings, as it relates to this research is the 2007 Ethno-Racial Minority

Youth Research Project (ERMY) carried out by the Sexuality Education Resource Centre of Manitoba (SERC) and with support from partner government and community agencies explored what it is like for "ethno-racial youth" to live in Winnipeg, their identity formation as "ethno-racial youth" and its relation to sexuality (ERMY 2009). My work with Nigerian and Sierra Leonean young women is a contribution to this important and growing research area. Specifically, to my knowledge there has not been a study like this one that works solely with African young women from Nigeria and Sierra Leone and will hopefully illuminate some areas for further research.

1.4 - Research Objectives and Main Research Questions

At this point, I would like to provide a brief explanation for how this research project emerged. Firstly, Winnipeg is where I live and in my everyday life through taking anthropology courses, in particular the sex and sexualities course, I began to think about some of these issues that are dealt with in this thesis. Furthermore, after seeing a presentation in an urban anthropology course taught by my thesis advisor by the Sexuality Education Resource Centre of Manitoba (SERC) where two young women presented the findings of a recent research project called the Ethno-Racial Minority Youth research project (ERMY) I began volunteering with SERC on one of their smaller research projects. I developed a keen interest in issues related to immigrant young women and sexuality more broadly. This project developed out of several years of exposure to and interraction with organizations such as SERC. In summary, this research emerged more out of my own social positoning and realtionship to these concepts rather than out

of reasons of "convenience" or even the apparent gap in the literature when it comes to Winnipeg and youth and sexuality research more generally.

The research questions I set out to answer in this project are firstly, as Nigerian and Sierra Leonean women living in Winnipeg, a prairie city in Western Canada, how does culture and cultural difference affect their sexual subjectivity? Secondly, how do sexual norms and consumer culture in Canada shape African immigrant young women's ideals and practices of love, sex, and marriage?[11] Broadly, those were the themes I was probing for in the focus groups and interviews I conducted and I tried to look for in the participant observation I carried out. Further questions emerged as I began to connect more deeply with the young women I was working with. Therefore this thesis also addresses the question of how Nigerian and Sierra Leonean young women make sense of how to act within the framework of Western-style dating. And, as I learned more about how these young women were consuming media, specifically movies from Hollywood, Bollywood and Nollywood, I began to ask questions about how media shaped their sexuality, which this thesis also addresses.[12] My hope is that this research, as outlined above with an understudied population, provides some meaningful insights into the sexual lives of these young women from Nigeria and Sierra Leone. At the end of this thesis I will also highlight some areas that I came across during my research for future study.

Chapter two explores language and the way in which it interacts with sexuality, including how the Nigerian and Sierra Leonean young women talk about sex and view sex more generally. In addition, this chapter explores the sexual practices of this population, including meeting men, dating and sex. Chapter three introduces some of the dominant perceptions, held by Nigerian and Sierra Leonean young women and uses the

social construction of sexuality framework to make sense of the source of these perceptions as well as the way in which they influence their decision making with regard to their sexual subjectivity. More broadly this chapter highlights the way in which sexuality connects the individual to the wider community and global spheres of life. Chapter four examines the contested realm of the Nigerian and Sierra Leonean young women's lives that is dating and the practice of "multiple boyfriends" where sex (in many forms) is exchanged for goods and services. A discussion that involves pleasure and how it is understood and articulated by Nigerian and Sierra Leonean young woman is also included in this chapter. Finally, chapter four also examines race and sexuality and the intersections of both within these young women's lives. Chapter five evaluates the affect of media and specifically Indian movies from Bollywood on the sexual subjectivity of Nigerian and Sierra Leonean women. A research project that has anything to do with sexuality, cannot leave out an analysis of the body and more specifically the "sexual body." Therefore, chapter six looks at the body as well as the role of hair in the production of sexual subjectivity. This chapter also explores meanings of the hour glass body shape and the buttocks within a wider discussion of sexuality and clothing.

Chapter 2 - Meg: Sexuality in the Everyday Lives of Nigerian and Sierra Leonean Young Women in Manitoba

2.1 - How Sex is Talked About By Nigerian and Sierra Leonean Women

> I'm a Daddy's girl, a Daddy's pet. My sister has a boyfriend, but I don't. My Daddy always says I must get a guy like him, a traditional Igbo man to marry. There is no sex before marriage. I have this strong Christian idea that your body is the temple of the holy spirit you should not defile it. Sex is only allowed between a married man and woman. Let me tell you the truth: Most Catholic, Christian parents don't permit you to have premarital sex. [Meg]

It was the end of March and nearing the completion of my fieldwork when I met up with Meg to ask a few last clarifying questions. It was a sad day for me because I knew this would likely be the last time we would hang out together until after my thesis was written. We had become quite close over my four months of fieldwork seeing each other almost daily. Needing my "Meg fix" I would sometimes joke to her as her personality was an injection of joy and energy into my research and, more importantly, into my life. Meg was very interested in my research and was very motivated to share her story with me, often asking after she explained something, "does that make sense?" She wanted to ensure that I understood what she was saying and that she welcomed my questions were welcomed. Indeed, I did not understand everything that Meg shared with me, but after this last March meeting I did feel I understood a great deal more about Meg.

As we sat down to drink our coffee Meg shared with me that she had applied and hopes to get into the Faculty of Nursing. She seemed to be holding something back as she talked and so I challenged her, asking her what was wrong. She explained that while she recognized that nursing is a good career path for her, what she deeply desired is to

become a writer. Meg had mentioned her love of literature on almost every occasion we met, but she had never before so explicitly described to me her most intimate of dreams, to write short stories and books about Nigerian men and women living in the diaspora. Meg's eyes widened as she told me about Chimamanda Adichie, a well known female Nigerian writer and speaker who has played an inspirational role in Meg's life.[13] She talked about her as if she was urging me to love her too. Meg explained Adichie felt the same pressure to be a doctor or lawyer, but she persevered in her goals to become a writer and that is indeed what she became. She told me she related to Adichie's story and often turns to her work as it represents a familiar comfort. Meg instructed that I listen to a TED Talk given by Adichie in July 2009 called "The Danger of the Single Story" saying, "You'll understand when you meet her." I remember eagerly opening my computer and looking up this talk when I got home, I was so excited to meet this woman who Meg spoke about so personally with such reverence and total admiration. After watching the almost twenty minute long talk I realized that Adichie was not simply a role model to Meg, but Adichie's life also represented a life course that Meg yearned for herself. Adichie spoke about how she slowly turned to African literature, moving away from the British and American work she had been immersed in as a child recalling how she "realized that people like me, girls with skin the colour of chocolate, whose kinky hair could not form pony tails could also exist in literature" (Ted Talk, July 2009). Adichie also symbolized a deeply imbedded strength in Meg that she could become the writer that Adichie talked about with "skin the colour of chocolate and whose kinky hair could not form pony tails," the writer she had always dreamed to be, despite her parents' wishes

and perhaps more accurately demands to become something else. It became apparent to me that Meg's connection to Adichie had moved far beyond a role model and could almost be defined as a love affair with a woman she had never met, who was perhaps too old to be her contemporary and too young to be a mother figure. Meg was making sense of her life and her "African-ness" through her love of Adichie and all things created by Adichie. Meg's desire to be a writer represented more than just a problematic situation in which her parents had something different in mind for her to study because indeed this was not a new reality for many young men and women.

In Adichie's talk, she warns against what she calls the "single story," which is as she describes the way in which we can adopt one way of viewing a person, group of people or situation and not being attentive to the multiple and complex interconnected stories that they may have. Adichie described how she had travelled to the United States for university at the age of nineteen and introduced the audience to her roommate, a white American woman. Adichie explains her roommate had a single story of Africa. She was surprised by how well Adichie spoke English and was shocked to hear that Nigeria's official language is English. Equally Adichie's roommate was taken aback when after requesting to hear some "African" music Adichie took out her tape of Mariah Carey. After listening to this talk I asked myself, "Did I have a single story of Meg?" I will admit that until this point perhaps I had seen Meg's story as just that, a single story of an international student that came to Winnipeg to study hard and obtain a professional degree while at the same time making sense of "Canadian" sexual culture and norms while still remaining attentive to her Nigerian practices, beliefs and influences. I had

realized through her connection with Adichie, that Meg's story was much more complex than I first realized and she no longer represented to me one of the thousands of international students that studied in Winnipeg. She had her own stories and indeed they were multiple and interconnected and her love for Adichie and literature and her desire to be a writer was pivotal to understanding her positioning and view of Canadian culture. This shift in thinking got me asking myself, what is it like to be a Nigerian or Sierra Leonean young woman living in Winnipeg? How is sex and sexuality understood and what role does this understanding have in the everyday lives of Nigerian and Sierra Leonean young women in Winnipeg?

I decided to start at the "end" so to speak because that moment was pivotal for me. That moment, in which I realized I needed to step back was critical. Our use of language and words are critically important when it comes to self-understanding and more specifically our sexual subjectivity, which I explain more fully in a moment. With that in mind I want to share a little about Meg, the young woman you will get to know in this chapter. Meg was nineteen when I met her. She came to Winnipeg as an international student a year ago. Meg is a self-professed "nerd," who grew up as a Catholic and still remains church going here in Winnipeg. . Meg came to Winnipeg to pursue post secondary studies largely because her older sister was already here and because Manitoba more generally had become known as an affordable site to study in North America. This belief that Manitoba is an affordable site to study in North America is a widely shared idea among immigrant groups and international students. On many occasions I heard this reason as part of the rationale for why certain women came to Winnipeg to study. Meg

describes herself as a "daddy's girl." Meg's linguistic skills and abilities to manage several responsibilities at once were simply remarkable to me. She spoke English, French, German, Igbo and Creole and juggled school, a part-time job at a fast food restaurant and volunteering.

Language and Sexuality:

In this chapter, I highlight the way in which sex is talked about by Nigerian and Sierra Leonean women. In the second part of this chapter sexual practices will be the focus. In keeping with my theoretical framework, the social construction of sexuality, I begin with language; it would be an understatement to simply say that language matters and so I have turned to a passage from the Language and Sexuality Reader that illustrates just how powerful language is,

> Sex, for humans, is not just something we do, but also something we represent and reflect on: language plays a crucial role in shaping human sexuality and in mediating its various expressions. Speaking (or writing) about sex is not so much a "displacement of sexual energies" as it is a means for giving those energies direction, shape and form (Cameron and Kulick, 2006: 1).

Researchers across disciplines are increasingly interested in language and sexuality as a field of study. Cameron and Kulick (2006) provide a useful definition of the study of language and sexuality: "[It is] an inquiry into the role played by language in producing and organizing sex as a meaningful domain of human experience" (2006: 1). One of the key aspects of how sexuality is talked about by this population is the predominance of heterosexuality. I discovered that sex is talked about by Nigerian and Sierra Leonean women within a heterosexual framework where same-sex sexualities are entirely absent.

The act of sex and its multiple expressions are reserved, in the discourses of my interlocutors, for male-female relationships. Research participants, when talking about sex, always uttered the phrase "no sex before marriage." The women frame sexuality quite narrowly in my view, in so far as they understand heterosexual sex and marital sex as the same thing. What this demonstrates is that "not all expressions of heterosexuality are equal: the 'ideal' heteronormative sexuality is the kind stereotypically associated with the middle-class nuclear family, involving a stable, monogamous (preferably marital) and reproductive sexual relationship between two adults (not too young or too old)..." (Cameron and Kulick, 2006: 11). In our first interview together Meg and I sat at a table for two in a coffee shop close to where Meg lives. We were both equally nervous, probably for different reasons and perhaps some the same, nevertheless this is what she had to say when I asked her what dating and marriage looks like in her life,

> [Meg] My Daddy always says I must get a guy like him, a traditional Igbo man to marry. There is no sex before marriage. I have this strong Christian idea that your body is the temple of the holy spirit you should not defile it. Sex is only allowed between a married man and woman. So let me tell you the truth, most Catholic Christian parents don't permit you to have premarital sex.
>
> [Katie] Can you tell me a bit more about that?
>
> [Meg] Well it's kind of like, it's important to be a good girl and stuff, not just for me but [also] for my family. You get what I mean? I can't just go sleeping around and stuff.

Meg is drawing out the importance of being a "good girl," a description she is equating with being a virgin and being "pure." Notions around being a "good girl" influence the most intimate of ways in which Nigerian and Sierra Leonean women's sexuality is lived out in everyday kind of ways. Meg and others acknowledge that there are individuals

who deviate from this 'ideal' (being a "good girl"), but largely speaking sex is reserved for married male-female couples and it is almost exclusively talked about in this way.

Sex Is:

Over the course of my fieldwork, it became clear to me that when the women were talking about "sex" they were, in almost all cases, referring to penile-vaginal intercourse and did not consider oral-genital contact as "sex." What became clear was that the Nigerian and Sierra Leonean young women I interviewed rejected the idea that oral sex is considered "sex." According to Sanders and Reinisch (1999) "engaging in behaviours other than penile-vaginal intercourse is a strategy used by some to preserve 'technical virginity'" (Cameron and Kulick 2006:222). While I am not entirely sure that this statement fairly represents all of the women, I did find it to be extremely accurate for most of the women, at least in the context of my interactions with them. This understanding of "sex" as almost exclusively penile-vaginal intercourse is similar to the way in which "Latina Girls" within Garcia's (2009) research associate first sex experience with virginity loss, defined in predominantly heterosexual ways. Garcia (2009) explains, "their assumption that first sex experience referred to virginity loss and that this was defined primarily as penis-vagina penetration underscores the persistence and power of compulsory heterosexuality in shaping interpretations of sexual behaviors" (2009:605). A larger discussion on this will follow later in the thesis. For now, for the purposes of this section on language, this is broadly how "sex" is understood by the Nigerian and Sierra Leonean women I worked with. For Nigerian and Sierra Leonean young women, these understandings of "sex" did not change a great deal over time in

Canada. For example, some of the women who have lived in Canada several years still had these understandings, similar to the women who had only been in Canada a matter of months or a couple of years.

Before going any further I must point out, while it may seem obvious or perhaps not so different from Canadian culture, it is still important to acknowledge that the women who participated in this study openly discussed the way in which there is an accepted code of silence around sex and sexuality. Meg often told me that when she hung out with her female Nigerian friends they did not discuss sex. However, this does not mean that they did not speak about who was dating who and what guys they may want to get to know better. In other words, they spoke about meaningful aspects of sexuality according to gender norms for their culture. When I asked Meg to describe herself further on this issue of not talking about sex she reiterated, "We don't talk about it, it just doesn't come up."

Talking About Sex:

There is, however, a contradiction that I was able to identify. On the one hand, Meg fervently argues that sex is not talked about within her circle of female Nigerian friends yet she acknowledges later in her first interview with me that the Nigerian community is extremely surveillant and always knows who is "sleeping" with who. I will let Meg explain,

> I think the Western idea of relationships is actually very interesting, you go to the movies, you go out for dinner, it can be tiring, it can be fun, but it can be tiring at the same time. And the kind of community we have here, the kind of African community, everyone knows everyone, we have here, it's so small. You know what is happening in everyone's life, you know who you go out with, funny enough if you have sex last

night and somehow, somehow everyone knows about it the next day.

It appears that Meg is actively negotiating the difference between Canadian sexual norms and culture and the sexual norms and culture of Nigeria. The western idea of dating as she describes by going to the movies represents a certain appeal that is only complicated by her description of how if you have sex the next day everyone knows about it and her desire to not upset the social world in which she lives and draw attention to herself.

On multiple occasions during my fieldwork, I observed a great deal of "talk" about who was dating who, how other women were dressing and who went home with who after the weekend party. It is important to note that the way in which the women talk about sex as not talked about has an influence over what is considered "appropriate" to discuss outside of their close knit communities, like with me as an anthropologist for example.

Another interesting dimension I discovered was the way in which it appeared that every effort is made to ensure the women present themselves as rule abiding especially relating to religious rules around sex as well as portraying the image that they are sexually "pure" and maintain their "good girl" status (in other words, that they retain their virginity, which is a complex category too).

Another research participant, Abeni, found the whole question rather amusing and answered very quickly and with confidence, "I'm keeping myself for my husband, because I want to find my one true love and give him that perfect gift or special gift of my pure body. I'm going to keep myself till marriage. Apart from that we're really

religious, it's in the Bible, we're not supposed, shouldn't have sex because it's a sin, but you know things happen (laughing)."

By framing her response this way, she is simultaneously re-inscribing sex as reserved for marriage, between a heterosexual couple, and "purity" as a characteristic reserved only for virgins (which characterizes a "good girl"). That said, Abeni's response is interesting in that she laughs jovially after she finishes her sentence. She acknowledges, "things happen," indicating that while this is the "ideal" situation there are many situations where "things happen" and sex does occur outside marriage. When probed to explain further what Abeni meant by "things happen" she quickly changed the topic. Words such as "purity," "sacred," "good girl" and "body as temple of holy spirit" are all meaningful and particular ways in which the women describe sex.

What does this mean in terms of the everyday sexual lives of my research participants? The language used to describe sex and what it means to be sexual influences decisions the women make about their sexual lives by defining and delimiting sex as a moral terrain. To make decisions and act outside of this dominant understanding and perception automatically renders the women transgressors and therefore morally inferior to their peers. This culture and specifically language around sex as viewed as sacred and pure limits the choices for the Nigerian and Sierra Leonean women to express themselves sexually while at the same time maintaining the rules and expectations around what is permitted within their own community in terms of being sexual. As a result situations emerge whereas Diana explains,

> We just don't tell our friends the exact details of where we're going or who we are going to be with. Like the other day, a friend of mine told us she was

> going to the university to study, but it turns out after a mutual friend of ours stopped by a house where these Nigerian guys live she had spent the evening there.

It appears that women deliberately mislead their female friends in an attempt to maintain some control over who they share their time with and over the image that they have amongst their female friends. This kind of secrecy around who the women are spending time with for example has everyday implications. For example, women may stay in abusive relationships in order to maintain that strong code of silence. In other situations women may lie to their friends and family in order to maintain this secrecy.

Language and behaviour is inextricably connected and Meg's reference to being "a Daddy's girl" is a useful example that draws out this connection. I was surprised when during our first interview together Meg so openly professed to be a "Daddy's girl." The language of "Daddy's girl" used by Meg is related to broader notions of reserving oneself for marriage.

The language of "Daddy's girl" is drawing on some of the same types of notions as being a "good girl". Meg's use of "Daddy's girl" is connected to the way in which she is supposed to remain a virgin until she gets married and refrain from dating until she is ready to marry in order to please her father. This suggests how women's bodies and sexuality are regulated by men.

As the social construction of sexuality framework suggests sexual subjectivity is constructed through varying influences across time and space including the economy, politics, family life, gender roles and in this case familial and cultural expectations. In

addition to the way in which sex is talked about by Nigerian and Sierra Leonean young women, the next section will explore some of the sexual practices of this population.

2.2 - The Sexual Practices of Nigerian and Sierra Leonean Women

Following a brief look at language and more specifically an exploration into the way in which the Nigerian and Sierra Leonean young women in this research talk about sex I would now like to take a moment to explore some of the sexual practices I learned about in interviews and observed during participant observation over the course of my fieldwork. I will discuss the everyday expressions of the women's sexual subjectivity, for example, how the women date ("multiple boyfriends" will be examined further in chapter four), where the women go to meet men as well as briefly examine what they wear to feel "sexy" (the body and clothing will be explored in more depth in chapter six).

