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## **An interrogation of the impact of gender stereotypes on the perpetuation of child sexual abuse**

**A mini-dissertation submitted by:**

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**in partial fulfilment of the requirements for a Master of Philosophy degree in  
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at The University of Pretoria**

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## **Dedication**

This work is dedicated to my departed dear mother Perseverance Mashamba, who was promoted to glory some seventeen years ago.

Mama, you were my biggest cheerleader. You always pushed me to be the best and to portray the best version of me. Even when I wasn't the easiest child to raise, you still sought out my best qualities and never gave up on me. Although you were taken from me too soon, it is the presence of you around me in spirit that gives me the strength to carry on and to live up to your wish; to always work hard, to be kind, and best of all, to be true to myself.

May your beautiful soul forever rest in peace.



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Last but not least; I give thanks to God Almighty, the Creator of all things, for giving me life, wisdom and strength. I would not have been able to complete this without His guidance.



## Declaration of originality

I, **Hanifa Mufaro Gutu**, with Student No. **15200672** declare as follows:

- 1 I understand what plagiarism entails and am aware of the University's policy in this regard.
- 2 This mini-dissertation is my own original work. Where someone else's work has been used (whether from a printed source, the internet or any other source) due acknowledgment has been given and reference made according to the requirements of the Faculty of Law.
- 3 I did not make use of another student's work and submit it as my own.
- 4 I did not allow anyone to copy my work with the aim of presenting it as his or her own work.

Signature of Student:

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Date: October 2016



## Table of Contents

Dedication .....	2
Acknowledgements .....	3
Declaration of originality .....	4
Abstract .....	7
Chapter 1 .....	8
Introduction .....	8
1.1 Background of the study .....	8
1.2 Problem statement.....	12
1.3 Research questions .....	13
1.4 Rationale.....	13
1.5 Purpose of the study .....	14
1.5.1 Objectives.....	14
1.6 Scope of the study .....	14
1.7 Limitations.....	14
1.8 Research methodology .....	15
1.9 Chapter outline .....	17
Chapter 2.....	19
Theoretical Framing.....	19
2.1 Introduction.....	19
2.2 An overview of relevant child sexual abuse theories .....	20
2.2.1 Seduction theory .....	20
2.2.2 Theory of attachment .....	21
2.2.3 Feminist theory.....	23
2.2.4 Theory of hegemonic masculinity .....	24
2.2.4.1 Application of the theory of hegemonic masculinities .....	25
2.2.5 Theory of social learning .....	26
2.2.5.1 Application of the theory of social learning .....	26
2.2.6 Child molesters' implicit theories.....	26
2.2.6.1 Application of the two child molesters' implicit theories .....	27
2.3 Conclusion .....	28
Chapter 3.....	29
Unpacking gender stereotypes .....	29
3.1 Introduction .....	29
3.2 What is gender?.....	29
3.3 What are stereotypes? .....	33
3.4 Gender stereotypes: What is their foundation and what perpetuates them? .....	36
3.4.1 How culture breeds gender stereotypes.....	39
3.4.2 Media's drive on gender stereotypes.....	42
3.5 Conclusion .....	43
Chapter 4.....	45
Gender stereotypes and the spread of child sexual abuse.....	45
4.1 Introduction.....	45
4.2 Gender stereotypes and child sexual abuse by female perpetrators .....	46
4.3 Gender stereotypes and the psychological development of boys, in view of their masculinity and sexuality .....	51
4.3.1 Boys as victims of sexual abuse .....	52
4.3.2 Boys who become child sexual abusers in their adult life.....	55
4.4 Conclusion .....	58
Chapter 5.....	59



An interrogation of the impact of gender stereotypes on the perpetuation of child sexual abuse:  
A Mini-Dissertation by Hanifa M. Gutu (15200672)

International and regional human rights law on gender stereotypes.....	59
5.1 Introduction.....	59
5.2. International human rights law addressing gender stereotypes.....	59
5.3 Regional human rights law addressing gender stereotypes .....	61
5.4 Domestication of international and regional human rights instruments.....	62
5.5 An analysis of the measures taken by South Africa and Zimbabwe to address child sexual abuse.....	64
5.5.1 Zimbabwe's report .....	64
5.5.2 South Africa's report.....	68
5.6 Conclusion .....	73
Chapter 6.....	74
Conclusions and recommendations.....	74
6.1 Introduction .....	74
6.2 Society's role in 'aiding' child sexual abuse.....	75
6.3 The law on gender stereotypes .....	77
6.4 Recommendations .....	77
References .....	82

## Abstract

*Child sexual abuse is a violation of children's rights to be protected from all forms of violence, exploitation and abuse. This is provided for by the Convention on the Rights of a Child (CRC) and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC). The CRC in Article 2, specifies that all children are to enjoy the rights provided in the Convention without discrimination on the grounds of sex among other things.<sup>1</sup> Similarly, Article 3 of the ACRWC also provides for non-discrimination in the enjoyment of the rights stipulated in the Charter for all children.<sup>2</sup> It is the reason why this study focuses on the sexual abuse experiences of the boy child, because for such a long time, focus has been on addressing sexual abuse for girls. On the other hand, the study seeks to balance its interrogation of child sexual abuse by looking at it from two angles. It looks at the experiences of boys as victims of sexual abuse and boys who grow into adult perpetrators of child sexual abuse.*

*Various studies on child sexual abuse have concluded that boys constitute a very small percentage of child sexual abuse victims. They also claim that men make up the largest number of sexual abusers, while women abusers are close to non-existent. This information comes from years of study, and is mostly based on evidence from reported cases of child sexual abuse. However, this study found that there are reasonable grounds to believe that most cases of boy child sexual abuse go unreported. Similarly, most cases of female child abusers either go unreported or undetected due to gender stereotypes. The research also found that there is a possible link between gender stereotypes and the reason behind men being more responsible for the abuse of children. It explored various gender stereotypes that society has accepted as normal and how they possibly impact the psychological development of young boys, leading to them developing negative sexual attitudes as they grow older.*

*By analysing gender stereotypes and interrogating their role in the spread of child sexual abuse, the aim is to highlight them as a threat to human rights. Generally, gender stereotypes cultivate the discrimination of individuals who do not conform to the normative standards that society uses as a yardstick to measure one's 'appropriateness'. The study gives a brief overview of some of the provisions found in international and regional human rights law on gender stereotypes that can be used to address them. This is with a view to not only eradicate child sexual abuse, but to promote non-discrimination and tolerance among human beings.*

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<sup>1</sup> Art 2 CRC.

<sup>2</sup> Art 3 ACRWC.

# Chapter 1

## Introduction

### 1.1 Background of the study

Child sexual abuse, otherwise known as childhood sexual abuse, is a widely researched subject. Research has demonstrated that child sexual abuse has been in existence for a long time and it occurs across all cultural, societal and social backgrounds.<sup>3</sup> It is neither isolated nor periodic but rather a complicated global phenomenon resulting from the interaction of human beings in various settings; ranging from families and communities, to society at large.<sup>4</sup> However, in Africa discussing child sexual abuse that occurs in the child's own home has been particularly difficult.<sup>5</sup> This is due to a widespread myth that it is a recent, rare and unorthodox phenomenon brought about by "insidious forces of modernity, 'foreign influences' and rapid social change." It is virtually seen as "un-African."<sup>6</sup>

It is also quite problematic that there are various interpretations of child sexual abuse, based on how different cultures define a child and the actual act the 'child' is subjected to.<sup>7</sup> Child sexual abuse is widely defined as sexual kissing, genital fondling, oral, vaginal or anal penetrative sex that is performed on a child by an older person or someone in a position of authority for the latter's personal enjoyment.<sup>8</sup>

The definition of child sexual abuse also varies according to whether force was used or whether the perpetrator coerced the child into the act.<sup>9</sup> If coercion was used, the child's age will determine if the act was a crime, based on the country's legal age of consent. If force is used, it becomes rape regardless of the child's age.<sup>10</sup> If a child under the legal age of consent is coerced into having sex, it is called statutory rape;

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<sup>3</sup> N Pereda *et al* (2009), "The prevalence of child sexual abuse in community and student samples: A meta-analysis", *Clinical psychology review*, 29, (4), 329.

<sup>4</sup> As above.

<sup>5</sup> K Lalor (2004), "Child sexual abuse in sub-Saharan Africa: a literature review". *Child abuse & neglect*, 28(4), 440.

<sup>6</sup> As above.

<sup>7</sup> A Armstrong, 'Consent and compensation: The sexual abuse of girls in Zimbabwe' in W Ncube (1998) *Law, Culture, tradition & children's rights*, 129.

<sup>8</sup> MA Hidalgo *et al*, (2015) "The impact of childhood gender expression on childhood sexual abuse and psychopathology among young men who have sex with men", *Child abuse and neglect* 46, 104.

<sup>9</sup> A Armstrong, (n 7 above).

<sup>10</sup> As above.



which carries a lesser sentence than actual rape.<sup>11</sup>

While the legal framework relies on age to determine someone's maturity, the African society often refers to one's physical development, capability as well as life experience to determine their maturity.<sup>12</sup> For example, if a person as young as 13, who has reached puberty, conceives a child, they automatically become an adult and therefore become fit for marriage.<sup>13</sup> As such, addressing child sexual abuse cases becomes more challenging in countries with a dual legal system because customary law, will often conflict with formal law.

The discrepancy in the interpretation of childhood and what constitutes child sexual abuse makes it difficult to apply a universal 'rule' against the sexual abuse of children.<sup>14</sup> The CRC does not provide a clear-cut definition of what constitutes sexual abuse. However, it does define a child and mentions that all children should be protected from exploitation and sexual abuse in article 34.<sup>15</sup> The problem is that the CRC assumes that there is a universal definition of a child and what sexual abuse is; which is not the case.<sup>16</sup> This challenge resonates with the infamous debate on the cultural relativism of human rights. Cultural relativists believe that human rights should be culture-specific not universal.<sup>17</sup> This debate will however not be explored here as it is outside the scope of the study.

In spite of its varying definitions, child sexual abuse remains a serious human rights issue. It poses various consequences to the general development of children. It also violates the universal right of a child to be protected from all forms of sexual exploitation and sexual abuse as stipulated in Article 34 of the CRC.<sup>18</sup> The violation of

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<sup>11</sup> A Armstrong , (n 7 above).

<sup>12</sup> As above.

<sup>13</sup> See C Himonga, 'The right of the child to participate in decision making-a perspective from Zambia in W. Ncube (1998) *Law, Culture, tradition & children's rights*.

<sup>14</sup> See G E Wyatt & S D Peters, (1986). Issues in the definition of child sexual abuse in prevalence research. *Child abuse & neglect*, 10(2), 231-240.

<sup>15</sup> A Armstrong, (n 7 above).

<sup>16</sup> As above.

<sup>17</sup> See J, Donnelly (1984), "Cultural relativism and universal human rights". *Human Rights Quarterly*, 6(4), 400-419, J Donnelly (2007), "The relative universality of human rights". *Human Rights Quarterly*, 29(2), 281-306 and JA, Cobbah (1987), "African values and the human rights debate: An African perspective". *Human Rights Quarterly*, 309-331.

<sup>18</sup> Art 34 CRC.

this right often creates a chain reaction of rights violations for the child. This includes a violation of the child's right to education and health among others.

One of the widely researched areas in the effects of child sexual abuse is how it can affect one's psychological soundness.<sup>19</sup> There is a general consensus among researchers that children who experience sexual abuse, especially of a penetrative nature, suffer numerous developmental problems.<sup>20</sup> These include psychological problems that lead to behavioural and sexual disorders, and sometimes even mental health problems.<sup>21</sup> It is also suggested that most child abuse victims turn out to be abusers of children when they themselves are older<sup>22</sup>; creating a never-ending cycle of child sexual abuse.

Despite child sexual abuse having been studied extensively, there still remains little research on the sexual abuse of children by women.<sup>23</sup> This suggests some preconceived underlying attitudes, or rather perceptions, by scholars and researchers, on the profiles of child sexual abuse perpetrators. Studies on perceptions and myths around child sexual abuse have unveiled a link between these myths and perceptions and the impact of the act on victims as well as judicial proceedings concerning the matter.<sup>24</sup> Such perceptions include the belief that most offenders of rape commit the crime due to high sexual desire.<sup>25</sup> According to McGee *et al*, this is one of the most commonly endorsed myths among the prevalent myths and perceptions on rape and child sexual abuse.<sup>26</sup> Another commonly endorsed myth is the belief that women have a lower sex drive than men, hence are less likely to be sexual abusers.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> See DM Fergusson *et al* (2013), 'Childhood sexual abuse and adult developmental outcomes: Findings from a 30- year longitudinal study in New Zealand'. *Child Abuse & Neglect*, 37(9), 664-674.

<sup>20</sup> See MA Hidalgo *et al* n 8 above, see also DM Fergusson *et al* (n 19 above); S Dinwiddie *et al* (2000), 'Early sexual abuse and lifetime psychopathology: a co-twin-control study', *Psychological medicine*, 30(01), 41-52 and M C, Cutajar *et al* (2010), 'Psychopathology in a large cohort of sexually abused children followed up to 43 years', *Child abuse & neglect*, 34(11), 813-822.

<sup>21</sup> As above.

<sup>22</sup> DM Fergusson *et al* (n 19 above), 671.

<sup>23</sup> MS Denov (2003), 'The myth of innocence: Sexual scripts and the recognition of child sexual abuse by female perpetrators', *The Journal of sex research*, 303.

<sup>24</sup> H McGee *et al* (2011), 'Rape and child sexual abuse: what beliefs persist about motives, perpetrators, and survivors.' *Journal of interpersonal violence*, 3588.

<sup>25</sup> As above.

<sup>26</sup> As above.

<sup>27</sup> MS Denov, (n 23 above) 312.

Some of the possible reasons for the under-representation of female sex offending in official statistics given in a study by Denov were “traditional sexual scripts” which dismiss the possibility of women carrying out any acts of sexual violence.<sup>28</sup> This is because of the belief that femininity entails protectiveness, care, and non-sexuality among other things.<sup>29</sup> Other reasons cited include sex role stereotypes that place the burden of having to meet society’s expectations of masculinity on men.<sup>30</sup> Such expectations are that men should be domineering and strong, and at times even forceful.<sup>31</sup> These are the expectations that are referred to, in this study, as gender stereotypes.

Gender stereotypes, such as those named above, can lead to the underreporting of boy children’s sexual abuse. This can then result in them lacking redress; leading to the manifestation of cyclical child sexual abuse cases. Cyclical child sexual abuse cases refer to the ‘victim-turned-abuser’ situation. This is whereby victims of child sexual abuse grow into child sexual abusers as they get older. In addition, gender stereotypes could actually be one of the biggest contributors to the perpetuation of child sexual abuse since they are responsible for some of the psychological development of the same boys who become abusers when they grow into men.<sup>32</sup>

Further to highlighting how the boy child is being forgotten in the fight against child sexual abuse due to gender stereotypes, this research will explore the role of these stereotypes in the creation of abusive attitudes in young boys due to patriarchal practices.

The study of the relationship between gender and child sexual abuse is not a new subject. There has been various research to that effect<sup>33</sup>. However, most studies only

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<sup>28</sup> MS Denov, (n 23 above), 308.

<sup>29</sup> As above.

<sup>30</sup> As above.

<sup>31</sup> As above.

<sup>32</sup> See CL Martin *et al* (2002), ‘Cognitive theories of early gender development’ *Psychological Bulletin* 128 (6), 903-933.

<sup>33</sup> See C Maynard & M Wiederman (1997), “Undergraduate students' perceptions of child sexual abuse: Effects of age, sex, and gender-role attitudes,” *Child Abuse & Neglect*, 21(9), 833-844; SE Ullman & HH Filipas (2005), “Gender differences in social reactions to abuse disclosures, post-abuse coping, and PTSD of child sexual abuse survivors.” *Child abuse & neglect*, 29(7), 767-782; and LM Blain *et al* (2010), “Gender differences in recovery from posttraumatic stress disorder: A critical review,” *Aggression and Violent Behavior*, 15(6), 463-474.

go as far as highlighting how gender and sexual orientation can determine one's vulnerability and, or their treatment, after making allegations of having been victimised. There is relatively little written about the role that gender stereotypes play in the psychological development of children as they grow and how this ultimately influences the development of their sexual attitudes; especially with respect to boy children. It is noteworthy that previous researchers have pointed out the role of gender in the perpetration of child sexual abuse. However, there is need to analyse not only gender but also gender stereotypes' role in influencing the many perceptions about child sexual abuse and consequently the spread of the act.

Among those that have attempted to touch on the subject of gender stereotypes and child sexual abuse is Gartner. He suggests that due to masculine gender expectations, boys are pressured into believing that they cannot be victims because they are supposed to be initiators of sex.<sup>34</sup> He adds that boys are encouraged to be resilient, and not too emotional; something that society uses to define masculinity.<sup>35</sup> All of these factors leave the boy child at risk of being abused and suffering in silence or even asserting that they were not abused or hurt by claiming that they were in control of the situation.<sup>36</sup>

Based on Gartner's observations, this study delves deeper into the interrogation of gender stereotypes in order to explore the various ways in which they impact the spread of child sexual abuse.

## **1.2 Problem statement**

Boy children are being neglected in the pursuit of protection for children from child sexual abuse. This is due to common practices and beliefs by society which emphasize on the sex role differences of men and women. These differences, whether real or imagined, are what pressures people to want to align themselves with specific expectations that society has prescribed for each sex. This has consequences because, instead of treating every individual as a unique person, society has created

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<sup>34</sup> R B Gartner (2011), 'Talking about sexually abused boys, and the men they become' <https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/psychoanalysis-30/201101/talking-about-sexually-abused-boys-and-the-men-they-become> Retrieved on 08/08/2016.

<sup>35</sup> As above.

<sup>36</sup> As above.



a 'one-size-fits-all' sort of label for groups of people. In this context, it is for men and women respectively. It is due to these labels that most cases of the sexual abuse of boys have gone unreported, leading to the belief that boys suffer little sexual abuse, and that women are generally non-perpetrators of sexual offenses.

Gender stereotypes are also often linked to sexuality in a manner that creates expectations for one to act a certain way to attract the opposite sex. There is little emphasis on same-sex attraction. This tends to negate the possibility of boys suffering sexual abuse from their male counterparts. On the other hand, these stereotypes could also breed negative attitudes in boys. Such attitudes can make them feel more superior to girls. As a result, they can grow into men with a sense of entitlement to exercise their will over others, especially those weaker than them; like women and children.