Tuzin (1995) pushed us to move our conceptualization of sex and sexuality beyond the level of language. He argued that behaviour has not been a major factor in analyzing and understanding cultural systems and it needs to be. Tuzin was writing during the mid nineties and in response to the AIDS crisis as anthropologists and other social scientists realized the importance of studying sex. "Spurred in large part by the AIDS crisis," he situates the emerging publications on sexual behaviour as "evidence of a rediscovery of sex as an important field of anthropological inquiry" (Tuzin, 1995: 257). Overall, I would agree with Tuzin, behaviour becomes especially important when examining cultural systems especially when focused on sexuality. There are many methodological challenges that exist when studying sex and sexuality as it is a highly complex realm of people's lives that are often enshrouded in secrecy (Frohlick 2008).

Sexual secrecy emerged as an important aspect during Frohlick's (2008) fieldwork in Costa Rica, "By asking people to talk about sex (their own and others') ethnographers are complicit in economies of desire, where disclosed secrets produce silences about erotic desires, sexual taboos and other border crossings, as well as intimacies between and across people in the community including the anthropologist.(2008: 25).

Meeting Men:

Wilma and I were sitting at the incredibly uncomfortable, hard plastic picnic-style table and chairs in the campus cafeteria one weekday afternoon studying when I realized the importance of the university campus as a site where Nigerian and Sierra Leonean women and men not only hung out together, but learned and made decisions about dating, friendships and everyday life. The university is a "safe" place to carry out these types of interactions, largely because it is not a space where parents or family are involved. In the case of the international students who do not have parents or guardians in Winnipeg, they do often have siblings or other close family friends. They tend to be involved in the church or maintain connections within their cultural community. All of the women spend long days at the university, usually arriving around 8:00 A.M. on the bus and leaving well into the evening at around 7:00 P.M. or later. The women brought with them large back packs or shoulder bags filled with everything they would need for the day. A change of clothes, if not two changes of clothes were always on hand in the event that a need may arise to wear something different. I will get more into these details in chapter six, but just in terms of an overview, the general wardrobe for these women included tight jeans, leggings and figure hugging tops and sweaters to school and on special occasions at

church they wore brightly coloured “traditional” clothing. Nigerian and Sierra Leonean young women make attempts to highlight certain areas of their body, the first being their “bom-bom” or their buttocks, the second their hips and third their breasts. Sexuality in how it is understood and experienced requires a thoughtful analysis of the body and therefore clothing becomes an important part of how we think about and express our sexuality (more on this in chapter six).

This community occupied the same area of the cafeteria without fail. One of the women would arrive first in the morning and reserve the space, then that person would go to a class and someone else would come by and sit and eat or hang out. It was a meeting place for friends and acquaintances. During my fieldwork I often sat with some of the women, I observed them helping each other with homework, doing each other’s hair, and sharing food. On a few occasions African men (many of Nigerian and Sierra Leonean heritage, but some were also from Rwanda and Ghana) would stop by and talk with the women. They would flirt with all the women simultaneously it appeared, hoping that one of the women would take a liking to them. In some instances the women almost completely ignored them, keeping their eyes on their textbooks while carrying out a faint conversation. In other instances, the women showed a little more interest, openly conversing and joking with the men. When I asked the women why they favoured some men over others, they shared a couple of reasons. The first reason they shared was the fact that only a few of the men have any money and often many of them lure them away with promise of lunch or gifts, but these promises do not materialize. These particular men are known to all the women as “cheap.” The other relevant aspect is the women’s

acknowledgement that only some of the men are "serious." The women are not interested in spending time with men who are not "serious" about "wooing" them.[14] Other than those two factors, the women did not give any further explanation as to who they preferred to talk to or hang out with.

The men would offer to buy lunch or coffee and sometimes one or two of the women would take them up on their offer. Most of the time the women talked about school work and papers they had to write. They would sit and work out what grade they needed on an upcoming test to achieve an A+ in the course. They were academically focused in a way that allowed for very little time outside of school to socialize. While at university, however, it appeared the women felt comfortable to take the time and hang out with each other during study breaks. The university campus as a site of contested meanings and representations of the women's sexuality is an important aspect when examining the sexual practices of this population. The young women rarely go to clubs, bars and restaurants in Winnipeg to meet men. I found that it was common amongst the group that the women dated men who they met through university, church or in a couple of situations through part time work.

Dating Preferences:

During my fieldwork I observed and heard from participants about only heterosexual relationships. That is not to say that same-sex relationships do not occur, but I could not find evidence of any with the women I worked with (not surprising considering my study population was relatively small in size). However, according to Greene (1997) and others they suggest that lesbians "do not exist" in African cultures and more specifically

"lesbian women of color, however, often still find themselves and their concerns invisible in the scholarly research of both women of color and of lesbians" (Greene, 1997: 109). The preference among Nigerian and Sierra Leonean young women is to date men a few years older. Many of the women seemed to not even be able to imagine marrying someone the same age or even younger. All of the woman expressed the importance for them to date and marry men who were Christians and from the same tribe. Some of the women's parents were more strict than others, but these two criteria were very important especially finding a Christian partner. According to the Nigerian and Sierra Leonean young women I interviewed and spent time with they all preferred to date men from African countries. In some cases some of the women particularly targeted men from certain African countries that they believed were superior to others. For example, Hannah, a Sierra Leonean young woman told me that she has no desire to date or marry a Sierra Leonean, but she wants to date and ultimately marry a man with African heritage. Hannah's older sister married a Cameroonian man and she thinks she will likely marry a non-Sierra Leonean as well. Getting ready to go out with my research participants was a significant border crossing for me, the anthropologist, in so far as I was able to witness first hand the private domains of my informant's lives. While getting ready to head out one evening Hannah told me about what she sees for her future,

> [Hannah]: Well it's funny cause all the guys that I've been dating are not, well one was from my country but after that one I swore not to ever date any of them again so.
>
> [Katie]: By "them" you mean Sierra Leonean men?
>
> [Hannah]: Yes Sierra Leoneans. Like it's just like I always believe we've come from a country from war, the ones that really want to come here, the

> ones that do come here, it's not like we're better than those other people still in Sierra Leone but it's just that we're blessed right? And we're lucky, type of thing right? And it's like people come here and they don't really take that, we have so much opportunities here, especially like the guys. One thing I always say is it's hard to go forward but you have to go forward right? But they come here they're not serious, all they want to do is make fast money, like there's so much education we can get here, but none of them are serious. It's like, trust me, the amount of students that go to university, like, the guys are so low. Like here you see lots of international students because they value education right. The way the world is going you need someone that can work side by side not rely on you to do everything. So that's why I made up my mind now I don't see any of them. They're not serious, like, they just care about big screen T.V.'s type of thing, and just not really education which is what we need to go forward.

Hannah can imagine dating and marrying men from other African countries, apart from Sierra Leone. However, white men were out. She has told me on many occasions "I wouldn't rule it out, but I probably would never date someone white. It would be too weird" (race and sexuality will be explored later in this thesis in more depth). During my fieldwork, the practice of "multiple boyfriends" emerged as a key sexual practice of the Nigerian and Sierra Leonean women. This practice will be fully examined in the next chapter. Here I want to explain how the practice involves the women maintaining several relationships with different men at the same time. These Nigerian and Sierra Leonean women call these men their "boyfriends". These relationships can involve an exchange of sex or erotics for goods and services (such as bus passes, lunch money, and clothing). This practice appears to be an example of the women's attempt to draw out and merge aspects of African, specifically Nigerian and Sierra Leonean courtship and what they perceive as Canadian norms around dating. In addition, this sexual practice is related to the interconnected realms of desires and consumer culture and economic exchange.

Curtis describes a similar practice in her work with girls on the Eastern Caribbean island of Nevis. More on this follows in chapter four.

In this chapter, I highlighted language and sexual practices as important influences and mediating factors on how Nigerian and Sierra Leonean young women produce their sexual subjectivities and experience their sexuality in everyday kinds of ways. I argue that the university campus is an important site where these young women experience and make sense of the multiple meanings and expressions of their sexual subjectivities in Winnipeg as diasporic Nigerian and Sierra Leonean youth.

Chapter 3 - Wilma: Canadian Sexual Norms and Practices - The Real and Not so Real Imaginings

3.1 - Nigerian and Sierra Leonean Young Women's Perceptions

> It's like the opposite, I don't know, it just feels like the opposite. Like here it's natural and for me it's like two opposite things. Here having a phone is natural and that's the way it is with sex, for me not having it is natural. So it's just like two opposite ends. But then, you also have to respect other people's decisions you know what I mean? So it's not like I'm going to see a girl who's had sex and point my fingers at her and say 'You're a bad person.' I'm not going to do something like that, but like I went to high school here for one semester and like I remember when I first got here I kinda thought, well if I was to describe it, people here look at it [sex] as fun, but I look at it as something stronger, I look at it as sacred you know. [Wilma]

One theme that continued to come up in interviews and during my participant observation was the way in which the Nigerian and Sierra Leonean women perceived Canadian sexual norms and culture to be extremely liberal and "open." [15] Research participants expressed on multiple occasions that they believed it was "normal" and socially and morally acceptable for Canadian women and men to have sex before they are married. In addition, many of the women shared stories of how they see Canadian men and women as being sexually "loose," and having sex with multiple partners, many of whom they do not know very well. Many of the research participants often mentioned the predominance of "one night stands" among Canadian young men and women. The way in which Canadians are imagined to be sexually liberal is important because these perceptions influence the Nigerian and Sierra Leonean women's sexual decision-making and sexual subjectivities.

In this part of the chapter I will outline some of the women's major perceptions of Canadian sexual culture. I will pull examples from several women to demonstrate the breadth of these imaginings. I will begin with Wilma and move on from there. I will contextualise these imaginings by drawing on the limited literature on Canadian sexuality. I will also explore where the women are getting these ideas from and discuss the "open" Canadian sexual culture that the Nigerian and Sierra Leonean women are picking up on. Ross and Rapp's framework of sex and sexuality that establishes sex as "a lived and changing relationship and not an 'essence' whose content is fixed" will be used to explain the ways in which sex and sexuality connect the individual to family, communities, the state and beyond (Ross and Rapp, 1997: 163).

Wilma is from Lagos, which is the former capital of Nigeria and is located in the western part of the country. She is the youngest of three children and has two much older sisters. Wilma came to Canada for university and has been here for two years. She attended one semester of high school here and then went to university immediately following. Wilma was originally part of the first focus group I carried out and then agreed to two one-on-one interviews with me. I was intrigued to find out a little bit more about some of what she shared in the focus group and as it turns out there was so much more to learn about her which helped to contextualise some of her responses in the focus group. During our first interview, Wilma told me that she was born in Quebec to Nigerian parents, while her "Mom" was studying there.[16] Wilma referred to her Mother as "Mom" which is significant in that it highlights her deeply personal and close relationship with her Mother, despite the way in which she talks about her Mother and looks up to her as a

mentor with respect and admiration. Wilma describes her Mother as a powerful influence in her life and talks about how her Mother is such a strong and independent woman and even goes as far as to say her Mother is called "Madam" (a sign of respect) by many people. The relationship between Wilma and her Mom appears to be a complicated one built around Wilma attempting to make her Mother proud and simulate her success in very similar ways. Furthermore, it also appears that Wilma continuously makes reference to her "Mom" during interviews, as she is very proud and somewhat boastful of what her Mother has been able to accomplish. After her Mother completed her degree in Canada, the family returned to Nigeria. Wilma grew up in Nigeria and only two years ago came to Canada for university. She talks about the ways in which her birth in Canada has been really ideal since she now does not have to pay international student fees and at the same time had the benefit of growing up in Nigeria and learning the language and culture of her family. Her parents are no longer together and she does not see her father, yet she has an incredible amount of respect and admiration for her Mother who, raised three children on her own. She talks about the ways in which her "Mom" was able to "do it all," that is, to be a Mother and a career woman,

> Like when they refer to my Mom, like my Mom has her degree from a Canadian university, when people refer to my Mom they refer to my Mom as Madam. My Mom has a really light complexion and [is] really pretty and she, you know, she wears heels you know and she's a single Mom and she wears her suits, but she's not afraid to show a little cleavage or something like that, but she's really smart. She's my, she is very hardworking, she's like my role model, like I've never seen anyone, even Obama I don't even think Obama has done as much as she's done for me, like she is my role model over anyone else. So it's like, going out there, being really smart, doesn't mean you have to be raggedy. You have to look good, your image is important.

Wilma looks up to her Mother and is inspired by her to study business and go into accounting. Wilma is focused and disciplined and has a very detailed five year plan, which involves finishing university, finding a good job in her field and gaining valuable work experience. Wilma presented as a very "put together" young woman who was sure of her promising future. Her confidence and self-assuredness was on occasion somewhat intimidating. A brief exert from my field notes before our second interview together illustrates some of my emotions,

> I'm nervous interviewing Wilma, and I think it has to do with the fact that she is such an all together confident woman, perhaps a trait in her I envy. It seems like so many of her opinions and ideas are so well established and thought out and she speaks so proudly and confidently about them. She is very self aware, this stood out to be because I think my own confidence and self awareness has been shaken (in a good way) by the field work process as I continually question my own ideas and perceptions, about not only this process, but about the women who have so graciously agreed to talk to me, hang out with me and answer my questions over and over again, no matter how obvious or insignificant they may seem. (Fieldnotes January 19).

I have shared this exert from my own field notes to demonstrate the interesting dynamic that exists between Wilma and I, as women of similar ages both living in Winnipeg. I have also drawn attention to this passage to show how I too have perceptions and misperceptions of the women I worked with and their ideas and cultural practices. Indeed it is "natural" for people to think about and gain an often partial understanding of another person's culture and cultural practices, nevertheless these understandings become important mediating factors in how people make decisions and think about their lives. My interactions with Wilma challenged some of my ideas and allowed me to move beyond being "just" a researcher and enabled me to engage on a more intimate level with the reflexive process, that is fieldwork.[17]

Wilma and other research participants repeatedly spoke about how they saw Canadian sexual culture and norms as being extremely "open" and often referred to Canadian men and women as sexually "loose." Wilma often spoke about how her ideas of sex and Canadian men and women's ideas of sex as totally "opposite." She spoke of how sex is "sacred" for her and that her "body is the temple of God" and stressed that that is not the case here in Winnipeg. Wilma mentioned in her second interview,

> [Wilma] It's like the opposite, I don't know, it just feels like the opposite. Like here it's natural, and for me it's like two opposite things. Here having a phone is natural and that's the way it is with sex, for me not having it is natural. So it's just like two opposite ends. But then, you also have to respect other people's decisions you know what I mean? So it's not like I'm going to see a girl who's had sex and point my fingers at her and say 'You're a bad person.' I'm not going to do something like that, but like I went to high school here for one semester and like I remember when I first got here I kinda thought, well if I was to describe it, people here look at it [sex] as fun, but I look at it as something stronger, I look at it as sacred you know.
>
> [Katie] Can you describe further what you mean by "opposite" and stuff?
>
> [Wilma] I don't know like I watch Jersey Shore and it's not Winnipeg but it's a good example, they go out and they come back home expecting to come back with a girl or the girl's expected to come back with a guy. When I go out I go out to have fun, I go to dance, then I go home and I go to sleep.
>
> [Katie] Okay I see what you mean.

I was particularly struck when Wilma described Winnipeg as being, in part, like Jersey Shore.[18] Largely because I think for the most part I did not know a great deal about Jersey Shore. After the interview I came home and tried to find out a little bit more about this reference Wilma had made.

Jersey Shore is an American MTV reality T.V. show. This show places men and women, of similar ages, into a house to live together. Some of the men and women

identify as “Guidos” (male version) and “Guidettes” (female version), who are American men and women of Italian background who pay particular attention to their physical appearance. Tanned skin, spiky male hair cuts and big muscles are defining characteristics of the “Guido.” The show is an exaggerated account of the ways in which they interact with each other and their daily routines that largely involve partying, sexual intercourse with multiple partners and part time work at a t-shirt store close to the beach. The official MTV website describes the show,

> Grab your hair gel, wax that Cadillac and get those tattooed biceps ready to fist pump with the best this summer at the Jersey Shore. MTV's newest docu-soap exposes one of the tri-state area's most misunderstood species, the Guido. Our Guidos and Guidettes will move into the ultimate beach house rental and indulge in everything the Seaside Heights, New Jersey scene has to offer. Beach by day, dancing and partying all night. They'll live, work, and rage together until the summer ends. There's no spray tan too orange, no hair too spiked, and no bod too tight for this crew. (http://www.mtv.ca/tvshows/jersey-shore/)

According to Wilma, men and women in Winnipeg are promiscuous and sexually “loose” and they resemble, in part the Guidos and Guidettes of Jersey Shore. I was really interested by the linkage that Wilma was making to Jersey Shore and I did some reading on the website. One of the characters on the show is Jenni and her bio on the website reads as follows:

> When Jenni walks into a bar, the guys yell "J-WOWW!" She may have a boyfriend, but down at the Jersey Shore all bets are off. Impulsive and spontaneous, Jenni is a party girl with zero self control. Wherever she goes, drama is sure to follow. But under her tough exterior there is a softer side which makes her the resident big sister (http://www.mtv.ca/tvshows/jersey-shore/).

For Wilma, the Guidos and Guidettes of Jersey Shore represent a complete "opposite" of her own sexual norms and culture and while she recognises that Jersey Shore "is not Winnipeg" she does point out that it is "a good example" of what she sees in Winnipeg therefore linking the Canadian men and women of Winnipeg to the "American" Guidos and Guidettes of MTV's Jersey Shore.

I am interested in doing further research that involves Canadian youth and sexual health and would therefore like to take a moment to briefly examine some of this literature, especially since the Nigerian and Sierra Leonean young women are thinking about similar issues. Canadian youth are imagined to be sexually "loose" and promiscuous by Nigerian and Sierra Leonean young women I talked to. It is important to reflect on the research on Canadian youth sexuality (as limited as it is) to draw out and contextualise some of the Nigerian and Sierra Leonean young women's perceptions. The literature on Canadian sexuality, as far as with regard to youth sexuality and sexual health, shows that there has been a great deal of progress in terms of education, but more research still needs to be done (Mitelman and Visser, date: 23). I will preface this with saying that overall there is not a great deal of research on sexuality in Canada. The *Canadian Youth, Sexual Health and HIV/AIDS Study* conducted in 2002-2003 is one of the larger most recent cross-Canada studies that focused on grades seven, nine and eleven students (Boyce, 2006: 59). Prior to this study, 1988 was the last time a cross-Canada study was conducted on Canadian youth and sexuality when a heightened chlamydia concern around AIDS spurred the Canada Youth and AIDS Study (Boyce, 2006: 59). Nevertheless, the literature tells us that Canadian teen pregnancies is on the decline and

has been for twenty years (Mitelman and Viser, date: 23). However, in Canada, Sexually Transmitted Infections (STI) like chlamydia, human papilloma virus (HPV), gonorrhea, herpes, and HIV all remain concerns for sexual educators and primary care providers (Maticka-Tyndale, 2001: 5). In Canada, syphilis has almost completely been eradicated, however, STI's like mentioned above, especially chlamydia, are of particular concern largely because it can often go undetected as it can be asymptomatic (Maticka-Tyndale, 2001: 5). Gulli (2009) draws attention to the numbers from Statistics Canada that indicate fewer Canadian young men and women under the age of fifteen are sexually active today than in the 1990s (2009:2). Despite the under researched nature of Canadian sexuality, the research we do have, largely focused on sexual health, STI's and HIV/AIDS, indicates that despite progress in research in some areas there is much more information to be gathered about youth's sexual practices, identities, and subjectivities. Findings from the Canadian Youth, Sexual Health and HIV/AIDS Study suggests "in addition to work on knowledge, attitudes, and behaviour our interventions should more fully explore the contexts in which students engage in sexual activities, the belief systems that inform their actions, and the strategies required for continued development of sexual health services that meet their diverse needs" (Boyce, 2006: 67).

With all that in mind, Maticka-Tyndale (2001) discusses the ways in which sexual activity in the teenage years is not new and describes sexual activity during the teenage years as not only "relatively common throughout history" but also across cultures (2001:2). However, Maticka-Tyndale (2001) does point out, "what is new is the length of adolescence—that time between childhood and entry into roles that are markers of

adulthood (such as husband, wife, or parallel status; employee in a permanent job; rentee or mortgagee)" (2001:2). Indeed it is much more complex than this singular shift described above, as new types of relationships and socialities, like "hook ups" and "no strings attached" dynamics between heterosexual sexual partners have become present in situations in Canada where men and women are marrying later (Frohlick and Migliardi 2011: 77). In addition, the "open" image of Canada (that will be discussed further, later in this chapter) that is maintained by the fact that Canadian law permits same-sex marriage is also a contributing factor to the way in which the Canadian sexual landscape is experienced and changed over time and space.

There are other dimensions to how Canadian sexuality is imagined by the Nigerian and Sierra Leonean women. Diana, another research participant, in our first interview spoke about how she thinks it is "normal" in Winnipeg to make out with your boyfriend in front of your parents. Diana describes how she cannot imagine doing that in front of her parents,

> It's like I can't make out with my boyfriend in front of my parents, but it seems here in Winnipeg that might be normal. I would show affection for my boyfriend in front of my parents, but I wouldn't like make out. I might hug him and hold his hand or even a little peck, but making out is crossing the line in front of my parents. But when my parents aren't looking I can do whatever I want.

The perceptions of Wilma, Diana, Hannah, Abeni and others paint Canadian men and women as being sexually "loose" and having sex with multiple partners outside of marriage. These imaginings, where Diana and other's perceive it to be normal for Canadian young men and women to make out in front of their parents is part of a larger

linkage to the pervasive image of Canada as "open". This image of Canada as "open" is reproduced and sustained through the Nigerian and Sierra Leonean women's peer group and community interactions and conversations.

In addition, the Nigerian and Sierra Leonean women perceive Canadian women as being able to ask men out on dates. I recall Hannah sharing that she was shocked when she came here and realised that a girl could ask a guy out. Within Sierra Leonean cultural norms around dating the man is supposed to pursue the woman. It is interesting, however, that they felt this way about Canadian women being able to initiate dates with men because I suspect this is very much not the norm in Canada. Based on anecdotal information, I would posit some Canadian women do not feel comfortable around asking out men and in some cases men therefore do the "asking out" in heterosexual couples in Canada.[19] In addition, the Nigerian and Sierra Leonean women talked about the simplicity around dating among Canadian men and women. When asked about Canadian norms and sexual culture around dating, the women would say things like, "guy meets girl, girl meets guy, guy asks girl out and sometimes a girl can ask a guy out which would never happen at home" as Abeni noted. Abeni, Hannah and others describe the dating experience with "black girls" as being complicated because it is not just a matter of the guy going up to a girl and asking her out (more on this in chapter four).

It was somewhat unclear to me if this kind of dynamic, whereby women ask out men was an "ideal" for the Nigerian or Sierra Leonean women or a myth that the women had of Canadian women being able to do this. In part, I think, it was a combination of both. This perception was very much a myth, in that it does not resonate true on the

ground in Canada, at least not in the widespread ways in which the Nigerian and Sierra Leonean women believe. However, the way in which Canadian women are perceived to be able to ask out men is not purely an "ideal" for the Nigerian and Sierra Leonean women. This is because, as Hannah describes, there are ideas around asking men out that makes it less common, or all together not present within the Sierra Leonean dating culture. As she said, "We believe that if a girl ask[s] out a guy, [and then] if the relationship doesn't work we believe he can curse you with it and say 'I didn't want you anyway, you were the one that asked me out.'"

In the next section I will provide narratives from the women that show how they see themselves in relation to their ideas of Canadian sexuality. In addition, I will explain some of the sources of the women's ideas about Canadian sexuality. This next section will also use Ross and Rapp's (1997) framework to demonstrate how sexuality connects the individual to family, communities', the state and beyond. I will focus on peer groups, communities and global influences and particularly the media as three "sites" of discourse where these ideas of Canada as "open" get internalized and reproduced by the Nigerian and Sierra Leonean women.

3.2 - Making Sense of These Imaginings

There is no one "Canadian" sexual culture. However, there is a dominant image of Canada as "open" and the women are picking up on this image, as demonstrated above by some of their perceptions of Canadian sexual culture and society more generally. This prevailing image has various shaping influences on the Nigerian and Sierra Leonean women and the ways in which they see themselves and their communities' sexual norms.

This openness is present in many facets of Canadian life, including even our laws as they allow same-sex marriages. Frohlick and Migliardi (2011) argue that "dating" is not a universal kind of experience in Canada and point out that this social practice varies across cultures and time. Frohlick and Migliardi (2011) discuss the contested nature of "dating" in Canada,

> Within a multicultural nation, minority groups struggle against the norms set by dominant white European Canadians (Dion and Dion 1996; Khanlou et al. 2002; Migliardi and Stephens 2007). What constitutes 'dating' and whether dating has become overly sexualised as the prevalence of 'no strings attached', 'hook-ups', 'friends with benefits', and other intimate socialities emerge as the new societal norms (Kalish and Kimmel this issue) are public and scholarly debates that underscore how 'the sexual' is a contested moral domain that changes over time (Pigg and Adams 2005). (Frolick, Migliardi, 2011: 77).

Laws that allow same-sex marriages and the appearance and predominance of "no strings attached" socialities contribute to this overall image of Canada as "open". I am reminded of something Kim, a focus group participant, said about Canada, "It seems like Canada's okay with everything and stuff, tolerant of everyone and so diverse and stuff, it isn't like that everywhere else."

An important question to ask is where might the Nigerian and Sierra Leonean women be receiving these understandings of Canadian sexual culture as "open"? What are the sources of these ideas? At this point I would like to turn to my theoretical framework, the work of Ross and Rapp (1997) that views sexuality as part of a complex set of layers of social life. Going further then, I would like to establish individual sex and sexuality as being a part of wider relations and ideas from family, communities', the state and beyond. According to Ross and Rapp (1997)

> Attempting to describe the link between society and individual sexuality, we initially saw these contexts spiraling outward from the individual toward the larger world. Social relations that appear peripheral to individual sexual practices (labor migration, for example) may in fact influence them profoundly through intervening social forms (e.g., by limiting available sexual partners and influencing the age of marriage) (1997: 154-155).

Bringing it back then to the Nigerian and Sierra Leonean women, I will use this framework to assess the sources and contextualisation of their ideas of Canadian sexual norms as well as their own through these different realms of social existence.

The three major "sites" of discourse about sexuality that I will be focussing on are peer groups, community and global influences, in particular the media. My interaction with the women definitely established family and kin relations as important, but less important when discussing sexuality than some of the other areas and influences of their lives. For the Nigerian and Sierra Leonean women I worked with, their peer groups, the wider African community in Winnipeg and the influence of media are the three major sites of discourse about sexuality.

Peer Groups:

The Nigerian and Sierra Leonean women's peer groups are largely made up of women who are of similar age and who go to university with them. Almost exclusively these women are other Africans and very often from the same countries, although some variation does exist. According to Ross and Rapp (1997),

> Peer groups are found in many cultures and they serve a variety of functions. Perhaps most importantly, they organise intergenerational relationships outside the family itself.... Peer groups are often age based, but because they encompass cultural experience beyond shared chronology, they are not reducible to demographic age-cohorts (1997: 157).

Peer groups are prominent "sites" of discourse about sexuality, specifically relating to discourse around "morals." The Nigerian and Sierra Leonean women see themselves as "virgins," who are "good girls" which involves being "pure" and having "good morals." There is a way in which Nigerian and Sierra Leonean peer groups living in Winnipeg self identify as "morally stronger" than Canadian young women and men. In my first interview with Wilma she shared with me why she thinks her Mother wanted her to "grow up" in Nigeria,

> She wanted us to grow up with the whole Nigerian mentality, with good morals, the language, the respect, cause there's so many things that we learn there, even like respect for older people like respect for your parents, there some things, some ways that people here talk to their parents that I dare not even try talking to my parents like that. In Nigeria, you learn the respect, you learn the morals, you learn how to prioritise, you are stronger you know you learn how to hustle in the community and make something for yourself and then you come here and you realise how you don't, you don't have to be that strong all the time but whatever it calls for, you know how to handle it. Our morals are stronger and we stay pure until we're married.

There is a way in which the Nigerian and Sierra Leonean women are continually creating boundaries between what they believe Canadians do and what they feel Nigerian and Sierra Leonean communities do. As a result of these boundaries, the women are carving out a space for themselves that is defined by categories around morals. Canadian women's sexual practices and identities appear to be the focus of moralising discourses.

Community:

The Nigerian and Sierra Leonean women's "community" that I am referring to involves their peer groups as well as established links through the wider population of African immigrants and refugees living in Winnipeg. This wider community interacts with the Nigerian and Sierra Leonean women on several levels. Church involvement, for many of

the women I talked to, is an accepted and embraced part of their lives in Winnipeg. In addition, country organisations like the Nigerian Association of Manitoba Inc. (NAMI) for example, are opportunities for the women to connect to a larger body of individuals with cultural and linguistic similarity. In addition, extended family, kin relations, friends and acquaintances encompass the community of Nigerian and Sierra Leonean women in Winnipeg. Communities play an important function in disseminating rules around sex and sexuality as they serve as the "...loci not only of the regulation of the sexual partners and practices, but also of the transmission of sexual knowledge as well. Indeed, before the proliferation of "how-to" books, communities were the only source of knowledge about sex and reproduction" (Ross and Rapp, 1997: 159). For the Nigerian and Sierra Leonean women I worked with, church leaders and the numerous African organisations issue warnings to African Winnipeg youth around the importance of sexual purity and the dangers of fully integrating and accepting "Canadian" sexual norms. Discourses around being a "good girl" and all that is bound up in that ("purity", "morality", virginity etc) are reinforced by church and community elders and leaders. These communities are, however, connected to and influenced by larger global economic, political and social systems, according to Ross and Rapp (1997),

> ...the community practices surrounding sexuality represent more than local traditions, for communities are also termini of worldwide economic, social, political and cultural systems. They simultaneously exhibit patterns that are regionally rooted and also reflect the larger world (1997: 157).

I will turn now to global influences and, specifically, the media as a "site" of discourse around sexuality and morals.

Global influences, media:

For the Nigerian and Sierra Leonean women involved in this research project, the effects of global influences and in particular the media on their own individual sexual subjectivities are quite significant and will be touched on briefly here and later explored in more detail in chapter five. According to Ross and Rapp's social construction of sexuality framework "world systems" are an important level of influence whereby sex and sexuality gets worked out in everyday ways. Ross and Rapp (1997) argue, "Large-scale social institutions and forces may appear distant and abstract, but they actually influence the intimate experiences people have, defining the circumstances under which shifting sexual mores are played out" (1997: 160). In terms of media, for the Nigerian women, Bollywood movies (movies produced in India) I discovered are particularly popular. As I delved into the literature further, I came to understand the significance of Indian movies to Nigerian culture and particularly the dominant Hausa culture in the Muslim dominated north of Nigeria.

Many of the women I talked to joyfully lamented memories of "back home" where they would watch Indian films, late at night, during school holidays at friend's houses. Today, many of these women still watch Indian films in their apartments and town houses in residential areas in Winnipeg. According to Larkin (2008), "Indian film offers a 'third space' for Hausa audiences that mediates between the reified poles of Hausa Islamic tradition and Western modernity (a false dichotomy to be sure, but one that remains deeply meaningful to people's political consciousness)" (2008: 335). The consumption of Indian films by Nigerians and Nigerians living in the diaspora (like the

women involved in this research) provides an opportunity for a negotiation around some of the meanings of "modern" and "traditional," as I explain further in chapter five.

In this chapter I argue that Nigerian and Sierra Leonean young women's perceptions of Canadian youth as sexually "loose" and lacking morality are a shaping influence on their sexual subjectivities and more broadly as part of their identity construction. This chapter highlights the way in which Nigerian and Sierra Leonean young women engage with and refer to this image of Canada as "open". I used my theoretical framework which focusses on the social construction approach to sexuality to examine the sexual subjectivities of these Nigerian and Sierra Leonean women, in so far as, they are connected to peer groups, their broader communities and even global influences, such as the media.

Chapter 4 - Hannah: “Multiple Boyfriends” - “Wooing,” Pleasure and Economic Exchange

4.1 - “Multiple Boyfriends” and Dating the “Canadian Way”

> It all depends on the individual. Sometimes, sometimes they’re just after you so sometimes, sometimes you just want to show them. Because in a woman you always have the one that you really love. And then the ones that they know you have a boyfriend, I’ve had this guy come up to me and tell me, I told him I have a boyfriend he’s like oh I’ll show you that I’m a better guy than your boyfriend... [Hannah]

A connection within the African community lead me to Hannah. Many people I spoke to mentioned her name and talked about how well connected she was within the African community. I distinctly remember someone telling me that she knows “every black person in Winnipeg” and after meeting Hannah I quickly realized why someone may feel that way. I recall the day we met, a mutual acquaintance introduced us in a hallway at the university and I was taken aback when without saying a word she hugged me. Full on with no warning a complete stranger embraced me. I come from a “huggy” family, but even for me it took me by surprise. After the hug she said, “So how you doing?” Her question had a highly personal tone, almost like she was talking to a close friend or family member, not someone she had just met. Her relaxed disposition and genuine interest laid my insecurities to rest and helped to settle my rosy cheeks, which had at this point gone from rosy to red. Over several months Hannah and I got to know each other. We learned a great deal about each other’s cultures and after Hannah agreed to participate in this research project she quickly became a key informant. We attended all kinds of cultural and religious events together. And on one particular occasion Hannah dressed me in one of her African outfits and braided my hair. I recall the painful experience, as I am

not sure that my head or scalp or perhaps both had ever moved or been manipulated in such a way before. We did not frequent the bar together, but from time to time attended parties that usually were a social celebrating one of the African countries' independence days. When I first met Hannah I was engaged (to be married) she and I would often talk about how I was feeling leading up to the wedding.

Hannah is a twenty-one year old Sierra Leonean young woman. She is a university student who hopes to study science. Hannah describes herself as a "chillaxed" person and also considers herself single. She is self-sufficient, independent and confident. Hannah has lived in Winnipeg for 9 years, attending almost all of her formal schooling here. Hannah grew up with paternal relatives as both her Mom and Dad are not in Canada.[20] She has a part time job that earns her some spending money. Hannah recently moved to another city, where she lives with two roommates and attends school. Both of her roommates are Sierra Leonean. Hannah is very involved in her church and within the African community more broadly. She is so well connected with other Africans, that it was a rare event when we went somewhere together and she did not know at least one person. Hannah remains relatively well connected to Sierra Leone and has visited once since she left nine years ago. She often laments not visiting more, but financial constraints and school responsibilities have made it difficult over the years.

This chapter will analyze one particular sexual practice of this population. In this section I will describe the multiple perspectives and central ideas that Nigerian and Sierra Leonean women draw upon in articulating and interpreting their own sexual practices and their meanings, particularly that of the "multiple boyfriends" practice.

The practice of what I call “multiple boyfriends” became apparent as an important sexual practice for the Nigerian and Sierra Leonean women I worked with. Let me back up slightly. Dating more generally was constantly referenced and talked about by the women and it appeared that it was an important part of their sexual lives as young women living in Winnipeg. Many of the women, including Hannah talked about how they were currently dating or had dated before. This issue of how the women were reconciling how to date the “Canadian way” came up repeatedly. The practice became coined as “multiple boyfriends” in my field notes after several hours of participant observation with the women led me to believe that the Nigerian and Sierra Leonean women I was working with had several boyfriends simultaneously. I often saw the same woman hang out with one man during one part of the day (say at lunch) and then that woman tell me about how another man later that day was buying her clothing and shoes. I slowly realized however that these relationships were not “boyfriends” as I understood “boyfriend” to mean. The major difference being that I had always understood boyfriend to mean that a woman could only have one and then other relationships outside of that were defined in different ways. I also came across the way in which the women consider themselves single, but are also dating and openly talk about their “boyfriends.” Over the course of my fieldwork many of my own ideas have been challenged by the cultural practices and ideas of the women I worked with. My own understanding of the term “boyfriend” has changed. As such it will be a useful exercise to talk about how “boyfriend” is a contested and somewhat ambiguous term.

According to Curtis' (2009) research with Nevision girls, relationships defined by an exchange of sex for cash and goods are sometimes denoted as "boyfriends," but not always. A combination of economic disparity (lack of cash), which is as Curtis describes exploitative as well as the desire for consumer goods contribute, in large part, to the way in which Nevisian girls exchange sex for cash and goods. Notions of "erotic" and "pleasure" are explored later in this chapter, both which are important mediating factors in this exchange. For the Nigerian and Sierra Leonean young women the notion of "boyfriend" is extremely contested and is used in different ways in different circumstances. These young women will refer to both "types of relationships" as their "boyfriends." The first "type" are the men who they are not interested in a relationship with, but who they have sex with (sex in this case, refers to vaginal-penile sex as well as oral sex) for goods and services. The second "type" are the men that the women are genuinely interested in "dating" and the exchange of sex for goods and services is built around a framework that is based on "traditional" notions of "African" courtship that require the man to "woo" the women. That said, I am not blanketing out the notion of pleasure all together, but rather later in this chapter I will explore how pleasure is a thread that weaves in and out of these relationships, in their multiple expressions and meanings.

I slowly came to understand that dating was a complex realm of these young women's lives where they negotiated interconnected ideas and processes of what it meant to date the "Canadian way," efforts to maintain Nigerian and Sierra Leonean sexual norms of dating at the same time as making sense of consumer desires and economic exchange. "Multiple boyfriends" are a particular type of relationship formation that

emerges as a result of these young women's dynamic positioning between these two different social worlds. Other sub-groups in Canada such as Aboriginal youth are also constructing new kinds of relationships, namely "on-off partnerships" and "booty calls," through migration (Devries and Free: 2011, 14). A recent study that examined sexual partnerships, condom "non-use" and the subsequent risk for contracting STI's among a group of Aboriginal youth in British Columbia identified migration as a key mediating factor in how these new types of relationships are being created. "On-off partnerships" involve "serially monogamous partnerships with sometimes rapid turnover of partners...lasting a few weeks or months in duration then a casual encounter or another shorter-term sexual partnership with someone else and then a return to their previous partner" (Devries and Free: 2011, 14). Condom usage does not appear to feature prominently in these "on-off partnerships." Furthermore, these partnerships are generally thought of as more "serious" even if their duration is only a matter of weeks or months and defined by several intermittent breaks where either one or both individuals find alternate partners (Devries and Free 2011: 15). "Booty calls" are a relationship formation where young Aboriginal men and women are brought together largely for the purpose of sex.

According to Devries and Free (2011) "...it was clear that migration played a role in the development of on-off relationships, partly because travel between locations afforded more potential sexual partners" (2011: 15). There were several reasons why migration occurred within this group of youth. The young men is this study identified a lack of suitable partners on their own reserve communities and therefore described a need

to relocate to other nearby reserves for short periods of time (usually days or weeks) to "get drunk and get laid" (2011, 15). In addition, complex family situations relating to substance abuse, violence, behavioural issues and lack of suitable guardianship results in young people being sent to live with other family members for periods of months or years. In both situations, young people develop new relationships with individuals who they come to know in their "new" communities as well as often still maintaining relationships in their "home" communities. Different types of relationships are continually being constructed among varying groups across Canada and they are influenced in large ways by migration and the associated sexual and cultural norms of the involved communities.