### **1.3 Research questions**

#### **Main question**

How do gender stereotypes influence the perpetuation of child sexual abuse?

#### **Sub questions**

- I) What are gender stereotypes and how does society perpetuate them?
- II) To what extent do gender stereotypes influence the different treatment given to the boy child in comparison to the girl?
- III) What effect does this different treatment have on the spread of child sexual abuse?
- IV) What provisions are there in the law to address gender stereotypes?

### **1.4 Rationale**

While criminalising child sexual abuse through laws such as rape and statutory rape laws helps to bring the perpetrators to justice, as well as to reduce the crime, the subject is too broad to rely on the legal framework alone. There is need to employ a multidisciplinary perspective such as the gender perspective. This will enrich the study of child sexual abuse by incorporating other disciplines such as sociology, psychology and anthropology, among others, to unravel some of the underlying causes of the problem that are not so evident at first glance.



## 1.5 Purpose of the study

The aim of this study was to highlight how gender stereotypes could be aiding the spread of child sexual abuse by masking boy child sexual abuse cases. It was also to explore the role of gender stereotypes in contributing to the development of negative attitudes in boys; that can possibly influence them into becoming child sexual abusers as adults.

### 1.5.1 Objectives

- To synthesize and critically analyse literature across various disciplines such as gender studies, psychology, sociology and anthropology *inter alia*, in order to make a unique interpretation that unearths how society could be unknowingly fuelling child sexual abuse through norms, myths and beliefs such as gender stereotypes.
- To emphasize the need to create a balance in the protection of children from sexual abuse and not discriminate them based on their gender.
- To encourage a change of perceptions on gender roles in order to achieve a more tolerant society, while contributing to the enhancement of knowledge and research on child sexual abuse.

## 1.6 Scope of the study

The study focuses on child sexual experiences of the boy child. It makes reference to gender stereotypes in the African context; focusing particularly on Zimbabwe and South Africa, although reference to other African countries is made. Where reference to silence is made with regards to child victims of sexual abuse, the study is limited to only those children who are able to communicate either by speech, sign language or other alternative means of communication.

## 1.7 Limitations

The study only referred to secondary data due to the following reasons:

- (i) time and budget constraints;
- (ii) the researcher is not trained and sensitised to have direct contact with children who have suffered sexual abuse.

However, the researcher strived to collect information from a wide and diverse range of sources in order to provide a balanced report. This arguably provides a good basis for the conceptualization of the problem. Future researchers can use the findings in

this study to do follow-up empirical studies in order to establish truths based on concrete evidence.

## 1.8 Research methodology

The study was in form of a desk review; with an analytical and exploratory research design, based on a sociological perspective. A desk review has been defined by Kothari as consisting of the gathering of information from secondary sources such as books, journals, press, the internet, analytical reports and other publications.<sup>37</sup> For the purpose of this study, a meta-synthesis was conducted. Scriber *et al* define meta-synthesis as the “bringing together and breaking down of findings, examining them, discovering essential features and, in some way, combining phenomena into a transformed whole”.<sup>38</sup>

Meta-synthesis is usually used to analyse qualitative data in order to find common views/arguments and differing ones, in order to formulate a unique interpretation of a subject/topic.<sup>39</sup> A meta-synthesis differs from a meta-analysis in that it can result in “new interpretations of research”; which may lead to the development of new theories; whereas the later is used to “aggregate findings to establish ‘truths’”.<sup>40</sup> As such a meta-synthesis was identified as the best method for this study because of its establishment as a good method for generating new insights. By bringing together various interpretations from previous research found in literature, highlighting common themes and differences, it helped to strengthen the researcher’s interpretation of the subject of child sexual abuse and gender stereotypes.

A conventional literature search using defined search terms was conducted electronically on Google Scholar, government websites, newspapers and over the following databases:

- Web of Science;
- Ebsco Host;
- ProQuest;
- Taylor & Francis Group;

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<sup>37</sup> CR Kothari, (2004) *Research methodology: Methods and techniques*, 10.

<sup>38</sup> R Schreiber et al (1997). ‘Qualitative meta-analysis’. *Completing a qualitative project: Details and dialogue*, 314.

<sup>39</sup> A Barker (2013). ‘Meta-synthesis’. Retrieved on 01/08/2016 from <https://abbarker.wordpress.com/2013/04/25/meta-synthesis/>

<sup>40</sup> As above.



- PsycInfo;
- Springer; and
- Wildcat.

The researcher used the following criteria as a basis for the inclusion and exclusion of journal articles:

- Peer-reviewed, open access English articles published between 1980 and 2016;
- Both quantitative and qualitative studies;
- Both empirical and secondary studies.

For Chapter 4, an initial Google Scholar search using terms such as “sexual abuse of the boy child”, “child sexual abuse by female perpetrators”, “gender stereotypes and child sexual abuse” brought forward 177 500 results, of which only 56 papers were deemed relevant based on a title and abstract scan. From the 56, only 22 were chosen after removing duplicates and using the inclusion and exclusion criteria for screening.

After the Google Scholar search, a bibliography scan of the selected articles was carried out to widen the base of literature, using the above-named databases to locate the relevant sources. In order to augment the electronic search, the researcher employed a manual search for literature through the use of the university library where books and journals on gender and sexual assault were consulted.

**Table 1: Electronic literature search terms employed for the study**

<b>Research Question</b>	How do gender stereotypes influence the perpetuation of child sexual abuse?			
<b>Concept</b>	Child sexual abuse	Gender	Gender Stereotypes	Psychological development





<b>Synonyms/Related Term</b>	Childhood sexual abuse,  Child sexual assault,  Child sexual exploitation,  Child molestation, Statutory rape	Sex	Sex role stereotypes,  Sex stereotypes	Personal development
<b>Broader search terms</b>	Female child sexual abusers,  Male child sexual abusers,  Sodomy,  Incest	Social Identity,	Culture,  Society,  Media	Child behaviour,  Child development,
<b>Narrower search terms</b>	Father-son incest,  Mother-son incest	Sexuality	Femininity,  Masculinity	Cognitive development,  Emotional development  Sexual development

*Table 1: An adaptation of a model for conducting meta-synthesis originally done by A Barker 2013 (See footnote 39 above)*

## 1.9 Chapter outline

The mini-dissertation is structured as follows:

### Chapter 1- Introduction

The chapter pulls the reader in on the background of the study, main purpose and the justification to carry out the study, problem statement, research questions, objectives, scope of the study and the methodology.

### Chapter 2- Theoretical framework

A brief outline of the theories employed in the study is given in this chapter. This is after a discussion of some of the theories that have been used in past child sexual abuse research.

### **Chapter 3- Unpacking gender stereotypes**

This chapter discusses the various understandings of the word gender and consequently gender stereotypes. It zooms in on some of the gender stereotypes that have relevance to the subject of the sexual abuse of boy children and also the creation of negative sexual attitudes in boys.

### **Chapter 4- Gender stereotypes and the spread of child sexual abuse**

This chapter serves to respond to the research questions given in Chapter 1. It builds up on the background of the study given above to elaborate the role of gender stereotypes in the perpetuation of child sexual abuse.

### **Chapter 5- International and regional human rights law on gender stereotypes**

The Chapter discusses some of the provisions found in international and regional human rights instruments that address gender stereotypes. It briefly highlights how these have been incorporated into the domestic legislation of South Africa and Zimbabwe. It also gives a brief overview and critique of some of the measures that the two countries report to have taken to address child sexual abuse in their state reports to the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child. This is to identify some strengths and weaknesses; as well as opportunities for addressing gender stereotypes in the fight against child sexual abuse.

### **Chapter 6-Conclusions and recommendations**

This last chapter draws up some conclusions and recommendations from the findings of the research. Suggestions for future research are also highlighted.

## Chapter 2

### Theoretical Framing

#### 2.1 Introduction

Different disciplines define theory differently. The definition of theory can be as simple as ‘opinion’ or as detailed as ‘a description of a particular scope of knowledge which details how things work in a particular subject’.<sup>41</sup> The difference in the two however, is that the earlier cannot be used for academic purposes. It is too simple and lacks verification. Anyone can have an opinion, but for an opinion to be considered as a theory that can be used academically it has to go through some kind of testing that can bring forth supporting evidence.<sup>42</sup>

According to Dubin, “a theory tries to make sense out of the observable world by ordering the relationships among elements that constitute the theorist’s focus of attention in the real world.”<sup>43</sup> This definition is supported by Ward & Keenan who assert that knowledge starts to be organized into theories from an early age, to develop an understanding of the world.<sup>44</sup> As a result one starts to form a perspective about their social environment and expectations, and possibly to foretell the future.<sup>45</sup> This observation however tends to point towards ‘an opinion-kind-of-theory’ because it describes perspective and sometimes perspective is not the reality.

Swanson & Chermack’s definition is more suitable for academic purposes. They suggest that a theory should have limited assumptions, should be precise, applicable across many real-life situations, and most importantly verifiable among other things.<sup>46</sup> With this definition in mind, this chapter will explore some of the common theories to have been used in child sexual abuse studies and briefly highlight their weaknesses and strengths. It will indicate which theories have been used for framing this study and why.

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<sup>41</sup> RA Swanson & TJ Chermack (2013). *Theory building in applied disciplines*. Berrett-Koehler Publishers, 6.

<sup>42</sup> As above.

<sup>43</sup> R Dubin (1978) *Theory Building*. Philpapers.org, 26

<sup>44</sup> T Ward & T Keenan (1999). ‘Child molesters’ implicit theories’. *Journal of interpersonal violence*, 14(8), 821-838.

<sup>45</sup> As above.

<sup>46</sup> Swanson & Chermack (n 41 above).

## 2.2 An overview of relevant child sexual abuse theories

Sexual abuse in general has been analysed through various theoretical lenses, mainly from sociology and psychology. There is a common tendency however, by scholars, to emphasize the vulnerability of girls and women. Below is a discussion of some of the most commonly referred child sexual abuse theories and how they have been historically applied. Theories used to frame this study are also discussed.

### 2.2.1 Seduction theory

The seduction theory is what pioneered the theoretical knowledge base for child sexual abuse.<sup>47</sup> It was formulated by Sigmund Freud, who is famous for his use of psychoanalysis,<sup>48</sup> which he developed as a result of his clinical work with women who purported to have been sexually abused in their childhood, by their fathers.<sup>49</sup> The seduction theory basically purported that sexual abuse during infancy was the reason behind his patients' hysteria and other psychological problems.<sup>50</sup>

Freud's seduction theory, however, did not receive much acknowledgement and he soon ditched it.<sup>51</sup> Instead, Freud strived to explain his patients' reports as "fantasy" based on the psychic damage that occurred to them as a result of failure to resolve the Oedipus complex.<sup>52</sup> Oedipus complex refers to "a desire for sexual involvement with the parent of the opposite sex and a concomitant sense of rivalry with the parent of the same sex; a crucial stage in the normal developmental process" of all human beings, according to Freud.<sup>53</sup>

It is still unclear why Freud abandoned the seduction theory. He may have genuinely felt that it lacked sufficient supporting evidence, or he may have succumbed to societal pressure due to the fact that back then, it was taboo to even imagine that a father

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<sup>47</sup> JM Masson (ed) (1985), *The Complete Letters of Sigmund Freud to Wilhelm Fliess 1887-1904*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 141.

<sup>48</sup> For a brief overview of Freud's work see SA McLeod (2013). Retrieved on 20/06/2016 from [www.simplypsychology.org/Sigmund-Freud.html](http://www.simplypsychology.org/Sigmund-Freud.html).

<sup>49</sup> RM Bolen (2001), 'Child sexual abuse: Its scope and our failure.' Springer Science & Business Media, 27.

<sup>50</sup> JM Masson (1985), (n 47 above).

<sup>51</sup> As above.

<sup>52</sup> As above.

<sup>53</sup> Retrieved on 27/06/2016 from <http://global.britannica.com/topic/Oedipus-complex>.

could sexually abuse his own daughter.<sup>54</sup> Freud's dismissal of his earlier beliefs in his patients could also be concluded as a denial of the existence of child sexual abuse altogether.<sup>55</sup>

Several years later, research has confirmed what Freud feared to publicly acknowledge; that children can be sexually abused by their parents. However, his theory still has shortcomings because of its suggestion that it is the victims that seduce their parents. It is unimaginable that infants can make sexual advances to an adult. What is more believable is that those who sexually abuse children have a psychological problem which makes them view children as sexual beings who are capable of seducing them.<sup>56</sup> The theory of seduction was not employed for this research not only because of its inconclusiveness but also because it tends to emphasize on girls' experience of the problem and very little on the boy child.

### **2.2.2 Theory of attachment**

The theory of attachment has been widely accepted as having the psychological answers for why child sexual abuse occurs.<sup>57</sup> Its emphasis is on seeking to understand the perpetrator, unlike the seduction theory which focuses on the victim. The theory suggests that children become attached based on the level of expectation that they have towards their caregiver, to provide them with security.<sup>58</sup> In the absence of that security, it is believed that children develop low self-esteem and cannot positively relate with others.<sup>59</sup> This is carried forth into their adulthood where it will consequently affect their relationships even romantically.<sup>60</sup> Failure to develop attachment as a child is basically attributed to reasons for failure of adult attachment where one becomes fearful to form relationships and becomes isolated.<sup>61</sup>

Table 2 below is a depiction by Bartholomew, of how one sees themselves and others

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<sup>54</sup> *Theories on why child sexual abuse happens*. <http://www.secasa.com.au/pages/theories-on-why-sexual-abuse-happens/the-feminist-approach/> Retrieved on 23/06/2016.

<sup>55</sup> As above.

<sup>56</sup> See Ward & Keenan (n 44 above).

<sup>57</sup> See MH Miner *et al* (2009), Understanding sexual perpetration against children: Effects of attachment style, interpersonal involvement, and hyper sexuality. *Sexual abuse: A journal of research and treatment*.

<sup>58</sup> As above.

<sup>59</sup> See JA Feeney & P Noller (1996), *Adult attachment* (14). Sage Publications.

<sup>60</sup> As above.

<sup>61</sup> As above.

as a result of feeling secure during their childhood or lack of security thereof.

**Table 2: Model of attachment**

	<b>Positive model-of-self</b> (low dependence)	<b>Negative model-of-self</b> (high dependence)
<b>Positive model-of-other</b> (low avoidance)	<b>SECURE</b> Comfortable with intimacy and autonomy	<b>PREOCCUPIED</b> Preoccupied with relationships
<b>Negative model-of-other</b> (high avoidance)	<b>DISMISSING</b> Dismissal of intimacy Counter dependent	<b>FEARFUL</b> Fearful of intimacy Socially avoidant

*Table 2: Model by Bartholomew<sup>62</sup>*

What Bartholomew means by the above table is that a person's perception of the self and of others is determined in the early stages of their lives, based on the level of security they feel is provided by their care-giver.<sup>63</sup> If one feels secure they will automatically be comfortable with developing intimate relationships.<sup>64</sup> They will also be confident in who they are without having to rely on the affirmation of others.<sup>65</sup> The opposite is true for someone who lacks that feeling of security.<sup>66</sup>

Those that have used the attachment theory to explain child sexual abuse have suggested that it is due to insecurity as defined in Bartholomew's terms. They purport that the insecurity 'forces' one to find someone much younger and weaker to have sexual relations with as a way of boosting their own self-esteem by exercising authority over them.<sup>67</sup>

<sup>62</sup> K. Bartholomew (1990) 'Avoidance of intimacy: An attachment perspective'. *Journal of Social and Personal relationships*, 7(2), 163.

<sup>63</sup> As above, 166.

<sup>64</sup> As above.

<sup>65</sup> As above.

<sup>66</sup> As above.

<sup>67</sup> See PC Alexander (1992) 'Application of attachment theory to the study of sexual abuse'. *Journal of consulting and clinical psychology*, 60(2), 185-195.



While attachment may be an essential process for one's development of self-esteem, the attachment theory as applied to the occurrence of child sexual abuse fails to justify why it is mostly men who are blamed for child sexual abuse. Surely female children who lack security also grow up to be fearful and uncomfortable socially, should the attachment theory be applied. That leaves a vacuum in its explanation of child sexual abuse. The theory however makes quite some substantive suggestions altogether, just not substantive enough to provide full answers to the problem in question.

### 2.2.3 Feminist theory

The feminist theory of child sexual abuse resonates very well with the subject of gender stereotypes that is under discussion. It is a theory that is rooted in sociology and is arguably one of the strongest theories for arguing the existence of child sexual abuse. It is credited for countering the seduction theory by challenging the notion that victims of sexual abuse are usually responsible for their own abuse.<sup>68</sup> It brought a whole new dynamic to the discussion of child sexual abuse; with a focus on gender and power relations.<sup>69</sup>

Feminists blame patriarchy for the existence of child sexual abuse.<sup>70</sup> They argue that "male privilege" is dominant in many private and public settings, allowing for men to easily abuse women and girl children.<sup>71</sup> While this may be partly true, the feminist theory, like the seduction theory and the attachment theory, turns a blind eye to the abuse of boy children, especially by women. It emphasizes the weak position of women in society in a manner that assumes that all females are in a position of weakness; forced by society to be subjects of males.<sup>72</sup> However, there are some situations in which women have power over those of the opposite sex. For example, in the case of young boys, who although male, are weaker than older women in terms of the hierarchy of power. They therefore stand a fair chance of being subjected to sexual abuse by an adult woman as much as by an

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<sup>68</sup> S Angelides, (2004), 'Feminism, child sexual abuse, and the erasure of child sexuality'. *GLQ: a Journal of lesbian and Gay Studies*, 10(2), 142.

<sup>69</sup> As above.

<sup>70</sup> T Ward, *et al* 'Feminist theories of child sexual abuse', in P Reavey & S Warner (eds) (2003), *Theories of sexual offending*, 2.

<sup>71</sup> As above.

<sup>72</sup> See <http://www.secasa.com.au/pages/theories-on-why-sexual-abuse-happens/the-feminist-approach/> Retrieved on 23/06/2016.



adult man.

The feminist theory of child sexual abuse is too biased towards the depiction of females only as victims as it is a theory based on a movement for women empowerment.

## 2.2.4 Theory of hegemonic masculinity

In a bid to utilise the feminist theory in an inclusive manner, Connell's theory of hegemonic masculinity<sup>73</sup> was used to frame this study. It shares similar insights with the feminist theory and is also influenced by Freud's theory of psychoanalysis.