It became increasingly apparent to me that the women were straddling two different sexual cultures as a result of their dynamic positioning as being a part of two different "worlds". Each of these worlds holds different sets of values, albeit some are similar, many are different. According to Tettey and Puplampu (2005) "despite the points of agreement with their parents, their lives remain wedged somewhere between African and Canadian values" (2005:218). For the women, the one world was their Nigerian or Sierra Leonean background with its own rules and norms around dating and sexuality more generally. The other world, was the Canadian - Winnipeg context, the everyday space they occupied, which carried its own sexual culture. While these two "worlds" may be presented as quite separate, they do in fact, interact and weave in and out of each other. For example, many of the women maintain relationships with other women who are from different African countries, for instance, Ghana and Rwanda. This practice is an

important way in which the women are negotiating their sexuality as a lived experience by incorporating some ideas and rules from their Nigerian or Sierra Leonean cultures while at the same time integrating aspects of Canadian sexual culture. The following paragraphs will show what this practice looks like in everyday life. I will turn first to a transcript from an interview with Hannah where she explains,

> [Hannah]: It all depends on the individual. Sometimes, sometimes they're just after you so sometimes, sometimes you just want to show them. Because in a woman you always have the one that you really love. And then the ones that they know you have a boyfriend. I've had this guy come up to me and tell me, I told him I have a boyfriend he's like oh I'll show you that I'm a better guy than your boyfriend. Trust me if he wants to stick around, no really if he wants to stick around be my guest. Like he knows I have a husband or a boyfriend type of thing right? So if you want to stick around be my guest. I'm using you, but it all depends if you want him too, like your encouragement with him like I don't know, but I don't mean I'm gonna get intimate with you, but sometimes you find yourself doing it right.
>
> [Katie]: So how do you "use them"?
>
> [Hannah]: Like all guys feel especially with black girls they feel like with black girls you have to buy them. That's why actually when you talk to black guys they say they have wahala [rough translation is "problems"] because most girls you can't just walk up to them and say 'I like you lets go out'. You have to like, you know, take her out. The way, the way you guys do it, okay you guys send flowers, you know. [You] go on one date, two dates and everything, but a black girl it's different. It takes a couple months before you can even go on a date. You have to talk to her, coerce her all that right. You have to prove yourself, prove yourself. So that's, that's really what they don't want, that trouble, they're like I'll just go after a white girl you know, two, three times I go out with her, she's wanting to go out with us. Sometimes the guys tell us the white girls ask us out... Sometimes you really want a man, you do like that person, but you don't want to seem easy you get what I mean? The guys will tell you 'Look you're being too hard. In the next two weeks I will just go get a white girl'...But I'll tell you, sometimes the remarks they [guys] make, and we use them, but they always come back to us when they're looking for marriage, because they know they have to marry an African then they come crawling back.

> [Katie]: Can you explain the rationale for having this type of relationship?
>
> [Hannah]: If I find someone that I love, you love me, you show me love type of thing, I'm not going to leave you and go to nobody else, but it all depends on like, you know what I mean. But for me like right now I'm gonna be honest with you like I don't have no man, it's like they're competing now right. That's how it is. There's these guys showing oh I like you, I like you, I'm the one in the middle picking and I don't have to decide yet.

At each interview, the women were asked about the rules around dating within Nigerian and Sierra Leonean culture. All the women responded with some kind of reference to a dowry which is paid by the man or man's family to the woman and her family. This reference does sound similar to the "wooing" part of the multiple boyfriends practice here in Winnipeg where the men purchase items such as bus tickets, rides, food, drinks, and clothes for the women in order to "woo" her into agreeing to go on a date with them. Hannah mentions "like all guys feel especially with black girls... you have to buy them."

It is important to draw out some of the defining characteristics of the women's socio-economic situation in order to situate this sexual practice. Like many university and college students around the world, the women I interviewed were incredibly money conscious. By this I mean the women were very aware of their finances, what they had available for bills and what money was left over for non-essential products (clothes, shoes, make-up) and entertainment. In many of the cases the women's parents or guardians (either in Winnipeg or from their home countries) would monitor how the women were spending their money. This monitoring puts particular constraints on how the women are able to spend their money. Abeni once remarked that her Mother is an accountant and from Nigeria constantly audits her bank accountant ensuring that she was spending her money wisely. Many of the women have part time jobs at fast food

restaurants and call centres but these are generally minimum wage earning jobs. They only work five or ten hours a week during the school year, which only results in a relatively small amount of income. To complicate matters further, the pressure from parents and guardians to obtain exceptional grades (some parents reviewed term transcripts of the women's school performance) at university make it difficult for the women to work more hours at their part time jobs. It is fair to say that the women have very little available cash to spend and that limited purchasing power made acquiring particular non-essential consumer goods like clothes and shoes difficult. The way in which the women acquired all kinds of goods from interested men was justified within the framework, that I described above, where the women feel the men have to "woo" them and purchase them tangible goods to prove that they are worthy of the women's attention. In most of these scenarios that I learned about during my fieldwork this dynamic interaction was not simply one sided. The women exchanged the goods they were acquiring for sex. Some of the women were open about discussing what this "sex" involved. For those women, they shared with me that they would perform oral sex for these men in exchange for goods such as, clothing, food and cash. According to research participants, oral sex, as mentioned in Chapter Two is not considered "sex." Therefore, by performing oral sex rather than penile-vaginal intercourse, these Nigerian and Sierra Leonean young women are able to maintain their virginity and therefore remain "good girls." What this finding indicates is that there are contradictions in sexuality in the way in which identity and sexual practices are not necessarily related.

Similar types of relationships were noted by anthropologist Debra Curtis (2009) while working with women on the eastern Caribbean island of Nevis. On Nevis, the women exchanged sex for material goods like hard currency, food and other services with multiple men, many of whom were the father's of their children. None of the women I worked with had children, so the contours of the practice among the Nigerian and Sierra Leonean women looks slightly different, but the larger premise is the same and that is the influence of economic conditions and consumer desires on their sexuality. I am reluctant however, to reduce my analysis purely to that level, thereby running the risk of only equating Nigerian and Sierra Leonean sexuality with heterosexuality and economics and ignoring other important aspects like sexual pleasure that may be as Curtis describes "mediating factors" (Curtis, 2009: 14). Curtis describes a similar hesitation to reproduce the dominant framework within Caribbean sexuality that says "women trade sexual favours with men for access to cash, food, services and goods in order to provide for themselves and their children" (Curtis, 2009: 14). In an attempt to fairly and accurately describe this practice in Winnipeg where Nigerian and Sierra Leonean young women exchange sex for bus tickets, food, drinks, clothing and other consumer goods a discussion of sexual pleasure is necessary to avoid the above mentioned problem with conflating the women's sexuality solely with heterosexuality and economics.

I would like to pose the question, what is considered "pleasure" for these young women from Nigeria and Sierra Leone? I initially believed this question would be quite easy to answer. However, it has become increasingly difficult after having completed my fieldwork and as I sit down to write this body of work. I would like to reflect on a

moment during my fieldwork and writing process where I realised I had fallen guilty of essentialist and universalist ideas around African sexuality "as having an abnormal insatiable sex drive" (Curtis, 2009:15) The central issue or topic of my thesis is Nigerian and Sierra Leonean sexual subjectivity so as a result wherever I went, whoever I spoke to that is what I was looking for and wanting to talk to people about. Over the course of my fieldwork I did begin to feel that the women I was getting to know were part of a community that was "highly sexualised" and I was beginning to frame the women and their decisions within a framework that not only established them as such, but also re-inscribed the above noted, all together incorrect, notion around African sexuality. I realise now that I was coming to these conclusions, in part because of the large number of sexual images, conversations I had myself as well as witnessed and the experiences I shared with the women themselves. I needed to ask myself however, was I coming to these conclusions purely because I was out to find sex in these women's lives? I think I had found myself so immersed within their lives, that I had lost some of my ability to be an anthropologist (perhaps a contradiction, but that is how it felt) and do what an anthropologist does, and that is to attempt to make sense of and situate the women's narratives in order to understand and make arguments about some of the ways in which they articulate their sexuality. I was able to re-orient myself as I began to think about what constitutes pleasure for this population and the different ways in which they talk about "feeling good" and "looking good."

4.2 - "Feeling Good" and "Looking Good" - Notions and Articulations of Pleasure

I would like to propose that for Nigerian and Sierra Leonean women their ideas around pleasure are very much "in flux".[21] Rules around talking about sex and the need by the women to maintain control over their own images as "good girls" made it difficult to gather information around pleasure. However, there was a way in which the women talked about themselves as "wanting to feel good" and would often share with me that it was not just about the "stuff," alluding to the material goods and services acquired from the men in return for sex. "Feeling good" involves a multi-faceted representation of the women's sexuality and ideas and notions of pleasure. On the one hand, they are alluding to sex and sex acts and the physical "pleasure" or orgasm experienced through it. On the other hand, and in a much more discursive way, the women are drawing attention to "feeling good" and the interaction of pleasure in "looking good" as they experience or perceive to experience the men compete over them.

Before I go too deeply into the women's own notions and articulations of "pleasure" I would like to examine "pleasure" itself. Firstly, like "boyfriend" pleasure cannot be assumed to have one meaning because it is itself culturally ascribed. Pleasure is understood and articulated within multiple ways and within different cultures. For example, work done by Tuzin (1995) discusses the ways in which pleasure is experienced through penile bloodletting. Tuzin (1995) describes the practice of penile bloodletting in Ilahita,

> ..Male cult initiates in middle to late childhood are taught the technique of ritually hygienic penile bloodletting. Under conditions of orchestrated terror, the boys' penises are slashed, in order to rid their bodies of maternal and other feminine essences which, it is said, would impede their growth into

> fully masculine maturity. Later, and for the rest of their sexually active lives, adult males periodically administer this operation to themselves, lest the reaccumulated feminine contaminants hinder their magical activities. Men jokingly refer to this as their "menstruation (1995: 266).

Tuzin (1995) witnessed the operation first hand and describes this as the way in which he came to realise the "autoertoic element" (1995: 266) and better understand how "...the perpetrator, remarkably enough, takes pleasure in the act" (1995: 267). Tuzin (1995) explains the way in which the "release of blood is emotionally equivalent to ejaculation" (1995: 267). The presumption that sex acts have to be "pleasurable" is a Western construct. Moreover, the belief that "pleasure" cannot be defined in different ways is also limiting. In this case, pleasure is experienced in a way that brings a great deal of pain. Important to this then is the way in which the pleasurable experience of penile bloodletting sustains these cultural practices.

In thinking about pleasure, as an anthropologist I needed to question my ethnocentrism. I tried to differentiate my own ideas of pleasure from what I was learning from the women in terms of their notions and expressions of pleasure. "Feeling good" as the women describe is twofold. It is a reference to experiencing physical orgasm but secondly for the Nigerian and Sierra Leonean women I worked with, pleasure transcends that purely physical realm and also becomes embodied in the multiple ways in which they spend time "looking good" and attracting men. The women are drawing attention to "feeling good" through "looking good" and the interaction of pleasure and power in experiencing the men compete over them. This involved wearing tight clothing that highlights particular areas of their body, having their hair done and paying close attention to their body and overall appearance (which will be explored further in chapter six).

There was a great deal of effort made to be constantly looking their best and this process and the outcome gave the women "pleasure" or deep, almost physical gratification. The way in which men would "compete" for the women's attention and the simultaneous attempt by the women to make the men "jealous" was all part of a dynamic interaction that in itself gave the women pleasure.

Allow me to explain using one evening during my fieldwork as an example. For two hours I sat and waited for Hannah. We had agreed to meet at a pub in Winnipeg, which is popular among students. At the bar I slowly sipped away at my overly priced cranberry juice and wondered if perhaps I had got my days wrong or even the time incorrect. I tried calling a couple of times, but she was not answering her phone. I thought I would relax and hang out and just see if she would show up because it was not that unusual for her to be late on occasion. Not long after I had paid my bill and was getting ready to leave, Hannah arrived with a friend. After greeting each other, she told me she was sorry for being late and told me, "It takes time to look this good." Hannah was dressed in a short tight skirt that highlighted her buttocks. Underneath she wore black three quarter length leggings and on her feet really high heeled black patent pumps. She wore a turquoise blue short-sleeved top. We talked for a little while together and even went on the small dance floor and danced for a couple of songs. When I told Hannah I needed to get going, she followed me out of the pub. I thought she was just walking with me so we could say good bye in a quieter setting, but I quickly realised this was not the reason. I noticed Hannah was carrying a camera and I wondered why. My question was answered when she gave me the camera and led me to a dirty, old yellow-cream coloured

Chevy four door vehicle. She draped herself over the hood of this car, which she told me was her friend's that she arrived in, and gave me specific directions about what to capture in the photograph. She was standing with her back towards me and her hands on the hood of this car, her feet slightly apart. She looked back towards me and the camera and told me, "Make sure you get me and most of the car, but don't be afraid to get close up. I want to make him jealous, I'm going to send these photos to him when I get home cause I'm looking so good tonight." She then pursed her lips and said "ready" and I took the photo. It became a mini photo shoot as she had me take what felt like dozens of photos of her in different positions around and on top of the car. The whole experience was somewhat strange for me, I am not entirely sure why, but it was not every day I stood in a parking lot, late at night, taking photos of someone that at this point I did not know very well who was posing in front of a car in somewhat "suggestive" positions. I did very much feel like I was, by virtue of taking these photos, part of Hannah's erotic expression of pleasure whereby she was "feeling good" because she was "looking good." While taking the photos I tried to probe for her own comments on what was taking place. One thing that Hannah said to me stood out, "It feels so good to look this good I just have to have photos."

I argue that pleasure and "feeling good" for Nigerian and Sierra Leonean women is embodied in notions around "looking good" and in the ability or perceived ability by the women to attract men. Over the course of my fieldwork I have come to understand pleasure differently. My previous understandings and notions of pleasure now only form

part of my overall conceptualisation of this very important part of sexuality as a lived experience.

I would like to end this section with a quote, "Neither 'the social' nor 'the bodily' can be maintained as an independent analytic realm without a close examination of their rootedness in one another" (Cohen, 1995: 279). I would argue that pleasure and how it is understood, is inextricably connected to both 'the social' and 'the bodily' in terms of how sexual subjectivity is produced.

4.3 - Race, Religion and Sexuality

It was shortly after Christmas and Deb and I were sitting together having a bite to eat while catching up with how each of us spent our holidays. Deb is a Sierra Leonean young woman, who shared with me her latest entrepreneurial endeavour where she braids the hair of her friends and family for a few extra dollars. According to Deb the holidays are a busy time for her, as everyone wants their hair done. I recall sharing with her about the last time someone braided my hair, only a few months ago, and I told her how painful I remember it being. Deb responded, "Your hair is slippery cause you're white. It hurts more for white girls' cause you're not used to it, but whatever, we are who we are, we look, you know, how we look."

Race cannot be left out of the analysis involving the sexual subjectivity of the Nigerian and Sierra Leonean women in this research. For these women, race is an important mediating factor in how they think about their own sexuality and those of others around them. Race is not necessarily just a matter of "being who we are or looking how we look" as Deb described above. I would like to mention at the outset of this

discussion on race that the way in which my research participants understand themselves in regards to race is not presumed to be the same way in which I understand how they see their race. The social construction framework allows me to think through how race and sexuality are socially constructed and the ways in which they mutually influence each other. My understanding and my research participant's understanding of race may not align perfectly, however this does not in any way diminish their experiences or lessen the implications of their conceptualisations. According to Nagel (2003),

> Differences of colour, culture, country, ancestry, language, and religion are the materials out of which ethnic, racial, and national identities and boundaries are built. Ethnic boundaries are also sexual boundaries. Ethnicity and sexuality join together to form a barrier to hold some people in and keep others out, to define who is pure and who is impure, to shape our view of ourselves and others, to fashion feelings of sexual desire and notions of sexual desirability, to provide us with seemingly "natural" sexual preferences for some partners and "intuitive" aversions to others, to leave us with a taste for some ethnic sexual encounters and a distaste for others. Ethnicity and sexuality blend together to form sexualised perimeters around ethnic, racial, and national spaces. Ethnic and sexual boundaries converge to mark the edges of ethnosexual frontiers (Nagel, 2003: 1).

Nagel (2003) also employs the use of a social construction approach to understand "the racing of sex and the sexing of race" (2003: 6). This kind of a conceptual framework, which will also be used throughout this thesis, analyses the social influences and structures to see how they form social relations at the individual level and beyond. I am going to now embark on a brief intellectual exercise in definitions before looking at the construction of "ethnosexual frontiers" (Nagel, 2003: 1). I'll begin with ethnicity, (a concept that I described earlier which is intimately connected to race), which according to Nagel (2003) refers to "differences between individuals and groups in skin colour, language, religion, culture, national origin/nationality, or sometimes geographic

region" (2003: 6). Race however, is largely understood in terms of visible differences between populations, largely based around skin colour.

It is important to explore how the theoretical framework I have used throughout this thesis, the social construction framework, may assist in making sense of complex issues relating to how Nigerian and Sierra Leonean young women's lives are connected to race, sexuality and dating in Winnipeg. First of all, the strength of the social construction framework lies in its ability to analyse each layer of social life (family relations, interactions with the "state" and beyond). This theoretical framework is not perfect (which will be discussed in the conclusion), however it does reject essentialist models and does align well with this thesis' understanding of race as a social construct. Since I take race to be socially constructed, the social construction framework allows for an analysis that focusses on everyday and embodied interactions that "can illuminate many of the taken-for-granted features of social life from the micro level (individual lives, friend- ships, families, communities) to the macro level (economic sectors, nations, international relations, the global system)" (Nagel, 2006: 546). Therefore, as an example, this theoretical framework allows me to reflect on and ask questions about the meanings and expressions of "black girls" (the way the Nigerian and Sierra Leonean young women refer to themselves) in their everyday lives, in their interactions with peer groups, family and wider social networks.

With those understandings of ethnicity and race, and with an understanding of the significance of the social construction of sexuality framework as they relate to ethnicity and race, I want to explore Nagel's (2003) concept of "ethnosexual frontiers," as a useful

way in which to attempt to unravel the ways in which Nigerian and Sierra Leonean notions of ethnicity, race and sexuality interact. To begin, ethnosexual refers to the "intersection and interaction between ethnicity and sexuality and the ways in which each defines and depends on the other for its meaning and power" (Nagel, 2003: 10). For the Nigerian and Sierra Leonean women, in this research study, ethnicity and sexuality interact in dynamic ways that are influential in the sexual decisions they make around possible partners for example. The Nigerian and Sierra Leonean young women I talked to actively construct boundaries around "black girls" and "white girls." I would argue that for these women their sexual subjectivity and identity has a lot to do with their understanding of themselves as "black girls." According to Deb there are "appropriate" and accepted behaviours associated with being "white" and with being "black" similar to how Nagel (2006) describes the way in which "ethnicity and sexuality join together to form a barrier to hold some people in and to keep others out, to define who is pure and who is impure, to shape our views of ourselves and others..." (2006: 545). Deb explains why she thinks Nigerian men are mostly having sex with white women, "No offense to you it's easier to have sex with a white girl than a black girl. Cause a black girl's going to shrug you off like, what are you trying to do?" "Canadian" to these women largely indicates "whiteness" and when the women refer to "white girls" they are largely referring to "Canadian" young women. The way in which "Canadian" signals "white" is similar to the way in which Williams (1989) demonstrates that "American" represents "white" and this shows how "the metaphors and prototypes that express our understandings of person

and group in the identity formation process of nation building become stereotypes of biologically given group place" (Williams, 1989: 430).

This is an important intersection whereby I would like to discuss morality as it relates to the sexuality and subjectivity of the Nigerian and Sierra Leonean young women in this research study. As described in Chapter Three research participants constantly referred to "Canadian" "white" women as being "loose" and at times even referring to them as "sluts." Therefore, I argued, "Canadian" ("white") women were the focus of moralising discourses. Furthermore, the way in which the Nigerian and Sierra Leonean young women describe themselves as morally superior because they went to church, held Christian values and abided by the rules of no pre-marital sex contributed to their identity formation as diasporic young women living in Canada. I argue that the Nigerian and Sierra Leonean young women used moralising discourses (which established themselves as "pure" and separate from "Canadian" women who were "impure") that allowed them a way in which to maintain an "African" identity while living in Winnipeg as diasporic Nigerian and Sierra Leonean young women. In order to avoid losing their "cultural distinctiveness" (and remain "African") and to slow the pace of a "dissolving boundary" between themselves and "Canadian" women and the wider Canadian community moralising discourses and how they are used become important ways Nigerian and Sierra Leonean women forge a new identity, as part of two social worlds, based on what they believe to be "Nigerian" and "Sierra Leonean" (Williams, 1989: 421).

Hannah mentioned to me once while we were hanging out that she doubts she would ever marry a "white" guy because as she describes "we're just too different,"

although she thinks she will probably "end up" (like her sister) marrying an "African black guy," but someone who is not Sierra Leonean. Their ethnosexual reality then is largely defined by "blackness" when it comes to deciding on dating or marriage partners. Dating or marrying a "white" guy is literally unimaginable by these women, as they associate "white" with "just too different." It appears that for all of the women I talked they can imagine dating or marrying "black" men from other African countries, different from their own and in some cases some women noted they may be interested in "black" Caribbean men "if the right one came around," however "white" guys represent an ethnosexual frontier which these women cannot see themselves "crossing" (Nagel, 2003:126).

Religion is also an important aspect of Nigerian and Sierra Leonean young women's sexual subjectivities and warrants further investigation. I did not explicitly ask research participants about the role of religion in their lives as I was focussed on other areas such as dating and other influences such as media for example. In terms of religion, it is important to first point out that all the research participants I spoke to identified as Christians or in some cases Catholic. Moreover research participants not only claimed they went to church regularly, but on occasion I attended with them and was able to observe not only their attendance at church but their extensive involvement in "church life". By "church life" I am referring to their regular involvement in their church's youth program, choir or drama club, for example, on Sundays as well as often also at least one other day during the week or on the weekend. The two churches I attended with the research participants were predominantly made up of people from Africa and in some

cases I met a couple of people from different parts of the Caribbean. In answering the question of what role religion plays in the everyday lives of the women I interviewed I turn to the three pronged framework of Ross and Rapp (1997). I will also use this framework to examine the role religion plays in dating.

Family and peer groups:

The influence of religion on Nigerian and Sierra Leonean young women's sexual subjectivities at the familial and peer group level will be described in this section. Research participants identified regular church attendance and involvement in church as an expectation of their parents and also an activity that they enjoyed. Church services that I attended with my research participants were in excess of two hours in length. Research participants spent all Sunday morning at church and then regularly enjoyed social time (eating and hanging out) with other church friends, family and acquaintances at someone's house. Research participants shared with me on many occasions that they were only permitted to date men who were Christian men who went to church regularly. Ideally, women were expected (by their parents) to select men to date from their church community. Research participants explained to me that their parents believed Christian men were suitable for them because if a man went to church he was considered a "good" man. A "good" man was a man who was Christian, went to church, was educated at the university level and was therefore able to support a wife.

Nigerian and Sierra Leonean young women have many friends through established connections at church and these same Christian values (no pre-marital sex)

were uttered by friends and acquaintances when someone might be discussing a possible man to date.

Community:

By community I am referring to the connections and relationships Nigerian and Sierra Leonean young women have within "country organisations" of Nigeria or Sierra Leone, for example. More broadly speaking I am also including the networks of relatives, friends and acquaintances from church involvement. According to research participants, Christian values such as no pre-martial sex, modesty, purity, the importance of prayer and church attendance was constantly being told to these women at "country organisation" meetings, choir practices and at church. I recall one research participant share with me a story involving an acquaintance of hers who was rumoured to have had pre-marital sex and the choir director found out and she was asked to leave. While all of it remains hearsay, the research participant shared with me, "It isn't the point, truth or not, everyone knows everything." The community that these Nigerian and Sierra Leonean young women occupy is surveillant and because of this women are seldom able to date men who for example are not "African" and not Christian. There are some exceptions however, the practice of "multiple boyfriends" does often involve non-Christian men. And furthermore, the university campus. I observed several women going on "dates" with several men who may not have been Christian or in one case not black either.

Global/International:

The influence of religion on the sexual subjectivities of these Nigerian and Sierra Leonean young women can be seen within the global context. The religious expectations

around purity, church attendance and prayer remain important mediating factors in how women seek out possible partners. I recall Wilma sharing with me that she could definitely imagine leaving Winnipeg to find a husband. The expectations I have described above as well as her own desire to find a man who is Christian, educated and African was perhaps, at least in her head more a reality if she travelled back to Nigeria to get married and then returned to Canada. It is important to note however that this may have a lot to do with the association of strong Christian values and their home countries as many of the participant's early years education were in Christian settings. Many of the women went to private schools, several of which were Christian or Catholic based. Many of the women shared with me in interviews that the private Christian and Catholic schools they went to were old schools that were started by missionaries during the colonial period.

Overall, religion is an influence on the sexual behaviours of Nigerian and Sierra Leonean young women that they associated with "back home" rather than a "Canadian" influence. By this I am referring to the way in which all of the women identified Christianity and religion more generally as something they knew from when they were very young and the way in which they identified as Christians or their church going involvement did not begin in Canada. The major influence of religion on the sexual subjectivities of these young women's lives has to do with the way in which women used moralising discourses (as "good Christian girls," who remained chaste and church going as opposed to "loose" "Canadian" women) to maintain their "African" identities. Religion is one influence of their sexual subjectivities that requires further examination.

In this chapter I explored the practice of "multiple boyfriends". The practice of "multiple boyfriends" as it was explained, involves the exchange of goods such as, clothing, food and cash for sex, and in particular oral sex. In this chapter I also highlighted pleasure as an important part of how Nigerian and Sierra Leonean young women live out their sexual subjectivities in everyday kinds of ways. For example, I discussed the way in which these young women experience pleasure and framed it within a discussion of "feeling good" in "looking good". Women experienced pleasure, beyond the purely physical realm, in "looking good" and in getting ready, in order to make themselves desirable to men and therefore have them pursue them. In addition, I explored the important aspects of race and religion as influences on the sexual subjectivities of Nigerian and Sierra Leonean young women. I used the social construction framework to examine the role of race and religion in the everyday lives of my research participants and in particular within the domain of their sexual lives.

Chapter 5 - Diana: The Effect of Media on the Production of Sexual Subjectivity

5.1 - The "Character" of Bollywood Movies - A Brief Introduction

> I remember during school holidays we would go and sleep at a friend's house for fun and we would stay up till past eleven o'clock and watch Bollywood movies. I don't know really what it is about them, but I do know that in Nigeria they are really popular. Even today I'm addicted to Bollywood movies because I love their actors. It depends I don't love all of them, but I do love them. It has to do with the dance and song and all that stuff...I like Hollywood films but, I don't know, sometimes a lot of the themes are far fetched they don't really relate to everyday life and they make you want stuff you can't have. I can relate to the Bollywood and Nollywood films more. [Diana]

India has a long history of loving movies, music and dance and has been described as a "movie-mad and music-mad nation" (Shedde, 2006: 25). Up until the 1920s Hollywood made up ninety percent of the Indian market, but this percentage dropped to roughly ten percent as the "advent of sound" in the 1930s enabled Indians the ability to make their own movies in their own languages (Shedde, 2006: 25). Hollywood has been trying to re-establish its presence in India ever since their market dominance of the 1920s but with no avail and Bollywood movies continue to be the most popular movies consumed in India and beyond, which I explain in a moment). According to Shedde (2006),

> It is a trend unlikely to change drastically in the foreseeable future, simply because Bollywood is not only incorporating Hollywood elements and cheerfully doing Hollywood remakes after its own fashion, it is rapidly adapting to globalization as well. Of course, a great deal of Bollywood, like Hollywood, is mainstream pap, but Indians would rather consume their own pap than Hollywood's (2006: 25).

The popularity of Indian cinema and the impressively large number of films it produces every year is unprecedented. For example, in 2005 Bollywood produced 1041 films,

more films than any other country in the world. The United States produced roughly half that number and France's production is not even a quarter. India is an anomaly, in that it is one of the only, if not the only place in the world where Hollywood does not dominate movie "culture" and viewership (Steede, 2006: 25). Indian's have demonstrated repeatedly that they prefer their own "Bollywood style" movies to Hollywood or any other movie industry styles. Furthermore, Indian's are not the only individuals who consume Bollywood movies. They are popular across the world and particularly with young people in Nigeria.

I first became aware of the way in which Nigerians consume the ever growing popular movies of the Bollywood film industry when I sat down to interview Diana in a south end coffee shop in Winnipeg. Diana is a Nigerian young woman who spent most of her life, prior to coming to Canada, in Lagos, Nigeria. Diana moved to Canada four years ago to attend university. She settled in Winnipeg and now lives with an older sister who is also attending university. Diana has two brothers and two sisters. Her parents, who are married, are both educated entrepreneurs in Nigeria. Diana identifies as a Christian, speaks more than three languages and loves reading and watching movies. I recall our last interview together when she shared with me stories from her childhood where she remembers staying up late to watch Indian movies from the Bollywood film industry on T.V. Diana told me they used to watch these movies late at night, under the cover of darkness and from inside make shift tent-like structures which they made from their own soft colorful bed linens. According to Diana this was the best part of school holidays, as there were more opportunities to stay up late, with a friend or two and in some cases her

sisters and watch Bollywood movies that were aired on Nigerian T.V. late at night. Today in a small apartment in Winnipeg, Diana finds herself consuming the same captivating movies she watched as a child.

Indian films, their dances, music, stars and stories have been a part of Nigerian life, and particularly Northern Nigerian life and its Hausa (the largest tribe in West Africa) culture for over forty years (Larkin, 2003). Research participants identified several key features of Bollywood films including, but not limited to: romantic story lines, relatable characters, "lively" dancing and "fun" songs.[22] The "character" of Bollywood films is what separates it from other movie industries and styles and its "character" is also a major part of its success and overall popularity globally. Shedde (2006) describes this "character,"

> ...romance, melodrama, comedy, spectacle, action, adventure, with at least six high-protein songs and dances, all topped off with a happy ending. They are characterized by a joie de vivre, a celebratory attitude towards life, despite all the knocks of destiny. In a country that is still largely poor (and considerably rich, but then India is full of contradictions), and people lead tough, grueling lives, these films are an escapist fantasy (2006: 24).

The "joie de vivre" that I saw in Bollywood films is I would argue, a secondary, yet nevertheless significant characteristic that resonates with Nigerian culture. What I mean by this is; of all the women in this research project one of the aspects I saw in each of them was their joyous demeanor and hopeful outlook on life, a way of "being" an "outlook" if you will, that nicely aligns Bollywood movies with their own beliefs and values at least in general terms. Indian films are shown five evenings a week at movie theatres in Northern Nigeria and T.V. and video rental stores are also dominated by Indian

films (Larkin 1997). Larkin (1997) describes the way in which Indian films provide a new set of "imaginings,"

> If, as Bakhtin (1981) writes, communication is fundamental to human life, that self and society emerge in dialogue with others surrounding them, then Indian films have entered into the dialogic construction of Hausa popular culture by offering Hausa men and women an alternative world, similar to their own, from which they may imagine other forms of fashion, beauty, love and romance, coloniality and post-coloniality (Larkin, 1997: 406).

Indians living in the diaspora actively engage with Bollywood films as a way of remembering and connecting to India, however, the mere fact that illuminates Bollywood as "true global media" lies with its popularity and consumption of Indian films with non-Indian watchers in Asia, the Middle East, Africa and Europe (Larkin, 2003: 338). There is no mistaking it, Indian films are a dominant part of Hausa and more broadly Nigerian (in particular Northern Nigerian) popular culture. I will use the example of Indian films and their consumption by Nigerian young men and women as a way of examining the effect of global influences, such as the media, on

sexual subjectivity and ever changing notions of love.

Hausa culture is predominantly Muslim and Indian culture is largely Hindu. However despite differences and similarities between the cultures "it is the gap between differences and sameness, the ability to move between the two, that allows Indian films to function as a space for imaginative play in Hausa society" (Larkin, 2003: 343). Hausa culture, which is predominantly Muslim, is quite "conservative" or "traditional" in its rules and ways of organising social life. The same argument can be made for Hindu culture, largely "conservative" or "traditional" in form and character. Indeed, according

to Larkin (2003), Bollywood movies offer an alternative for Nigerian viewers, that enables them a way to be modern without being "Western." The following section will introduce some of the more specific details of how media, and specifically Bollywood movies, affect sexual subjectivity.

5.2 - Bollywood Movies - The Effect of Media on the Production of Sexual Subjectivity

For the Nigerian women I talked to Indian films from Bollywood were very much a part of their upbringing, as many of them remember watching the movies, singing the popular music tunes and following the Bollywood actors and actresses in their local Nigerian news and T.V. media. I recall Kim tell me about how she used to try braid her hair and even adorn her head with beads and jewels like the beautiful women she would see in the Bollywood movies. It became more and more apparent to me that for the Nigerian women in this research study, and likely many others, Bollywood films were an important medium through which these diasporic Nigerians connected to Nigerians living in Nigeria and some of the ways of life they remember. For Nigerians living in Winnipeg, these movies still represent a way in which, as Larkin suggests, they are able to make sense of this West/non-West, modern/Non-modern or "traditional" discourse.

These movies very much offer an alternative to purely American political, economic and cultural systems and ways of life while still allowing the women a way to be modern. I will note however, that while this may sound like the women in this research study are outright rejecting American ideology, this is not in fact the case, but rather American, Indian and other types of ways of life and thinking about the world are

understood and lived out in many ways and carry with them multiple meanings. Abu-Lughod (1990) explains the danger of the "romance of resistance" which involves a simple focus on local forms of "resistance" to multiple forms of cultural dominance. This kind of analysis fails to recognise the complexities and effectiveness of power systems overall. For Larkin, his concern is slightly different, describing a larger critique of African studies and others that have largely focused on resistance and dominance type models which are focused on a "reductive binary distinction between oppression and resistance. [And] the effect of this is that phenomena that cannot be neatly organised within that binary distinction then fall out of view" (Larkin, 1997: 408). While both Abu-Lughod (1990) and Larkin's (1997) concerns are different the larger critique remains the same, there is a danger in purely focussing on a resistance-dominance type of model. As such, my analysis of the influence of media on sexual subjectivity will demonstrate an attentiveness to the dynamic ways in which the young women in this research study make sense of and negotiate these different, yet similar ideas around sex, love and marriage as well as larger ideas around fashion and beauty will not simply reduce these understandings and negotiations to "resistance." Indeed it is extremely complex, as Diana described at our first interview together,

> [Diana]: I remember during school holidays we would go and sleep at a friend's house for fun and we would stay up till past eleven o'clock and watch Bollywood movies. I don't know really what it is about them, but I do know that in Nigeria they are really popular. Even today I'm addicted to Bollywood movies because I love their actors. It depends I don't love all of them, but I do love them. It has to do with the dance and song and all that stuff...I like Hollywood films but, I don't know, sometimes a lot of the themes are far fetched they don't really relate to everyday life and they make you want stuff you can't have. I can relate to the Bollywood and Nollywood films more.

> [Katie]: Could you explain a little more about the actors and actresses and why you "love" them so much?
>
> [Diana]: It's like they're kinda like us sort of and I mean, we're not the same, but the plots and stuff, of the movies, are interesting for Nigerians and we can understand some of what the actors talk about and experience you know.
>
> [Katie]: What are you specifically referring to? Like how are Nigerians and Indians somewhat the "same"?
>
> [Diana]: Well I don't know like Nigerian parents and stuff are strict you know, about dating and everything and like it seems it's kinda like that also for Indians in the movies.

For Diana and other Nigerians (in the diaspora or otherwise) who consume Indian films it is not just a matter of "relating" to the Indian films more than American films. Bollywood films and their global appeal serve as a powerful example of the way in which sex and sexuality are affected by international flows of cultural goods and ideas. As Larkin (2003) suggests, "the popularity of Indian films with Arabic, Indonesian, Senegalese, or Nigerian youth reveals the mobilization of desire and fantasy that animates global cultural flows" (Larkin, 2003: 335). There is a way in which Diana is actively negotiating established notions of the "West" as modern by watching Indian films which have similar, but still different ideas of love and sex. For example. I argue that for Nigerian young women in Winnipeg I spoke to their consumption of Indian films offers a "third space" where they can think about their own notions of Canadian sexual culture (the "West") while at the same time connecting to "home" through this popular practice of viewing Indian movies (Larkin, 2003: 335). The Indian movies and the ideas they portray are also a way in which the women think through ideas around desire and "finding love" as it appears these movies, for the women I talked to serve as somewhat of a road map for

how to achieve successful relationships defined by love. These movies make "finding love" possible for Nigerian women living in Winnipeg. Meg shared with me her experiences with Bollywood films in our second interview together,

> [Meg]: Indian movies are still popular with us here. I think it's cause of the song, the music and because of the dance. And because it makes us dream cause you know the whole long hair thing and I don't know the whole, I think they have, Indians have a good, they know how to define love, I don't know they, they know how to project love in their movies. They sometimes show like how to find love and what kind of a man is good to marry you know? The stories even show how the girl has to fight to marry the person she loves. Like for me I get to decide who I want to marry. My parents won't pick for me, but they do want me to marry a man from my tribe who is a Christian, has a good job and who is a good man. I want to marry the person I fall in love with wherever they are from and whatever job and stuff. Of course I want him to be a Christian and have a good job and stuff, but he doesn't have to be Nigerian. I want my Daddy to be proud of me, but I have to follow my heart.
>
> [Katie]: What else is it about Bollywood movies that you like?
>
> [Meg]: Well it's cool also because we get to know and stuff like some of Indian culture you know? It almost lets us see India, without going there, cause I probably won't actually go there any time soon you know and stuff.

Indian film story lines often include conflicts around arranged marriages and searches for "true love" against obstacles largely based around "tradition" like arranged marriages. Meg is alluding to these arranged marriages when she says "a girl has to fight to marry the person she loves." According to Larkin (2003),

> It is the discourse around love, especially the tension between arranged and love marriages, that has most influenced Hausa viewers. Indian films provide Hausa youth with an alternative style of sexual interaction, a different pattern of speech and bodily affect between the sexes (Larkin, 2003: 344).

For Meg, she is not going to have an arranged marriage but she does talk about how she has to marry a "good man" which, defined by her parents, is a Christian man from her own tribe - the Igbo tribe and who is financially secure. For Meg, she is not set on marrying a Nigerian, but rather wants to marry the person who she falls in love with. However, enough emphasis cannot be placed on the importance of Meg's family as she definitely wants her "Daddy" to be proud of her. Even from thousands of miles away, Meg's family and community values around sex and sexuality remain important influences in her decisions around picking possible partners and relationships more generally. As the theoretical framework of the social construction of sexuality points out, sexuality is not in isolation of various levels of societal influences like alluded to in previous chapters, for example communities, family, peer groups and of course wider affects of media etcetera. It is apparent that, "communities, societies, nations, and even entire continents exist not autonomously but in a densely woven web of connectedness, within a complex and multivalent relationality" (Shohat and Stam, 2003: 1). Media and, more specifically, Bollywood films intimately connect and relate individuals all over the world to India as well as to a newly created space defined in part by their own understandings of their culture as well as by the cultural ideas and notions portrayed of India in theses movies.