Connell refers to psychoanalysis as one of the ways which best explain adult personality as a by-product of one's pressures to adapt to the expectations of society.<sup>74</sup> This resonates with the theory of social learning (discussed under section 2.2.5 below) which explains how certain elements become entrenched in the behaviour of children as a result of social modelling. As such the theory of social learning was used to complement the theory of hegemonic masculinity in depicting the interplay between gender stereotypes and the perpetuation of child sexual abuse.

Connell's theory of masculinity is a result of many years of studies around gender and psychology. It is a notion born out of her much popularised social theory of gender, which seeks to reason the many challenges society faces in relation to male domination and power, without necessarily painting all men with a black brush.<sup>75</sup> Connell defines her theory as "...the configuration of gender practice which embodies the currently accepted answer to the problem of legitimacy of patriarchy, which guarantees (or is taken to guarantee) the dominant position of men and the subordination of women".<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> See RW Connell & JW Messerschmidt (2005) 'Hegemonic masculinity: Rethinking the concept'. *Gender & society*, 19(6), 829-859. (Please note that Raewen is a transitional woman who was born male and named Robert. Although in earlier publications she was known as Robert, this study will cite all her work using the name Raewen to avoid confusion.)

<sup>74</sup> RW Connell (1983), 'Dr Freud and the course of history'. *Which way is up? Essays on sex, class and culture*, 3-16.

<sup>75</sup> See N Wedgwood (2009), 'Connell's theory of masculinity—its origins and influences on the study of gender 1'. *Journal of gender studies*, 18(4), 329-339.

<sup>76</sup> R Connell, (1995), *Masculinities*. Berkeley, 77.





The theory of hegemonic masculinities hinges on the sociological differences such as male dominance and female subordination, race, class and power among other things.<sup>77</sup> However, unlike the feminist theory, it emphasizes the existence of plural masculinities and femininities as opposed to just masculinity and femininity. A demonstration of how plural masculinities are expressed is through hegemony over other masculinities, for example, the domination of gay men by straight men.<sup>78</sup>

#### **2.2.4.1 Application of the theory of hegemonic masculinities**

Connell's theory was used as a lens by which to analyse some of the ways in which boy children are currently being marginalised, especially with respect to protection against child sexual abuse. The theory of hegemonic masculinities clearly demonstrates how it is not only one's sex or gender that determines their dominance or subordination but also other social factors such as power; which children obviously do not possess. The concept of power relations and plural masculinities was applied to analyse how young boys relate with grown men and older women or girls on the scale of power, and how this in turn impacts their vulnerability to sexual abuse by both sexes.

Connell's theory was resourceful for addressing two of the sub-questions raised in Chapter 1: Sub question ii) *To what extent do gender stereotypes influence the different treatment given to the boy child in comparison to the girl?* and, Sub question iii) *What effect does this different treatment have on the spread of child sexual abuse?* The use of the theory of hegemonic masculinities to address these two questions was only from the angle of boys as victims of sexual abuse.

The limitation that Connell's theory has in this study, is that Connell is an Australian scholar and obviously writes with a general bias towards the Western society. However, there was an effort to make use of only those insights from her theory that are all-encompassing.

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<sup>77</sup> DZ Demetriou (2001), 'Connell's concept of hegemonic masculinity: A critique Theory and society' 30 (3), 337-361.

## 2.2.5 Theory of social learning

The social learning theory was originated by prominent psychologist Albert Bandura who basically asserts that learning occurs through a cognitive process which takes place within a social setting.<sup>79</sup> It has been widely used to understand child sexual abuse occurrence and for studying similar forms of violence such as domestic violence.<sup>80</sup> It is mostly used to explain the link between child sexual abuse experiences and the chance of victims turning into child sexual abusers in their adult life.<sup>81</sup>

### 2.2.5.1 Application of the theory of social learning

Building on Bandura's observation, Reed *et al* point out that children learn from observing their surroundings, peers and adults.<sup>82</sup> This view forms the basis of one of the hypotheses of this study; that child sexual abusers are unknowingly 'created' by society through gender stereotypes, as a result of social modelling or social learning. As such the social learning theory was used complementary to the theory of hegemonic masculinity to address the main research question: *How do gender stereotypes influence the perpetuation of child sexual abuse?* It was also used to address the question: *What are gender stereotypes and how does society perpetuate them?*

The social learning theory was engaged as a lens through which gender stereotypes and their effects on the psychological development of boy children were analysed. The focus was on the role of socialization in creating negative sexual attitudes in young boys, as well as in influencing boy children's response to sexual abuse.

## 2.2.6 Child molesters' implicit theories

Child molesters' implicit theories usually indicate some level of distortion in the way

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<sup>78</sup> As above.

<sup>79</sup> See A Bandura (1973), *Aggression: A social learning analysis*. Prentice-Hall.

<sup>80</sup> See DL Burton *et al* (2002), 'A social learning theory comparison of the sexual victimization of adolescent sexual offenders and nonsexual offending male delinquents'. *Child abuse & neglect*, 26(9), 893-907 and also CL Miller-Perrin & RD Perrin (2012), *Child maltreatment: An introduction*. Sage Publications.

<sup>81</sup> DL Burton *et al* (2002), (n 81 above), 894.

<sup>82</sup> See M Reed, *et al* (2010), 'What is social learning?' *Ecology and Society*.

sexual offenders view the world, themselves and their victims.<sup>83</sup> The originators of these implicit theories of child molesters suggest that they are formulated in the early developmental stages of a person such as childhood.<sup>84</sup> According to Ward & Keenan, these theories are usually developed through social modelling of parents, siblings or peers.<sup>85</sup>

Two implicit child molesters' theories; which are the theory of entitlement and the theory of uncontrollability were employed in this study.

- **The theory of entitlement**

The theory of entitlement states that men have a sense of entitlement which is brought about by the sense that they are regarded as more powerful and more important than women and children; hence they can exercise their will over them.<sup>86</sup> In reference to Marshall & Barberie, Ward & Keenan explain how the domination of women and children by men is prevalent in patriarch societies; which results in the development of a sense of entitlement in boys through impersonating their fathers and other older male counterparts.<sup>87</sup>

- **The theory of uncontrollability**

According to the theory of uncontrollability, men who sexually abuse children think or feel that they cannot control their sexual urges.<sup>88</sup> It suggests that when such men sexually abuse children it is never planned.<sup>89</sup> The act happens during periods of not thinking clearly due to compelling underlying issues which the offender has no control over, such as the fact that they were probably abused as a child themselves.<sup>90</sup>

### **2.2.6.1 Application of the two child molesters' implicit theories**

There is a clear connection between the two theories mentioned above and the

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<sup>83</sup> See Ward & Keenan (n 44 above), 287.

<sup>84</sup> As above.

<sup>85</sup> As above.

<sup>86</sup>As above.

<sup>87</sup> As above.

<sup>88</sup> As above.

<sup>89</sup> As above.

<sup>90</sup> Ward & Keenan (n 44 above), 287.

social learning theory. This study treats these two theories as examples of gender stereotypes because, as mentioned by Ward & Keenan, they develop as a result of social modelling of parents and others during childhood.<sup>91</sup> The use of linking the two child molesters' theories to gender stereotypes is to interrogate the current trend in child sexual abuse research which shows men as the major perpetrators of child sexual abuse.

### **2.3 Conclusion**

This chapter focused on giving a brief overview of some of the major child sexual abuse theories to have been employed by previous researchers, outlining some of their weaknesses and strengths. Two major theories that were used for framing the study; the theory of hegemonic masculinities and the theory of social learning, were discussed together with their applicability. Two sub-theories linked to the theory of social learning, (the theory of entitlement and the theory of uncontrollability), were also discussed.

It was noted in quite a few theories that there is an underlying gender stereotypical thinking in the development of most child abuse theories. Most of them are inclined towards the blaming of men and the exclusion of women from the typical profiles of child sexual abusers.

Chapter 3 and 4 below will argue the prevalence of gender stereotypes in society across all sectors, including their influence on the development of knowledge; which in turn affects how research is carried out in light of child sexual abuse.

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<sup>91</sup> As above.



## Chapter 3

### Unpacking gender stereotypes

#### 3.1 Introduction

This chapter seeks to provide the reader with an understanding of the complexity of gender stereotypes and the impact that they have. An analysis of the definition of gender will be given to highlight the varying meanings of the word depending on context.

The chapter aims to reveal how gender, understood as both a biological and social construct, determines one's treatment in society. It reveals how people who are born as males biologically can transition from being 'seen' as men to being 'seen' as women and how this can amount to their prejudice. It also reveals how homosexuals are prejudiced due to the fact that they don't fit the stereotypical definition of a man. All this is linked to how boy children growing up in a society where a boy who fails to meet the 'male stereotype' stand to face the same discrimination that a girl child would face.

To better explain the interplay between gender and subjugation, a brief analysis of the definition of stereotypes will be given in an effort to highlight what constitutes gender stereotypes. This understanding is meant to set the reader onto a path to understanding how gender stereotypes form a part of everyday life and how they influence people's perceptions and beliefs about their roles and identity among other things.

#### 3.2 What is gender?

The definition of gender is quite ambiguous. It is often interchanged with the definition of sex.<sup>92</sup> Society has grown to accept the term 'gender' as the socially acceptable word to refer to one's sex.<sup>93</sup> However, there is a long-standing debate about the connection of the two and whether they can be interchanged. Scientists argue that sex and gender are one and the same thing while sociologists believe that sex is one thing and gender is another.<sup>94</sup> These two viewpoints are best summarised

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<sup>92</sup> J Archer & B Lloyd (1982), *Sex and gender*. Cambridge University Press, 17.

<sup>93</sup> As above.

<sup>94</sup> See DL Anselmi & AL Law (1998), *Questions of gender: Perspectives and paradoxes*. McGraw-Hill Humanities Social.

as 'biological determinism'<sup>95</sup> and 'social constructionism'.<sup>96</sup>

Geddes & Thompson were among the first gender theorists to attribute gender construction to biological reasons as opposed to social construction.<sup>97</sup> They argued that the way human beings behave is purely based on biological attributes such as brain size and genetics.<sup>98</sup> They sighted the biological differences between men and women, such as metabolic states - which render women as 'anabolic' (they conserve energy), and men as 'katabolic' (they burn up their surplus energy) as the reason why women are "passive, conservative, sluggish and stable" while men are "energetic, passionate and variable".<sup>99</sup>

However, Anselmi & Law seem to downplay the biological determinism argument. They argue that although gender is mostly regarded as something that essentially descends from being either a man or a woman, it only expresses the undeniable relatedness of sex and gender, but does not mean that sex and gender are synonymous.<sup>100</sup> They differentiate sex from gender by describing sex as something that can be linked to one's biological make-up; such as "chromosomes and genes that allow for differences in "physical appearance" and not behaviour between men and women.<sup>101</sup> They refer to gender as the societal and cultural factors that are responsible for forming or shaping one's reality and one's sense of identity.<sup>102</sup>

They however underscore the importance of not limiting the differences in sex to biology alone and the differences in gender to culture alone.<sup>103</sup> It can be argued that

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<sup>95</sup> See <http://what-when-how.com/social-sciences/determinism-biological-social-science/>. Retrieved on 30/06/2016/, See also [http://www.encyclopedia.com/topic/Biological\\_determinism.aspx](http://www.encyclopedia.com/topic/Biological_determinism.aspx). Retrieved on 30/06/2016.

<sup>96</sup> PA Boghossian (1999), 'What is social construction?' Retrieved on 30/06/2016 from <http://philosophy.fas.nyu.edu/docs/IO/1153/socialconstruction.pdf>. For a comparison of biological determinism and cultural constructivism see M Mikkola (2011), 'Feminist Perspectives on Sex and Gender', The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy. Retrieved June 30 2016 from <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2016/entries/feminism-gender>.

<sup>97</sup> Mikkola (n 96 above).

<sup>98</sup> As above.

<sup>99</sup> As above. For a definition of the terms 'anabolic' and 'katabolic' see *Miller-Keane Encyclopedia and Dictionary of Medicine, Nursing, and Allied Health, Seventh Edition*. (2003). Retrieved June 30 2016 from <http://medical-dictionary.thefreedictionary.com/catabolism>.

<sup>100</sup> Anselmi & Law (n 94 above) (preface) xii.

<sup>101</sup> As above.

<sup>102</sup> As above.

<sup>103</sup> As above.

they based this viewpoint on the fact that there are people who have undergone a sex change by surgical means (e.g. genital alteration)<sup>104</sup> while some people can identify as being of a particular gender not because society says so but because of their biological make-up.<sup>105</sup> This demonstrates just how complicated the question of gender is. Nevertheless, this study adopts the view that gender is constructed socially; although its connection to sex remains crucial.

The study does not endorse Geddes & Thompson's theory of biological determinism because it tends to exhibit an element of stereotypical and prejudiced reasoning. They refer to all women as one thing and all men as another; as if to say all women are the same while all men are the same.<sup>106</sup> They have a prejudiced view on the status of women, which is influenced by patriarchy. This is evidenced by their use of metabolic states to rationalise why they believed men are better placed to hold political power than women.<sup>107</sup>

Stereotypical theories such as Geddes & Thompson's can only be analysed through a social lens and not biology. Lewontin seems to agree with this view. He says that one needs to look to "social and political *myths*<sup>108</sup> that constitute the ideology of our society" in order to comprehend biological determinism theories.<sup>109</sup> Gender stereotypes are some of these myths that are so entrenched in human life to the point that it is sometimes difficult to separate them from the way even knowledge is constructed.

Below is a visual illustration to demonstrate how gender is acquired, and most importantly-socially constructed, unlike what the theory of biological determinism suggests.

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<sup>104</sup> See JK Meyer & DJ (1979), 'Sex reassignment: Follow-up', *Archives of General Psychiatry*, 36(9), 1010-1015.

<sup>105</sup> As above

<sup>106</sup> Mikkola (n 96 above).

<sup>107</sup> As above.

<sup>108</sup> My emphasis.

<sup>109</sup> RC Lewontin (1983), 'Biological determinism'. *Tanner Lectures on Human Values*, 4, 149.



An interrogation of the impact of gender stereotypes on the perpetuation of child sexual abuse:  
A Mini-Dissertation by Hanifa M. Gutu (15200672)



Figure 1: Picture supplied by Drum magazine.<sup>110</sup>

This is an image of Wandile- a fictional character from one of the South African local soap operas, “Generations-The Legacy”.

Just by looking at the way the person in this picture is seated, dressed, and the haircut, one can simply conclude that the person is a



Figure 2: Picture taken by Emmanuel Tjiya<sup>111</sup>

This is a real-life image of the woman who plays the fictional character named above (Wandile).

Both the image above and this image show the same person as different sexes. Both pictures are arguably convincing. This demonstrates the versatility of gender.

It can be argued from this illustration that gender transition can be achieved by changing the features that society uses to label one as a man or a woman; such as clothes, hair, make-up etc.

<sup>110</sup> See <http://www.sabc1.co.za/sabc/home/sabc1/shows/details?id=c4b9d096-1f71-4c32-8bf7-cbb9850608d9> and <http://drum.co.za/mobile/magazine-issue/wait-wandile-is-a-girl/> Retrieved on 03/07/2016.

<sup>111</sup> Retrieved on 03/07/2016 from <http://www.sundayworld.co.za/shwashwi/2016/03/21/who-wore-what->



Gender can be constructed in one's mind based on cues such as one's behaviour, length of hair, way of moving and dress among other things.<sup>112</sup> Much too often people construct one's gender within seconds of meeting/seeing that person, without even paying particular attention to the process.<sup>113</sup>

Although one's sex is defined by the biological differences between men and women, the distinction between sex and gender is very complex. Sex and gender are intertwined in that people do not ordinarily go about physically inspecting people's private parts to determine whether they are male or female. They determine how to classify a stranger as a man or a woman based on what they construct in their heads from what they see<sup>114</sup> (such as the characteristics/traits named above).

The significance of the analysis of the definition of gender in this chapter was to highlight some of the issues that will be discussed later; which involve the role that stereotypes play in determining one's gender and how this ultimately leads to gender stereotypes.

### 3.3 What are stereotypes?

Stereotypes are commonly understood to be "beliefs", "perceptions", "assumptions" or "generalizations" about a group of people based on either ignorance or one or more encounters with one member of a group.<sup>115</sup> These are then used to generalise the characteristics of all the people from that particular group, among other things.<sup>116</sup>

Wittenbrink describes stereotypes as overgeneralised beliefs about a group of people.<sup>117</sup> These come about as a result of an individual or society's tendency to categorize

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2016-saftas-edition.

<sup>112</sup> Archer & Lloyd (n 92 above), 105.

<sup>113</sup> As above.

<sup>114</sup> As above.

<sup>115</sup> CN Macrae *et al* (eds.) (1996), *Stereotypes and stereotyping*. Guilford Press, 6. See also L Brink (2014), 'The exploration of stereotypes within selected South African organisations.' Published Doctoral thesis. Retrieved on 04/07/2016 from [http://dspace.nwu.ac.za/bitstream/handle/10394/13147/Brink\\_L.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y](http://dspace.nwu.ac.za/bitstream/handle/10394/13147/Brink_L.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y).

<sup>116</sup> As above.

<sup>117</sup> See B Wittenbrink (1994) '*Stereotypes as social concepts on a knowledge-based approach to categorization.*' University of Michigan.

people with similar attributes such as character, race, class, *inter alia*, together, while those different from that category are classified on their own.<sup>118</sup> The Merriam Webster dictionary offers a simplistic definition of a stereotype as “an *unfair belief*<sup>119</sup> that all people or things with a particular characteristic are the same.”<sup>120</sup> This is the definition that this study will adopt in order to highlight the unfairness that results from gender stereotyping, in view of the boy child.

It is noteworthy that stereotypes, apart from usually being myths, are usually prejudicial in nature.<sup>121</sup> Stereotypes are usually an escapism method used by people to avoid having to process large volumes of information by simply generalizing information about a group of people or things based on one or more encounters with one or a few of those people or things.<sup>122</sup>

A more detailed look at stereotypes breaks them down into two groups- descriptive and prescriptive stereotypes.<sup>123</sup> Descriptive stereotypes are used to describe a group of people based on their features such as hair colour.<sup>124</sup> While prescriptive stereotypes are basically used to highlight the expected behaviour from a group of people or other things.<sup>125</sup> An example of a descriptive stereotypical belief is that all blonde white women are unintelligent while an example of a prescriptive stereotype is that men should not cry.

Stereotypes are also believed to be passed on from generation to generation through the influence of “parents, teachers, peers/significant others” and more broadly through the media.<sup>126</sup> Psychologists have come up with an explanation for the reason why people form stereotypes. They have attributed it to the human ‘need’ to

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<sup>118</sup> As above.

<sup>119</sup> My emphasis.

<sup>120</sup> Merriam Webster Dictionary. Retrieved on 12/07/2016 from <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/stereotype>.

<sup>121</sup> See SA McLeod (2015), Stereotypes. Retrieved on 12/07/2016 from [www.simplypsychology.org/katz-braly.htm](http://www.simplypsychology.org/katz-braly.htm).

<sup>122</sup> As above.

<sup>123</sup> D Burgess & E Borgida (1999), ‘Who women are, who women should be: Descriptive and prescriptive gender stereotyping in sex discrimination.’ *Psychology, Public Policy, and Law*, 5(3), 665

<sup>124</sup> As above.

<sup>125</sup> As above.

<sup>126</sup> See BE Whitley Jr & ME Kite (2006), *The psychology of prejudice and discrimination*. Belmont, CA: Thompson

“categorise both the social and physical world” in order to easily process information,<sup>127</sup> to easily make predictions, and to boost one’s own ego through the definition of others as being inferior.<sup>128</sup>

Although it may seem reasonable for people to want to have an easier way of processing information or to be able to make predictions about uncertain events using stereotypes, there is always the danger that those who do not fit the criteria of certain stereotypes (in the case of prescriptive stereotypes) face prejudice.<sup>129</sup> For example if boys are stereotypically expected to be emotionless, it affects those boys who show emotion in that they can be ridiculed for being weak and be equated to girls. Not that there is anything wrong with being a girl. However, because society generally expects members of these two opposite sexes (male and female) to have ‘clear-cut’ differences, those who belong to a particular sex but display characteristics deemed to be of the opposite sex tend to face victimization.<sup>130</sup>

This brings into perspective the whole debate about gender and sex. If, for example, a person who is male biologically, tends to identify more with the opposite sex in terms of the common feminine and masculine stereotypes outlined in Table 3 below, and tends to like cross-dressing (this excludes males whose traditional dress consists of robes/skirts etc.), they are usually labelled as being ‘transgender’.<sup>131</sup> If such a person goes on to want to change their sex from one to another they are then labelled ‘transsexual’.<sup>132</sup> Note the different circumstances that determine the two labels. One is based on mannerisms, dress and behaviour, while the other is based on physical appearance or genital/hormonal make-up. It has already been established earlier that this represents that sex and gender are separate things although closely related.

The significance of this reiteration is to highlight the root cause of why society ends up having transgender and transsexual people. It is due to gender stereotypes. If there

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Wadsworth.

<sup>127</sup> R Cook & S Cusack (2011), *Gender stereotyping: transnational legal perspectives*. University of Pennsylvania Press, 14.

<sup>128</sup> See JL Hilton & w Von Hippel (1996), ‘Stereotypes’, *Annual review of psychology*, 47(1), 238.

<sup>129</sup> Cook & Cusack (n 127 above), 46.

<sup>130</sup> R Connell (2005) *Gender and society*, 231.

<sup>131</sup> See the International Society for Sexual Medicine website. Retrieved on 17/07/2016 from <http://www.issm.info/sexual-health-qa/what-is-the-difference-between-transsexual-and-transgender/>

<sup>132</sup> As above.



was no such thing as gender stereotypes and people could 'freely' express themselves, then even if someone born male acts according to the present feminine stereotypes it would not be problematic because there would be tolerance. In fact their behaviour would not even stand out as being weird because it would be accepted as normal for some men to express themselves differently than most men and vice-versa. The effects of this gender identity dilemma which results from gender stereotypes will be elaborated further in Chapter 4 in view of its impact on child sexual abuse.

Below is a discussion on what constitutes gender stereotypes; their origin and what perpetuates them.

### **3.4 Gender stereotypes: What is their foundation and what perpetuates them?**

Most definitions of gender stereotypes seem to be derived from the definition of gender as referring to the same thing as sex. In fact, gender stereotypes are sometimes referred to as sexual stereotypes, sex stereotypes or sex-role stereotypes.<sup>133</sup> This is perhaps due to the difficulty in the separation of the two which was mentioned earlier. For the same reason, in this research, the term gender stereotypes shall be used to refer to those stereotypes that encompass both sex and gender.

The definition of gender stereotypes involves a set of beliefs, perceptions or assumptions about what or who men and women are or should be.<sup>134</sup> Gender stereotypes depict normative models that are meant to guide the roles and identities of men and women in society.<sup>135</sup> However, these models are often too limited to accommodate all types of people.<sup>136</sup> For example, gender stereotypes that describe all men as womanisers assume that all men are heterosexual. This alienates gay men and tends to depict them as though they do not belong to the male group of people as

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<sup>133</sup> See Cook & Cusack (n 127 above), R Connell (2005) *Gender and society* and L Firestone (2012), 'Are sexual stereotypes ruining your relationship?' Retrieved on 19/07/2016 from <https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/compassion-matters/201202/are-sexual-stereotypes-damaging-your-relationship>.

<sup>134</sup> Connell (n 133 above), 231.

<sup>135</sup> Retrieved on 17/07/2016 from <http://study.com/academy/lesson/gender-stereotypes-definition-examples-quiz.html>.

<sup>136</sup> Cook & Cusack (n 127 above), 46.

they are considered to be not masculine enough.<sup>137</sup> This discrimination is ironically directed at them mostly by their fellow men.<sup>138</sup>

Gender stereotypes remain entrenched in many societies albeit the on-going shift in gender roles across different cultures.<sup>139</sup> For example, a woman who defies the common stereotype that women should take up jobs that are not physically demanding and are nurturing in nature such as teaching and nursing, and joins the army is often labelled as being ‘macho’.<sup>140</sup>

Below is a list of some of the common gender stereotypes that have been said to determine masculinity or femininity according to a review of literature on gender stereotypes. Both descriptive and prescriptive stereotypes are included.

**Table 3: Common gender stereotypes on femininity and masculinity<sup>141</sup>**

Feminine stereotypes	Masculine stereotypes
Helpless, nurturing, soft voice, graceful, emotional, sensitive, dainty, irrational; easily forms emotional attachments, unstable, less interested in sex, less interested careers, marriage and motherhood oriented, responsible for raising children, submissive, passive, weak, cannot be powerful or self-sufficient, supposed to have "clean jobs" such as teaching, and nursing, should earn less money than men.	In control, physically and emotionally tough, competitive, success-driven, high sex-drive which is difficult to control, provider/head of the family, powerful, logical, afraid to commit or form an attachment, independent, deep voice, aggressive, professionally/career-driven, capable, "men do not cry", "men do not do household chores or look after babies".

<sup>137</sup> Connell (n 133 above), 231.

<sup>138</sup> See R Connell (1995), *Masculinities*. Berkley.

<sup>139</sup> G Siann et al (1994), ‘Who gets bullied? The effect of school, gender and ethnic group’, *Educational Research*, 36(2), 78

<sup>140</sup> The Cambridge online dictionary defines macho as “behaving forcefully or showing no emotion in a way traditionally thought to be typical of a man.” Retrieved on 10/07/2016 from <http://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/macho>.

<sup>141</sup> L Firestone (n 133 above). See also LL Kwatsha (2009), ‘Some aspects of gender inequality in Selected African literary texts.’ *Literator*, 30(2), 130.

This is just a summary of some the most prevalent gender stereotypes. There are many which are not listed here. According to Firestone, “men who openly express affection may be teased for being “soft” or “whipped” and “[w]omen who seek power have been called “ruthless” or “cold.”<sup>142</sup> This indicates that what is commonly seen as attractive or normal in men is often seen as abrasive in women, while what is commonly seen as attractive or normal in women is often seen as a sign of weakness in men. A study carried out by Van de Walt established that South Africans currently idealise masculinity that stresses the importance of heterosexuality, management of emotions and participation in ‘tough’ activities and sports.<sup>143</sup>

In order to understand why the process of ‘unlearning’ gender stereotypes seems to be taking time despite progress in gender role transformations, it is necessary to trace the foundations of these stereotypes and what ignites their spread. According to Rhode, gender stereotyping begins from as early as when a child is born or sometimes before it is even born.<sup>144</sup> The moment parents discover the sex of their child, either at birth or during the course of the pregnancy, automatically they begin to buy items that are ‘typically’ meant for that particular sex. If they are toys, girls get dolls and mini-cooking sets, while boys get cars and guns. Due to this, gender stereotypes are often linked to ones’ parents.<sup>145</sup>

However, it would not be enough to say that parents are the source of gender stereotypes because they too must have gotten them from somewhere. This is when the role of society becomes imperative in analysing the development of gender stereotypes. Society plays a pivotal role in how perceptions are formed and how these perceptions influence human behaviour.<sup>146</sup> Some of the things that come out of society that play a role in the development of perceptions are the media and culture.<sup>147</sup> These are the two things that this study will focus on because of their arguably undeniable role in shaping children’s perceptions.

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<sup>142</sup> As above.

<sup>143</sup> M Van der Walt (2007), ‘South African men and their construction of masculinities in relation to women and homosexual men: A thematic analysis’ Unpublished dissertation. Retrieved on 19/07/2016 from [http://www.psychology.uct.ac.za/sites/default/files/image\\_tool/images/117/Malan.van\\_der\\_Walt\\_.pdf](http://www.psychology.uct.ac.za/sites/default/files/image_tool/images/117/Malan.van_der_Walt_.pdf)

<sup>144</sup> See DL Rhode (1999), *Speaking of sex: The denial of gender inequality*. Harvard University Press

<sup>145</sup> As above.

<sup>146</sup> See L Brannon (2015), *Gender: psychological perspectives*. Psychology Press.

<sup>147</sup> As above.

### 3.4.1 How culture breeds gender stereotypes

One thing that stands out from existing literature on culture and gender stereotypes is again the focus on the subjugation of women. This is more so when it comes to African literature,<sup>148</sup> probably because the African society is very patriarchal.<sup>149</sup> Men have the leadership role while women are perceived in the same manner as children; basically as 'subjects' of the male figure.<sup>150</sup> What this means is that boys are raised to be providers while girls are raised to be nurturers.<sup>151</sup> The woman's place is that of subordination while the man's place is that of authority.<sup>152</sup>

This section, although dwelling on the discussion of patriarchy, it does so with a view to explain some of the attitudes that the patriarchal system creates in young boys as they get older. This can be elaborated further using the theory of social learning, theory of entitlement and the theory of uncontrollability mentioned in chapter 2.

From the gender role profiles of men and women given above, it is apparent that according to prescriptive stereotypes, mentioned earlier, men would be expected to be strong and powerful, while women would be expected to be weak and submissive. This means that children begin to be socialized into these roles from an early age. In most cases, it is not by way of formal teaching but from everyday activities such as playtime and chores.<sup>153</sup> Boy children are given more physically demanding chores such as cutting firewood and ploughing while girls are expected to work in and around the house.<sup>154</sup> Although girls may also work in the fields, they do less physical work like weeding while boys take on the tougher work.<sup>155</sup>

The above is characteristic of boys and girls growing up in rural areas. However, even in urban areas there are ways in which gender stereotypes are perpetuated. In urban areas it is usually through activities such as sport. Ordinarily boys play tough sports like rugby while girls play less physical sports like netball. It is argued that

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<sup>148</sup> See Kwatsha (n 141 above), 127-156.

<sup>149</sup> As above.

<sup>150</sup> Kwatsha (n 141 above), 129.

<sup>151</sup> S Kent (ed) (2000), *Gender in African prehistory*. Rowman Altamira, 13.

<sup>152</sup> As above.

<sup>153</sup> As above.

<sup>154</sup> As above.

<sup>155</sup> As above.



the physical differences between men and women (men usually look physically tougher than women) are attributed to this allocation of roles.<sup>156</sup> It is also argued that the differences in men and women's temperaments and abilities is due to societal pressure arising from patriarchy.<sup>157</sup>

When it comes to marriage and starting a family, the African culture usually puts more pressure on the girl child to preserve her virginity until marriage while for boys the emphasis is usually on being able to provide.<sup>158</sup> It is almost as if marriage is the ultimate goal for girl children. This often leads them in dropping out of school early to get married; and usually to much older men.<sup>159</sup> Although there have been significant improvements in terms of girls being encouraged to get the same level of education as boys and to take up any employment they may wish, those girls who succeed in doing so are usually faced with patriarchy one way or another, be it in their own homes as wives or at work.

The issue of the bride price also plays a pivotal role in the promotion of gender stereotypes. It encourages the subordination of married women to their husbands in a manner which often leads the husbands to treat their wives as their 'possessions' due the fact that they would have 'paid' for them. Armstrong points out that this marriage transaction often leads parents into treating their girl children as some sort of 'investment' where they expect to benefit from their marriage.<sup>160</sup> Which explains their emphasis on girls preserving their virginity; because a virgin fetches a higher bride price than a girl who's not.

Another way in which cultural practices perpetuate gender stereotypes is through rites of passage.<sup>161</sup> Most initiations for girls and boys during these events carry a stark representation of patriarchy. Girls are often taught how to cater to men

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<sup>156</sup> Archer & Lloyd (n 92 above), 1.

<sup>157</sup> As above.

<sup>158</sup> See SW Daniel (1999), 'Gender and HIV/AIDS: Taking Stock of Research and Programmes' published on the UNAIDS website. Retrieved on 20/07/2016 from [http://data.unaids.org/Publications/IRC-pub05/jc419-gender-takingstock\\_en.pdf](http://data.unaids.org/Publications/IRC-pub05/jc419-gender-takingstock_en.pdf),3

<sup>159</sup> As above.

<sup>160</sup> A Armstrong, 'Consent & compensation: The sexual abuse of girls in Zimbabwe' in W Ncube (ed) (1998) *Law, culture, tradition and children's rights in Eastern and Southern Africa*, 144.

<sup>161</sup> See TX Maluleke (2001), 'The puberty rites for girls (vukhomba) in the northern region of the Northern Province of South Africa: Implications for women's health and health promotion.' Published thesis retrieved on



sexually and through child-bearing, cooking, washing and other household chores.<sup>162</sup> Some cultures even go beyond female subordination to a level of self-sacrifice by women in order to please men. This is through acts such as genital mutilation- an act which often places the woman at risk of health hazards and serves to 'curb' her sexual pleasure while enhancing her man's.<sup>163</sup>

Men are considered to be some sort of 'heroes' if they have many concubines while women are strongly discouraged from having more than one sexual partner.<sup>164</sup> Such gender roles can influence the way women and men develop their sexuality. According to Archer & Lloyd, men are perceived to have a strong sexual desire that is hard to suppress hence they need frequent relief.<sup>165</sup> The fact that society has accepted this perception has allowed for practices such as polygamy and the sprout of what is called in street lingo 'side dishes', 'small houses' or 'amakwapeni'.<sup>166</sup>

The above is a demonstration of how much 'importance' men are given in the African culture. The purpose of this section was to highlight some of the background factors that play a role in the development of young boys' identity. This is important because it can explain how those that 'fail' to fit within these patriarchal stereotypes may have poor self-image as they get older; resulting in them wanting to take advantage of those weaker than them such as children. It can also contribute to the development of negative sexual attitudes in boys/men where they convince themselves that they are unable to control their sexual desire.

Due to the importance that men feel as result of gender stereotypes, they can end up believing that their will is more important than that of others. This could be why men are reportedly the most offenders when it comes to child sexual abuse; based on the theory of uncontrollability and the theory of entitlement discussed earlier in chapter 2. It could also explain how pressure arising from such a patriarchal

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17/07/2016from uir.unisa.ac.za/bitstream/10500/1043/1/thesis.pdf.

<sup>162</sup> As above.

<sup>163</sup> See SA Alsibiani & A Arouzi (2010), 'Sexual function in women with female genital mutilation'. *Fertility and sterility*, 93(3), 722-724.

<sup>164</sup> Archer & Lloyd (n 92 above), 119.

<sup>165</sup> As above.

<sup>166</sup> This refers to women who get into relationships with married men yet remain unofficial partners although they may have children by these men.

system can lead young boys into denying to admit sexual harassment/abuse by a female as will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter.

### **3.4.2 Media's drive on gender stereotypes**

Media is one of the most powerful tools for communication. Technology advancements have enabled to 'shrink' the world into a space where people can interact with one another across oceans and seas as well as share knowledge and experiences. While this is largely a positive thing, media has grown into a 'monster' that 'detects' the values by which people should live.

The most 'dangerous' thing about the media is how it imperceptibly influences people's opinions and subsequently their behaviour.<sup>167</sup> Media has a huge role in the perpetuation of gender stereotypes because it often portrays gender roles using traditional stereotypes.<sup>168</sup> A seemingly 'innocent' advertisement for a particular commodity can have very serious undertones of gender stereotypes; and mostly those that denote patriarchy. For example, an advertisement for fruit juice which shows a half-naked woman in a bikini, grabbing a bottle of juice and drinking it seductively<sup>169</sup> may suggest that women are sex objects, designed for the satisfaction of men.

Another way by which gender stereotypes are perpetuated in the media is through some news reports. According to Brannon, the sensationalization of stories by journalists sometimes leads them into making inaccurate reports just to attract their target audience by telling them what they believe the audience wants to hear.<sup>170</sup> The unfortunate thing about this is that the audience often subconsciously accepts whatever they read, see or hear without questioning any of it. Brannon's observation is very critical to this study because it can offer a new perspective on the way cases of child abuse are reported in the media and how this in turn influences research.

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<sup>167</sup> See J Steinke et al (2007), 'Assessing media influences on middle school-aged children's perceptions of women in science using the Draw-A-Scientist Test (DAST).' *Science Communication*, 29(1), 35-64.

<sup>168</sup> ES Weisgram & RS Bigler (2006), 'Girls and science careers: The role of altruistic values and attitudes about scientific tasks.' *Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology* 27, 330.

<sup>169</sup> To view the advertisement go to <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UYcrDdadsRU> Retrieved on 19/07/2016.