I recall something Abeni said to me during one of our interviews together, she told me, "Nigeria thinks they're getting all modern and everything, like it is less common to see arranged marriages and stuff but still a girl can't necessarily just marry who she wants, it's complicated." All of the women I spoke with talked about how they do not

have to have arranged marriages however they constantly alluded to the strict rules, placed on them by mainly their parents, to marry a "good man." According to Hegde (2005), "individual and group identities are redefined through media practices that seamlessly weave in local and global realities...it is the calculus of globalization where the political economy of Indian films works into the circuit of immigrant desire, youth identity, transnational mobility and the commodification of nostalgia" (2005:61). These Indian movies offer a script where young Nigerian women in Winnipeg can imagine "finding love" defined in part by their own desires (including love) as well as their families and communities etcetera. These movies demonstrate a way in which "traditional" familial requirements around love, sex and marriage; Indian, Nigerian or otherwise can be negotiated in a way that does not outright reject these values, but are actively redefined through this dynamic tension and changing notions and resulting decisions.

I am however reluctant to overly exagerate the effect of global media on "local" sexual subjectivities since "the media can exoticize and otherize cultures" (Shohat and Stam, 2003: 1). However, there is no mistaking the noticeable influence of transnational flows of all kinds of cultural goods and in particular global media. The social construction of sexuality framework argues that sexuality cannot be studied in isolation of such powerful global influences, including the media and therefore an analysis of Indian films is not only appropriate in this thesis, but it is necessary.

In summary, this chapter highlighted the influence of Indians films from the Bollywood film industry on Nigerian and to some extent also Sierra Leonean young

women's sexual subjectivities. For these young women their conceptualizations of sexuality as well as their ideas and notions around what it means to be "modern" and "traditional" are worked through during their consumption of Indian films from Bollywood. Following Larkin (2003), I argue that these films offer a way in which to be modern without being western. The story lines, characters and overall jouie de vivre relate to these Nigerian and Sierra Leonean young women and offer other ways of dealing with issues around arranged marriages, love, and dating that can be as mentioned earlier particularly complicated and stresstful for young women with conservative religious, cultural and familial values. The practice of "multiple boyfriends" and the consumption of Bollywood movies by Nigerian and Sierra Leonean young women highlights the danger of focussing on a resistance-dominance type of model. For this reason, I focussed my efforts on understanding and describing the dynamic ways in which these young women make sense of their lives as diasporic youth in Winnipeg, in how they negotiate the different meanings and experiences of dating, marriage and sex.

Chapter Six - Abeni: The Cross-Cultural Sexual Body - Hair and the Hour Glass Body Shape

6.1 - 'Making' the Sexual Body - The Role of Hair

> On week days I just tend to wear normal jeans and a shirt, flip flop, boots and accessorize. I'm really big on accessories. Like it's really hard here cause it's cold here and back home it's warm, everyone's wearing gold and back home I would have my bracelet, my watch and I'll have like a bunch of, you know, like my earrings I'll have my ankle bracelet, then you get here everyone's just plain and normal and you want to fit in right so you have to ditch a lot of stuff like that. And then you go to the store and you buy all the things you think are gold and two weeks later it's white. I'm like ahhhh, I've spent good money on this and it's already washing off [laughing]. But whatever, I wear my traditional African clothing from back home for like special occasions, if I'm going out for church, if I'm going like to some sort of event I would wear it like that's when I get all dressed up like you know my heels and all that. I don't often go to clubs, but if I do I wear nothing traditional, normal Western clothes... [Abeni]

Sex is felt and experienced in varying ways and carries with it multiple meanings within cultures and also among different cultures. My theoretical framework takes sexuality to be a socially constructed and culturally differentiated discourse and set of practices rather than a biological given, as was explained throughout this thesis. Sexuality is therefore shaped by social structures and influences that are evident in all layers of social life such as family, communities, peer group and larger global influences. Sex and sexuality is lived through the body and therefore the body remains an important site of anthropological inquiry. Beauty has become closely linked to "sexiness" in Western societies largely because sexual attraction relies on a "manufactured beauty" (Donnan and Magowan, 2010: 23). A manufactured beauty alludes to the growing ability of men and women to alter and enhance areas of their bodies through cosmetic surgery. "Natural" beauty now exists within the "reconstructive domain" whereby bodies get reshaped,

reconstructed to reflect new and changing ideas of beauty and sex (Donnan and Magowan, 2010: 23). According to Donnan and Magowan (2010) other significant shifts are evident in the landscape of sex, the body and beauty,

> While beauty and sex have moved closer to one another in Western thinking in the past fifty years, sex and reproduction have gradually drifted apart. Female sexuality was once tied in to reproductive potential and acceptance by a male husband, but today the possibilities for sexual experimentation through 'safe sex' have meant that reproduction has been cast away from sex for family purposes to allow for varieties of erotic experimentation. Instead of women being confined to the home and to the jobs that reflected assumed biological differences from men, enhanced sexiness could empower women's employment opportunities, affording social, economic and political advancement as well as increased choice over a sexual partner (Donnan and Magowan, 2010: 23-24).

The outcomes noted above by Donnan and Magowan (2010) reflect a change in men and women's sexuality. However, while this "liberalization" has occurred an equally complex set of ideas and influences emerges that find men and women subject to social expectation and sexual control. As Foucault (1978) has suggested, sexuality is not free floating, but is highly regulated and every citizen has a complex relationship with the state through the multiple areas and established ideas of sexual control. Altman (2001) suggests that "sexuality is an area of human behaviour, emotion, and understanding which is often thought of as "natural" and "private," even though it is simultaneously an arena of constant surveillance and control" (Altman, 2001: 2). As such, one must note that women's bodies are not automatically liberated from "strait-laced sexual expressions of the past" (Donnan and Magowan, 2010: 24) by their new ability to access breast enhancement or other types of cosmetic surgery, but rather represent a new set of

expectations for themselves based on shifting ideas of beauty and sex and their intimate linkage with one another.

At this point in the chapter I would like to take a brief look at hair and the various meanings it carries for sex, sexuality and beauty and particularly its meanings and significance for the Nigerian and Sierra Leonean women involved with this research. Hair can be many colours, styles, lengths and can be maintained through different methods like plucking, waxing, shaving etcetera. All of these various modifications of hair and how it is shaped can change the ways in which head hair, underarm hair and pubic hair are perceived and understood (Donnan and Magowan 2010). Hair (in all its forms) has a multitude of implications for how sex and sexuality get lived out in everyday life, specifically related to meanings and ideas about individual sexual subjectivity and social relations.

Hair and specifically head hair is an important mediating factor in how sex and sexuality gets understood and internalized by the Nigerian and Sierra Leonean women I worked with. I am reminded of the day Hannah braided my hair. It was an experience that revealed a great deal to me about how important head hair is in the creation of the sexual subjectivity of the women I worked with. It became increasingly clear to me as I watched Deb braid a friend's hair. She sat on a wobbly stool and leaned over her friend who was sitting cross legged on the floor beneath her. She carefully pulled pieces of her hair from her head and continued to weave them in and out of one another. This carpeted bedroom floor was littered with combs, hair products, and packages of hair extensions. The hair

extensions, hair gels and sprays are often sent over from Nigeria and Sierra Leone or are brought back when friends and family go "back home" for visits.

When I asked if these items are available here in Winnipeg I was told by Deb, "You know our hair isn't like yours. Black girl's hair is more coarse and stuff, you know. And these products are expensive here so for us to get what we need. For us to take care of our hair we have to get it from back home, the real stuff, you get?"

Music played in the background from an iPod with a cracked screen that was connected to a set of ancient looking speakers that somehow still produced sound. While I was sure that only one of the speakers actually worked, nevertheless hip hop artists, pop stars and rock bands provided the background music for this lengthy process. I recall Deb tell me about how her Mother used to braid her hair and how over time she slowly learned how to "do it" herself, almost instinctively, describing this practice as something "we all learn how to do." While this process took place, Deb and her friend spoke about life and had conversations about friends and family. They spoke candidly about relationships they currently had with men and also about their interest in other men.

Since none of the women's conversations and interactions while "doing hair" were audio taped, I rely on my memory and some field notes to draw out some of the themes of the conversations, the deeply personal conversation topics, and the intimacy that weaves in and out of them. To do this, I would like to turn to an evening where Abeni and Deb and I were sipping on juice and chatting while getting ready to go out. Deb was working on Abeni's hair and I recall Deb tell Abeni a story. Deb mentioned two men and the stress she was experiencing over their wanting to "get with her." One of the guys she

talked about at length and I got the sense that she expressed a genuine interest in a long term future with him. Deb talked about how he is a Christian, a few years older and how her parents would really like him if they met him. As the conversation continued, Abeni reminded Deb of how the other guy (who is a Christian, but does not go to church regularly) is a better choice telling her that he may not be the "safe bet" but he is the one that really loves Deb. Deb agreed that when she makes out with him its almost "magical," a perhaps fairy-tale description of her most recent encounter with him where he bought her the following month's bus pass and talked with her and kissed until all hours of the night. However, she then went on to talk about how it would ultimately never work. I interrupted at that point and asked Deb why she did not feel that it would work with this guy. She explained that her parents would never approve since he is "not so much what they want for me and stuff. If I was back home, I would never even spend time with someone who does not go to church every Sunday you know." After Deb said this a silence fell on the room, almost like a heavy brick, and then all of a sudden Abeni stretched to turn up the music and started moving her upper body to the music. Deb quickly told her to sit still and she continued to braid her hair. We all had a good laugh when Abeni hit us with a one liner that I will never forget, "They have to work for this!" [pointing to her body]. She went on to explain how nothing is free in this world and that before she has to settle down and seriously decide on a partner she feels that men have to work "for this" and alluded to the various ways they can do that through buying her clothes and "taking care" of her.

I will argue that the act of braiding and "doing hair" becomes an intimate and erotic practice whereby women engage in an intimate relationship with one another within a "space" defined by "local" modes of intimacy and "global" "authenticity." For these Nigerian and Sierra Leonean young women this skill of "doing hair" provides opportunities for economic gain as in some cases women carry out these services for other women who have the money to pay someone to perform this service. Whether purchased or not, these "spaces" where hair is "done" become a complex "site" where sexuality is experienced and lived out in an everyday kind of ways as well as a "site" where the discourses around "tradition" and "back home" get worked through.

"Local" Modes of Intimacy and "Global" "Authenticity":

> Transformations in intimacy have occurred as cultures touch and brush against one another, traveling further than ever before. Boundaries of intimate behaviours, sexual values and concepts of acceptance, consent and access are being reshaped as they move across and between countries in physical and virtual ways (Donnan and Magowan, 2010: 157).

Over the course of my fieldwork I watched almost all of my research participants carry out hair braiding and other forms of "doing hair" as well as experience the same with their own hair. Nigerian and Sierra Leonean women do each other's hair several times a month and the interaction that takes place while this occurs constitutes a "local" intimacy between these women. This intimacy is defined by conversations and memories that connect these Nigerian and Sierra Leonean women to "back home" while at the same time linking themselves to each other and their "Winnipeg" community through common "boyfriend" and dating experiences that they share with each other. I never witnessed

these women talk so openly about their "boyfriends" and their lives as they did when they were either braiding or getting their hair braided.

My methodology, which included participant observation, allowed me to gain valuable insights through observing these interactions and conversations between the women, while "doing" hair, when we hung out together. The intimacy (at least in general terms) that I witnessed between Sierra Leonean and Nigerian women while "doing hair" is not necessarily unique to their cultures, but rather, at least anecdotally there is a belief in dominant Canadian culture that the relationship between a hair stylist and client is a space where both can speak freely to one another. Furthermore, the relationship between a hair stylist and a client in Canada is also one that can be described as having an intimate rapport.

It seemed as if this "space" offered an opportunity for the women to speak more candidly and at the same time reinscribing their intimate relationship with one another in their similar positioning as "African" women living in Winnipeg during the twenty-first century. Donnan and Magowan (2010) quote Berlant at the beginning of their chapter on "intimate cultures," "intimacy builds worlds; it creates spaces and usurps places meant for other kinds of relation" (2010: 157). For the Nigerian and Sierra Leonean women I got to know, these "places" where women braid each other's hair and share about their lives are transformed by intimacy into created "spaces" where discourses about "tradition" and "back home" get lived out while at the same time conversations about their "boyfriends" and lives in Winnipeg take place.

"Tradition" and memory gets lived out in different ways by these Nigerian and Sierra Leonean women as hair braiding, previously performed in their home countries by female family members (usually a mother or older sister) is now carried out on each other. This practice, usually carried out by female family members is lived out in different ways and holds different meanings for the Nigerian and Sierra Leonean women in Winnipeg who braid and get their hair braided. I recall Meg sharing with me her experiences related to her hair,

> Getting new hair is important. We have to change our hair. It's more a social thing now than a religious thing, but still everyone does the braiding, and it's kinda painful, but just to look beautiful. Every Mom wants her child to also look beautiful so even though she causes her pain she still does it. Cutting your hair isn't encouraged. I remember my Mom braiding my hair when I was little, I used to cry and complain she told me, but I got used to it, it's just what we do. Whenever my friend does my hair here I kind of remember my Mom and stuff you know, I'm really close to my Daddy and stuff, but my Mom and I are really close too.

The intimacy that I am describing that exists between Nigerian and Sierra Leonean women in Winnipeg while performing hair braiding and having one's hair braided is an erotic intimacy between female friends defined by common experiences, memories and ideas associated with "tradition" and "back home." These relationships are intimate in ways that are different from Western female friendships. I observed the Nigerian and Sierra Leonean women involved in this research to be very "physical" with one another. They would often hug and kiss and hold hands. When I asked Deb about some of these observations I was making regarding the physical contact between the women she shared with me, she told me, "We're close, but it's not like we're gonna have sex with each other. But we care and show each other that." It quickly appeared to me that the intimacy

I was observing between these women was not a "romantic" one and not one defined by sex acts, but it was eroticized. These intimate spaces, while "doing hair" are eroticized, and ideas of "sexiness," "beauty," "modernity" and "traditionalism," "global" and "local" get worked through and experienced within the domain of what is sexual to Nigerian and Sierra Leonean women living in Winnipeg.

This "local" intimacy (among young women from Nigerian and Sierra Leone living in Winnipeg) is present while braiding hair and while hair is braided, where women share very personal details of their lives with each other. These are also points of intersection between the "local" and the "global." This is evident in the hair extensions and hair products that get shipped from home or that are brought back with friends and family. A brief investigation led me to believe that these products or similar such products are readily available in Winnipeg. It was clear based on the dusty boxes and yellowing plastic that the stores I visited had this product on the shelves for years without selling. It was not just a matter of cost, but rather these Nigerian and Sierra Leonean women wanted to use the "real stuff" (as Deb described) from "back home". This "real stuff" represents a "global" authenticity, in the eyes of these women that they both actively use on a practical level and reproduce on a more conceptual level. The flows of these products from "back home" to Canada, are not just arbitrary decisions to use certain products over others. These decisions represent a desire to carry out and connect with the ways and meanings of being a Nigerian woman as well as the ways and meanings of being a Sierra Leonean woman.

As mentioned earlier some women, who are quite experienced with hair, charge other women, who are willing to pay to perform the service. There is a way in which however, that level of intimacy still exists, where conversations are had and memories are shared that connect the women to their local communities while at the same time relating to "back home." There is a way in which hair provides opportunity for intimacy and in some cases economic gain while at the same time adding a complexity to the lives of these women.

> Hair can invite sexual advance or signify virginal or marriageable status. A change in its shape, length and style can alter a person's social and sexual status where shaving the head may signify penitence or concealing the hair can indicate sexual modesty or chastity. Hair fully embodies the paradox of being neither fully culture nor nature, dead nor alive, and yet it epitomizes the aesthetic as well as the abject and obscene... The social value of hair may change over time and with it the sexual connotations it holds" (Donnan and Magowan, 2010: 30).

For the Nigerian and Sierra Leonean women I talked to, hair braiding and the two women involved openly discuss their current "boyfriends" and their desires and interest in other men. These conversations, while someone's hair is being done, become a complex site of local and global intersections where decisions are made to use products from "back home" in order to make the process "real" and "work." Ideas surrounding discourses of "tradition" and "back home" are negotiated and set within ideas and boundaries within what constitutes necessary for the women to maintain their "black girl hair." These are the efforts to obtain "the real stuff" as well as the intimacy surrounding the conversations of everything from their sex lives to their latest dates. In this case, the hair of Nigerian and Sierra Leonean women and how it is maintained is a way in which their sexuality

gets experienced and negotiated within a Manitoba city in Canada, as well as within a greater global context and the "intimate" and "authentic" connections between the two.

6.2 - The Body, Sexuality and Clothing- The Hour Glass Body Shape and the Buttocks

There is a large body of literature that explores the relationship between sexuality and the body and clothing. In this section I will explore some of the literature in order to provide the theoretical underpinnings when examining fashion within the context of African women in Winnipeg. Craik (1994) suggests that some view fashion as being an attempt to conceal the "real" essence of the person or body. However, according to Mauss (1973, 1985) and Bourdieu (1986) in Craik (1994) "we can regard the ways in which we clothe the body as an active process or technical means for constructing and presenting a bodily self" (Craik, 1994: 1). The choices we make regarding what we wear on our bodies are part of a complex process of identity construction. The clothes we wear express the connection between a specific body and the social world in which it lives. Clothes therefore create a personal "habitus," a concept coined by Bourdieu (1986). Craik interprets "habitus" as the "specialised techniques and ingrained knowledges which enable people to negotiate the different departments of existence" (Craik, 1994: 4).

When studying human sexuality, one cannot (and should not) separate the body out of the analysis. The body, while often taken for granted is "not a given, but actively constructed through how it is used and projected" (Craik, 1994: 10). We tell a story about ourselves through the clothing we wear and the social codes considered in the decisions made to wear those clothes. According to Tulloch (2010) the decisions regarding what we

wear are part of a process of "self-telling, that is, to expound an aspect of autobiography of oneself through the clothing choices an individual makes-what I have come to call style narratives" (2010: 276). Below is a "style narrative" of Hannah, who shared with me a little about what she chooses to wear and why,

> I wear tight jeans and leggings because I want to make my bootie pop, so when I walk they look! I even have a second boobie (sic) [laughing] I wear under my tops that makes my chest look bigger and more out there. I want to look all curvy you know? That's why I usually wear a belt around my waist to squeeze me in and stuff. I like to wear heels and stuff and show off my body like this. If you've got it you just got to show it off [laughing]. For black girls this is what it means to be beautiful and stuff and we want to attract black guys so this is what we have to do you know? It's not easy, but whatever.

Many of the women, like Hannah, expressed the importance of the buttocks and the hips and to a lesser extend the breasts as important identifiers of "black beauty." The hour glass body shape, large buttocks and chest represent a general prescription for "black beauty" for a Nigerian or Sierra Leonean women wanting to attract black men. When asked what would be acceptable for Abeni to wear from her parents perspective she responds "for my parents to have me wear or for my parents to see [laughing]". When I asked Abeni to explain further about what she likes to wear she explained,

> [Abeni]: And like you were asking about those shiny leggings and stuff. Well the thing is I wasn't into it at first, but they are really comfortable.
>
> [Katie]: Where do you get these "leggings" from?
>
> [Abeni]: From Sirens, Stitches, they have a lot of them. I'm guessing they are wearing them to the club cause well it's figure hugging and it's sexy and something like that. It's not something I would, I would wear. I'll wear leggings if I have like a top that covers my bum like goes all the way down there. Most African girls won't care though they and just wear the leggings. I think it's an African thing, I don't know really. But yes Africans are big on the bum and the hips and all that. It has always been like that. I think to them maybe it defines a woman I don't know. In Nigeria most of our clothes, if you

> see when, mostly like a gown or something are tight they always cut it in a way that even if you don't have hips, they cut the clothes in a way that at least still looks like you do. I think it's an African thing.