A simple Google search on ‘incest news’ will bring forward various articles from across the world on fathers and uncles who sexually abused their daughters or nieces respectively, while cases of female child sexual abuse are considerably less.<sup>171</sup> What this ultimately says is that men are the child abusers. There is potential that this can influence the way a researcher will approach their knowledge gathering on the sexual abuse of children. Because at the back of their mind, they already have this pre-conceived conclusion that men are the common offenders while girls are the common victims, when they go in search of evidence they are likely to go into places that produce the results they want to achieve. Archer & Lloyd support this view when they state that gender perspectives may be playing a role in determining what to look for when carrying out research on child sexual abuse.<sup>172</sup>

Common sense beliefs see the girl child as the common victim, hence most research is around the girl child.<sup>173</sup> But if change of attitude is achieved, more research into the abuse of boys would be carried out, thus providing more accurate findings. Although there is need for further research to back this up, the possibility is there. Should the observation be true it would change a lot of ‘facts’ on child sexual abuse, beginning with the perpetrator profiles.

The depiction of women as caring, nurturing and sensitive in the media helps to enforce the perception that women cannot possibly harm children, especially by abusing them sexually. Women are often portrayed bathing, feeding and tucking children for bed; actions which stereotypically define the roles of women. Another possibility resulting from these stereotypes would be that women are indeed less of offenders because of how they are socialized into being nurturers. The order of gender roles makes women condition themselves to be care-givers while men have a sense of entitlement.

### 3.5 Conclusion

This chapter has highlighted the varying meanings of gender and stereotypes, leading to the definition of gender stereotypes. It demonstrated the technical challenges in the

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<sup>170</sup> Brannon (n 146 above).

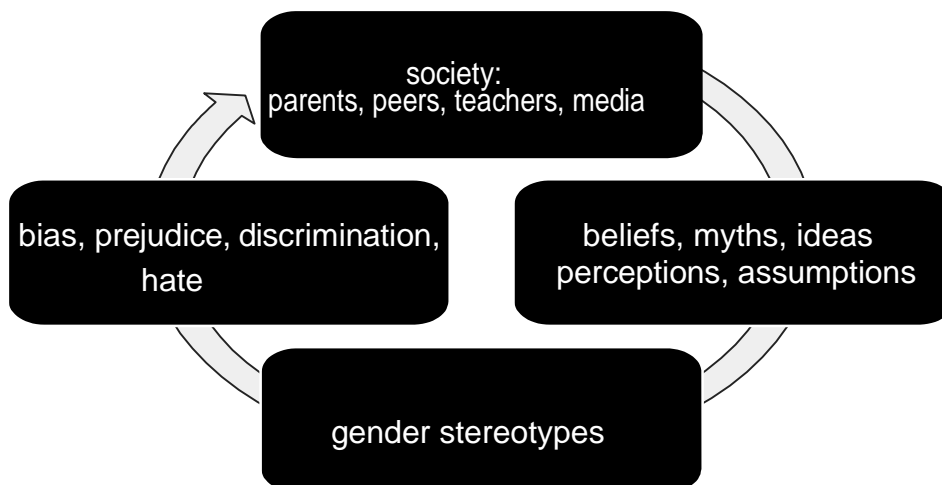
<sup>171</sup> See <https://www.google.co.za/webhp?sourceid=chrome-instant&ion=1&espv=2&ie=UTF-8#q=incest&tbn=nws>. Retrieved on 20/07/2016.

<sup>172</sup> Archer & Lloyd (n 92 above).

separation of sex from gender and gave an overview of some of the common gender stereotypes and how they come about, including how they are perpetuated. It was established that most gender stereotypes place women under the authority of men, while they emphasize male 'importance'. This was discussed, however not in depth, against the background of the theory of entitlement and uncontrollability, and the theory of social learning in view of the development of certain attitudes and characteristics by young boys such as the development of their sexuality. This discussion will be carried forward in chapter 4.

It was also established that most discussions on gender stereotypes almost always involve the power-relations between males and females. They highlight the feeble position of women in society while they reveal the dominance of men across all sectors. They however often forget to highlight the reasons behind the current order of things and the plight of the marginalized group of men such as gays, who because of their sexuality, are cast out of the masculine group of men.

Another point which was raised was how feminine stereotypes can elusively permit the on-going of child sexual abuse through failure by society to detect or predict the sexual abuse of boys by women. Feminine stereotypes result in society failing to consider circumstances that potentially place young boys at risk of sexual abuse by adult women or older girls due to stereotypical beliefs that generally regard women/females as nurturing as opposed to being 'threats' to the safety of children. *Figure 2* below is a summary of what the chapter found to be the drive behind and the outcome of gender stereotypes.



<sup>173</sup> As above.

## Chapter 4

# Gender stereotypes and the spread of child sexual abuse

### 4.1 Introduction

In Chapter 3 gender stereotypes were discussed to lay the foundation upon which the discussion in this chapter lies. Having provided an understanding of gender stereotypes, this chapter aims to analyse some of the ways in which gender stereotypes possibly contribute to the instigation of child sexual abuse.

As already highlighted in Chapter 1, the main research question for this study is: *How do gender stereotypes influence the perpetuation of child sexual abuse?* To answer this question, 2 elements were analysed:

- The influence of gender stereotypes on the way child abuse research is conducted; with a special focus on the sexual abuse of boy children by female perpetrators.
- How the variations in the way boy children and girl children are raised/brought-up affect the psychological development of young boys in relation to their sexuality and sexual attitudes, and their reaction to sexual abuse.

From the articles selected in the meta-synthesis, there were a number of themes suggesting that gender stereotypes do have an impact on child sexual abuse matters, albeit from various angles.

Some of the themes discovered were the influence of gender stereotypes on the reporting of child sexual abuse, victim perceptions of the abuse based on their offender's gender, both public and judges' reactions to allegations of child abuse by boy children who report abuse by female offenders, and the impact of boys' expression of their gender during childhood on their experience of child sexual abuse by other males, among others. Having discovered these major themes, the researcher sought to find any similarities or differences in the studies, in an effort to come up with a synthesized and unique interpretation. This interpretation is what forms the rest of this chapter from section 4.2 to 4.4.

## 4.2 Gender stereotypes and child sexual abuse by female perpetrators

A number of studies concur that cases of sexual offending by female perpetrators are very low as compared to those perpetrated by men;<sup>174</sup> while girls/women make up the majority of the victims.<sup>175</sup> Whereas the studies may be factual, there is room to question their absolute credibility since there still remains considerably little research on the sexual abuse of children by women<sup>176</sup>. The first studies to ever acknowledge sexual abuse by female offenders only began in the 80's<sup>177</sup> (which is pretty recent taking into consideration how old the subject of sexual abuse is), with serious considerations by other researchers only starting to be made in the mid-90's<sup>178</sup>.

In addition, existing literature on child sexual abuse prevalence and offender profiles is based on statistics collected from a record of incident reports made to official organs such as hospitals, clinics, courts, social services and other government departments.<sup>179</sup> This is problematic because it only indicates the demographics of the reported cases only. There could be many more cases that go unreported due to societal issues such as gender stereotypes that generally disregard the possibility of females being capable of exuding aggressive behaviour.<sup>180</sup> This is one of the problems cited as hindering the identification and reporting of child sexual abuse by women among other “myths”, such as the opinion that women have a low sex-drive hence cannot sexually abuse anyone since sexual abusers commit the crime due to a high

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<sup>174</sup> See N Pereda et al (2009), 'The prevalence of child sexual abuse in community and student samples: A meta-analysis'. *Clinical psychology review*, 29(4), 328-338. See also C Kilmartin & AD Berkowitz (2005), *Sexual assault in context: Teaching college men about gender*. Psychology Press. Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc. p1; J Wihbey (2011), 'Global prevalence of child sexual abuse'. Retrieved on 08/08/2016 from <http://journalistsresource.org/studies/government/criminal-justice/global-prevalence-child-sexual-abuse> and S Kramer (2010), *Discourse and power in the self-perceptions of incarcerated South African female sexual offenders* (Doctoral dissertation) School of Human and Community Development, Faculty of Humanities, University of the Witwatersrand). Retrieved on 08/08/2016 from [http://www.mrc.ac.za/crime/atsa\\_kramer.pdf](http://www.mrc.ac.za/crime/atsa_kramer.pdf)

<sup>175</sup> See P Rogers & M Davies (2007), 'Perceptions of victims and perpetrators in a depicted child sexual abuse case: Gender and age factors'. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence* (22)5, 566

<sup>176</sup> See J Johansson-Love & W Fremouw (2006), 'A critique of the female sexual perpetrator research'. *Aggression and Violent Behaviour*, 11(1), 12-26. See also H Ford (2006), *Women who sexually abuse children*, London: John Wiley.

<sup>177</sup> C Tsopeles et al (2011), 'Review on female sexual offenders: Findings about profile and personality'. *International journal of law and psychiatry*, 34(2), 122.

<sup>178</sup> Ford (n 176 above), 1.

<sup>179</sup> Pereda (n 174 above), 329.

<sup>180</sup> MS Denov (2003), 'The myth of innocence: Sexual scripts and the recognition of child sexual abuse by female perpetrators', *The Journal of sex research*, 312.





sex drive that is uncontrollable.<sup>181</sup>

According to McGee *et al*, the belief that most offenders of rape commit the crime due to overwhelmingly high sexual desire is one of the most commonly endorsed myths in society.<sup>182</sup> Denov points out that some of the possible reasons for the underrepresentation of female sex offending are “traditional sexual scripts” which dismiss the possibility of women carrying out any acts of sexual violence because femininity entails protectiveness, care, and non-sexuality among other things.<sup>183</sup> Evidence of these myths being based on gender stereotypes is undeniable.

Some studies depict some preconceived underlying attitudes or rather perceptions on the profiles of child sexual abuse perpetrators by the authors. For example, a renowned child sexual abuse research expert, Finkelhor states:

Female perpetrators are rare, but of some clinical interest, so they constitute a fourth group of importance. They are a diverse group that include some very isolated mothers, some adolescent girls under pressure to acquire sexual experience, and some women manipulated into joining the abusive activities of their boyfriends.<sup>184</sup>

Based on this paragraph, it can be argued that Finkelhor views women as a vulnerable group that only turns volatile under special circumstances. His choice of words in describing what he calls the ‘few’ cases of women sexual abusers almost makes it sound like he is excusing these female perpetrators because he ordinarily sees them as ‘victims’ of circumstances. Phrases such as “..isolated mothers..”, “..girls under pressure..”, and “women manipulated into joining the abusive activities of their boyfriends....” all have an underlying suggestion that the women who do commit sexual crimes only do so because of circumstantial pressure, otherwise they would not ordinarily do so. The last statement that suggests manipulation by “abusive boyfriends” is even more glaring because it almost endorses the common myth that men are the only ones capable of sexual abuse. Hetherington suggests that adherence to such beliefs is misguided because, it undermines or trivializes child sexual abuse

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<sup>181</sup> H McGee *et al* (2011), ‘Rape and child sexual abuse: what beliefs persist about motives, perpetrators, and survivors?’ *Journal of interpersonal violence*, 3762.

<sup>182</sup> As above, 3581.

<sup>183</sup> Denov (n 180 above), 308.

<sup>184</sup> D Finkelhor (1984), ‘Child Sexual Abuse’ *Childhood and Trauma*, 104.

by women.<sup>185</sup>

Considering the prominence of Finkelhor in the field of child sexual abuse<sup>186</sup>, it is easy for others who refer to his work to not pick up these underlying suggestions of female victimization as anything worthy of note or anything other than factual. This study however, argues that his reasoning is biased as it is based on gender stereotypes. Not only does he rule out the possibility of female sexual offenders being equally to blame for their actions as their male counterparts, but he also seems to underplay some of the social dynamics that play into the reporting and disguise of some of the cases.

Ford, in agreement with studies cited earlier, by McGee *et al* and Denov, refers to some of these dynamics as the *unwillingness*<sup>187</sup> by society to admit that women can defy the stereotypical behaviour that sets them as protectors and nurturers of children, to become child molesters<sup>188</sup>. By this she means that society is deliberately turning a blind eye to the sexual abuse of children by women due to its failure to accept that women can violate their gender stereotypical role as care-givers and custodians of children and do the unimaginable. Ford also states that due to the same denial, researchers have tended to focus on the same aspects, which excuse female sexual offending.<sup>189</sup> For example, they try to find behavioural and psychological problems of the offenders because to them, accepting that a woman of sound mind can commit sexual abuse is a contravention of their expectations for women.<sup>190</sup>

Ferguson & Meehan, agree that female sexual offending in general may be significantly higher than reported/recorded.<sup>191</sup> They argue that it is usually hidden behind the care-giving behaviour of women.<sup>192</sup> By this, they are not exactly endorsing the view that society is ignorant about female sexual offending because it is

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<sup>185</sup> J Hetherton (1999), 'The idealization of women: Its role in the minimization of child sexual abuse by females'. *Child abuse & neglect*, 23(2) p161-174.

<sup>186</sup> See D Finkelhor bio and curriculum vitae on <http://www.unh.edu/ccrc/researchers/finkelhor-david.html> Retrieved on 08/08/2016.

<sup>187</sup> My emphasis.

<sup>188</sup> Ford (n 176 above), 8. See also Hetherton (n 185 above).

<sup>189</sup> Ford (n 176 above), 1.

<sup>190</sup> As above.

<sup>191</sup> See CJ Ferguson & DC Meehan (2005), 'An analysis of females convicted of sex crimes in the state of Florida'. *Journal of child sexual abuse*, 14(1), 75-89.



unwilling to accept that it happens. They seem to suggest that it is hard to detect since it is often concealed in care-giving exercises. It is indeed difficult for a child to decipher that they have been sexually fondled if the fondling happens during normal care-giving times like bath-time.

Going back to the prevalence of female sexual offending, Tsopelas *et al* also agree that female sexual offending is often “under reported, unrecognized or considered ethically more acceptable than male abuse”.<sup>193</sup> This is in unison with a study that was recently carried out by Kramer on South African female sexual offenders. The study established that there is a lot of emphasis on gender constructions when it comes to discourses relating to sexual offenders.<sup>194</sup> According to Kramer’s study, female sexual perpetration is overlooked, refuted or justified in academia, law and psychiatry.<sup>195</sup>

It can be argued that the justification or the overlooking of female sexual perpetration is based on the stereotypical belief that men have a high sex drive hence cannot be sexually victimised since they generally enjoy sex. However, this tends to be based on the assumption that cases of female sexual offending are always heterosexual; whereby males are the victims of these female perpetrators. It cannot be used to explain cases whereby females sexually abuse other females. This justification would also not be appropriate for cases such as mother-son incest.

Although generally, incest of any nature is in itself taboo,<sup>196</sup> the subject of mother-son-incest is considered even more deplorable and unimaginable.<sup>197</sup> It is therefore argued that mother-son-incest is less prevalent than father-daughter-incest.<sup>198</sup> The frequency of parent-to-child incest is however difficult to ascertain, but even more so for cases of mother-son-incest. Researchers struggle to prove the prevalence of the incidents because it is difficult to tell whether it is merely due to its under-reporting based on the

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<sup>192</sup> As above.

<sup>193</sup> Tsopelas et al (n 177 above), 122.

<sup>194</sup> Kramer (n 174 above).

<sup>195</sup> As above.

<sup>196</sup> AM Arkin (1984), ‘A hypothesis concerning the incest taboo’, *Psychoanalytic Review* 71 (3), 375.

<sup>197</sup> I Niehaus (2010), ‘Maternal incest as moral panic: Envisioning futures without fathers in the South African Lowveld’, *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 36 (4), 835.

taboo nature of the subject, or whether it is indeed rare.<sup>199</sup> Needless to say, there are hardly enough studies to refer to considering that female sexual offending is a relatively new subject in research. However, Lawson's critique of the research on cases of mother-son sexual abuse provides some valuable insight into the subject of female sexual offending which is important to the argument in this study<sup>200</sup>. Although it focuses on mother-son sexual abuse alone, it can be applied to female sexual offending in general.

Lawson basically finds that there is insufficient evidence for proving the prevalence of mother-son- sexual abuse in most studies.<sup>201</sup> This is because most of the documented cases from long-term therapeutic treatment are often not reported to child abuse authorities and therefore not included in public statistics; which is what most researchers use as reference when carrying out their surveys.<sup>202</sup> She further points out that although clinical literature does point to the under-reporting of such abuse, it is often criticized for lacking scientific evidence and being difficult to simplify.<sup>203</sup>

Lawson further notes that cultural differences that provide for varying ways of displaying one's affection towards their child(ren) make it difficult to determine what constitutes mother-son sexual abuse; hence causing some cases to go undetected.<sup>204</sup> This goes back to the fluidity of the definition of child sexual abuse in the CRC as highlighted earlier in Chapter 1. Lawson recommends that researchers should opt for qualitative and quantitative methodologies that comprise of medical records as well as life history analyses among other things.<sup>205</sup>

Lawson's findings are in accordance with the view maintained in this study, which argues that cases of child sexual abuse by women; especially of the boy child may not necessarily be as rare as currently reported. They may just be either going

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<sup>198</sup> Arkin (n 196 above), 375.

<sup>199</sup> See C Lawson (1993), 'Mother-son sexual abuse: rare or underreported? A critique of the research'. *Child Abuse & Neglect*, 17(2), 261-269.

<sup>200</sup> As above.

<sup>201</sup> As above.

<sup>202</sup> As above.

<sup>203</sup> As above.

<sup>204</sup> As above.

<sup>205</sup> As above.

undetected or going unreported due to gender stereotypes. The fact that when women commit sexual offenses they are somewhat pardoned and deemed to be mentally unfit or said to be acting under the influence of an exploitative male partner is a clear demonstration of gender stereotypes at play.

In Zimbabwe, a recent case of a woman who sexually harassed her own brother got the presiding judge to refer the woman to a doctor for psychological evaluation first before anything else because she *suspected*<sup>206</sup> that the woman was mentally ill.<sup>207</sup> The issue of how gender stereotypes can influence the adjudication of sexual crimes is something that would be beneficial in establishing how far-reaching the effects of gender stereotypes go. However, it is beyond the scope of this study and therefore will not be explored at this point.

Below is a discussion on how gender stereotypes can influence the psychological development of young boys as they grow older and how this may lead to the masking of their sexual abuse by both men and women, and consequently the ‘creation of child sexual abusers’.

### **4.3 Gender stereotypes and the psychological development of boys, in view of their masculinity and sexuality**

In Chapter 3, it was explained during the unpacking of gender stereotypes, that boys are generally brought up differently from girls and that there is a general ‘importance’ attached to being male, especially a heterosexual male who is in touch with his masculinity. The impact of this importance was further discussed in view of how it affects those that ‘fail’ to meet the prescribed version of masculinity.

In this section, a review of literature will be used to corroborate the link of this importance to the development of boys’ sexual attitudes, their view of the opposite sex and the way in which they respond to sexual abuse. The review will focus on two aspects as follows:

- Boys as victims of sexual abuse, and

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<sup>206</sup> My emphasis.

<sup>207</sup> See <http://nehandaradio.com/2014/09/03/sister-attempts-to-bed-brother/> See also <http://www.southerneye.co.zw/2014/06/17/sister-hell-woman-demands-sex-brother/> Retrieved on 06/08/2016.

- Boys who grow into child sexual abusers in their adult life.

It is important to analyse these two aspects because it is from understanding the impact of gender stereotypes on boys' reaction to sexual abuse and the 'creation' of child sexual abusers that the overall impact of these stereotypes on the continuation of child sexual abuse can be fairly assessed.

### 4.3.1 Boys as victims of sexual abuse

Research has historically claimed that male sexual abuse is a rare phenomenon.<sup>208</sup> However, recent studies have started to consider the fact that there may actually be a lot of cases that are going unreported due to various reasons.<sup>209</sup> Many of these reasons have to do with gender stereotypes and the taboo nature of homosexuality.<sup>210</sup> Where a male person is sexually abused by a female; gender stereotypes can influence how they will react to such abuse, if at all they consider it as abuse.<sup>211</sup> Whereas the sexual abuse of a male by another male may be covered up due to the victim's shame to disclose the abuse for fear of being labelled as a homosexual.<sup>212</sup>

Finkelhor is generally of the view that the prevalence of male child sexual abuse is not very high.<sup>213</sup> He suggests that males are generally the perpetrators and not the victims of sexual violations.<sup>214</sup> However, he does acknowledge that there are cases of male child sexual abuse which go unreported.<sup>215</sup> He just doesn't seem to consider them numerous enough to match the prevalence of girl child sexual abuse.<sup>216</sup> He states that boys are unlikely to disclose sexual abuse because of "a peer ethic of being independent" and to them admitting to victimization is something only girls do.<sup>217</sup> He further explains that boys are "concerned with the loss of masculine reputation and the stigma of homosexuality that would go along with the admission of

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<sup>208</sup> See D Finkelhor (1994), 'The international epidemiology of child sexual abuse.' *Child abuse & neglect*, 18(5), 409-417.

<sup>209</sup> See Pereda n (174) above.

<sup>210</sup> J Wihbey (2011), 'Global prevalence of child sexual abuse'. Retrieved on 08/08/2016 from <http://journalistsresource.org/studies/government/criminal-justice/global-prevalence-child-sexual-abuse>

<sup>211</sup> As above.

<sup>212</sup> As above.

<sup>213</sup> Finkelhor (n 208 above), 102.

<sup>214</sup> As above.

<sup>215</sup> As above.

<sup>216</sup> As above.

<sup>217</sup> As above.

having been victimized.”<sup>218</sup>

The same is agreed by Gartner who suggests that masculine gender expectations pressure boys into believing that they cannot be victims because they are supposed to be the initiators of sex.<sup>219</sup> He adds that boys are encouraged to be resilient, and not too emotional; something that society uses to define masculinity.<sup>220</sup> All of this can influence the way in which boys develop psychologically in terms of affirming their masculinity in order to appear as if they are in control of a situation.<sup>221</sup>

The fact that Finkelhor accepts that boy sexual abuse is underreported and even seems to know some of the reasons yet he stills concludes that it is a rare phenomenon based on reported cases is an indication of the inadequateness of current research on child sexual abuse. Pereda made the observation that “the secrecy” and “shame” surrounding child sexual abuse, coupled with the victims’ young age and “their dependence upon adults mean that very few victims come forward at the time of abuse, it therefore being highly probable that official statistics underestimate the true extent of the problem.”<sup>222</sup>

Although Pereda’s observation was a holistic one, when analysed in light of a study by O’Leary *et al*, it would mean that official statistics do not only underestimate the extent of the problem but also the prevalence of boys’ sexual abuse. O’Leary *et al* tested some hypotheses from clinical literature which purported that males are more likely to remain silent if they suffer any sexual abuse as compared to females.<sup>223</sup> They confirmed that boys tend not to discuss any sexual abuse at the time it occurs, and if they eventually do discuss it, they generally take longer to do so than females.<sup>224</sup>

This takes us back to the discussion on theories which was started in Chapter 2. It

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<sup>218</sup> As above.

<sup>219</sup> R B Gartner (2011), ‘Talking about sexually abused boys and the men they become,’ Retrieved on 08/08/2016 from <https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/psychoanalysis-30/201101/talking-about-sexually-abused-boys-and-the-men-they-become>

<sup>220</sup> As above.

<sup>221</sup> As above.

<sup>222</sup> Pereda n (174) above, 328.

<sup>223</sup> See P J O’Leary et al (2008), ‘Gender differences in silencing following childhood sexual abuse’. *Journal of child sexual abuse*, 17(2).

<sup>224</sup> As above, 134.





was found, in Chapter 2, that socialization plays a role in the development of one's character. This means socialization has a major role in influencing young boys' response to child sexual abuse. Based on the discussion above, literature suggests that gender stereotypes have a negative impact on the disclosure of sexual abuse incidents by boy children. This can be concluded to mean that gender stereotypes have a negative influence on the psychological development of boys. This is in the sense that boys end up feeling pressurised to meet society's expectations of them as the 'stronger' and more 'important' sex.

In Chapter 3 it was found that gender stereotypes are a product of how children are raised. As such, Bandura's theory, which suggests that learning occurs through a cognitive process which takes place within a social setting<sup>225</sup> offers the answer to why boys develop attitudes of fear and shame when it comes to disclosing matters of sexual abuse. If society is defined by gender stereotypes, it means children will simply learn from observing those around them and further perpetuate these stereotypes.

Another angle to look at it from is based on Connell's theory of hegemonic masculinity.<sup>226</sup> Connell believes that although most societies are highly patriarchal, there is subjugation of some males based on issues such as race, class, age, sexual orientation or power.<sup>227</sup> Using this observation to reflect on the findings from literature above; where it was found that there is little written on the sexual abuse of boys, and that boys' sexual abuse is generally more under-reported than girls, it can be argued that boys are being neglected in the quest for protection from child sexual abuse. This is based on the assumption that their abuse is rare; a conclusion based on them being male; which has connotations of gender stereotypes.

However, boy children, by virtue of being young in age, have no power, especially over older people, just like young girls. This means that they can be equally manipulated by older girls or women; although they will most likely choose to remain silent for fear of coming across as weak. Couple that with the fact that homosexuality

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<sup>225</sup> Bandura, (n 79 above).

<sup>226</sup> Connell (n 76 above).

<sup>227</sup> As above.

is frowned upon, then young boys are even more powerless to report sexual abuse by another male person.

It can therefore be argued that where research and protection from sexual abuse is concerned, young boys are being side-lined by society, in the same manner that women are generally side-lined in everything, because of society's expectations and view of them as the 'stronger sex' compared to girls. Yet in actual fact their young age renders them to be in a state of powerlessness. It is unimaginable for a boy of 4 years to be more powerful than a girl of 14 years. But as previously stated, because boys belong to a sex group that is historically known to be at an advantage over girls; there is little attention paid to the power-embroiled struggles that they face every day. Many other factors driven by gender stereotypes also affect their psychological development.

The discussion below will focus on just how far gender stereotypes go in shaping young boys' psychological development in as far as the development of their sexual attitudes.

#### **4.3.2 Boys who become child sexual abusers in their adult life**

In this section there are two aspects that will be analysed:

- Boy sexual abuse victims and the possibility of them becoming child sexual abusers later in life;
- The development of sexual attitudes in young boys that lead to sexual offending when they become men.

At the beginning of this research, the researcher sought to establish the possibility that men may indeed be the most prevalent child sexual abusers due to the fact that they hardly get redress for their own sexual abuse during childhood, which obviously would result from them failing to disclose the abuse for all the reasons mentioned above. However, this hypothesis could not be fully tested because research into the reality of victims of child sexual abuse growing into child sexual abusers is inconclusive.<sup>228</sup>

Studies have been conducted to establish the prevalence of 'victim-turned-abuser'

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<sup>228</sup> P Bouvier (2003) Child sexual abuse: vicious circles of fate or paths to resilience? *The Lancet* 361, 446.

situations of child sexual abuse with varying results.<sup>229</sup> Some have found that there is little evidence supporting the link between childhood sexual abuse experiences with sexual offending later in life, while others suggest that the possibility is significantly high especially if victims are male.<sup>230</sup> There is need for further research in this area in order to make a more conclusive assessment of the contribution of gender stereotypes to the perpetuation of sexual offending by men based on their own childhood sexual abuse experiences.

However, it still remains important to go back to the childhood of men who sexually abuse children in order to ascertain why men make up the largest population of child sexual offenders, if indeed the current statistics are reflective of the actual situation. This is because these men's cognitive development during childhood has a lot to do with the people they become in their adulthood. In that regard, if men are generally brought up (as children) to believe that they are more important than the opposite sex; that they should command some authority over women, and that their sexuality is also more important and uncontrollable, as discussed in Chapter 3, this can affect how they will treat those considered weaker than them.

According to Ward & Keenan, in the theory of uncontrollability, child sexual abusers believe that their actions are difficult to control and similarly, that their sexual urges are difficult to suppress.<sup>231</sup> They also believe that they are superior and hence can exercise their will upon others, which includes having their sexual needs met.<sup>232</sup> Gannon & Polaschek explain that these beliefs are cognitive *distortions*<sup>233</sup> created from childhood.<sup>234</sup> If these factors are to be considered within the framework of gender stereotypes, it can be argued that these distortions come about as a result of social conditioning, based on gender stereotypes.

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<sup>229</sup> See G Ryan (2002), 'Victims who on to victimize others: no simple explanations' Child Abuse & Neglect 26, 891-892.

<sup>230</sup> See D Finkelhor et al (1990), 'Sexual abuse in a national survey of adult men and women: Prevalence, characteristic, and risk factors'. Child Abuse and Neglect 14, 19-28, I Lambie et al (2002) Resiliency in the victim-offender cycle in male sexual abuse'. Sexual abuse: A journal of research and treatment 14 (1), 31-48, and D Salter et al (2003), 'Development of sexually abusive behaviour in sexually victimised males: a longitudinal study'. Lancet 361, 471-476. See also Bouvier (n 228 above), 446.

<sup>231</sup> Ward & Keenan (n 44 above), 287.

<sup>232</sup> As above.

<sup>233</sup> My emphasis.

<sup>234</sup> See TA Gannon and DLL Polaschek (2006), 'Cognitive distortions in child molesters: A re-examination of key theories and research'. Clinical Psychology Review, 26, 1000-1019.

The belief that sexual abusers have; that they cannot control their sexual urges, is closely related to a common gender-stereotypical myth which was mentioned earlier, which suggests that men have a very strong desire for sex which is difficult to control. In terms of these offenders feeling as if they have a right to exercise their will over others, this comes from a point of them having a sense of entitlement, emanating subconsciously from deep within their psyche.<sup>235</sup> This also makes them not see anything wrong with engaging in sexual activities with minors.<sup>236</sup>

Kilmartin & Berkowitz reinforce this view by stating that, the “culture of masculinity” is a “social context that supports sexual assault”.<sup>237</sup> They single out psychological and social effects of this culture which they say result in the pressure by males to shun “feminine behaviours, dominate women, take risks, be sexual conquerors, and eschew any appearance of dependence, get the job done, and never take “no” for an answer” as some of the major reasons why men commit sexual assault.<sup>238</sup>

This observation when analysed through the lens of the theory of social learning and the two child molesters’ implicit theories mentioned in chapter 2, could be the reason for the present state of child sexual offender profiles, which has more men than women. If gender stereotypes expect women to be gentle and kind and girls are socialized into this behaviour, chances are that this is the reason that they offend less if indeed female sexual offenders are not very prevalent. The opposite applies to men. Having said that, the role played by gender stereotypes in creating attitudes that lead to the development of sexual offending behaviour cannot be overstated. This can be corroborated by other studies that have found a connection between gender socialization and the sexual abuse of women.<sup>239</sup>

According to the theory of social learning, people condition their behaviour according

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<sup>235</sup> 172 F Rush (1980), ‘Best Kept Secret - Sexual Abuse of Children. Retrieved on 08/08/2016 from <http://www.ncjrs.gov/App/publications/abstract.aspx?ID=72791>

<sup>236</sup> As above.

<sup>237</sup> Kilmartin & Berkowitz (n 174 above), 2.

<sup>238</sup> As above.

<sup>239</sup> See D Lisak, ‘Male gender socialization and the perpetration of sexual abuse’, in RF Levant & GR Brooks (eds) (1997), *Men and sex: New psychological perspectives*. New York: John Wiley and Sons p156-177. See also L Lackie & de Man AF (1997) Correlates of sexual aggression among male university students. *Sex Roles*, 37 (5/6) p451-457.



to their socialization. In Chapter 3 it was established that gender stereotypes are responsible for the socialization of boy children to identify with tough masculinity; which endorses heterosexuality, promiscuity and aggression among other things. Kilmartin & Berkowitz also mention this stereotypical childhood socialization of boys and “stereotypical media images” in their analysis of how gender awareness could contribute positively in the reduction of child sexual abuse cases.<sup>240</sup>

All of the factors mentioned above as hindering the reporting of child abuse by boys and fuelling the creation of destructive sexual attitudes in them are arguably attributed to gender stereotypes in more ways than one.

#### **4.4 Conclusion**

In this chapter, a review of literature found that gender stereotypes are allowing the sexual abuse of children by women to go unreported and even undetected. This was found to be mainly due to the belief that women are nurturers by nature, hence cannot harm children. A review of literature demonstrated that there is need to improve research methods in order to unearth as many cases of child sexual abuse by women as possible, including mother-son-incest.

It was also established that boy victims of female sexual abuse do not ordinarily disclose such abuse based on gender stereotypes which ‘force’ them to act tough and pretend that they were in control of the situation for fear of being labelled weak. Additionally, it was found that boys who are sexually abused by other males hide the abuse for fear of being labelled gay and being victimized as a result. The victimization of gay people was traced back to gender stereotypes that expect men to be masculine and heterosexual.

Lastly, the role of gender stereotypes in ‘creating’ child sexual abusers was analysed and it was found that, to a large extent, the attitudes of male sexual offenders are developed from the time they are children, during which they develop a sense of entitlement and also believe in their incapability to control their actions. This was also attributed to gender stereotypes.

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<sup>240</sup> Kilmartin & Berkowitz (n 174 above), 4.



## Chapter 5

# International and regional human rights law on gender stereotypes

### 5.1 Introduction

International and regional human rights law recognizes harmful gender stereotyping as a violation of human rights and a dominant source of discrimination.<sup>241</sup> The law places a legal obligation on governments to eliminate discrimination against both men and women in all areas of their lives.<sup>242</sup> This obligation puts a responsibility on States to take measures to address gender stereotypes in all spheres of life, and to refrain from stereotyping.<sup>243</sup>

This chapter will discuss some of the regional and international human rights instruments that have provisions to address gender stereotypes. In addition, it will briefly highlight how these have been incorporated into the domestic legislation of two Southern African countries; South Africa and Zimbabwe. Afterwards, a brief overview and critique of some of the measures that have been taken by the two countries to address child sexual abuse as reported in their state reports to the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child will be given. This will be to identify some strengths and weaknesses; as well as opportunities for addressing gender stereotypes in the fight against child sexual abuse.

### 5.2. International human rights law addressing gender stereotypes

Although most human rights instruments refer to gender stereotypes in view of their impact on the realization of women and girls' socio-economic rights such as the right to health, the right to education and the right to gainful employment; there are provisions that are found in these instruments that speak to the non-discrimination of all people whether male or female. The United Nations recognizes that human rights treaty bodies that "recognise the rights to non-discrimination and equality – and through them, other rights and freedoms – contain an implied obligation to address

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<sup>241</sup> OHCHR Commissioned Report (2013) Gender stereotyping as a human rights violation. Retrieved on 26/09/2016 from <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Women/WRGS/Pages/GenderStereotypes.aspx>

<sup>242</sup> Gender Stereotypes/stereotyping: Retrieved on 27/09/2016 from <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Women/WRGS/Pages/GenderStereotypes.aspx>

harmful stereotypes and wrongful stereotyping.”<sup>244</sup> This caters for the need to address gender stereotyping, since it has been established in Chapter 3 that gender stereotyping can cause harm to some groups of people; and in Chapter 4 it was particularly established that they are responsible for the pressure felt by young boys to conform to society’s expectations for them to display strength and stamina all the time, leading to them failing to reveal cases of sexual abuse in fear of being ridiculed or victimized.

The overarching treaty which speaks to the right to freedom from discrimination is the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) which states in Article 1 that every individual has the right to equality.<sup>245</sup> Article 2 also refers to individuals’ right to freedom from discrimination.<sup>246</sup> Focusing on children particularly is the Convention on the Rights of a Child (CRC). Article 2 of the CRC speaks on non-discrimination of children. It says that the Convention applies to all children despite their race, religion, language, culture or sex among other things.<sup>247</sup> It also states in Article 4, which speaks about the protection of rights, that it is the responsibility of governments to take all possible action to ensure that all children’s rights are respected, protected and fulfilled.<sup>248</sup>

Article 19 provides for the protection of children from all forms of violence: to be protected from being hurt and mistreated, physically or mentally.<sup>249</sup> Article 34 refers particularly to the right of all children to be protected from all forms of sexual exploitation and abuse<sup>250</sup> and lastly Article 36 adds that children should be protected from any activity that takes advantage of them or could harm their welfare and development.<sup>251</sup> All these provisions are linked to the need to protect all children, regardless of their sex, from child sexual abuse.

In terms of reference to stereotypes in particular, there are human rights instruments

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<sup>243</sup> As above.

<sup>244</sup> OHCHR Commissioned Report (n 241 above).

<sup>245</sup> Art 1 UDHR.

<sup>246</sup> Art 2 UDHR.

<sup>247</sup> Art 2 CRC.

<sup>248</sup> Art 4 CRC.

<sup>249</sup> Art 19 CRC.

<sup>250</sup> Art 34 CRC.

<sup>251</sup> Art 36 CRC.



that make a direct reference to gender stereotypes such as The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), which stipulates in article 5 that, “State Parties shall take all appropriate measures to modify the social and cultural patterns of conduct of men and women, with a view to achieving the elimination of prejudices and customs and all other practices which are based on the idea of the inferiority or the superiority of either of the sexes or on stereotyped roles for men and women.”<sup>252</sup> CEDAW has progressively demonstrated the serious effects of gender stereotypes and gender stereotyping over the years.<sup>253</sup> Some of the recommendations to be made in the next chapter will be based on the premise of Article 5 of CEDAW as stated above.