With all this talk of shiny leggings and the way in which Abeni believes they are worn to highlight certain aspects of the body, it is important to point out that the women would often tell me about how their parents (even from afar) impose strict rules around dressing modestly, wearing clothing that does not reveal breasts or heavily emphasize any part of the body. This way of presenting one's self is associated with being a virgin and being "pure" before a young woman marries. One must ask the question then, are the ways in which these Nigerian and Sierra Leonean women dressing in Winnipeg (wearing tight clothing that emphasizes buttocks, hips and breasts) a logical outcome of being in the middle of two sexual cultures, a contradiction of some kind or a rebellion against the wishes and requirements of their "traditional" parents? I would argue, that the answer lies in part with a greater understanding of clothing and the body. According to Hansen (2004),

> Because it both touches the body and faces outward toward others, dress has a dual quality, as Turner (1993 [1980]) noted when he coined the notion the social skin. This two-sided quality invites us to explore both the individual and collective identities that the dressed body enables. The subjective and social experiences of dress are not always mutually supportive but may contradict one another or collide. The contingent dynamic between these two experiences of dress gives rise to considerable ambiguity, ambivalence, and, therefore, uncertainty and debate over dress. Dress readily becomes a flash point of conflicting values, fueling contests in historical encounters, in interactions across class, between genders and generations, and in recent global cultural and economic exchanges (2004: 372).

For Nigerian and Sierra Leonean women living in Winnipeg the way in which they dress, emphasizing particular areas of their body through tight leggings and "second boobie(s)"

is in part a result of being between two different sexual cultures and the way in which these differences and simularities in meanings and practices get worked through as Hansen describes as the "individual and collective identities that the dressed body enables" (2004: 372). However, clothing for these women and the choices involved to wear that clothing is all part of a larger understanding and conceptualization of the "black body" and "black beauty" as intrinsically connected to pleasure and the ways and meanings associated with pleasure as Nigerian or Sierra Leonean young women living in Winnipeg.

It is important to point out, however, that I am not loosely throwing around conceptualizations such as the "black body," but rather draw attention to this important intersection in the Nigerian and Sierra Leonean young women's understandings of their bodies (which are very much based on race), with knowledge of the problematic and deeply imbedded way in which "black sexuality" and "white sexuality" have been cast against each other. As Wekker (2006) describes "In the domain of sexuality a by now impressive body of literature that traces the epistemic and real violence of the circulation of discourses constructing black women's sexuality in opposition to white women's sexuality. In Stoler's rereading of Foucault, "race" was at the root of sexual constructions...normalizing white women's sexuality" (2006: 226). My analysis is in no way attempting to reinscribe these problematic notions around "white" and "black" sexuality, but rather I have briefly described this complexity in order to demonstrate my attentiveness to avoiding this type of perscription of sexuality more generally.

As described earlier in Chapter Four, there is a way in which ideas of "looking good" are associated with "feeling good" and clothing is very much connected to this pleasure of "feeling good" in "looking good." Clothing and "feeling good" offers a way in which to be sexual for these Nigerian and Sierra Leonean women without having to be open about the details of their "boyfriend" relationships. I often heard research participants share how they felt that they "don't need men, [we] look good and feel good without them." This understanding of their body as being able to create its own pleasure ("feeling good") and meaning without men directly, but often with men in mind, allows them to create a different space where their "boyfriend" relationships with men can exist in various ways despite the rules placed upon them around virginity and purity, for example. This space is therefore a complex space that is enshrouded within and surrounded by layers of the body and social relations and the ways in which they interact and are experienced together for economic gain, the pursuit and experience of "local" modes of intimacy, sex and pleasure.

In this chapter, I argue that the practice of "doing hair" where female friends and in some cases family members braid each others hair and the spaces that define these conversations and interractions are an intersection of "global" authenticites and the "local" modes of intimacy. By "global authenticities" I am referring to the hair products that are used by these young women while doing hair. These women believe the hair products from "back home" are the "real stuff" and there is an authenticity that is associated with these products and all the meanings and notions wrapped up in "back home". By "Local modes of intimacy" I am referring to the spaces where female friends

braid each other's hair and the intimate conversations that disclose personal details about their relationships with men, their sexual experiences and desires. I observed this "space" while doing hair to be the only realm of these young women's lives where they spoke so openly about dating, sex and relationships. I argue that the intimacy between female friends (or family members) while "doing hair" is an experience where the conversations and interactions are erotic. This practice of "doing hair" is an attempt to make themselves sexually desirable and therefore able to compete with other women and in some cases therefore have men fight over them. Intimacy (while "doing hair"), pleasure (in "looking good") and erotics ("multiple boyfriends") overlap one another in the everyday meanings and expressions of these young Nigerian and Sierra Leonean young women's sexual subjectivities. It is in these intersections of space and experience where these young women negotiate meanings of "tradition" and "modernity," as well as notions of "back home" and what is means to live in Winnipeg as diasporic young women.

Conclusion

As the end of March 2011 approached, I slowly started to say goodbye (for now) to research participants and explain that I would be focusing on writing my thesis. I arranged ways to stay in touch with each of the women and informed them of when they could expect to receive my findings in the event they were interested in reading them. I would like to share a brief excerpt from my field notes that helps to illuminate the emotions I was experiencing as I began to "exit" the field.

> I'm looking out the window of the coffee shop where I've spent hours hanging out with research participants over the past four months. This was where we got to know each other, where we laughed and where I learned to make sense of my role as an anthropologist. Through the glass I can see the Winnipeg winter is showing signs of breaking and the same harsh temperatures and rock hard crunchy sounding ice that characterized December when I began my fieldwork seems to be letting up. I'm sitting here with the intention of reading and preparing my thesis outline and I'm struggling to concentrate as this space represents a kaleidoscope of emotion and adventure.
>
> It is hard for me to think that I won't be meeting any of the women here today and even harder for me to imagine how they must be feeling as I've come to be a friend to many of them and now I'm disappearing, at least in part, into a stranger characterized by a distance that takes me out of their daily routines and conversations as Nigerian and Sierra Leonean young women in Winnipeg.
>
> Since my "field" and my "home" share the same space, I wonder what it will be like to bump into the women from this point on as they are no longer research participants? Will it be awkward or rather a smooth transition into some other kind of friend relationship that is not built around the same type of intimacy, information gathering and research? I really hope the latter (Fieldnotes March 25th, 2011).

Moving away from the "field" was difficult, but I believe this is a result of the relatively strong relationships I formed with the women I worked with over this short period of immersion. The information obtained through hours and hours of participant observation, focus groups and interviews have informed and provided a level of compexity to this thesis, that made writing about what I saw and heard at times rather difficult. This research has been guided by a theoretical framework that establishes sex as socially constructed and with a focus on narrative I have attempted to tease apart the multiple influences from two different social worlds on the sexual subjectivities of these young women. The past hundred or so pages have been about how culture and cultural difference affect the sexual subjectivity of Nigerian and Sierra Leonean young women living in Manitoba. The ways in which sexual norms and consumer culture in Canada affect these young women's ideals and practices of dating, sex, and marriage have also been explored. The everyday lives of Nigerian and Sierra Leonean young women, living in Winnipeg, Manitoba, a prairie city in western Canada are highly complex and are influenced by interacting layers of social relations that are defined at least in part by both "local" or "Canadian" ideas and notions of consumer culture and sexual norms as well as "global" ideas and notions of sex and consumerism from "back home." This thesis also highlights how these Nigerian and Sierra Leonean young women embody and simultaneously produce cultural difference. This small cohort of Nigerian and Sierra Leonean young women are fighting constrainsts and working within cultural norms and understandings each and every day. Other populations and immigrant groups in Canada are existing within similar constraints. However, the gendered constraints that inform

these Nigerian and Sierra Leonean young women's sexual lives, while not entirely unique, still exist and are experienced in particular ways.

The African identity and Canadian identity binary that I have explored within this thesis requires a word of clarification. After reviewing the major findings of this research I have determined that in actuality this binary that I have discussed throughout the thesis, where young women make sense of their sexual subjectivities as African as well as Canadian youth, is much more complicated. Their identities and their sexual subjectivities are also mediated by other discourses and influences. It occurs to me that the binary that I carved out in nuanced ways throughout this thesis may be exagerated within a multicultural setting such as Winnipeg and the need by these young women to maintain Nigerian or Sierra Leonean identities and create spaces of their own. To further explain the point of clarification I am trying to draw out, I would like to turn to an example I used earlier in the thesis. I am referring to the university campus as a contested site where ideas and notions of sex, dating and marriage are explored, experienced and reworked. This site is a space where these two major influences of African sexual norms and culture and Canadian norms and culture merge. It is within these nuanced and embodied interactions where this binary becomes complicated by other influences and discourses which are also having a shaping effect on these young women's sexual subjectivities. Some of these other influences include race, religion and power relations for example.

In this conclusion I will provide a summary of what was discussed in this thesis. I examine the limitations to this research and in particular the limitations to the theoretical

framework I used. I will explain the contribution my research has made to the literature on youth and sexuality as well as introduce further research areas based on new questions that emerged during my research.

The five main chapters in this thesis explored the major areas of investigation that focused on language, sexual practice, perceptions, dating, the media and the body. Language plays a major part in how sexuality is lived out and understood (Cameron and Kulick, 2006). Nigerian and Sierra Leonean young women conceptualize sex in a way that is framed within a discourse that is focused on "no sex before marriage." Sex is largely understood in terms of not only a heterosexual relationship but within a marriage relationship. "Sex" as far as sex acts is predominantly understood as penile-vaginal intercourse and, therefore, oral genital contact does not qualify as "sex" within this population. This belief appears to be consistent with other African and Caribbean cultures including the Latina Girls in Garcia's (2009) study. According to Garcia (2009) Latina girls in the United States considered vaginal penetration as their "first-sex" experience and a range of practices including kissing, masturbation, touching as well as oral sex were considered "messing around" not "sex" (2009: 605). In addition, the belief that "oral sex" is not "sex" also appears to be common in dominant "Western" culture as well, as indicated in a 2005 American sexual health study of young people. According to this study, the way in which sexual education programs purely target "vaginal sex or sex in more general terms" has resulted in a perception by young people that oral sex is not only "less risky," but also "more acceptable," are perhaps some reasons for the predominance of this notion across cultures (Halpern-Felsher et al, 2005: 845). Oral sex was seen by

Nigerian and Sierra Leonean young women as more acceptable because they believe oral sex does not lead to loss of virginity because oral sex is not considered "sex."

There is a code of silence around sex and sexuality that is common across time and space and among different cultures (Curtis 2009). This code of "silence" is a particular reference to the way in which there is no public discourse within these two communitties around sex. Anthropologists who study sexuality are only privy to the "spaces" that their research participants allow them to occupy (or rely on accounts provided by research participants) and since many sex acts remain "private," "silences or gaps" are therefore pervasive in studies involving human sexuality (Curtis, 2009: 181) . For Nigerian and Sierra Leonean young women they told me that a code of silence does exist that governs conversations around sex and sexuality, however in another breath many of the women would share stories of how extremely surveillant their respective Nigerian and Sierra Leonean communitites are and the ways in which gossip around who's sleeping with who is rampant. The way in which this contradiction plays itself out in every day life is useful in explaining how language shapes sexuality. The Nigerian and Sierra Leonean young women are continually negotiating the difference between what they perceive as the dominant Canadian sexual norms and culture and the sexual norms and culture of their respective countries. There is also a way in which each woman makes efforts to present themselves as rule abiding within religious contexts, namely Christianity, defined by ideas of purity, that require them to retain their virginity until marriage. Most of the women attend churches that are part of more evangelical or conservative denominations including, but not limited to Baptist faith communities. The way in which sex and

sexuality is understood and talked about and framed, and the context in which the women normally talk about their own sexual experiences or those of others, influences the decisions each women make each and every day about their sexual lives. Therefore, when the women act outside of these dominant understandings and manifestations of sex and sexuality they are deemed morally inferior to his or her peers. I recall one story a research participant told me about a friend of hers. She shared with me that her friend had told her that she had sex with a man before she left Nigeria and gave several reasons for why. Her friend said that she had sex with him because she said she loved him and she was leaving the country and figured why not? The research participant who told me this story explained that she felt these reasons were absurd to "sleep" with someone and went on to explain further that this particular woman often experiences difficulty finding friends because she has been deemed "easy."

In terms of sexual practice, Nigerian and Sierra Leonean women seek out sexual partners who are from the same country as they are from or are from another African country. When asked, some women shared they may be interested in a "black man" from a Caribbean country. Other important criteria these young women use to find a partner include a preference for Christian men, from the same tribe, who are educated at the university level or who are getting educated at the university level. In almost all cases the Nigerian and Sierra Leonean young women meet men through established family, friends or community connections and not in bars or night clubs in Winnipeg. On occasion these women will go to bars or night clubs and connect with men who they know these established family, friends or community connections that are considered "appropriate"

ways to meet men. These women also seek out men who are anywhere from one year to seven or eight years older and in many ways cannot imagine dating or marrying someone younger than them.

The first main finding from this research involves the influence of Nigerian and Sierra Leonean young women's perceptions of Canadian sexual norms and culture as extremely liberal and "open." This research indicates these understandings are significant influences on the sexual subjectivity of Nigerian and Sierra Leonean women. Many of the women perceived Canadian sexual norms and culture to be "loose," so much that having sex with multiple partners before marriage is viewed by the Nigerian and Sierra Leonean women as not only tolerated but socially and morally acceptable in Canada. The way in which sex and sexuality connects the individual to family, communities, peer groups, the state and beyond became clear to me in my analysis of the way in which these perceptions of Canadian sexual norms and culture by Nigerian and Sierra Leonean women affect their sexual decision making and become important mediating factors in how their own sexuality is understood and lived out every day (Ross and Rapp, 1997).

The Nigerian and Sierra Leonean women are also picking up on the overall image of Canada as "open." I am not suggesting that there is one "Canadian" sexual culture, but there is a dominant image of Canada as "open" that the Nigerian and Sierra Leonean women think about and reflect on. This image of Canada as "open" is reflected in all areas of social life including but not limited to our laws, largely referring to the way in which same-sex marriage is legal in Canada. The media, as reflected in popular (American) T.V. shows such as Jersey Shore, also reinscribe these perceptions of

"Western" culture as sexually promiscuous and lacking morality, and shows how the boundaries of "Canadian" culture are blurred with culture originating in the United States. These perceptions are also the logical outcomes of warnings from community members (largely religious church leaders) and parents that establish Canadian youth as being especially "loose" and represent a potential danger to the established understanding of sex as solely defined in a marriage context in order to be "pure." The emergence of "other intimate socialities" such as "no strings attached," "hook-ups," and "friends with benefits" highlight how the sexual realm is a "contested moral domain" varying across time (Frohlick and Migliardi, 2011: 77). The combination of laws that permit same-sex marriage as well as the emergence of these "other intimate socialities" contribute to an overall image of Canada as "open." As I show in my thesis, peer groups, communities, global influences and particularly the media are three "sites" of discourse where these ideas of Canada as "open" get internalized and reproduced by the Nigerian and Sierra Leonean women. Nigerian and Sierra Leonean women are carving out spaces for themselves that are defined by categories around morals—and a binary between "African" (black) and "Canadian" (white) sexual subjects and citizens. "White" Canadian women's sexual practices and identities appear to be the focus of moralising discourses.

Dating is not a universal kind of experience in Canada (Frohlick and Migliardi 2011), nevertheless dating is a particularly complex realm of Nigerian and Sierra Leonean young women's lives. A second important finding from this thesis research includes the sexual practice of "multiple boyfriends." An important sexual practice that

emerged early on in my fieldwork is the practice of "multiple boyfriends." This practice is similar to the way in which girls on the Eastern Caribbean island of Nevis carry out multiple relationships with several men for the purpose of obtaining tangible goods and services. This type of economic exchange, as described by Curtis (2009) is eroticized. The sexual practice of "multiple boyfriends" that became evident to me during my research in Winnipeg refers to the various relationships between Nigerian and Sierra Leonean women and men from Nigeria, Sierra Leone as well as other African countries. These sexual relationships occur for the purpose of economic exchange whereby women exchange sex for "stuff," goods and services like bus passes, clothes and meals.

A third finding involves the way in which, similar to the findings of anthropologist Debra Curtis with Nevisian young women, there is an element of eroticization where the economic exchange itself within the "multiple boyfriends" practice becomes sexual. More specifically, the sexual practice of "multiple boyfriends" is particularly important because it illuminates the contested nature of their sexual lives and the ways in which they negotiate how to date the "Canadian way" while still incorporating aspects of "traditional" Nigerian and Sierra Leonean sexual culture (as I explain in Chapter four, the "wooing" part) as well as dealing with the desires and needs for consumer goods and everyday items.

A fourth finding is the Nigerian and Sierra Leonean women experience pleasure in ways that are wrapped up in the different ways in which they talk about "feeling good" and "looking good." "Boyfriend" is not presumed to have one meaning in this thesis and neither is "pleasure." "Feeling good" and "looking good" is a source of pleasure for this

population and it is lived out each and every day through the way in which the women spend time getting ready to "look good" and attract men. For these women pleasure goes beyond that purely physical realm and is experienced in a complex way that draws on both notions and practices associated with "feeling good" as well as its interaction with "looking good" and the way in which the women perceive to experience the men competing over them. The interaction where women perceive men competing over them and the efforts made by the women to make the men jealous interact in a dynamic way that brings about pleasure. I argue that for this population, the way pleasure is experienced and understood is connected to both social relations and the body in terms of the way in which sexual subjectivity is produced.

A fifth finding that emerged as an important consideration through my fieldwork was race. I realised early on that race is an important part of how women identify themselves and how they feel about themselves. Nigerian and Sierra Leonean young women in Winnipeg think about themselves and their bodies in terms such as "black girls" and talk about wanting to marry "black guys." For this group of young women, "Canadian" represents "whiteness."

The sixth main finding involves the powerful influence of media and specifically Bollywood movies on the sexual subjectivity of this population. For Nigerian and, to a lesser extent, Sierra Leonean young women their conceptualisations of sexuality as well as their ideas and notions around what it means to be "modern" and "traditional" are worked through during their consumption of Indian films from the Bollywood film industry. Following Larkin, I argue that these films offer a way in which to be modern

without being “Western” (Larkin 2003). The story lines of these Indian films also relate to and offer other ways of dealing with issues around arranged marriages, love, and dating that can be particularly complicated and stressful for young women with particularly conservative religious and cultural values.

A final important finding involves the body. Sexuality can be expressed through language as well as through the body and therefore an analysis of the body is critical. Specifically the practice of “doing hair,” where female friends (and in some cases family members) braid each other’s hair and the spaces that define these conversations and interactions are an intersection of the “global,” the “local,” pleasure and beauty as well as notions of “tradition” and “back home.” Hair products used while “doing hair” are, according to the all the young women I asked, specifically designed for “black girl hair.” The gels, sprays and mousses that are used by these young women while “doing hair” are brought over from their home countries and are not purchased at local hair product supply stores or drug stores in Winnipeg despite being readily available. These products are considered the “real stuff” and there is an authenticity that is associated with these products and all the meanings and notions wrapped up in “back home.” This intimacy between female friends, while “doing hair,” is an intimate experience where the conversations and interactions are erotic. Nigerian and Sierra Leonean women are very much a product of their positioning as members of both social worlds in which they occupy. This practice of “doing hair” is an attempt to make themselves sexually desirable. This allows the women the ability to compete with other women and therefore have men fight over them.