Another treaty which addresses harmful stereotypes and the practice of stereotyping is the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD). The CRPD, in article 8(1) (b) states that State Parties must “undertake to adopt immediate, effective and appropriate measures: to combat stereotypes, prejudices and harmful practices relating to persons with disabilities, including those based on sex and age, in all areas of life.”<sup>254</sup>

### **5.3 Regional human rights law addressing gender stereotypes**

At regional level, the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights (ACHPR), also known as the Banjul Charter of the African Union, in Article 2 states that “Every individual shall be entitled to the enjoyment of the rights and freedoms recognised and guaranteed in the present Charter without distinction of any kind such as race, ethnic group, colour, sex,<sup>255</sup> language, religion, political or any other opinion, national and social origin, fortune, birth or other status.”<sup>256</sup>

Concerning children, the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC), also known as the African Children’s Charter, in Article 3 speaks of the right to non-discrimination. It says that every child is entitled to the enjoyment of the rights and freedoms stipulated in the Charter regardless of the child’s sex, language,

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<sup>252</sup> Art 5 CEDAW.

<sup>253</sup> OHCHR Commissioned Report (n 241 above).

<sup>254</sup> Art 8(1) (b) CRPD.

<sup>255</sup> My emphasis.

national and social origin, among other things.<sup>257</sup> Article 16 refers to the protection against child abuse and torture which provides for the protection of all children from sexual abuse<sup>258</sup> regardless of their sex as stipulated by Article 3 above.

The Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa also referred to as the Maputo Protocol, in Article 2(2), provides for State parties to "commit to the modification of social and cultural patterns of conduct of women and men through public education, information, education and communication strategies, with a view to achieving the elimination of harmful cultural and traditional practices and all other practices which are based on the idea of the inferiority or the superiority of *either of the sexes*<sup>259</sup>, or on stereotyped roles for women and men."<sup>260</sup> This is another important provision in the law that will be referenced in the recommendations to follow in Chapter 6.

#### **5.4 Domestication of international and regional human rights instruments**

All the above special mechanisms have given some impetus to the discussion of gender stereotyping on the international human rights agenda; which has helped to encourage some State parties to domesticate the instruments into their local legislation. For example, the South African Constitution has a Bill of Rights which provides for equality among all people. In Chapter 2(3), the South African Bill of Rights places a responsibility on the government to ensure that it does not "unfairly discriminate directly or indirectly against anyone on one or more grounds, including race, gender and sex among other things."<sup>261</sup>

It further places an obligation on all people residing in the country to abstain from "unfairly discriminat[ing] directly or indirectly against anyone on one or more grounds in terms of subsection (3)".<sup>262</sup> It also calls for the enactment of national legislation

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<sup>256</sup> Art 2 ACHPR.

<sup>257</sup> Art 3 ACRWC.

<sup>258</sup> Art 16 ACRWC.

<sup>259</sup> My emphasis.

<sup>260</sup> Art 2(2) Maputo Protocol.

<sup>261</sup> Chapter 2(3) RSA Constitution (1994).

<sup>262</sup> As above.

that prevents or prohibits unfair discrimination.<sup>263</sup> Subsection (5) provides some room for fair discrimination on one or more of the grounds listed in subsection (3).<sup>264</sup> However, it is the argument of this study that the neglect of boys in addressing matters of child sexual abuse is based on negative gender stereotypes and violates the right of many boy children to be protected against all forms of violence and abuse, hence it is unfair discrimination.

Zimbabwe similarly has a Declaration of Rights in its new Constitution of 2013, which stipulates, in Chapter 4, Part (2), under Section 56, the right of individuals to equality and non-discrimination.<sup>265</sup> In sub-section (2) of Section 56, the Constitution states that women and men have the right to equal treatment.<sup>266</sup> In subsection (3) it goes on to say that “every person has the right not to be treated in an unfairly discriminatory manner on such grounds as their....sex....”<sup>267</sup> Sub-section 4 describes what constitutes unfair discrimination and sub-section 5 gives a provision for fair discrimination;<sup>268</sup> in a manner much similar to the provision in the South African Bill of Rights Chapter 2(3)(5). Unlike the South African Bill of Rights, The Zimbabwean Declaration of Rights however does not place an obligation on the state to enact national legislation that prohibits unfair discrimination. This loophole could allow negative stereotyping to prevail.

The Zimbabwean Constitution, in Chapter 2 Section 17, states that the state must promote full gender balance in society and must in particular take the measures to rectify gender discrimination and imbalances.<sup>269</sup> Section 19 (2) Sub-section (c) puts an obligation on the state to adopt reasonable policies and measures to ensure that all children are protected from neglect or any form of abuse.<sup>270</sup>

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<sup>263</sup> Chapter 2(4) RSA Constitution (1994).

<sup>264</sup> Chapter 2(5) RSA Constitution (1994).

<sup>265</sup> Chapter 4(2) 56 Constitution of Zimbabwe Amendment No. 20, (2013).

<sup>266</sup> As above.

<sup>267</sup> As above.

<sup>268</sup> As above.

<sup>269</sup> Chapter 2 (17) 56 Constitution of Zimbabwe Amendment No. 20, (2013).

<sup>270</sup> Chapter 19 (2) 56 Constitution of Zimbabwe Amendment No. 20, (2013).

It is clear in the provisions outlined in the two Constitutions of South Africa and Zimbabwe that there is an effort to address issues of discrimination. However, there is need for this effort as presented in the Constitutions, to actually translate into real legislation and policies that are compliant with the normative standards of the various international treaties that the two States are party to. The section below looks at two State reports made by South Africa and Zimbabwe respectively, to the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACERWC). This is to analyse some of the measures that the two countries have taken to tackle child sexual abuse; with a view to see how the role played by gender stereotypes fits into some of these measures.

### **5.5 An analysis of the measures taken by South Africa and Zimbabwe to address child sexual abuse**

The ACERWC provides in Article 43 that African Union (AU) Member States should submit their first State Party Reports within two years of ratification of the ACRWC and Periodic Reports on the implementation of the ACRW C every three years.<sup>271</sup> However many Party States have not adhered to this reporting principle and as such the reports analysed here by South Africa and Zimbabwe are initial reports made to the Committee as these were the only available reports at the time of the research. The South African report however, is a combination of the initial report and three subsequent periodic reports, whereas the report of Zimbabwe is an update of events that have taken place since its Common Core Document (HRI/CORE/1Add.55) in 1995. This update report was submitted in 2013.

The reports that State Parties submit to the ACERWC are what the Committee uses to evaluate whether State Parties are fulfilling the commitment they made by ratifying the ACRWC through the translation of the Charter into programs, laws and policies that improve the realization of children's rights.

#### **5.5.1 Zimbabwe's report<sup>272</sup>**

Zimbabwe has taken some strides in the implementation of common substantive

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<sup>271</sup>Art 43 ACERWC.

<sup>272</sup> Initial Report of the Government of the Republic of Zimbabwe under the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (2013).



human rights provisions that guarantee non-discrimination and equality of all people before the law. It is notable that this is now also extended to children, since the coming into force of the country's new Constitution in 2013. Before the new constitution, children's rights were not laid out in the constitution.<sup>273</sup> The new Constitution authorizes the Supreme Court to handle allegations of violations of the Declaration of Rights made under the Constitution, with complimentary assistance from The Human Rights Commission which investigates human rights violations.<sup>274</sup> These two mechanisms are there to ensure that human rights are not only implemented but enforced.<sup>275</sup> The New Constitution also provides for the establishment of the Gender Commission to monitor matters around gender equality, including investigating alleged violations gender-related rights and to conduct research into gender-related issues among other duties.<sup>276</sup>

In terms of International human rights instruments that relate to children, Zimbabwe is party to the CRC and its Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography, while at regional level the country is party to the ACRWC.<sup>277</sup> It is noteworthy that Zimbabwe's new Constitution in terms of section 34, places an obligation on the State to make sure that all international conventions, treaties and agreements to which the country is party to are incorporated into domestic law.<sup>278</sup> To this effect, the government of Zimbabwe has enacted several laws that promote the rights and welfare of children.<sup>279</sup>

The country's Children's Act, Domestic Violence Act and the Criminal Law (Codification and Reform) Act, are most relevant to the protection of all children from sexual abuse. The Children's Act provides for the general welfare of children; which includes their protection from physical and mental violence, neglect, and abuse among

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<sup>273</sup> R Muchenje (2015), Children's rights in Zimbabwe: An Analysis of how the State seeks to protect Children's Rights: A legal perspective. Retrieved on 07/10/2016 from <http://www.jesuitszimbabwe.co.zw/index.php/2015-01-05-16-44-03/mukai-vukani/181-2014/mukai-vukani-no-67/483-children-s-rights-in-zimbabwe-an-analysis-of-how-the-state-seeks-to-protect-children-s-rights>

<sup>274</sup> Zimbabwe's State Report (n 272 above), 12.

<sup>275</sup> As above.

<sup>276</sup> As above, 19.

<sup>277</sup> As above.

<sup>278</sup> As above, 14

<sup>279</sup> As above.

other things.<sup>280</sup> The Domestic Violence Act also protects children from harmful cultural practices and mostly focuses on the protection of the girl child from discriminatory customs that degrade women; “such as forced virginity testing, female genital mutilation, pledging of women and girls for purposes of appeasing spirits, abduction, child marriages, forced marriages, forced wife inheritance and other such practices.”<sup>281</sup> However, the law can be interpreted to represent boys as well since it refers to domestic violence against women and children.

The Criminal Law (Codification and Reform) Act under Section 70, provides that any person who has sexual intercourse with a person below the age of sixteen (16) years, with or without their consent, shall be charged with rape or aggravated indecent assault or indecent assault.<sup>282</sup> The Act as such has widened the scope of sexual offences, thereby offering more protection to *children of either sex*<sup>283</sup> something that addresses some of the concerns raised in this study. It is commendable that the Act refers to offering protection to children of either sex and that it also offers protection to mentally challenged children from sexual exploitation.

In addition to enacting laws that protect children from sexual abuse, the government of Zimbabwe has adopted a “Multi-Sectoral Response against Sexual Violence of Children” which involves members of the Judicial Services Commission, Police, Education, Health, Social Services and a number of child-centred private voluntary organizations.<sup>284</sup> This is also quite a positive move as it does not only limit child sexual abuse response to the justice system but involves other sectors as well. It is in keeping with the call for a multi-disciplinary approach to the study of and response to child sexual abuse that was highlighted in this study.

Zimbabwe also runs some capacity building and awareness-raising programmes in schools and communities on the subject of child abuse and the preventative measures.<sup>285</sup> These programmes are a great initiative because they could also be used for awareness raising around the impact of gender stereotyping on the spread of

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<sup>280</sup> As above.

<sup>281</sup> As above, 15.

<sup>282</sup> As above, 14.

<sup>283</sup> My emphasis.

<sup>284</sup> Zimbabwe’s State Report (n 272 above), 16.



child sexual abuse as well. The government has also put some additional structures in place that include health institutions and victim-friendly units in the police stations, to provide survivors of sexual abuse with counselling, forensic examination, treatment of sexually transmitted infections and treatment for prevention of pregnancy.<sup>286</sup> The report also states that the government is in the process of establishing “child sensitive” survivor friendly clinics within the institutions.<sup>287</sup> At the time of the report four survivor friendly clinics had already been set up.<sup>288</sup>

Of particular interest to this study is the implementation of gender clubs in schools by the government; through the Ministry of Women Affairs, Gender and Community Development.<sup>289</sup> The report says, “These clubs are guided safe platforms created to allow the girl child/ young woman and boy child /young man to openly learn, share and discuss issues they face and the obstacles encountered in achieving their individual child rights.”<sup>290</sup> The establishment of such clubs is a great initiative that can be used towards the stamping out of gender stereotypes as well because the environment cultivates mutual respect and mutual understanding between boys and girls.

Other notable achievements made by Zimbabwe, which also benefit the effort to address child sexual abuse, include programmes such as the National Programme of Action for Children (NPAC), established in 1992 following the ratification of the CRC to coordinate, implement, monitor and evaluate children’s rights;<sup>291</sup> and the establishment of victim-friendly units in police stations, victim friendly courts that accommodate vulnerable victims and allow the use of “anatomically correct dolls for child survivors and witnesses” who may have difficulty in explaining their case.<sup>292</sup>

This victim friendly exercise also allows the provision of witness expenses by government; in camera trial; as well as allowing judicial staff to behave less formally

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<sup>285</sup> As above, 33.

<sup>286</sup> Zimbabwe’s State Report (n 272 above), 33.

<sup>287</sup> As above.

<sup>288</sup> As above.

<sup>289</sup> Zimbabwe’s State Report (n 272 above), 16.

<sup>290</sup> As above.

<sup>291</sup> As above.

<sup>292</sup> Zimbabwe’s State Report (n 272 above), 33.



before and during trial.<sup>293</sup>

In terms of policies, the country has a Child Rights Policy which is an initiative to improve coordination, implementation, monitoring, evaluation and reporting on international and regional children's rights instruments. It also has the National Gender Policy launched in 2004, which seeks to mainstream gender into all sectors and to promote equal advancement of women and men, as well as girls and boys.<sup>294</sup> This initiative can also be crucial to the cause of eradicating gender stereotypes.

It can be concluded that Zimbabwe as a State has played and continues to play a great role in the protection of children's rights, in view of sexual abuse, especially where the law is concerned. However, programme implementation may be hampered by the turbulent economic conditions prevailing in the country; hence policies and programs may not be as effective if not being implemented adequately. There are quite a number of initiatives made by the government to address gender issues and child sexual abuse separately; which in view of the findings of this research, could be made a combined effort to stamp out gender stereotypes for the benefit of both boys and girls, unlike the current situation where the law and policies speak to the protection of all children regardless of sex; but actual programmes, especially regarding gender, are inclined towards the realisation of the rights of the girl child mostly.

### **5.5.2 South Africa's report<sup>295</sup>**

South Africa ratified the CRWC in 2000 and its Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Pornography (OPSC) in 2003.<sup>296</sup> Since then the country has enacted and amended several legislation to ensure the protection of children's rights.<sup>297</sup> Among these is the Criminal Law Amendment (Sexual Offences and Related Matters) Act of 2007 (herein after referred to as the Sexual Offences Act).<sup>298</sup> The benefit of this Act is that it embraces a multidisciplinary approach to

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<sup>293</sup> Zimbabwe's State Report (n 272 above), 33.

<sup>294</sup> As above.

<sup>295</sup> South Africa's Initial Country Report on the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child Reporting period: January 2000 – April 2013

<sup>296</sup> South Africa's State Report (n 295 above), 13.

<sup>297</sup> As above. To its credit, South Africa, at the time of the report, had reviewed at least seven legal frameworks impacting on children's rights, and this includes laws governing sexual offences. The review was aimed at aligning the country's legislation on child rights with the provisions of the ACRWC.

<sup>298</sup> South Africa's State Report (n 295 above), 15.



service delivery and also expands the protection of children against sexual violence, abuse and exploitation just like in Zimbabwe's case. The report clearly states that the Act has increased the legal minimum age of consent for sex for *both boys and girls*,<sup>299</sup> which is a clear indication that boys need not be left behind in the protection of children from sexual abuse.

The sexual abuse of children is addressed in Chapter 3 of the Sexual Offences Act which deals with issues such as rape, sexual exploitation, sexual grooming, child pornography and child prostitution. The Act provides for the severe punishment of those who commit crimes related to any of the above and also seeks to cater to the child victim through provision of care and protection.<sup>300</sup> Another Act which also guarantees the protection of children from all forms of abuse, neglect and exploitation; and which seeks to give children access to justice after being victimized, is the Children's Act which came into force in 2005 (as amended).<sup>301</sup> According to Section 42 of the Children's Act, every magistrate's court is a Children's Court; and at the time of the report there were 384 such courts in the country.<sup>302</sup>

The law also provides for accommodative measures to support children who participate in court proceedings.<sup>303</sup> Some of these measures include child-friendly judicial procedures such as "appropriate questioning techniques for children in general and, in particular, for children with disabilities, traumatised children, and very young children."<sup>304</sup> Additionally, the Criminal Procedure Act of 1977 permits the use of an intermediary who gives evidence supporting child witnesses.<sup>305</sup> There are efforts to accommodate children with disabilities through the provision of accessible courts and sign language interpreters<sup>306</sup> which is a good indication of non-discrimination based on disability.

The Domestic Violence Act of 1998 is another law that caters for the protection of

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<sup>299</sup> My emphasis.

<sup>300</sup> South Africa's State Report (n 295 above), 9.

<sup>301</sup> As above.

<sup>302</sup> As above, 47.

<sup>303</sup> As above.

<sup>304</sup> As above.

<sup>305</sup> South Africa's State Report (n 295 above), 47.

<sup>306</sup> As above.



children against domestic violence; whose definition includes acts of sexual abuse.<sup>307</sup> The Act is commended for allowing children to apply for a protection order against an abuser, even without the help of a parent or a guardian.<sup>308</sup> This is commendable because in some cases it is the parent/guardian who is the abuser; so this provision makes it easier for the child to report such matters and get the protection they need. At the time the report was written, South Africa had developed a Protection from Harassment Bill (2010) which was passed into law in 2011.<sup>309</sup> The purpose of the Act is to protect vulnerable witnesses, including child witnesses from being harassed by their perpetrator, should the perpetrator be related to them.<sup>310</sup>

Like Zimbabwe, South Africa also has a national human rights institution in the form of the South African Human Rights Commission (SAHRC).<sup>311</sup> Its mandate is “to receive, investigate and resolve complaints of rights abuses from, and on behalf of, children; moreover, it has a Commissioner dedicated to attending to children’s rights” among other human rights.<sup>312</sup> Unlike the Zimbabwe Human Rights Commission, it is commendable that the South African Human Rights Commission has a specific mandate, among other duties, to address issues concerning children’s rights in particular.<sup>313</sup>

However, even with the enactment of laws to deal with child sexual abuse, the report acknowledges that South Africa faces serious challenges with “domestic violence and the ill-treatment and abuse of children, including sexual abuse within the family.”<sup>314</sup> It also acknowledges that the rate of reporting is low, especially for cases of sexual abuse- yet it still remains the “single-largest category of abuse against children, accounting for almost half of all reported cases of abuse per annum.”<sup>315</sup> It sites non-compliance by “responsible adults” like teachers in obliging with the provisions of the Children’s Act which calls for compulsory reporting of child sexual abuse among other

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<sup>307</sup> As above.

<sup>308</sup> As above.

<sup>309</sup> As above.

<sup>310</sup> As above.

<sup>311</sup> As above, 17.

<sup>312</sup> As above.

<sup>313</sup> As above.

<sup>314</sup> South Africa’s State Report (n 295 above), 45.

<sup>315</sup> As above.



things.<sup>316</sup> Fear and lack of confidentiality are some of the given reasons for the non-compliance.<sup>317</sup> The report states that “continued efforts are needed to address under- and late reporting of child sexual abuse.”<sup>318</sup> This is an opportunity to explore addressing the role played by gender stereotypes in the non-reporting of cases of sexual abuse.

Programmes and policies implemented to supplement laws dealing with children’s rights include a National Policy Framework and Strategic Plan for the Prevention and Management of Child Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation (2004), The Department of Health Sexual Assault Care Policy (2005), and the Clinical Management Guidelines that guide the way health-care service providers deal with sexual abuse cases and victims.<sup>319</sup> The country also has training initiatives to support social service professionals in protecting children from abuse and neglect,<sup>320</sup> as well as to raise awareness amongst traditional leaders on the provisions of the Domestic Violence Act.<sup>321</sup> It has also developed a curriculum that aims to enhance children’s knowledge of their rights and human rights in general.<sup>322</sup>

In addition to the training and the awareness-raising through the education system, South Africa has facilitated the provision of victims of sexual abuse with integrated services, such as “access to police, counsel[ing], doctors, court preparation and support with offender prosecution.”<sup>323</sup> Just like in Zimbabwe, there are some victim-friendly rooms at police stations to ensure all victims, including children, are able to provide statements in a safe and private environment.<sup>324</sup> For children, the rooms are equipped with aids to assist the taking of statements.<sup>325</sup> The report also states that The South African Police Service (SAPS) also organizes some school visits “to raise awareness on child abuse and to highlight the importance of reporting

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<sup>316</sup> As above, 46.

<sup>317</sup> As above.

<sup>318</sup> As above.

<sup>319</sup> As above.

<sup>320</sup> As above, 47.

<sup>321</sup> As above, 120.

<sup>322</sup> As above, 65.

<sup>323</sup> As above, 120.

<sup>324</sup> South Africa’s State Report (n 295 above), 120.

<sup>325</sup> As above.

its occurrence.”<sup>326</sup> It also reports that the protection of children from abuse also covers children living on the streets<sup>327</sup>; which is a great initiative that demonstrates that there is no discrimination based on the social or economic status of children.

In terms of the country’s efforts to address gender stereotypes in its measures regarding children’s rights, there are some specific efforts that could be taken to imply some reference to the elimination of gender stereotypes. Among these; the Women Empowerment and Gender Equality Bill which was passed in 2014 to eliminate discrimination and harmful practices, including gender-based violence.<sup>328</sup> The Bill also “provides the Minister of Women, Children and People with Disabilities with the authority to monitor, review and oversee gender mainstreaming, integrate gender equality considerations into all programmes of Government and other sectors.”<sup>329</sup> The Sexual Offences and Community Affairs (SOCA) Unit also focuses on eradicating all forms of gender-based violence.<sup>330</sup>

Additionally, according to the report, the Children’s Act, the National Health Act of 2003, the Mental Health Care Act of 2002, the Promotion of Equality and Prevention of Unfair Discrimination Act of 2000 and the Schools Act of 1996 among others, all prohibit unfair discrimination.<sup>331</sup> It is noteworthy that the State, in addition to enacting all these laws, carried out some advocacy missions which were aimed at changing harmful attitudes and beliefs;<sup>332</sup> such missions could help to eradicate harmful gender stereotypes.

The advantage that South Africa has over Zimbabwe is that it has more resources at its disposal to allocate towards the implementation of programmes and policies that promote children’s rights. Although the report notes that the budget allocated by various government departments towards this cause is not sufficient,<sup>333</sup> the situation is arguably still fairly better than in Zimbabwe.

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<sup>326</sup> As above.

<sup>327</sup> As above, 108.

<sup>328</sup> As above, 20.

<sup>329</sup> As above.

<sup>330</sup> As above, 120.

<sup>331</sup> As above, 25.

<sup>332</sup> South Africa’s State Report (n 295 above), 27.

<sup>333</sup> As above, 17.



## 5.6 Conclusion

There are several human rights instruments and subsequent domestic laws on the realisation of equality of all people in the region that were named above. However, human rights discourses in the region at large have not quite made any particular effort to address the issue of gender stereotypes, even in the face of evidence that they are a cause for notable infringement on the rights of many people; and in this case the rights of boy children.

There is a general misunderstanding of gender stereotyping which results in them being often ignored, unidentified or misidentified. In the event that they are identified there is hardly any profound discussion of the various ways in which they hinder the realization of the rights of sexual minorities such as gay men and boy children in general. There is more emphasis on the realization of gender equality; in particular, to address the infringement on the rights of women and girls, with no direct reference to gender stereotypes and how to address them.

This chapter has demonstrated that there are provisions in existing international and regional human rights law, which guarantee every person the right to non-discrimination, regardless of gender among other things. It made reference to the connection between the right to non-discrimination and the right to be free from any forms of stereotypes, which include gender stereotypes, in that gender stereotyping often leads to the discrimination of some groups of people.

The chapter also highlighted the lack of commitment in the regional human rights movement, to specifically address gender stereotyping even against the backdrop that there are quite a number of international and regional human rights instruments which recognize the harmful nature of stereotypes to the realization of other rights and which therefore call for the abolishment of all forms of stereotyping. Most legislation is very generalised when referring to non-discrimination. Although such legislation could still be used to address gender stereotypes, given the multiple interpretations, more specific legislation addressing gender stereotypes would be more beneficial as it would accord gender stereotypes the right amount of attention that they require.

## Chapter 6

### Conclusions and recommendations

#### 6.1 Introduction

At the beginning of this research, some objectives were set to achieve the main goal of the study, which was to explore the impact that gender stereotypes have on the spread of child sexual abuse through a review of literature, in form of a critical analysis. These objectives were to analyse the role played by society, through gender stereotypes, in unknowingly aiding the spread of child sexual abuse; to highlight the discrepancies in the protection of children from sexual abuse based on their gender; and last but not least, to contribute to the enhancement of knowledge and research on child sexual abuse. The conclusions and recommendations discussed in this chapter are linked to these objectives.

All of the above objectives were achieved through a rigorous process. Firstly, a theoretical framing exercise was undertaken in Chapter 2; where a discussion of several theories that have been employed in child sexual abuse and gender studies research was carried out. At this stage, 4 theories were identified as what would frame the discussion in the study. These were, Connell's theory of hegemonic masculinity, the theory of social learning and 2 child molesters' implicit theories; these being the theory of uncontrollability and the theory of entitlement.

Following the theoretical framing, the meaning of the word gender was explored in Chapter 3, with a view to arrive at the definition of what gender stereotypes are. Once the definition was established, an overview of some of the common gender stereotypes that depict masculinity and femininity were explored. This exercise demonstrated that gender stereotypes can lead to the subjugation of those that do not conform to the norms expected by society; and that they could lead to some groups of people feeling more important than others. In chapter 4, various findings were made from literature on the subject of child sexual abuse by female perpetrators as well as the sexual abuse of the boy child and the challenges they face that hinder the disclosure of their abuse.

It was established that there is a significant gap in literature on the sexual abuse of



children by females and this was attributed to myths that stem from gender stereotypes. Such myths as the perception that women have a lower sex drive compared to men hence cannot sexually abuse children since, according to another myth, people who commit sexual offences have a high sex drive. It was also established that various studies have concluded that boys constitute a very small percentage of child sexual abuse victims; and that men make up the largest number of sexual abusers, all based on official statistics from reported cases, without much regard for the cases that could be going either unnoticed or unreported. This means there is still a great need to expand research on the sexual abuse experiences of young boys in order to have a clearer picture of the actual situation on the ground, although exact figures may be difficult to arrive at due to many culturally-imbedded beliefs and practices.

It is rather disturbing that in the face of acknowledgements that child sexual abuse of any nature is globally underreported, and that there is very little known about the sexual abuse of boys, the available statistics of reported cases have been used to draw some conclusions on the prevalence of the problem and who the most victims and perpetrators are based on estimates. This clearly implies that gender stereotypes are at play, not only in determining which cases are reported but also in the way that research is being conducted. Although the need to take the reported cases into consideration in order to have some indication on the nature of the problem is undeniable, it is unacceptable to draw conclusions based on inconclusive data.

## **6.2 Society's role in 'aiding' child sexual abuse**

It was established from a review of literature, that society plays a great deal of a role in shaping people's perceptions. An analysis of gender stereotypes; how they are developed; as well as their effects, revealed that they are a result of society's tendency to group people in 'boxes', with clear distinctions of what is expected of males and what is expected of females. The study found that it is this prescriptive behaviour that leads to the subjugation of some groups by others when they fail to identify with what is expected of them. An example of gay men was given to demonstrate this subjugation.



It was found that society embraces heterosexuality and if one is found to be gay they can be discriminated against, especially by other men. This was mentioned as one of the reasons that hinders boys from disclosing sexual abuse by another male; because they fear being labelled as gay and getting victimized as a result.

It was also found that being sexually abused by a female was no better for young boys as this 'demeans' them and makes them appear weak. Instead they choose to cover-up the abuse and if it so happens that it gets discovered, they would rather maintain the position that they were in control hence it was not abuse; just to protect their male ego. This was attributed to gender stereotypes perpetuated by society, which expect males to be tough, to be initiators of sex, to always enjoy sex so cannot be expected to turn down any sexual advances from a female among other things.

Another way in which gender stereotypes were found to negatively impact the unearthing of some cases of child sexual abuse was through failure by society to recognize child sexual abuse by female perpetrators as something significant. Literature suggested that female sexual abusers were people with a troubled past or who acted as accomplices of their controlling male partners. This study argued that this was all based on gender stereotypes because society believes women are a vulnerable group; that they are gentle, care-givers and would not be capable of committing crimes of a sexual nature unless they have a psychological disorder or they are under duress by a male partner, because they have a low sex drive. All these beliefs were argued to be myths that are spread in society through parents, the media and one's peers among other things.

Another thought-provoking point made was how, in encouraging boys to conform to masculinity which identifies as tough and as sexual conquerors, society is blindly contributing to the creation of attitudes that lead to these boys growing up to be men with a sense of entitlement, which leads them into believing that they can exercise their will over others and consequently, their sexual advances should never be turned down, even by children. It can therefore be concluded that society is indeed unknowingly or blindly aiding the spread of child sexual abuse, all from practicing gender stereotypes.



### **6.3 The law on gender stereotypes**

It was found that there are existing provisions in both international and regional human rights law that are directed at addressing gender stereotypes, either directly or indirectly. On the indirect provisions, all instruments speaking to non-discrimination were indicated as having a link to the need to address gender stereotypes because gender stereotypes enable discrimination. On the more specific provisions, although these are specifically found in instruments relevant to the realisation of women's rights such as CEDAW and the Maputo Protocol; or some other groups of people like persons with disabilities, it was established that they can be interpreted to include both sexes depending on context.

A discussion on the domestication of these instruments was also given; with specific reference to the cases of South Africa and Zimbabwe. It was found that there have been some positive efforts made by both countries to domesticate both international and regional human rights law, not only on gender equality, but also on children's rights in general. To evaluate the impact of this domestication in relation to actual programs and policies, a review of the countries' state reports to the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child was undertaken to measure the efforts that have been made to address child sexual abuse and also to identify some opportunities for addressing gender stereotypes in the process.

It was discovered that both South Africa and Zimbabwe have taken major strides both in domesticating and initiating some programs to address child sexual abuse and gender inequality in particular. However, in terms of specific reference to gender stereotypes the efforts were found wanting and some opportunities to address them specifically were identified. It was also pointed out that while program initiation and policy development may have made some headways, implementation still remains a challenge due to limited resources, although South Africa was found to be in a much better position than Zimbabwe in terms of resource allocation.

### **6.4 Recommendations**

Taking all the findings from the research into consideration, this study makes the following recommendations:

- There is need for more research into the sexual abuse of children by female



perpetrators, in order to try and establish the prevalence of child sexual abuse of boys. In suggesting so, the study is by no means disregarding the fact that not all cases of female sexual abuse cases are heterosexual in nature, nor does it suggest that boys cannot suffer sexual abuse from men, but this would unearth a substantive number of cases going unreported due to the gender stereotypical belief that women cannot sexually abuse children. The focus on heterosexual cases of the sexual abuse of children by women stems from the scope of this study- which places focus on the sexual abuse of the boy child.

- Similarly, more research should be carried out to try and establish how common male-on-male child sexual abuse is.
- Another possible area for further research which would be useful in trying to establish the impact of gender stereotypes on the spread of child sexual abuse would be to find out how gender stereotypes can influence child sexual abuse crimes adjudication. This was not explored in this study due to lack of space but it is highly recommended.
- While all this research is necessary, it would be pointless if the affected victims, or those responsible for their protection, remain silent about the abuse; fail to identify it or ignore it. It is therefore necessary to encourage proactive disclosure of such abuse through a process of helping society to unlearn some gender stereotypes that have been identified in this study as influencing the decision whether to disclose or not or influencing the masking of child sexual abuse by female perpetrators as well as male child abusers who abuse young boys. This process of unlearning would be aided by the encouragement of a more tolerant society that embraces gender diversity.

This could be achieved through a number of initiatives including awareness-raising campaigns on gender stereotypes in schools and universities by:

1. Adapting the educational curricula to include the promotion of the depiction of reversed gender roles from the traditionally known and accepted roles; as well as incorporating human rights education like in the case of South Africa.
2. Encouraging gender balanced representation in sports and other extra-curricular activities;
3. Marrying efforts to raise awareness on child sexual abuse with efforts to raise awareness on gender stereotypes since the two are linked as established by



the study.

- Awareness campaigns are also needed for parents and guardians. This would require civil society organizations and designated government departments to implement programs that can facilitate workshops or information sessions for parents and guardians to learn what role they are playing in endorsing gender stereotypes and the effect this has on the development of their children. The parents and guardians can be drawn from churches, parents of children in early childhood development centres, schools and universities and so on.
- Reforms in media portrayal of gender roles, including refraining from the use of stereotypical images of women and men is also another way in which to encourage a change of perceptions. For example, refraining from portraying an 'ideal' man as someone who is physically and emotionally strong, while women are portrayed as the opposite.
- Both South Africa and Zimbabwe have already taken a lead in addressing gender inequality as evidenced in their state reports discussed in the previous chapter where both countries have set up ministries and committees to ensure that there is a balance in the enjoyment of human rights by both men and women. However, specific reference to the harm caused by gender stereotypes (including aiding the spread of child sexual abuse) in their awareness-raising campaigns would reap more rewards in terms of changing perceptions around the way society sees men and women. This would have to start from early childhood education because that is the critical stage where lasting impressions can be made.

Furthermore, as highlighted earlier, CEDAW provides that member states should make all efforts to enable the modification of social and cultural patterns of conduct of men and women, in order to eliminate prejudices and customs, including all other practices which are based on the idea of the inferiority or the superiority of either of the sexes or on stereotyped roles for men and women, named here as gender stereotypes. Similarly, the Maputo Protocol also provides for member states to dedicate themselves to the adaptation of social and cultural patterns of conduct of women and men



in order to eliminate harmful cultural and traditional practices and all other practices which are based on the idea of the inferiority or the superiority of either of the sexes. It gives specific measures that should be used in doing so and these include public education, information, and communication strategies. The recommendations made above are in line with these provisions.

- As is their mandate according to treaties that they are party to as mentioned above; the governments of South Africa and Zimbabwe, in addition to raising awareness on child sexual abuse, should commit to eradicating gender stereotypes through the development of clear, time-bound and achievable goals that can facilitate the strengthening of institutional mechanisms developed to facilitate gender mainstreaming. In doing so, they should fully engage all stakeholders of children's rights and gender equality achievement; as well as develop sustainable fundraising and resource capacity building for all those involved. This should be followed by periodic assessments of projects to determine their impact and identify areas for improvement.
- Policies around gender inequality should not side line minority groups like gay men, and transgender people. There should be clear mention of these groups in the legislation and policies in order to encourage positive language regarding them and consequently tolerance; *not necessarily endorsement*,<sup>241</sup> for their choices because of the consciousness that some groups of people, due to religious beliefs and other reasons, will always have their reservations regarding homosexuality and sex change or gender transition.
- The cultivation for tolerance needs to be promoted from the domestic family context up to the national level, as well as the global level; in order to build an enabling environment for the enjoyment of human rights by all regardless of sex, gender and as such sexual orientation. At domestic family level, encouraging shared domestic responsibilities between women and men on parenting and care giving among other things would help. In the context of Africa; South Africa and Zimbabwe more particularly, the importance of using traditional leaders to spearhead campaigns on social cohesion that eliminates gender stereotypes cannot be overlooked since

these leaders very much have an influence on most of the rural and some urban based people who still uphold their traditional beliefs and values.

- The use of religious leaders can also be explored although that may be a bit of a thorny path due to varying views regarding issues like homosexuality. However, as previously mentioned, the message needs not necessarily be about approving the choices by homosexuals and such other groups of people but about developing tolerance for who they choose to be and who they choose to be with because it is their right to express themselves freely as provided for in article 19 of the UDHR on Freedom of Expression.

These are just some of the ways in which society can be 'taught' to be more appreciative of every person's uniqueness. This would feed into the creation of a society that is free from the discrimination of those who are deemed to be 'different'. Consequently, fear of discrimination would no longer be a reason for boys not to disclose their sexual abuse by both men and women.

In conclusion, the impact that gender stereotypes have on the perpetuation of child sexual abuse is quite tremendous although it is very easy for it to go unnoticed as it is something that is deeply imbedded in both societal and cultural practices and daily activities. Without any societal reforms to unlearn negative gender stereotypes, many cases of child sexual abuse will remain unearthed and many children will continue to lack protection from abuse and consequently fail to get the redress they require if they are sexually abused.

It is imperative for governments to fulfil the obligation they committed to when they ratified various human rights treaties on the elimination of discrimination, by addressing gender stereotypes; and for society as a whole to play a part in the elimination of these stereotypes. This will ensure that there is freedom of identity and expression for everyone and in the process, ensure a tolerant society that embraces differences in people.





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