Limitations of my theoretical framework and overall research project:

A discussion of the limitations of this theoretical framework and overall research project is needed. I would like to begin with the social constructionist approach to sexuality that was used throughout this thesis. As mentioned throughout, it is a very useful approach for studying sexuality, especially considering the multiple and interconnected ways in which diasporic youth are able to connect with their "local" and "global" communities. The theoretical framework used in this thesis, that establishes sexuality as social constructed was very useful in addressing my research questions. Firstly, as Nigerian and Sierra Leonean women living in Winnipeg, a prairie city in Western Canada, how does culture and cultural difference affect their sexual subjectivity? The social construction approach to sexuality allows me to answer this question specifically by asking questions that related directly to socio-cultural influences such as varying ideas and meanings associated with school life, community interactions and connections with back home. All of these allow me to understand the multiple influences (both local and global) on these women's lives. Secondly, how do sexual norms and consumer culture in Canada shape African immigrant young women's ideals and practices of love, sex, and marriage?[23] The social construction framework helps me answer this research question by enabling me the ability to focus on questions that are solely based on socio-cultural influences that I have described above. Other biological or cultural influence models that I described at the outset of this thesis would not have been appropriate to ask questions such as these that are heavily based in culturally specific and social circumstances, specifically relating to love, sex and marriage.

This theoretical framework assisted in the analysis of my findings in several ways. The three layers of social life that Ross and Rapp (1997) described and the established understanding of sexuality as socially constructed enabled me the ability to easily structure initial themes (family/peer groups, community and global/international) whereby I was able to break down patterns and commonalities I identified in transcripts and in field notes from participant observation. Moreover, the theoretical framework used in this thesis is not based on essentialist or biological/genetic models and therefore analysing concepts such as race (which is a social construct) became a fluid shift in thinking rather than a completely different line or realm of questioning. Furthermore this social constructionist approach allowed me to analyse the ways in which these Nigerian and Sierra Leonean young women connected to "home" and the ways in which their sexual subjectivity (pleasure, the body) is influenced by their positioning as straddling two social worlds.

However, occasionally there is a way in which this type of analysis can be overly exaggerated to the point where individual decision-making becomes taken for granted as a simple byproduct of larger forces and influences. My attempt to counter this weakness of the social construction framework is evident in my emphasis on the materiality of the body throughout this thesis. In future research I would like to explore embodiment and performance theories in order to better contextualise and make sense of my data as well as strengthen my arguments. In future research I would advise further emphasis on the materiality of the body as well as specific lines of questioning within the interview schedule that ask the young women directly what their motivations are for performing

certain practices or feeling a certain a way. I would then use triangulation to compare these answers with what I observe during participant observation. In order to strengthen this thesis and to account for some of the weaknesses of the social constructionist approach I would turn to other theoretical frameworks such as a feminist theoretical perspective as well as a framework that allows for an analysis that focuses on power. In future research I would like to include Foucault in order think more about power and knowledge in the creation of sexual subjects.

The social construction theoretical framework addresses (albeit partially) the formation of sexual subjectivity through discourses and other social processes. Sexuality is not a discrete, singular part of our lives that can be teased apart from other influences and layers of social life. Sexuality overlaps and intermingles with areas and influences that are multiple and interconnected. The theoretical framework used in this thesis is well suited for approaching the complex and nuanced issues related to and influencing sexual subjectivity and sexuality more generally. While this framework cannot contextualise or help to explain every aspect of sexuality, it can in fullness, make sense of many factors because of how broad this theoretical approach is. For example, when looking at issues of race and sexuality, this framework allows me the ability to understand how they are mutually constructed within social life. Furthermore, this theoretical framework shows how diasporic identity is not essentialist and can be studied through looking at different sites of discourses, for example within peer groups, wider communities and globally.

Another limitation of this research involves my methodology. Methodologically, I was only able to include two Sierra Leonean women and so my data is largely collected

through interviews and participant observation of the majority of the women who were from Nigeria. Practically, the main reason why I was not able to include more than two Sierra Leonean women had a lot to do with the fact that my own social networks were limiting. I was more involved in Nigerian circles in Winnipeg and as a result more of the research participants were members of that group. In future research studies and hopefully over a longer period of time, I would make a more focused effort to become connected with all communities who I am trying to obtain research participants from. I would also do some research into specific ways to reach out to each particular group I am targeting and perhaps designing more than one recruitment strategy based on those findings.

Contributions to scholarship:

This research is important because it builds on feminist theories of heterosexuality. This research highlights the way in which these Nigerian and Sierra Leonean young women in spite of gendered constraints still find ways to experience pleasure and explore a sex life. This research shows the ways in which "proper woman" or "good girls" are able to negotiate discourses and gender and cultural norms in order to still experience pleasure and engage in a sex life. Furthermore, this research contributes to our understanding of erotics within a non-European setting. As such, these findings interrogate the heterosexual couple and bring about new ways of thinking about female-female relationships through erotics within the sexual domain.

This research has made a contribution to the literature on youth and sexuality. This research has brought about new ways of thinking about pleasure as an embodied

experience that goes beyond the physical realm. In addition, this research has also highlighted dating as a particularly complex and important part of youth's lives and has also shown the different ways youth explain and categorise their partners. I have also brought to the forefront contested terms such as "boyfriend" and offered a different way of thinking about these terms and evaluating youth relationships more generally.

This research, to my knowledge, is the first of its kind in Winnipeg and offers some preliminary understandings into the everyday lives of Nigerian and Sierra Leonean women and their sexual subjectivity that may help to inform policy decisions and help to shape sexual health programming. By no means do I suggest that my thesis can possibly provide a complete picture of the lives and experiences of Nigerian and Sierra Leonean sexual subjectivity. It does, however, provide some important partial glimpses and attempts to explore some of the wider influences of Canadian sexual norms and culture, cultural difference and consumer culture on Nigerian and Sierra Leonean sexual subjectivity.

Further research questions could include particular focuses on sexual health and ideas around STI's and HIV AIDS. In addition further research may want to explore what other ways young Nigerian and Sierra Leonean women and also "Canadian" women categorise and think about their sexual partners and relationships. Research on African newcomer youth in Canada is an area within the youth and sexuality literature that is somewhat under-researched and therefore more investigation is important. This is a small, seed study that I hope to use as a launching point to carry out further research through a PhD. This research would build on these findings and through the use of a

similar ethnographic approach would be extended to include "Canadian." It became apparent to me that a larger study would have to be broadened in this way, largely because the intimate ways in which Nigerian and Sierra Leonean young women actively think about their own sexuality requires contextualisation that can only be gained by hearing from more women. Indeed this may seem like a comparison, in part it is, but the larger point is to draw out the nuanced ways and complicated interconnections and relations between the two groups and the ways they influence and affect each other.

Final Thoughts:

Reflecting back on my fieldwork, the analysis and the actual writing of my thesis, I feel that I learned a great deal from the research process. Generally, the research process taught me to be patient and encouraged me to be more attentive to why I feel or act a certain way. This process, which I learned to trust, forced me to rethink many of my own preconceived notions. I became open to thinking about "pleasure," "boyfriends" and about "relationships" more generally in different ways. More specifically, I came to acknowledge the varying and complex ways in which sexuality, in the everyday lives of human beings, is lived out in complex and varying ways. I now view sex and sexuality as a particularly complex realm of people's lives and believe that greater understanding in this area will result in more culturally appropriate and effective sexual health programming. Before beginning this research project, I did not view race as having such a powerful influence on sexuality. I learned that race, in all its manifestations, is a part of each and every one of us, in what we say, what we do, if we "belong" or if we do not. Through the use of field notes I engaged in a writing exercise that brought together my

own personal observations and thoughts with the broader intellectual notions I was grappling with throughout this project. Field notes also provided me another avenue in which to engage with the reflexive analysis that is used throughout this thesis.

My parents moved my brother, sister and I to Canada over a decade ago. I do not think they ever imagined the types of challenges that lay ahead and the time it would take to feel settled and like we "belonged." Reasons for immigrating are numerous, but whether it is a possibility of a life without fear, access to "Western" education, or the promise of a "brighter" future we pick ourselves up and we start over somewhere else. Sexual subjectivity and how it is lived out and experienced everyday is influenced in part by this meaningful positioning as part of two social worlds. Similar to the research process, the act of relocating across the world and settling in a "foreign" place never allows us to stay exactly the same, as one research participant said "It's not like I'm not happy here, it will just never be the same."

Appendix A
Informed Verbal Consent Script:

Project Title: Sexual Transformations and Consumer Culture
African Young Women's Sexuality in Winnipeg

Verbal Informed Consent Script

As you know, my name is Katie Dutfield-Wilms. I am the only researcher on this project. I am a master's student at the University of Manitoba, in the Department of Anthropology. This research is for my thesis as well as for other publications including conference papers and journal articles. This project is attempting to learn more about how sexual norms and consumer culture in Canada shape the ideals and practices of love, sex, and marriage of African young women living in Winnipeg. I want you to know that you only have to participate in this study if you want to. Your participation is entirely voluntary. You do not have to take part at all if you do not want to. If you do decide to participate your involvement will be approximately 2 to 4 hours, depending on if you decide to take part in one or two interviews. In addition, if you do decide to participate in the project and you consent to an interview, you can answer any questions you want to and feel free to omit the ones you do not want to answer.

All those who participate in this research project must be 18 years or older. You do not need to tell me your exact age, but I would appreciate it if you could declare yourself as 18 or older. **Are you 18 years or older?** It is completely your choice if you would like the interview to be audio taped. However, if possible I would appreciate your permission to audio tape the interview. So you are aware no one other than myself and

my advisor, Susan Frohlick will listen to the audio tapes of the interviews. **Do you give permission for the interview to be audio taped?** The only people who will know you participated in this project will be myself, my advisor Dr. Susan Frohlick and the other research participants who you may be interviewed in groups of two or three. Just a reminder that if you do agree to be interviewed in a group of two or three, it is your responsibility to maintain the privacy of your co-participants, both in their identity and in the comments they make. All group interview participants will be reminded of this and therefore your privacy will be maintained by them as well. However, I am happy to interview you alone if that would rather be your preference. Your actual name will not be used. Would you like to provide me with a false name to use instead? Or if you prefer I can assign one to you. Your identity will remain anonymous with the only possible exception of Dr. Susan Frohlick. You can contact me by email or phone if you have any questions at all. You are also able to quit the project at any time and without any kind of fear of repercussions or hard feelings. You do not have to provide a reason or explanation to quit the study and you can leave at any time. If you do want to withdraw from this research project at any time you will have to let me know before the thesis is written at the end of July 2011.

Finally, I would like to stress that the main benefit in your participation will ultimately be in helping to provide information about the challenges facing young African immigrant women in terms of achieving sexual and reproductive health. I am hopeful that this information will be helpful for organizations like the Sexuality Education Resource

Centre of Manitoba (SERC) who do programming for newcomer communities in Winnipeg.

Dr. Susan Frohlick is my advisor on this project and can be contacted through the University of Manitoba Anthropology Department if you have would like to address any concerns or pose any questions. This study has been given approval from the Joint-Faculty Research Ethics Board of the University of Manitoba, a group that ensures research with human subjects is conducted ethically. Here are the contact details for myself, Dr. Susan Frohlick and Maggie Bowman, the Coordinator for Human Ethics at the University of Manitoba:

Please feel free to contact any of the below listed individuals if you have questions or concerns.

Katie Dutfield-Wilms (Researcher)
k.dutfield@gmail.com
(204) 995-8419

Dr. Susan Frohlick (Advisor, Acting Department Head, Anthropology, University of Manitoba)
frohlick@cc.umanitoba.ca
(204) 474-7872 or 474-8999

Maggie Bowman (Coordinator - Human Ethics)

(204) 474-7122

margaret_bowman@umanitoba.ca Please feel free to contact any of us if you have any questions or concerns.

Here is a copy of the script I just read/delivered, it is yours to keep.

With all that in mind, would you like to freely consent to participate in this research project?

Appendix B
Resource Page Given to Research Participants:

Resource Page
Health and Counselling Resources:

Sexuality Education Resouce Centre Manitoba
http://www.serc.mb.ca
Winnipeg: (204) 947-9222
Outside Winnipeg: 1 (800) 452-1957

Klinic Community Health Centre
www.klinic.mb.ca
(204) 784-4090
870 Portage Avenue, Winnipeg

Nine Circles Community Health Centre
www.ninecircles.ca
705 Broadway, Winnipeg
(204) 940-6000

Women's Health Clinic
www.womenshealthclinic.org
Winnipeg: 947-1517
Toll Free: 1 (866) 947-1517
419 Graham Avenue, Unit A, Winnipeg

University of Manitoba Counselling Services Fort Garry Campus
www.umanitoba.ca/counselling
(204) 474-8592
474 University Centre

University of Manitoba Counselling Services Bannatyne Campus
(204) 789-3857
S207 Basic Medical Science Building

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[1] Winnipeg is a medium sized prairie city in the province of Manitoba, Canada. The 2010 population numbers provided by the City of Winnipeg show Winnipeg has a population of 684, 100. (http://www.winnipeg.ca/cao/pdfs/population.pdf)

[2] Meg is a pseudonym, as are all of the names in this thesis. All of the specific details relating to the research participants themselves are factually accurate, however some have been altered slightly to protect their identities.

[3] Here I am referring to a larger body of literature referred to as "whiteness studies" that emerged in the late 1990s (Shohat and Stam, 2003: 3). By briefly drawing on this literature, I am illustrating the need for an analysis that is in part based on intersecting points of race and sexuality. At several points in this thesis race, as it relates to sexuality, is examined in greater depth.

[4] The informal interviewing approach involves less direct control by the interviewer, allowing the research participant the ability to direct the flow of the conversation. The interviewer asks questions that pertain directly to what she or he finds pertinent and in some cases asks the research participant for clarification. Dewalt and Dewalt describe informal interviewing as the situation where the, "...researcher follows the lead of the participants but asks occasional questions to focus the topic or to clarify points that she/ he does not understand (2002: 122).

[5] Triangulation is one way in which anthropologists obtain a more comprehensive understanding of a research participant's life or particular issue. For example, an anthropologist might compare different sources of information such as how a participant acts and what a participant says. Often there are contradictions and new questions that emerge which offer the anthropologist other areas to examine further. According to Dewalt and Dewalt, triangulation involves the way in which "insights gained through participant observation can be cross-checked through the appropriate use of other methods" (2002: 102). Most importantly triangulation offers a way in which to examine validity.

[6] The inductive or "open" coding method functions in a way that allows the researcher to be "...grounded in the data and to allow understanding to emerge from close study of the texts" (Bernard, 2006: 492). The nuts and bolts of this approach involves the researcher searching out common themes, words or patterns in interviews and participant observation.

[7] By "open" I am referring to the overall dominant image of Canada as "open" that the Nigerian and Sierra Leonean women in this thesis pick up on. The "openness" that these young women speak about is in part a reference to the Canadian laws that allow same-sex marriage. This perception is an important mediating factor in the decisions these Nigerian and Sierra Leonean young women make regarding their sexuality. This is explored in further detail in chapter three.

[8] "Black sexuality" is a reference to the way in which Nigerian and Sierra Leonean young women in Winnipeg think about their sexual bodies and subjectivities (as "black girls") that are based on notions of race.

[9] "Sexual biography" is the terminology Garcia (2009) uses to express the overall sexual experience and narrative of the "Latina girls" she interviewed.

[10] Kanu's (2008) article "Educational Needs and Barriers for African Refugees in Manitoba" outlines the specific challenges involved for African refugees in Manitoba with particular reference to access and complications around education.

[11] The way in which consumer culture is understood and used throughout this thesis involves its linkage to consumption and the ways in which "consumption pervades our everyday lives and structures our everyday practices. [And the way in which] the values, meanings, and costs of what we consume have become an increasingly important part of our social and personal experiences" (Goodman and Cohen, 2004: 1). Consumer culture is used to interrogate the ways in which the desire for goods and services influences the ways in which the sexual subjectivity of Nigerian and Sierra Leonean young women is produced. Consumer culture, according to Curtis (2009) "has become a part of the social context in which sexuality and economics constitute each other" (2009: 10). Similar to Curtis' comment of Nevisian society, consumer culture and a desire for certain goods and services affect how the sexual subjectivities of Nigerian and Sierra Leonean young women are produced.

[12] "Hollywood" invokes American, "Bollywood" involves a reference to movies from India, and Nollywood is referring to the Nigerian films industry. Chapter five will examine this more fully. Work by Larkin (1997, 2003) on the popular consumption of Bollywood movies in Nigeria illuminates the way in which Nigerians are attempting to, through their choice of movies, move away from American ideas and ways of life and interact with an "Indian" cultural and historical model and way of life that is similar to their own, while at the same time allows for an ascription to "modernity".

[13] According to the official website of Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie (http://www.l3.ulg.ac.be/adichie/) she was born in Enugu, Nigeria on the 15th of September, 1977. Adichie's parents are part of the Igbo tribe and had six children of which Adichie was the fifth. A well known novelist and speaker, Adichie is the author of Purple Hibiscus (2003), Half of a Yellow Sun (2006) and a collection of short stories called The Thing around Your Neck (2009). Adichie has achieved significant recognition and received many awards, for example the Orange Broadband Prize for Fiction (2007) and a MacArthur Foundation Fellowship (2008).

[14] "Wooing" is an important part of the sexual practice of "multiple boyfriends." "Multiple boyfriends" are explored in Chapter Four.

[15] By "open" I am referring to the overall dominant image of Canada as "open" that the Nigerian and Sierra Leonean women in this thesis pick up on. The "openness" that these young women speak about is in part a reference to the Canadian laws that allow same-sex marriage. This perception is an important mediating factor in the decisions these Nigerian and Sierra Leonean young women make regarding their sexuality.

[16] "Mom" is the term Wilma uses when talking about her Mother.

[17] By "reflexive process," I am referring to the way in which "social researchers [like myself] are part of the social world they study" and this has implications for their research (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007: 14). Namely, the reflexive process accepts that beliefs and ideologies of the researcher are constructed by the social worlds in which they occupy.

[18] Jersey Shore, an MTV reality television show.

[19] Here I am making a reference to the anecdotal evidence from "Canadian" women that suggests that they do not feel comfortable asking out men and largely do not ask out men as a result. It appears that largely speaking, men do the "asking out."

[20] The specific details around Hannah's family make up will not be provided so as to ensure her anonymity is maintained.

[21] "In flux" is a reference to the way in which Curtis describes the Nevisian codification of sexual pleasure: "It seems equally clear that on Nevis such codification of sexual pleasure is very much in flux" (Curtis, 2009:149).

[22] "Lively" and "powerful" were a few of the words research participants used themselves to describe Bollywood movies when they were asked what they liked about them.

[23] The way in which consumer culture is understood and used throughout this thesis involves its linkage to consumption and the ways in which "consumption pervades our everyday lives and structures our everyday practices. [And the way in which] the values, meanings, and costs of what we consume have become an increasingly important part of our social and personal experiences" (Goodman and Cohen, 2004: 1). Consumer culture is used to interrogate the ways in which the desire for goods and services influences the ways in which the sexual subjectivity of Nigerian and Sierra Leonean young women is produced. Consumer culture, according to Curtis (2009) "has become a part of the social context in which sexuality and economics constitute each other" (2009: 10). Similar to Curtis' comment of Nevisian society, consumer culture and a desire for certain goods and services affect how the sexual subjectivities of Nigerian and Sierra Leonean young women are produced.